

Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2016 7:09 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Last nite we looked back at the last eight MOB lessons we had, covering the epistles of II Peter, II & III John, and Jude--all divinely inspired--highlighting some of the most foundational issues of the Christian faith.

Peter wrote his second letter to believers and followers of Christ, as a kind of "last will and testament"--(1) to encourage them to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" (2) to remind them of the source and "trustworthiness" of the Scriptures (the Word of God); (3) to warn them about "damnable heresies" which were already infiltrating the "church," which would deceive many; and (4) to reassure them of the promise and reality of Christ's return!

He began his letter by referring to "those who had received a faith of the same kind as ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ--directly affirming that salvation is not based on our righteousness but on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is both "our God and Savior," thus also affirming the Deity of Christ! And he makes it clear that our faith is based on "true knowledge"--not cleverly devised fables--i.e., clear, objective, revealed, historical truth from God, which is intended to be understood believed, and taught!

Peter further notes that because of God's "precious and magnificent promises," we have become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust!" And because of this, we need to "add" to our faith seven specific godly qualities (including the "agape-type" love of Christ) as part of the process of "sanctification"!

As part of his "last words," Peter wanted to assure his readers (and that would include us!) of the origin and trustworthiness of God's Word! Realize, he said, that "no prophecy of Scripture came by the will of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God!" And it's because of, and by means of, the Word of God--the truths of Scripture--that we as believers and followers of Christ are able to maintain doctrinal stability; recognize, expose, and thwart false teaching; and "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ!"

Peter thus sets tone for the rest of his writing, as well as those of John and Jude! The warning about false teachers rising up within the church itself is a key theme in the writings of all four epistles! And this shouldn't have come as a big surprise, since Jesus Himself warned: "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). The Apostle Paul used this same language (in Acts 20:29-30) where he noted that "after his departure, savage wolves would come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves men would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

But Peter makes it clear also that God "knows how to rescue the godly...and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the Day of Judgment (2:9). That His judgment is swift and sure is illustrated by three specific incidents in Biblical history: (1) how He dealt with the angels who sinned; (2) how He "did not spare the ancient world...when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;" and (3) how He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction..." (2:4-6). And yet, Peter notes, He "preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others...and rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul

tormented day after day by their lawless deeds")! The story of Lot thus takes on a new perspective!

Peter, John, and Jude all describe, in graphic detail, the ungodly character, and wicked intentions and practices of false teachers--who would be spreading "destructive heresies," even "denying the Lord who brought them," living shameless lives, "bringing the truth into disrepute," questioning the promised return of Christ, and exploiting others with greed! John was especially emphatic in drawing the line! "Anyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God...and if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not bid him God speed (giving him the so-called "right hand of fellowship")!

And yet the writings of Peter, John, and Jude contain so many positive and encouraging messages for true believers! Peter notes how God's "divine power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and excellence" (II Pet. 1:3). And he ends his letter by encouraging them to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity! Amen!" (3:18).

John, the beloved apostle, opens his second epistle by expressing great joy in finding his "children...walking in the truth, just as we have received commandments to do from the Father" (II John 4). And, in his third epistle, he writes that he had "no greater joy than hearing of his children walking in the truth" (III John 4). His letter is a reminder not only of the "battle for truth, and against apostasy," but also about the importance of linking it all with Christ-like love for others--including by showing a special brand of "hospitality for strangers" who are seeking to serve the Lord, in accordance with the truth of the Gospel!

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus--who saw himself more as His "bond servant"--"found it necessary" (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit)--to follow up Peter's letter with a special "appeal" of his own for believers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). He also urged believers--because of the apostasy that was spreading--to "build themselves up in their most holy faith;" to "pray in the Holy Spirit" (or as Wiersbe notes, "according to the leading of the Spirit): to "keep themselves in the love of God..." and to "show mercy" toward others!

We spent some time discussing the contrast, even the "balance," conveyed between the believer's responsibility for "persevering in the faith" and God's sovereign role in "preserving the saints"! And, interestingly, Jude actually begins, and ends, his epistle with words of assurance for the eternal security of believers! In Jude 1, Jude addresses believers as those who are "called, loved, and kept (secure) for Jesus Christ"! And, in Jude 24-25, he closes with the even more reassuring words: "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 forever! Amen!"

I can't think of any better way to "wrap up" our study of these four great epistles!

Have a great week, men, as we reflect on these eternal, and inspiring, truths--and move on to a new and exciting study of Daniel!

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