

No.30. Jude

The writer – identifies himself as “*the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.*” James we take to be the writer of the epistle that bears his name; and since Jude is his brother, then, as was noted when considering James’s epistle, both these men are the half-brothers of the Lord. While Jude identifies himself as the brother of James, in true humility he does not refer to his physical relationship with Jesus of Nazareth but is content to underline that he is “*the servant of Jesus Christ.*”

There is also much irony in the fact that Jude is the penman of this epistle. This letter is a devastating exposure of the sin of apostasy from Christ and betrayal of Christ. In the annals of the NT the name that stands out as a betrayer of Christ and an apostate from him is *Judas* or *Jude* for the two names are synonymous. But while Judas or Jude, one of the twelve disciples, betrayed and sold Christ, the Lord chose another man of the same name to sound the true note of the Gospel and to warn the Church in the most powerful way of apostasy from the faith.

Jude’s initial intention was to write to the Church on the subject of the salvation that all believers have in common, v.3. The terms of this verse show clearly that “the common salvation” and “the faith” are synonymous. Here *the faith* is not a reference to the subjective faith of the Christian, the faith by which he believes in Christ, but to the body of truth that the Christian believes, that God has delivered to and deposited with His people. *The faith* is essentially the revelation of the salvation that all of God’s people experience – which they all have in common. But due to the apostasy in Jude’s day from that revealed truth concerning salvation he felt it necessary to write and urge the saints to contend against this apostasy and for the faith that was under attack.

Hence, we are to contend against apostasy and apostates. Keep in mind that an apostate in the NT context is one who has professed Christ but who departs from Him and seeks to undermine His person & work while remaining within the visible church. Jude makes it clear that God is against such and will have no mercy on them; therefore, the Lord’s people should expose & oppose them too and contend for the faith.

NOTE WHAT THE FAITH IS

As seen already it is that body of revealed truth in which the sinner believes to the saving of his soul. Throughout the epistle there are various aspects of this body of truth mentioned. *The common salvation, v.3; the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, v.21; being pulled out of the fire, v.23; and being presented faultless before the presence of his glory, v.24.* Thus, the faith as Jude defines it is the divinely revealed message of the person & work of Christ through whom God saves men from their sin & its penalty to bring them to glory.

But the heart of this message is the great truth of the absolute deity of Christ – and this is the point that apostates hate vehemently and constantly seek to undermine. See the closing words of v.4 – “*denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Literally this reads – “denying the only Master, our Lord and our God, Jesus Christ.” This is one of the most vital verses in the NT in its presentation of the person of Christ. The word for *master* denotes that Christ is sovereign – sovereign ruler; and He is such because He is “our Lord and our God.” He is the person who is at the heart of the Gospel.

What is said here about Christ underlines that the Gospel is Trinitarian. Note in v.1 the reference to “God the Father” – the Father is God. Then here in v.4 as already noted Christ is God; and in vs.19 & 20 Jude refers to the Spirit or the Holy Ghost. Unregenerate men do not have the Spirit but God’s people do. As a divine person He dwells in them. Thus, bringing these thoughts together we are shown that the faith is Trinitarian in nature in that only one who is divine as well as human is able to save the lost. But apostasy is decidedly antitrinitarian, attacking the deity of Christ as v.4 reveals, thus robbing the Gospel of its intrinsic saving power.

The work of Christ for men is a work of mercy. Thus, v.2 – mercy is mentioned immediately; and as v.21 shows it is “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life...” or that leads to eternal life. *Mercy* is that feature of the Gospel that tells us that Christ came to save us from “the fire” of divine wrath, v.23 and eventually bring us into “the presence of His glory.”

JUDE’S EXPOSURE OF APOSTASY FROM THE FAITH

The detail in this epistle – a short epistle – is amazing as Jude unveils the way in which apostates operate in their evil agenda of resisting the Gospel. The NT as a whole presents an exposure of apostasy that is very incisive, showing the need for God’s people to be reminded of its danger. From Christ Himself through to the Apostles the NT Church is given a most clear warning about the ever-present danger of departure from the faith. But Jude’s epistle – like 2 Peter – is devastating in its exposure of this terrible wickedness. We can only give a summary of what Jude actually sets forth from v.4 through to v.16 *The essence of apostasy, v.4; the examples of apostasy, vs. 5-7; the excesses of apostasy, vs. 8-10; the errors of apostasy, v.11; the exposure of apostasy, vs. 12, 13 & 16; the end of apostasy, vs. 14 -15* – the Apostle shows that apostasy is doomed to failure, as Rev 17 also does with its description of the destruction of the Babylonian whore.

NOTE ALSO THAT THE LORD DEFENDS THE FAITH

The saints are to do so, v.3; and are to do so in various ways, see vs.17-23. But the Lord Himself defends the faith by judging apostates and the apostasy they promote. He sometimes does so in this world, vs. 5-7; and He certainly will do so at Christ’s coming, vs. 14-15. But He defends the faith in another way – by seeing to the success of the Gospel in spite of what evil men do. God will save and keep His elect and bring them to glory. That is the ultimate success of the Gospel.