

Jude

“A” Is Always “A”

Hymns: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

* James 3:1 says “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” So before we get started I just want to clarify a statement I made two weeks ago. I had some JW’s come to my door this morning and afterwards I found myself reflecting on this sad modern day form of Arianism. It reminded me of my mention of Nestorianism in 2 John. I mentioned it in connection with the Antiochan School of thought, which it was, but this heresy was not technically an exact counterpart to the gnostic heresy of Docetism which John was combating. Nestorianism technically emphasised the separation of the Divine Nature from the Human Nature of Christ. Arianism on the other hand taught Jesus was a lesser created being and rejected His deity. Thus, Arianism and the JW’s would represent a more accurate counter heresy to that of Docetism which taught that Jesus was divine, but only appeared to be human.

Tonight as we come to the Book of Jude we come to the close of our series Beware of Counterfeits. In it Peter has given us the Values, Virtues and Verification of Knowledge; and we’ve heard the Apostolic, Divine and Prophetic Voices. We have understood the Expectation of Future Apostasy, Examples of past Judgements, Explanation of Present Characteristics and Resolution in Symmetry. The Apostle John has given us warning and directions regarding threats both from without and within the church. And today we turn to Jude, in what is possibly the most un-original epistle in the entire NT, for as we shall see only about one third of this short epistle appears to be “uniquely original”. But let me hasten to say that this “un-originality” is not a disparaging remark on Jude; far from it. For in fact, it is actually the “unique strength” of this letter and one that I believe we must emulate if we are going to avoid the counterfeiting apostasy of our day. Jude opens this letter with some original material in telling us “What to Do”, followed by 16 verses of un-original material telling “Why to Do It”, before he closes with 6 short original verse telling us “How to Do It”. So let’s walk our way through this Holy Spirit breathed letter.

1. What to Do (v. 1-3)

V. 1-2 “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: 2Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.”

Exactly who is this Jude that we are about to hear from? First, we know from the original Greek text that his name is actually Ἰούδας- Judas and he identifies himself as the brother of Ἰάκωβος – Jacob. But wait a minute, doesn’t your version say Jude and James? Yep, so does mine. So what’s going on? While there are a couple of contenders for who this Jude/Judas was, most biblical scholars agree that this is Judas (Jude) the brother of Jacob (James) both of whom were the half-brothers of Jesus. Sometimes we forget that Jesus came from a family with brothers and sisters. In Matthew 13:55-57 we read “Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers **James (Lit. Ἰάκωβος- Jacob)**, Joseph, Simon and **Jude (Lit. Ἰούδας-Judas)?** Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offense at him.” So here we see Jesus, James and Jude recognized as the sons of Mary. So why aren’t they called Judas and Jacob in the NT letters? We see James appear in the first English Bible which John Wycliffe’s translated in 1380. Wycliffe’s Bible was a translation from Latin Vulgate and not the original Greek and Hebrew texts. When we follow the etymology of the name Jacob, it goes from Hebrew to Greek to Latin to French to English, and the French is “Gemmes”. So it appears as if Wycliffe drew upon the Latin to French and gave us James, the Anglicized “Gemmes”. As for Judas, it appears to have been shorted to Jude

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to avoid confusion with “Judas Iscariot” which many more seemed familiar with than the fact that Jesus had a half-brother by that name. This makes more sense when we consider that much of Christendom at that time and up to this day, held that Mary was a virgin and remained a virgin even after the birth of Jesus.

So this Jude, appears to be writing to other Christian Jews of Israel. “The references made to Old Testament incidents and to extra biblical literature (The Assumption of Moses and The Book of Enoch) identifies the recipients as people who would understand these references with no need for explanation. Egypt, Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Enoch, Adam, and the fallen angels all point to a people familiar with Old Testament history and possibly apocryphal literature.”¹

V. 3 “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Jude wanted to write about more pleasant things, about our common salvation. But the circumstances demanded that he urgently exhort them to “contend for the faith”. This word contend, ἐπαγωνίζομαι- is an intensive form of the English word to “agonize”. When you agonize over something you are emotionally involved; you are focused and sense the gravity of the situation. It means to fight appropriately for something. To contend as a Christian is just like contending as an athlete; it implies having a clear goal, being dedicated to the discipline of training and having a steely determination to fight to the end and win. The English word itself gives us an idea of what it means: con= together + tend= guard, weed or shepherd. So we see both the individual and the corporate application of contending.

