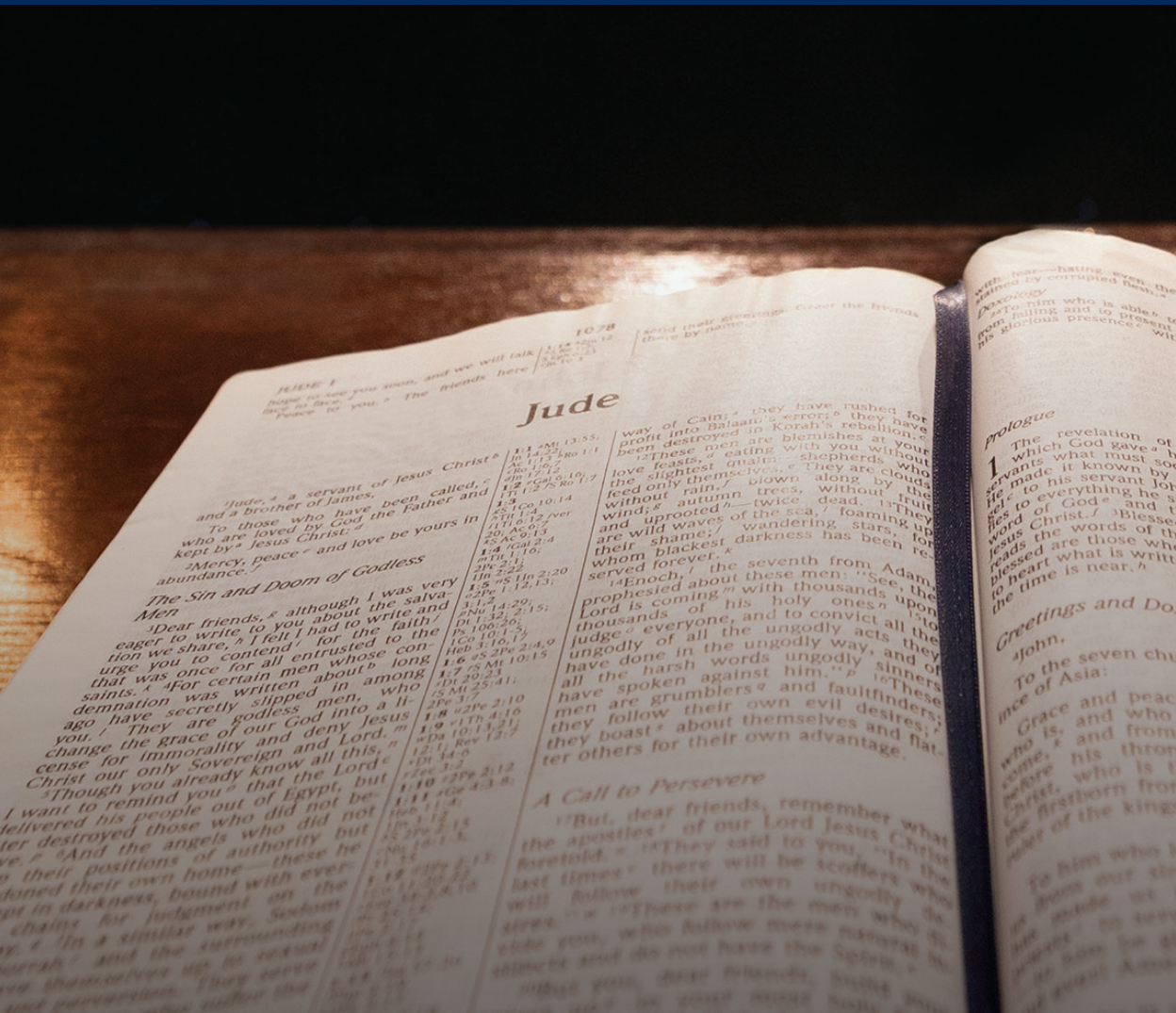


# JUDE



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## *How to Survive and Thrive in the Apostasy*

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One of the most-watched and most-popular shows on television in recent years has been *24*. This is a show concerned with terrorist infiltration into virtually every area of the U. S. Government. The show's protagonist is Jack Bauer, an anti-terrorist agent, who is constantly thwarting the efforts of all in his path. One of the reasons this program has so gripped the psyche of the American people is because it is dealing with things that are all-together possible. The infiltration of terrorism is a great concern.

