

How Do We Recognize False Christians?

By Joe R Wheeler

Introduction As we read all of the epistles written from the Book of Acts to the Book of Revelation, we encounter one overriding concern among all of the writers. They wrote to the churches and the individual Christians to remind them of the truth they had taught them, and to warn them to abide in it.

False teachers and brethren were running rampant throughout the churches, spreading all sorts of strange doctrines.

Most of us are probably pretty familiar with Paul, Peter, and John. We know James and Luke as well. These all wrote fairly large letters to the churches, and they get studied by most of us more thoroughly than the smaller letters.

2 Peter and Jude have always been compared to each other, some even believe that Jude was heavily influenced by Peter and that is how this letter came to be. This belief discounts the Holy Spirit's influence!

We must remember that 2 Timothy 3:16 plainly states that ALL scripture is inspired by God and is to be read and taught as His Word.

2 Peter 1:21 also tells us that men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost...in other words, the Bible is God's Word, it is not the word of the individuals who put it down in writing. So Jude was not inspired by Peter...he was inspired by God.

With that in mind, I want to examine the message sent to us from God through the writing of Jude.

I. Who is Jude?

A. A Servant of Christ...

Jude 1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. 2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

B. A Brother of James...

Matthew 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

(Many believe that Jude was an actual brother to Jesus, others, just a close relative. He himself claims only to be a servant here...often a man's closest companions were referred to as his brethren).

C. Potentially One of the Twelve Disciples...

Luke 6:13-16 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

John 14:22-23 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and

James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

II. Why Did Jude Write This Epistle?

A. To Write About the “Common Salvation”...

Jude 3a *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation,*

B. To Exhort Them to Struggle For “The Faith”...

Jude 3b *it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

III. Who Are They Supposed To Contend With?

A. Certain Men...

Jude 4 *For there are certain men...*

B. What Attributes Do These Men Have, How Can They Recognize Them?

1. They have “crept in unawares”...Jude 4

They are men who are considered part of the church! These are not outsiders from the world!!!

2. They are “before of old ordained to this condemnation”...Jude 4

They were known of in advance by God, spoken of through His Word, and already condemned by Him for their disobedience.

3. They are “ungodly men”...Jude 4

They are not truly faithful members of the Lord's body. By their ways they have denied Him.

4. They are “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”...Jude 4

They are abusing the grace of God. Lasciviousness means carnality, or feelings of morbid sexual desire in it's usual sense. These men were refusing to live in purity. They did not remain sanctified. They are not keeping themselves pure for the Lord.

5. They “defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities”...Jude 8

They indulge in their passions, instead of denying them. They despise the pattern of life exhibited by the Lord and His Apostles, and testified to by the Scriptures. They refuse to acknowledge the Word as an authority that they must submit to.

6. They “speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves”...Jude 10

They are unknowledgeable in the way of Christ, they instead continue to live as they did before hearing the Word proclaimed unto them! These are men who originally became Christians, but never grew in the faith. Now they stand against the Word and undermine it by their influence.

7. They *“have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah”...Jude 11*

Hebrews 11:4 tells us that Cain didn't offer his sacrifice in faith. After his sacrifice was rejected by God he angrily slew Abel. He was jealous instead of remorseful. These men also try to destroy those who obey God's will out of jealousy towards them...they want to be in control of things instead of submitting to God.

Numbers 31:16 tells of Balaam leading astray some of the Israelites to their own destruction. He first had tried to profit from cursing them for their enemies. After failing in that, he advised their enemies to tempt them away from God with forbidden fruit!

2Peter 2:15 warns of those who follow after the “wages of unrighteousness” as Balaam did. These also want to profit from taking advantage of their brethren.

Numbers 16 tells how Korah, along with Dathan, and Abiram revolted against Moses and Aaron and were all destroyed.

All of these examples were of men who willfully sinned against God. They were rebellious! These men Jude is speaking of will also be rebellious against the authority of God, and His pattern laid out in Scripture. They will mock the Bible and try to make others doubt it as being genuinely from Him.

8. They *“are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots”...Jude 12*

They are stains on a pure white garment. They are arrogant towards God, having no fear of Him. They have no value as Christians. They are Christians in appearance with no substance. They are easily moved in the wrong direction because they follow their desires, instead of God's Word. Twice dead meaning they had a chance to escape destruction when they became Christians, but refused to live in accord with God, so they fell back and continued to live in their former manner. Because of this they are once again lost.

