

JUDE: THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

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The third verse of Jude has given rise to some controversy. It reads:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful of me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

There are things to note carefully.

The apostle is not talking about faith but the faith. C E Hocking writes, Now we have in our hands the completed New Testament canon, and the faith once-and-for delivered to the saints which has been handed down firm and unalterable. Frank Holmes refers to the faith and the potential of a possible moral and doctrinal conflict. This verse is speaking of a common apostasy and the later verses support this with mention of mockers who walk after their own ungodly lusts and who do not have the Holy Spirit, but may insist that they do, and they are sensual and these false people will be even more prevalent in the last times.

The faith of which Jude speaks is related to the common salvation. Therefore it refers to the Gospel and the body of truths contained therein.

This is the faith once delivered to the saints and so there is no new doctrine after the completion of the New Testament which, as W E Vine points out, is final and sufficient. The Divine will is that nothing should be added or modified. As the faith has been set out once and for all, there are to be no new doctrines, additions or modifications. There are some today who claim to be prophets and say that their predictions are essential new revelations from God and as authentic as the Scriptures themselves.

I fear that some of the type of people I worship with may have made some essential matters for fellowship. Such new doctrines or, rather, over-emphasised certain aspects of doctrine are used to elevate such teachings as being vital doctrines and as a prerequisite for fellowship, but these views do not affect our common salvation.

Many denominations, that have arisen after the Scriptures were finalized, have introduced both new doctrines and practices not found in the Bible. In the last fifty years or so, there are thousands of new cults which have sprung up, particularly in the USA, which are based on additions, modifications to the once-and-for-all-faith and there are many heresies. One could list some.

1 Timothy 4 speaks of perilous doctrines that arise when people do not maintain sound doctrine and therefore depart from the faith. Such people have itchy ears and go after new styles and sensationalism where there is an emphasis on self, personal experiences, entertainment and social activities. They turn away from the truth and this is why the true churches and assemblies are falling in attendance figures and some are closing. People do not want the truth. People today look down their noses at those who maintain the truth and, as a consequence, they are castigated as old, not modern and frumpy. Those who uphold the truth are ridiculed by their tormentors who state that their own churches are so successful being full with young people, guitars, testimonies, dance and Sunday is now fun-day and, in the week, they have lots of social events. That is what brings people in, not the stuffy old fashioned boring traditionalists where the women have to have their hair up in buns and wear a hat and the men have to wear a collar and tie.

The common salvation is what the church must stand for. We are to evangelize and not entertain. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

We will be criticised for writing like this and will suffer persecution from the enemy within. But the Bible tells us what the true position is and what falsehoods will come and many are here today. However, these falsehoods are attractive and appealing to many, and a friend has recently remarked that many church services today are like a variety show at a theatre.

The criticism of us will be that we believe that we are the only ones who are right and, therefore, we are conceited and when we get to heaven we will have many shocks. Someone said that in Heaven, Peter and Paul may be playing electric guitars and the Lord will perform at a drum kit and all we frumpy traditionalists will be laughed at.

Jude identifies the apostates as fallen Christians destined for everlasting punishment. They are filthy with defiled bodies who speak evil of others including dignities. They talk about things they do not understand and they are corrupt and apostate. They admire mere people and adore their own leaders at the expense of honouring and loving the Lord Jesus.

We are sickened by the adulation given to so-called Christian leaders.

Our pastor is wonderful... if that is so, what is the Lord like? I love our youth leader because he led me to the Lord. Nonsense. That is the Lord's work. David Pawson is the greatest teacher of the Bible. I thought that that was the work of the Holy Spirit. We hear about the value of a worship leader to introduce choruses and prepare us for worship. Again, I thought that that was the work of the Spirit.

Why do Christians want to make a name for themselves? They should be exalting the name and person of the Lord Jesus, since, in everything, He must have the pre-eminence.

The Church has been infiltrated says verse 4 and ungodly men have crept in unawares and so has their false teaching. One of the most despicable errors that has crept in unawares is the denial of the Deity of the Lord Jesus. That is a heresy and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Gospels recount the acts of the Lord Jesus and stress His Deity. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God in whom the Father delights. The common salvation of which Jude speaks is that the Son of God was the Eternal Word of God made flesh, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who, at the age of twelve, impressed the learned people in the Temple and, at around the age of thirty, began His ministry of preaching and healing and showed us how to believe and how to behave. He died willingly to save all who come to Him in faith. He rose again and has ascended on high and has promised to come again.

His second coming had been foretold even in the Pseudepigrapha with the book of Enoch (verse 14) stating, Behold, the Lord cometh with thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon the earth setting up His millennial reign.

It is all very well saying that God is love but He is also the God of righteousness and justice. All that oppose Him and His people, by which we mean both Jews and Christians, will be judged.

In this epistle, we are reminded of evil angels as in the book of Enoch, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their dreadful fornications, the deliverance from Egypt, Michael contending with the devil over the body of Moses which events show both the mercy and judgment of God. The argument over the body of Moses appeared in writings called The Assumption Of Moses.

There are references to the errors of Cain and his lack of spirituality, and Balaam with his ungodly motives and avarice, as well as Korah and his rebellion against Divine authority. These are set out as former examples of apostasy and, sadly, we never seem to learn from history and fall in the same traps as before.

We allow things into our churches and assemblies thinking it is all right but often damage is done and may not be repairable. It may seem severe to some but we must earnestly contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints and that faith is the common salvation, the Gospels.

The final two verses are the finest benediction in the Bible. It speaks of those true believers who have upheld the faith and can be kept from falling and whom the Lord Jesus will present to God the Father with exceeding joy. There is also the welcome assurance that our God is the only God having ultimate power and majesty and who is eternal. What a reward for we so-called frumpy old-fashioned traditionalists who have kept the faith despite opposition and ridicule.

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