

Sent: Monday, February 03, 2016 7:36 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Last nite we covered the first of two lessons on the book of Jude. Jude, as we learned, was actually the half-brother of Jesus, although you wouldn't have known it just by reading his letter! You see, that wasn't the most important thing, to Jude, for him to highlight! And he didn't try to "use" that fact to gain special recognition, or some advantage--in communicating the message he wanted to convey to other believers and followers of Christ! In fact, Jude (or Judas as he was known), along with his other brothers--James, Joseph, and Simon--all grew up with Jesus, in the household of Mary and Joseph. And yet none of them knew, or believed, Jesus for who He was, despite those family times together! (Matt. 13:54-58). And none of them became apostles! In fact, it wasn't until after His crucifixion and resurrection--and the coming of the Holy Spirit--that they became believers!

And then--at least we know for James and Jude--they became real zealots for Christ! In fact, James became known as one of the "pillars" of the church and wrote the great book of James--where, among other things, he challenged believers to be real "doers of the word." And both James and Jude identified themselves, first and foremost, as "bond servants" of Jesus Christ! Jude addressed his letter to fellow believers who all were (and still are!) called, and loved, and "kept" (secure) in Jesus Christ--and part of the "body of Christ," and "family of God." That spiritual connection they now had together was apparently more important, to James and Jude, than any earthly family tie!

And, as we saw in our lesson last nite, Jude was "very eager" to share something about that wonderful new relationship that they all had in common as part of the "family of God (and real brothers)! But, as he notes, he "found it necessary" (was actually inspired by the Holy Spirit!) to send a different message--one with a special "appeal" for believers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all handed down (delivered!) to the saints!"

The reason for urgency was that the message of the gospel--and the bedrock teachings of "faith and practice" in the "grass-roots church of Christ--were under severe demonic attack! "Certain persons had crept in unnoticed...who turned the grace of God into licentiousness and denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ!" This wasn't something, as Jude also points out, that hadn't happened before, down through the ages of time! And it had to be dealt with!

Jude reminded his readers of how God always judged sin and rebellion against Him! The people (Israel) whom He called out of bondage in Egypt, who turned to sin and rebellion--and "unbelief!"--never made it to the "promised land." The "angels who left their first estate" were "cast into the pits of darkness!" (II Pet. 2:4) And the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where people indulged in gross immorality, were condemned and reduced to ashes--a story repeated in Scripture 20 times, to illustrate God's judgment of sin!

But there's more! Jude writes: "Woe to those who have gone the way of Cain" (rebellious against God's revealed plan for sacrifice)! Same for those who "have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam," who, for financial gain, allowed Israel to be enticed with idolatry and immorality,

thereby bringing God's judgment on His people! And to those who participated and perished in the "rebellion of Korah," against God's appointed leadership of Moses and Aaron!

Jude picturesquely likens those who lead or follow rebellion and disobedience to God as "hidden reefs (where shipwrecks were about to happen)...clouds without water...autumn trees without fruit...wild waves of the sea casting up their own shame like foam...and wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever"! You get the picture!

But Jude doesn't end there! There are more warnings and descriptions of the depravity of false teachers which we saw in verses 14-16, and in other verses, which we'll be looking at next week! But Jude also finally gets to a little of the good news of our "common salvation"--including through the example of a man named Enoch who we learn from other Scripture "walked with God," and "contended for the faith"--and must have passed it on to the generations to come--being the father of Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived, and the great grandfather of Noah, who we are told (Gen. 6:9) was also "a righteous man, blameless in his time," and who also "walked with God"!

And Jude ends his letter with perhaps the greatest of all "benedictory doxologies," which should be encouraging to every believer who wants to improve his (or her) walk with the Lord! Here it is--too good to wait until next week (in the beautiful KJ version):

"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen!"

Have a great week, men, as you "walk with the Lord"!

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