9. They are *“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever”...Jude 13*

They are in motion, but they go nowhere because they follow their own ways, not God's. They “foam up” by many words, but their words are empty because they have no faith. They wander around, never seeming to gain understanding. After years of being part of the church, they still know nothing about the truth. They refuse to learn what God's Word teaches.

10. They are *“murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage”...Jude 16*

They are like the Israelite's in the wilderness; always complaining about what God has or hasn't done for them! Because of their dissatisfaction with God and the Christian life, they follow the way that gets them what they want instead of being content with what He has provided for them. They loudly proclaim this worldly path to weaker Christians and by so doing lead them astray as well. They respect the men of the world for their success, and hold them up as examples of men who have been blessed by God for living good lives. They teach that others likewise should spend their time becoming financially successful, instead of wasting time learning to follow God's way.

11. They are *“mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts”...Jude 18*

They mock God's way, and those that follow it. They follow their ungodly, lustful ways. They seek worldly fulfillment as payment for the work that they do. Christians who follow the Word and grow poorer and poorer financially, are ridiculed by them as being “unwise stewards” or persons who refuse to work responsibly to support themselves. They laugh at those who teach others to “lose their life for the sake of Christ” Matthew 16:25-26

12. They are those *“who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit”...Jude 19*

They remain aloof from their brothers in Christ. They never develop a genuine concern for the members of the body. They may attend services, but they never get involved in the work of the church. They offer no encouragement to weak Christian's, instead they try to pull them away from the rest of the congregation. They are always eager to spread bad news or gossip about a brother who has slipped, and they are the last ones to forgive them when they try to repent. The spirit of unity, and peace, and love is missing from their life. They can't grasp the concept of trying to grow in the faith, because they have no faith!

All of these attributes are indicators to us of who is and who isn't really a believer. These men can be recognized by the way they live their lives as Christians!

Others also wrote about danger from these false brethren, and how to protect yourself from them:

Matthew 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Matthew 24:10-13 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

Acts 20:29 *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

2Corinthians 11:13-15 *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

2Timothy 1:13 *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*

2Timothy 3:14-17 *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2Timothy 4:2-4 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables

2Peter 1:15-17 Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. 16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

2Peter 2:1-3 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

2John 1:9-11 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeak: 11 For he that biddeth him Godspeak is partaker of his evil deeds.

IV. What Will Happen To These Men, And The Men That Are Led Astray By Them?

A. Examples From The Past...

Jude 5a "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord"

Those who study the Bible have already seen what will happen...it happened many times before. The Lord will judge and punish those who turn away from Him.

1. They will suffer the same fate as...Israel

"having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" **...Jude 5**

Some of God's chosen people did not choose Him! They perished for their rebellious attitudes. God will not force people to serve Him, He gives them free will...but He will judge them for the choice that they make. If you won't be with God in this life, you definitely won't be with Him in the next life!

2. They will suffer the same fate as...Angels who rebelled

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" **...Jude 6**

This rebellion of angels is presumed to have been led by Satan. One key difference worth noting...it appears that the ability to repent and be forgiven by God is an option that only men get to enjoy. Every indication is that angels can never be forgiven if they turn away from God. The EVENTUAL fate of all who reject God will be the same...eternity in Hell.

3. They will suffer the same fate as...Sodom and Gomorrah

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”...Jude 7

The destruction of these “cities of the plain” is recorded in Genesis 18-19. They were destroyed despite several pleadings by Abraham on their behalf (Genesis 18). The Lord is merciful until He decides that the time to be merciful has ended, and then He destroys the wicked. Those who think that they will be given a second chance on the day of judgment should remember this story and repent now while they still have time. Lot's wife is also a warning to Christians as well, we must not long for the days when we were living as sinners, but keep pressing forward towards the goal...God does not accept half-hearted commitment.

4. They will suffer the same fate as...Cain, Balaam, and Korah

“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah”...Jude 11

They will be cut off from the presence of God as Cain was (Genesis 4:9-16). They will be sought out and destroyed like Balaam was (Numbers 31:8). They will go down quick into the pit, and disappear forever, along with those who follow their example like Korah (Numbers 16:28-40). The punishment of all of these men was severe and terrible.

5. They will suffer the same fate as...All the rest of the Ungodly

“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him”...Jude 14b-15

They will be gathered together by the Lord and His angels for destruction (Matthew 13:30, Matthew 14:31, Matthew 16:27). They will try to hide from their fate...but to no avail (Revelation 6:15-17). Those who have spoken against Jesus or mocked Him will suffer for having denied Him as the Son of God (Matthew 12:32). Many Christians deny Him by refusing to live as He said they should. They love the world and the things of this life more than Him (Matthew 10:37-40).