Personally, I have encountered an infiltration of a different kind. Recently, I had a sore on my forehead that would not heal. At the insistence of my wife, I went to the dermatologist and discovered that I had a basal cell carcinoma. I was then sent to a surgeon to cut out the basal cell carcinoma. The doctor called it an infiltrative basal cell, which means that it had infiltrated my skin to a deeper level. I was dealing with a terrorist in my body: cancer. I was dealing with something that had infiltrated my physical body.

Christianity, however, is dealing with a terrorism that is more serious than the two I have mentioned. The Bible talks about spiritual terrorism: the infiltration of false doctrine and false teachers into the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is referred to as apostasy. The word "apostasy" does not occur in the Bible, but rather it is a transliteration from a few verses. In 1 Timothy 4:1, it says "in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith."<sup>1</sup> The verb is the word from which apostasy is transliterated. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the text says that the coming of the Lord will not happen "except there be a falling away first," utilizing the Greek word ἀποστασία. Apostasy is departure from the teachings of the Bible and an apostate is a person who believes and teaches the doctrine of apostasy.

We are dealing today with a world that is changing, a world that is introducing new problems to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Around us there is a culture which is filled with anarchy, but the problem is not so much the anarchy in the culture, rather it is that which occurs inside the church.

One of those problems is apathy. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will wax cold" (Matt 24:12). I heard about two church members who were talking one day and one of them said to the other, "Have you heard that they say that the two big problems in the church today are ignorance and apathy?" And the other said, "I did not know and I do not care." There are problems of apathy.

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the King James Version.

The other problem that the churches are dealing with internally is apostasy. It is a Trojan Horse that makes its way into the body of Christ. The Spirit of God led Jude to write his letter as a survival manual for those who would be living in days of apostasy. I do not know of a book that is more applicable and relevant to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in our day than the book of Jude.

There are three great divisions in the book of Jude. First of all, verses 1–4 provide words of exhortation and define apostasy. Second, verses 5–16 present words of exposition and a description of apostasy. Finally, verses 17–24 provide more exhortation and a plan to defeat apostasy.

Notice in the opening words of introduction, “there are certain men crept in unawares” (Jude 4). The particular word used literally means to slip in through the side door. It is the picture of an alligator stealthily slipping into the water almost unnoticed. It is the picture of an exiled criminal who slips back into the country from which he is exiled. Jude says that there will be certain individuals who will slip in unawares. He says they are ungodly men who will depart from the faith. In the previous verse Jude states that we are to contend earnestly for the faith that was literally once-for-all delivered to the saints. This admonition is offered because of apostasy, which is defined in verse 4. He says that these certain men who slip in through the side door, who worm their way in, will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and they will deny our Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. There you have the two components of apostasy. Some people misunderstand and think that apostasy only has to do with false doctrine. But if you will notice Jude’s words, there is not only a doctrinal component but also a moral component. Lifestyle changes that do not conform to the teachings of the Bible will result in doctrinal changes. The opposite is true as well, doctrinal changes will lead to lifestyle changes.

Jude did not mention the current apostates in his day by name. The only apostates he mentioned were those who were already dead. I will do the same and follow Jude’s example. Recently a preacher at the Church of Oprah said that marriage (referring to both homosexual and heterosexual marriage) is a “gift to the world.” Oprah responded, “Well, when is the church going to get that?” The preacher then said, “We think it’s inevitable and we’re moments away. I think our culture is already there and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2000 years ago as their best defense.”<sup>2</sup> Notice what this preacher has done. He has not only departed from the faith morally, but he has also departed from the faith doctrinally. He is claiming that the Word of God is not applicable, nor sufficient, for the day in which we live. This is a classic indication, or picture, of apostasy.

<sup>2</sup>Leonardo Blair, “Former Megachurch Pastor Rob Bell Tells Oprah the Church is ‘Moments Away’ from Embracing Gay Marriage,” *The Christian Post*, 2015, last modified February 17, 2015, accessed September 3, 2015, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/former-megachurch-pastor-rob-bell-tells-oprah-the-church-is-moments-away-from-embracing-gay-marriage-134264/>.

After the introduction of Jude, the second division describes apostasy. In doing so we see that Jude is an excellent preacher. Those who say that the New Testament authors did not expound the Scriptures only reveal their ignorance. In the middle section of his letter Jude preaches two sermons. In the first sermon he uses three historical events to illustrate how God judges apostasy. In the second sermon he uses three Old Testament Bible characters to illustrate that God not only judges apostasy nationally, but he also judges apostates individually. These two sermons are some of the most withering, devastating descriptions to be read in literature concerning the terrible, detrimental effects of apostasy and apostates on the local church.