But what are we to contend for? THE FAITH! That is the “body of doctrine that was given by God through the apostles to the church.”² We are to agonize with all diligence in defence of Biblical Christianity and doctrine. And we are to contend for the faith at all times. But there are obviously seasons where we have to stand particularly firm and apart from the godless men who seek to destroy THE FAITH. This doesn’t mean that we are to “go around looking for trouble. But when the banner of Christ is in danger of being taken by the enemy, we cannot sit idly by, nor can we ever hope to win the victory by wearing kid gloves...We are not fighting personal enemies, but the enemies of the Lord. It is the honour and glory of Jesus Christ that is at stake, so fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). As Charles Spurgeon once said “the new views are not the old truth in a better dress, but deadly errors with which we can have no fellowship.”³

And notice that this faith was “once” delivered to or entrusted to the saints. Once means once. And that “once” came in and through the Apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42). And folks, that doctrine doesn’t change. “Truth does not need updating. There is a story of a man who came to his old friend who was a music teacher, and said to him, “What’s the good news today?” The old teacher was silent as he stood up and walked across the room, picked up a hammer, and struck a tuning fork. As the note sounded out through the room, he said, “That is A. It is A today; it was A five thousand years ago, and it will be A ten thousand years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off key, the tenor across the hall flats on his high notes, and the piano downstairs is out of tune.” He struck that note again and said, “That is A, my friend, and that’s the good news for today.”⁴ A is always A; Once is always Once; the Apostles Doctrine is always the Apostles Doctrine. It doesn’t change and that is good news. It is for this reason that Jude is unashamedly un-original in what follows in v. 4-19.

¹ Edward C. Pentecost; *Jude; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*; 1983; SP Publications (p. 918)

² Warren Wiersbe; *Be Alert- “A Call to Arms”*; Victor Books; 1987; p. 135

³ *Ibid.* p. 137

⁴ Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*; Baker Books; 1982; p.389

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2. Why to Do It. (v.4-19)

For the next 16 verses Jude is going to hit that tuning fork. To his credit he is going to reiterate almost verse for verse the entire content of 2 Peter chapter 2 and part of chapter 3. Jude doesn't feel the need to reinvent the wheel, but rather draws directly from Peter's letter to warn and remind his hearers. He didn't feel the need to get gimmicky or cute or "go beyond what is written". He simply, but firmly holds out the "Apostle's Doctrine" that was "once delivered to the saints" in order to combat a very real and present danger. He sounds the alarm and tuning fork that is always the same. This should be both an encouragement to us and a warning sign when we don't see it being employed. We don't need to get gimmicky or cute with teaching or preaching or building up one another. We simply need to know and stay in Biblical Christianity as "once delivered". I'm not going to go into great detail over these next 16 verses, for we have covered them in detail back in the messages on Expectation of Future Apostasy, Examples of past Judgements, Explanation of Present Characteristics and Symmetry in Resolution. But let's look at Why Jude urges us to contend and just how closely he follows Peter and comment on a couple of things.

V.4 "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Peter said as much in 2 Pet. 2:1. There Peter warned that there "will be" false teachers among the people and here Jude is saying "they have arrived". They're here; they have secretly slipped in among God's people. "These apostates were not followers of Christ who had erred, but intruders who did not belong, and who sought to wreck the believer's faith."⁵ Why else would they have "secretly slipped in" unless they were wanting to avoid detection? "How could false brethren get into true assemblies of the saints? The soldiers had gone to sleep at the post! The spiritual leaders in the churches had grown complacent and careless. This explains why Jude had to "blow the trumpet" to wake them up."⁶ These were godless men- ἀσεβεις- meaning irreverent, disrespectful and undevout men. Jude says they have changed the grace of our God into licentiousness or a license for immorality. Can you think of a current example of where godless men in the church are supporting providing people with a "license for immorality"? Indeed, we have just this kind of "license" for SSM become legislated in this country.

V. 5-7 "Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. 7In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."

Here Jude follows 2 Peter in 1:13 with his reminder; 2:4 with his mention of judgement on angels and 2:6 with his mention of judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah. Notice the thread of sexual immorality that runs through individual's v.4, angels v. 6 and communities v.7, all of which we saw in detail in 2 Peter 2. It appears that Peter and Jude's reference to angels here in verse 6 is a compilation of passages from the Book of Enoch 6: 1-8; 10:4-6; 10:12; 54:4-5 and 91:15. The book of Enoch is an apocryphal book written prior to 110 BC. At the time of Jude's writing around 67 AD, the Torah (Law) and Nevi'im (Prophets) of the OT had been canonized, but the Ketuvim (Writings) were still in flux moving in and out of recognized authority. The Book of Enoch was one such writing. Thus,

⁵ Edward C. Pentecost; *Jude; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty; 1983; SP Publications (p. 920)*

⁶ Warren Wiersbe; *Be Alert- "A Call to Arms"; Victor Books; 1987; p. 133*

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it was well known among the Jewish audience and thus needed no explanation or commentary as to what he meant by angels. We'll talk more in a minute about this source, what it is not, and yet why it is important when we see Jude quotes it directly in v. 14-15.