V. What Are They Supposed To Do About Them?

A. Treat Them With Compassion...

Jude 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference

They are best influenced by the loving example of other Christians. Some of those who are unfaithful can be led back by those who show them that they really do care about them. If all of the men mentioned in this epistle were beyond hope of saving, Jude would recommend that they withdraw fellowship from them. The only Bible many people will ever read is the example of a Christian who lives as he is supposed to live.

B. Pull Them Out Of The Fire...

Jude 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh

To save with fear means two things:

1. To fear their evil influence may affect us...

1Corinthians 15:33 *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

We must be careful that we convert them to Christ, not be converted to sinning with them.

2. To make them fear for what they will suffer if they continue in sin...

Romans 11:22 *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

We should try to save those who go astray. Too often we give up on someone and judge them as not worthy of our time. We leave them to their fate. This is a sinful attitude on our part. We must walk in love and seek to save the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7).

Hating the garment spotted by the flesh? Don't envy what they have achieved through their worldly efforts. Be content with what the Lord has provided for you...you will probably have less than those who "serve two masters", but you have what God wants you to have. We are to hate sin and do everything we can to remove it from our lives. We shouldn't allow anything that is sinful to remain in our hearts. If God hates sin, we also must learn to hate it.

C. Deliver Them To Satan...

1Corinthians 5:1-6 *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

To deliver them to Satan means to put them out of the church. After an effort has been made to "pull them from the fire", and all efforts have failed, this is the Lord's command for us to follow. It is not loving to allow someone to destroy themselves while we stand by and do nothing about it. "Tough Love" is a last resort for most of us, but it is love. We have to remove from them our seal of approval for their actions and attitudes by leaving them alone until they repent. We also must be strong enough to leave them alone for as long as it takes, even if it never causes them to repent. Sometimes this effort works:

2Corinthians 2:5-11 *But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. 9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; 11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

This is a very important part of "delivering them to Satan". If they do repent, we must accept their repentance and take them back! Many churches have used dis-fellowshipment as a way to get rid of undesirable members over a dispute or matter of opinion. These are abuses of the love we are supposed to share. Was the dis-fellowshipment for the right reason? Time will tell. If the person repents and is allowed back into the church, then it

served its proper purpose. If the person repents, but is never accepted again, then the congregation was not acting out of love. This corporate punishment should be administered in love, or it will anger God and bring His wrath.

VI. What Will We Receive If We Follow This Advice?

A. We Will Be Built Up...

***Jude 20** But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,*

Obedience strengthens us as individual Christian's, and as a body of believers. We strengthen our weaker element's by discipline and commitment. God rewards the faithful who separate themselves from the world, and if all else fails, from worldly Christians.

***2Corinthians 6:17** Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

B. We Will Be In The Love Of God...

***Jude 21** Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

This obedience to the will of God will secure or keep us in the love of God (Jesus is the way to come into the love of God). Those who abide within this love will also find the mercy of the Lord leading them unto eternal life.

***2Timothy 1:12** For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

C. We Will Be Kept From Falling...

***Jude 24a** Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling*

Christ will preserve us by His strength. He has the power to save us and then to keep us protected from evil.

***Philippians 1:6** Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

D. We Will Be Faultless...

***Jude 24b** and to present you faultless*

Faultless by the power of the blood of Christ, His blood cleansing us from all sin.

***Hebrews 9:12** Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

E. We Will Be In God's Presence...

Jude 24b before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy

We stand before Him because the way has been provided for us by His Son, by His obedient submission to the Father.

Hebrews 10:19-22 *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having a high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Conclusion

After the Book of Acts, we have a series of epistles written by various men appointed by Christ to spread His Word to all of the world.

Paul wrote the majority of the letters, but other men wrote as well.

All that they wrote was inspired by God, He spoke through them in order to give us a reliable guide to salvation in Christ, and to abiding in Him.

Jude is the one of the less well known of these letters from God, but the message we receive from reading it is just as powerful as any other Book.

The message of all of the letters is that we must continue in what we have received from the beginning. We must not follow the ways that many others have followed as they slowly turned from doing God's Will, to doing what seemed to them to be just as reliable a way to salvation as the way in which those of the first century walked.

All of the warnings of these epistles are meant to correct us if we follow the wrong paths.

It's a shame that so many refuse to learn from the Word of God what His Will really is...they would rather put their faith in a preacher or other religious figure than in an inspired book that requires study and patience in order to understand.

We who study for ourselves what God's Word teaches will avoid all of the punishments written here for a warning.

To finish this study, lets end with the last verse in the little book of Jude...

Jude 25 *To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*