If there was no final section to Jude, if verse 16 was where he put his “amen” and it was all over, the letter may be depressing. However, the seventeenth verse says, “But, beloved, remember,” and presents the first imperative in the entire book of Jude. So what I want to do is to discuss how to survive and thrive in days of apostasy.

### **Do Not Let the Apostasy Surprise You**

Notice again verse 17, he said, “Beloved, remember.” Jude has said all these things have been spoken before by the Apostles. Not only by the Apostles, but also spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus predicted that a time of apostasy would come, “and many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Matt 24:11). The Apostle Paul also predicted apostasy (Acts 20:30). “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Peter mentions the apostasy as well, “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 Pet 2:1). So Jude says, “Do not let it surprise you; it has already been predicted.”

This section presents an interesting insight into the written Word of God, briefly notice that it is the Apostles who have spoken. These Apostles gave oral testimony before their testimony was recorded. In the conclusion of Jude a reference is made back to verse 2; the faith delivered is the full, final, and finished revelation of God. The prophets have already spoken. The Apostles have already given the Word of God. That Word of God has been canonized in the pages of the Bible. This is the only Bible that there will ever be and any talk of “a new revelation,” or “a special word from the Lord,” should be ignored. If it is new it is not true; if it is true it is not new.

Jude says remember. “Remember I told you so when these things happen, you and I should not be surprised about it.” Christians should be aware of the fact that the Bible predicted that those days would come. Jude mentions them in verse 19, “they . . . separate themselves.” Literally, apostates draw boundary lines. They come in under the radar in a local church and begin to draw lines developing what they call a spiritual elite. The elite are a

group of individuals who are the only ones in the congregation who really are intelligent enough to understand their teaching. As a result, apostates split churches, separate believers, and sometimes even separate family members. “They . . . separate themselves.”

Jude also uses the word “sensual,” (ψυχικοί) denoting that they live on a worldly level. The apostates believe that they live on a level above what the ordinary experience and thus the normal rules do not apply to them. Jude further defines them as those “having not the Spirit,” which makes it very clear that the apostates are not believers. So the first encouragement Jude provides is, “Do not let the apostasy surprise you.”

### **Do Not Let the Apostasy Stop You**

In the concern for apostasy and the departure of the faith it is easy to become hostile and bitter. Jude begins with an appeal to contend earnestly for the faith. However, contending for the faith does not mean to be contentious in defending the faith. Apostasy should not stall the work of the church.

For those who are pastors, Jude presents the pastoral task clearly as spiritual surgeons. Pastors will biopsy a problem when it occurs and then act as the spiritual surgeon protecting the health of the body of Christ by removing the infiltrated cancer with the surgical tool of the Word of God. Slowly and carefully the intrusion into the body of Christ will be cut out. This task, however, is not the main concern; pastors and their congregations must continue obeying what God has commanded.

The leading verb in this section of Jude is found at the beginning of verse 21: “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” That is the second imperative in Jude. Jude liked the word “keep.” He uses it five times with one synonym. There is a two part keeping in Jude: one that God does and one that believers do. Verse 1 states we are “preserved in Jesus Christ.” This is the same word as in verse 21, we are kept in Jesus Christ. Believers do not have to keep themselves saved, for God is the one who keeps them. Also notice verse 24, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” It is God who does that kind of keeping.

There is also a kind of keeping that believers do that is mentioned in verse 21: “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Now putting this in a Georgia-country English, what he is saying is “Scrooch up real close and stay in love with Jesus,” or “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Whether you stay close to the Lord or not, his love remains and never changes. His love is like the sun; it is constantly shining. Whether you are directly in the atmosphere and warmth of the sun or not the sun continues to shine. When the prodigal son left his father’s house, his father did not stop loving him (Luke 15:11–24). When the son removed himself he also moved from the warmth, affection, and the love of his father. The good news is that we can do what

the prodigal did. The prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my father" (vs. 18). Christians, we ought to keep ourselves in the love of God.

How do you keep yourself in the love of God? Jude answers this question by using three present tense participles in relation to this aorist imperative, "keep yourselves." He says first of all, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith . . . keep yourselves in the love of God." That means that in days of apostasy, keep in love with Jesus Christ. One of the ways to accomplish this is to keep studying the Bible. One of the major reasons people fall into false doctrine is an ignorance of the Bible. Paul said in Acts 20:32, "Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up." Bible study and daily Bible reading is spiritual weight-lifting and spiritual food. I read some time ago that there are some dogs who can do without food for nine days. I read that there are some birds that can do without food for twenty days. I read that there were turtles that could do without food for five hundred days. I read that there were some snakes that could do without food for eight hundred days. I read that there were even some fish that could do without food for one thousand days. But we cannot do without the Word of God for a solid week if we are going to stay strong in the faith and build ourselves up in our most holy faith. It is imperative for believers to read and study God's Word.