In v. 7 we read that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in addition to having given themselves up to sexual immorality - ἐκπορνεύσασαί- our English word pornography is derived from the root meaning of this word, they did something else that appears to be quite distinct lit. "having gone after strange flesh" - ἐτέρας σαρκός. This doesn't appear to be a reference to 'homosexuality', for that is included in the previous phrase. "Heteros" (the opposite of "allos" which means same kind) is the word used here meaning "different". If one is hetero-sexual, that means one is drawn to the opposite or different sex. Since homosexuality was the condemned trait and practice of Sodom and Gomorrah, "heteros sarkos" must refer to a different group, class or type of flesh. This could include both animals and/or angels as we discussed back in 2 Peter 2, both of which we know were practiced in that day and afterwards.

v. 8 -10 "In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. 9But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals--these are the very things that destroy them."

This passage mirrors 2 Peter 2:10-12. The "pollution" of their bodies Jude mentions here, may have included far more than we commonly think of. The occult sexual practices of Sodom and Gomorrah had the same thread of demonic genetic corruption associated with Nimrod and the Nephilim of Gen 6. In v. 9 it appears that Jude is make direct reference to another pseudoepigraphical book called the "Assumption of Moses". This book was part of the Jewish tradition and well known.

V. 11 "Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion".

This passage draws down on 2 Peter 2:15, but includes Cain and Korah alongside Balaam. We saw before how Balaam was the prototypical false teacher driven by greed. Jude adds Cain who is a type of those who establish false religion and self-righteousness rather than coming to God the way he prescribed and receiving His righteousness which is our only means of salvation. Cain is also a type of jealous apostates. Able obeyed God and came with the sacrifice and was accepted. Cain came with his own idea of religion bringing produce and was rejected. And for this reason he murdered his brother in a temper tantrum of rejection and jealousy. Korah is a type of apostates who live in rebellion and do not recognize God ordained leadership. In Number 16, Korah led a revolt against Moses and Aaron, not acknowledging that God had delegated authority to them. So their rebellion was actually against God Himself.⁷

V. 12-13 "These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm--shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted--twice dead. 13They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever."

Here Jude reflects 2 Peter 2:13 and 2:17. The word blemishes here should be better translated as "hidden reefs"- σπυλάδες. In other words the false teachers who join you in Communion or fellowship meals are there to "shipwreck" the unsuspecting. It says that they are there literally,

⁷ Edward C. Pentecost; *Jude; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty; 1983; SP Publications (p. 921)*

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“shepherding themselves”. They’re not true shepherds concerned about the flock. They are shepherd and feed themselves like the wolves in sheep’s clothing they are. Jude adds that they are “wandering stars”. He has in mind here the idea of a “shooting star” and erratic bright flash and then disappearing into the blackest darkness. “Fixed stars help guide navigators, but wandering stars are useless to them. If any shipmaster would be stupid enough to follow one he would be led astray.”⁸

V. 14-16 “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” 16 These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.”

The last verse in this passages summarizes 2 Peter 2:18, while v. 14-15 are uniquely Jude’s addition. Here he quotes directly from the book of Enoch 1: 9. This is the first and oldest prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ. All the way back to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jesus Christ’s coming in judgement has been known. What is fascinating about this is that Enoch, who prophesied this, was raptured. Gen. 5:24 “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” Even from the beginning of Genesis, we have been given the prophetic promise of the rapture to those who walk with God and judgement associated with Christ’s Second Coming of those who do not.

Regarding the Book of Enoch, first, let me be clear that just because this passage is quoted by Jude doesn’t mean the Book of Enoch is inspired. It is not. Jude “was affirming only the truth of this prophecy and not endorsing the book in its entirety.”⁹ The Apostle Paul does something similar when he quotes Epimenides, and ancient Cretan Poet, when he said in Titus 1:12-13 “Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith” Second, let me also say that this doesn’t make the book of Enoch unimportant. Rather it sheds a great deal of light on the common understanding of the day among the Jewish Christians that Jude wrote to. Again, the fact that he offered no commentary or explanation to his use of this material suggests that it needed none for it was understood. It also gives us some indication as to what Peter and Jude meant when they spoke of “the angels” who corrupted humanity and produced the Nephilim. For example, consider these few excerpts:

6.1 And it came to pass, when the sons of men had increased, that in those days there were born to them fair and beautiful daughters. 6.2 And the Angels, the sons of Heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another: “Come, let us choose for ourselves wives, from the children of men, and let us beget, for ourselves, children.” 6.3 And Semyaza, who was their leader... 6.6 And they were, in all, two hundred and they came down on Ardis, which is the summit of Mount Hermon. 6.8 These are the leaders of the two hundred Angels and of all the others with them.

7.1 And they took wives for themselves and every one chose for himself one each. And they began to go into them and were promiscuous with them. And they taught them charms and spells (enchantment), and they showed them the cutting of roots and trees. 7.2 And they became pregnant and bore large giants.

