**Jude**

**Helpful Background for the Book, Part 3**

**1. Jude wrote to followers of Jesus Christ who he viewed with great love as his friends. He earlier reminded them to defend the Faith and stand only on the truth of God’s Word. In v. 17, Jude reminded them that they must “remember” what the apostles of Jesus taught. He is equating the teachings/words of the apostles with the truth of God’s Word.**

**2. By the time period during which Jude wrote his letter, the words and teachings of the apostles were viewed as authoritative. An apostle was an individual who had been directly called and commissioned by Jesus Christ. The early Church believed that the Holy Spirit inspired the words, actions, and teachings of such men, and God had confirmed this with signs, miracles, and fulfilled prophecies. The early Church also recognized that the number of apostles was limited to the generation that lived around the time of Jesus earthly ministry. They realized that as that small group passed into eternity, the Church would need to record and preserve the teachings of the apostles. Thus began the collection of letters and the sharing of information from city to city, church to church.**

**3. In the NT, the phrase “last times “ or “last days” referred to the time period that began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and will end with the second-coming of Jesus Christ. The NT authors often reminded the Church of this reality, and urged a watchfulness that looked forward to the return of Jesus and guarded the truth until that time. The Church is to be aware that scoffers and false teachers will come, as they have always come, to distract God’s people. We are to guard against those who would deny the truth, destroy the unity of the Church, and distract us from God’s purposes for us. (2 Peter 3, 2 Tim. 3:1-5 & 4:1-2, 1 Jn. 2:18-26)**

**4. In v. 19, Jude again mentioned the false teachers, but revealed the greatest danger that they presented to the Church. The greatest harm done to the Body of Christ was that these “scoffers” created divisions in the Church from within the Church. They destroyed the unity that is vital to the health of the Church, by following their own desires and selfishly putting their own interests before the interests of others, and convincing others to do the same.**

**5. In v. 19, Jude also reminded the audience that the false teachers did not have the Holy Spirit within them. The root of the problem was that the false teachers appeared to be believers and may have even pretended to be followers of Jesus, but were not. Every genuine follower of Christ was given the Holy spirit upon their genuine conversion. Believers were to closely examine the actions, attitudes, and words of any teacher, and pray to discern if they were Spirit-led, or led by self-interest and selfish desires. All that a teacher taught must be evaluated with scripture, and the Church should be diligent to monitor all who teach within the Body of Christ. (James 3:13-18, 1 Cor. 12:1-3)**

**6. Jude urges his audience to stand against the false teachers by standing together. He urges believers to “build each other up” (encourage) each other, but not just to spark positive feelings. Believers are to encourage each other to grow in the “most holy faith,” and be built up with the truth of God’s Word that will always prove true and reliable. When we encourage each other with a listening ear, kind words and actions, and unconditional love and acceptance, this is very good. But when we go further to encourage each other to grow spiritually, to know, to apply, and to live God’s Word and be better led by God’s Spirit, then we are doing great work that will have eternal implications. (1 Cor. 3:9-17, Eph. 2:20-22)**

**7. We must take the responsibility of building one another up in the faith seriously. (The best defense is a good offense!) We must help each other to study and live out the Word, not just read it. (Acts. 2:42, Heb. 5:13-63) We must help each other to trust the promises of God, especially when times get tough. (Rom. 8:18-39) We must help each other to serve God and to use our God-given gifts for His purposes, and to put off our old sinful ways. (Eph. 4:22-5:2)**

**8. Jude also urged the believers to pray in the Spirit. (v. 20) Every Christian is given the Holy Spirit as a direct link to God the Father’s unlimited resources of strength, wisdom, power, and energy. Believers are to remember that the Holy Spirit is already intervening on our behalf, (Rom. 8:26-27) and that we just need to recognize that reality and join in. The Spirit will ALWAYS lead us to truth, and will NEVER contradict the Holy scriptures or the character/nature of God.**

**9. Prayer is the lifeline of the believer. It connects us to God the Father and God the Son, through God the Spirit. But, it can also connect us to each other, as we spark one another on to grow in Christ. Prayer is our powerful resource that we can access any time, any place, and in any condition.**

**10. Signs that we are praying in the Spirit:**

 **a. We pray to know God’s mind/heart before we insist on sharing our opinions and demands with Him. A God-focus, not a self-focus.**

 **b. Our security and joy rests in the assurance of God’s love and presence more than if we get our “wishlist fulfilled” through prayer.**

 **c. Our hearts and minds find joy and peace in God through prayer, regardless of the struggles in our lives or our circumstances at the present time.**

 **d. We are willing to make the great exchange through prayer, our stress and struggle for God’s peace and comfort.**

 **e. We begin to sense the Spirit guiding our thoughts and prayers, or start to notice the nudge of the Spirit guiding us to an action or direction.**

**11. Another way for believers to stand strong together against false teaching was to keep themselves safe in God’s love. This means that Christians must intentionally keep themselves close to God and to rest in His love. Believers can practice that by staying connected to each other, to His Church, and by obeying His Word. Christians are to “remain in Christ,” (Jn. 14:21, 15:7, 9-10) and through consistent obedience, experience the presence and power of God. We must choose to align ourselves with God’s Word daily, and when we do so, we keep ourselves close to God and to His love.**

**12. Believers can stand strong together by reminding each other of the mercy given to us in Jesus and the eternal life that that mercy guarantees. The promise of eternal life will come true. The mercy and grace we have already been given will lead to an eternity of joy and peace with Jesus as Lord of all. Reminding each other of this future reality can help us to stand strong in the present. (2 Pet. 3:11-14))**

**13. In v. 22-23, Jude calls believers to action toward others around them. The early manuscripts vary slightly. Some have there being just two groups; those who should receive compassion/mercy and those who should be challenged/motivated by fear of the judgement. The majority of scholarship would suggest three groups to which Jude refers:**

 **a. Those who waiver or doubt - Christians are to demonstrate mercy to anyone who is struggling in their faith. We should not condemn those who have questions or doubts, but rather understand that doubts are “normal” and try to assist. (“Faith is not the absence of doubt; it’s the presence of trust.”)**

 **b. those in need of a rescue from the flames of judgement – Christians must also be respectfully able to lovingly confront others about the sinful choices that are being made and the dangerous destination that will be a result of those destructive choices.**

 **c. those who might be repentant but still struggling with sin – Christians are to carefully and prayerfully help brothers and sisters who are struggling with sin. If someone is repentant, and trying to change, we are to come along side them and help, encourage, and support. But, we must be very careful not to fall into sin ourselves. We are to always hate the sin, as we love the sinner. (Gal. 6:1-2)**

**14. Jude ends his letter with an amazing closing section of praise. He reminds the believers that God will keep them secure and will keep His children from falling away. We must be aware of our role. If we will only keep ourselves close to Him, God will not only receive great glory from our being saved, but from our being sustained through this life and safely arriving in eternity.**