The Bible is a love letter. Imagine a girl receiving a love letter from her boyfriend. She goes to the mailbox and immediately notices the handwriting and the scent of an envelope that it was from her boyfriend. She would not return to the house and say, "Mom, I got a love letter from my boyfriend and I am going to put it up here on the mantle, and on Christmas Eve we are going to get down the letter and we are all going to gather around and I am going to read it." This is rather unlikely. What probably would happen is that the girl would run back into the house, saying "Oooh, mama mama mama, I got a love letter." Then she would run to her room, fall across the bed, and tear open the envelope to read it, perhaps even placing it later under her pillow to be read again. God has written a love letter to us. Every day we ought to read that love letter. God wants us to know how very much he loves us. To help us stay in the love of God, we must constantly be building ourselves up in the Scriptures.

The second participle is, "praying in the Holy Spirit" (vs. 20). Bible reading and prayer complement each other. When we read the Bible, God talks to us; when we pray, we talk to God. Some might think this means the gift of tongues, but it does not have a thing to do with tongues. Romans 8:26 says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." That literally means groanings which you cannot put into words. Have you ever been there? Have you ever had a burden on your heart, a need in your life so great that when you got to your prayer altar all you could do is just groan and say, "Oh Holy Spirit groan over me?" It takes a lot of prayer in days of apostasy. We need to keep

ourselves in the love of God and we do it by building ourselves up, studying the Bible, and by praying.

Then, the third participle in verse 21, “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” The best way in the world to stay in love with Jesus is to be looking for Jesus to come any day. We must expect that Jesus will return any day.

I believe in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the things that really gets me excited when I recognize that we are in the days of the apostasy is that the Bible is clear that apostasy will occur right before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Lift up your heads. Your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). Some golden daybreak Jesus will come. I had an old step-grandmother, my real grandmother Johnson died before I was born, my grandfather, a country evangelist/preacher, married Aunt Callie. Aunt Callie was an uneducated woman, but she had a real walk with the Lord. Aunt Callie used to put it this way, “I’mma looking for Jesus to come today, but if he doesn’t come today, I’mma looking for him to come tomorrow.” If you want to stay in love with Jesus, just keep your mind and heart on the fact that one of these days soon, and very soon, Jesus Christ is going to come again.

What Jude is saying here is, if you want to survive and thrive in the apostasy, first, do not let the apostasy surprise you, and second, do not let the apostasy stop you. We must keep on loving the Lord. However, there is something else he tells you to keep on doing, notice verses 22–23. In those verses there is a relative pronoun translated as “some” and is translated “others.” The word οὗς is a plural pronoun that is a structure word providing the flow and logic of the language. Jude is saying, “Do not stop loving the Lord,” but he is also saying, “Do not stop loving the lost.” In this he provides three categories of lost people that Christians are to seek to win.

Notice, first, verse 22, “and of some have compassion” (a better translation would be “have mercy making a difference”). There are precious souls in the world that are just in doubt. They are weak and perhaps have been influenced by apostate teaching. They do not know true doctrine because no one has explained it to them. This passage helps believers see that there is an opportunity in the world to witness to those who are in doubt.

I pastored in Jacksonville, Florida for almost twenty-four years and on Tuesday nights we would go out visiting. I remember one of those nights of visitation to Beach Boulevard and the home of Mr. Lance. I simply shared the gospel with him and he looked at me and said, “Well, that just sounds too simple.” And I said, “Well, do you have a grandchild?” And he said, “Oh yes. I have a grandson—he is the only one I got and he is the apple of my eye.” I then said, “If you wanted that grandson to have something, would you go into the kitchen and hide it somewhere and make it difficult for him to find?” He said, “Why, no. If I wanted him to have it, I would just put it on the table and tell him to come get it.” I replied, “That is exactly what God has done with his great salvation. He has put it on the table and he has said to people like you and me, ‘Come and get it.’” As I said those last words tears welled up

in his eyes, he said, "Well it is just too good to be true." I responded, "Well it might be too good to be true, but it is true." There are a lot of lost people who could be won like that. We are to love those who are in doubt.