9.6 See then what Azazel has done; how he has taught all iniquity on the earth and revealed the eternal secrets that are made in Heaven. 9.7 And Semyaza has made known spells, he to whom you gave authority to rule over those who are with him. 9.8 And they went into the daughters of men

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 922

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 922

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together, lay with those women, became unclean, and revealed to them these sins. 9.9 And the women bore giants, and thereby the whole Earth has been filled with blood and iniquity.

15.3 Why have you left the High, Holy and Eternal Heaven, and lain with women, and become unclean with the daughters of men, and taken wives for yourselves, and done as the sons of the earth, and begotten giant sons? 15.4 And you were spiritual, Holy, living an eternal life, but you became unclean upon the women, and begot children through the blood of flesh, and lusted after the blood of men, and produced flesh and blood, as they do, who die and are destroyed.

In the summary passages addendum to this teaching which I'll post, I have included some extended excerpts with some commentary by Dr. Michael Lake and Dr. Thomas Horn. But these are sufficient to help us see what would have been a fairly common understanding in the minds Jude's Jewish hearers. Thus, it also undergirds the previous teaching on Genesis 6 and the origin of the Nephilim.

V. 17-19 "But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. 18They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." 19These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit"

Here Jude hammers the tuning fork again reminding us of the Apostle's Paul and Peter from 2 Peter 2:1: 12, 13, and 15. He reminds us, just as Peter did in 3:3, that there will be scoffers who laugh at prophesy and the Book of Enoch and scoff at the idea of the rapture and second coming of Christ to judge this world. Jude says these are the men who divide you; men who despise prophecy; men who are literally "worldly minded" and do not have the Spirit. They divide you by putting forth "new cultural moment" definitions of things rather than God's word. Paul instructed Titus and you and me for that matter, to "warn such a person twice and then have nothing to do with him. You may sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned." (Titus 3:10). Likewise Paul warned of those with a form a godliness that denies the power thereof. From such we are to turn away. (2 Tim 3:5)

3. How to Do It. (v. 20-25)

Having clearly demonstrated and reminded us that "A is always A", Jude returns to some original thoughts to close. He has told us What to do- Contend; Why to Do It- because of false brethren and teachers; now he closes by telling us How To Do It.

V. 20- 22 "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. 21Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. 22Be merciful to those who doubt; 23snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh."

The way we are to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" is by building ourselves up in solid apostolically delivered Biblical Christianity. This involves three disciplines for ourselves and three commitments to others.

Ourselves: (Essentially a Trinitarian Abiding)

1. Pray in the Holy Spirit
 - a. This means in Spirit and in Truth "by means of all kinds of prayer" (Eph. 6:18)
 - b. Includes kataphatic and apophatic prayer. Liturgical and pre-mediated as well as spontaneous and contemplative.
2. Keep yourself in God's Love
 - a. Not your love Him, but His love for you.

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- i. 1 John 4:9-10; 16 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...16And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.”
 - b. Obedience
 - i. John 15:9-10 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love”
3. Wait for Jesus to come in mercy to you
 - a. By saying “NO”
 - i. Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,
 - b. Looking for the Rapture and Serving with Zeal
 - i. 13while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Others:

1. The Doubters = show mercy
 - a. Those who are literally judging back and forth and vacillating, we are to gently hold forth the attractiveness of a merciful and graceful Saviour.
2. The Ignorant = snatch from the flames
 - a. Some who are ignorantly about to kill themselves or others we are to literally “snatch them” ἀρπάζοντες from the eternal fire of hell. This is the same word we get “rapture” from. This kind of snatching is not invited and may in fact feel quite shocking to the ignorant, and they may even (likely?) resist you. But this is more about obedience to Jesus, their salvation and “contending for the faith” than it is for their feelings or your fear.
 - i. James 5:19 “My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”
 - ii. Gal. 6:1 “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted”
 - iii. Prov. 24:11-12 “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?
3. The Wilfully Disobedient = mercy mixed with fear, hating even their clothing
 - a. The wilfully disobedient should be presented the same merciful and graceful Savior with gentleness and respect, but not left with any other impression from us regarding their filthy external coverings than that of utter disdain.

Doxology V.24 “To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”

As we close this series Beware of Counterfeits, let us take great comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ our Saviour is able to guard us with an ever watching eye, so that we need not stumble now in this life. He is also able to present us before Himself unblemished from the marring effects of sin through faith in His redeeming, reconciling and propitiating blood shed at the Cross as pure gift of grace. That

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presenting will be with exceedingly great joy. With such joyous prospects before us both now and in the future let us live “contending” lives that glorify Him who is, was, and is to come; He who is the same yesterday today and forever. And finally let us never forget, the good news that even amidst the counterfeits, “A is always A”.