Second, we are to love those that are in danger. In verse 23 we find the same relative pronoun, "and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." There are many who are in danger. I used to listen to the evangelist, Oliver B. Green, every day to close his show he would say, "Lord, save the soul that is nearest hell." Hell is real and there are people who do not know Jesus Christ whose feet are almost in the fire. It is the job of Christians to pull them out of the fire.

On Sunday mornings when I was a little boy, one of the things I would do is get up and run out in the front yard to get the Sunday newspaper. I would run back into the house to read through the sports and comics. On one particular day, a picture on the front page of that paper caught my attention. It was the picture of people leaping out of windows. The front page had a picture of the burning of the Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta on Peachtree Street, it was the worst fire we had ever known in history in a hotel. Grown men came to windows and jumped to their death. Mothers took their babies and tossed them out of windows in an attempt to get them out of the fire. God has a message that will get people out of the fire. Stay in love with love with Jesus. Stay in love with those who are lost and nearest to hell.

Jude uses the pronoun a third time, "and to others have mercy . . . hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." "Garment" refers to the inner garment, the *χιτώμα*. The word for "spotted by the flesh," literally means human excrement. It is as if Jude is saying, "Some people you have mercy on, you win, but they are in defilement. Their inner life is so corrupt and filthy that it has corrupted their outer life and it is dangerous to touch them."

In response to the Ebola outbreak people would wrap themselves up and insulate themselves in such a way to not be infected or defiled by the virus. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. There are some people who are in defilement and they need to be witnessed to, and need to be won to Christ, but there needs to be great caution to avoid personal defilement.

When I was at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, there was a student who was an evangelist. He used to give his report in chapel of the great crusades he was having and the hundreds of people who were coming to know Christ as Savior. He began to minister in the French Quarter around Bourbon Street. He became attached to the place and called himself a chaplain, but in coming so close to the defilement in the ministry around him he soon became defiled himself.

There is a teaching today that says that the way to win the world is to be like the world. The truth is that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has had the most influence on the world when it was the least like the world. Win some who are in defilement, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." So, what Jude is saying is, Do not let the apostasy surprise you; the



Bible said it was coming. Do not let the apostasy stop you. Keep on loving the Lord; keep on loving the lost.

### **Do Not Let the Apostasy Stifle You**

Finally, Do not let the apostasy stifle you. The end of Jude provides relief from the previous content in perhaps the most beautiful doxology in all of the pages of the New Testament, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” The ultimate solution to apostasy is proximity to *him*. Stay close to him and keep preaching him. We do this also knowing that he is able. The text presents this in the present tense. It does not say he was able, nor is it in the future tense. Jude is saying, “He is able.” Whatever the need is today, God is able.

What needs exist today? Some say, “Well, I need grace.” Second Corinthians 9:8 says, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you.” Some say, “Well, I am going through some temptation.” Look to Hebrews 2:18: “He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Still others say, “Well, I need salvation.” Consider Hebrews 7:25: “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.” Some may say they need confidence in the faith, 2 Timothy 1:12 says, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” Then there is a passage that seems to cover everything, Ephesians 3:20: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.” The Lord is able to keep us from stumbling before a fall.

The Lord is able “to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (vs. 24). In this verse there is a Greek word loaded with meaning. Some have translated it, “He will present you before the presence of the Lord with mighty shouts of joy.”<sup>3</sup> When I get to heaven Jesus is never going to hear the last of it. I am going to spend eternity praising Jesus. The next verse follows with a great doxological statement, “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Here Jude mentions God’s splendor, greatness, sovereignty, and authority. Finally, look to what A. T. Robertson claims is “as complete a statement of eternity as can be made in human language.”<sup>4</sup> The praise offered to the Lord is past, present, and future. This is praising him forever and forever.

This is how to survive and thrive in the apostasy. The joy of the Lord and the hope of eternity are able to keep one from becoming spiritually satisfied. In the Old Testament, when the children of Israel came into Egypt, they were placed in the land of Goshen. When the plagues came in Egypt in the time of Moses there was prosperity in Goshen. There was darkness in

<sup>3</sup>The Living Bible translates this as “And he is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy.”

<sup>4</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:196.

Egypt that could be felt, but in Goshen there was light. There was death in Egypt, but in Goshen there was life. Today Christians are living in an old Egypt culture, but it is possible to be Goshen Christians in the midst of an Egypt culture.

The solution to apostasy is not isolation. The solution to live in an apostate culture is not isolation. The solution is insulation from culture for the purpose of infiltration in culture. The apostates are not the only ones infiltrating. Believers are doing some infiltrating of our own. We are going over there into an Egypt culture to capture some people for the gospel and we are bringing them into the land of Goshen.

