

Sunday Morning Message

August 21, 2021

Earnestly Contending for the Faith - Messages from Jude

Jude 1:5 – 16 – The Enemies Among Us – Characters from the Past - Part Six – Korah (A Power Hungry)

Text – Jude 1:11; Numbers 16

Congregational Reading – Jude 1:5 – 7 and verse 11

Introduction

We have been examining this little Epistle of Jude, which was written not to a specific church or person, but was intended to be circulated and used to instruct all Christians in all local churches in Jude's day. Of course, the Holy Spirit superintended over this writing and included it in the canon of Scripture where it would be used for millennia to help churches fight off error. The great emphasis of this letter is the encouragement for us to "earnestly contend for the faith:"

"3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, 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." (Jude 1:3)

The reason for our defending the faith is given in verse 4:

"4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness (ἀσελγειαν from ἀσελγεια – aselgeia – NASF – unbridled lust; excess), and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1:4)

I. Characters from the Past (vs. 5 – 7; 11)

In the past three sermons from this letter, we looked at the examples that Jude cites from the Old Testament that would serve as warnings for the people of Jude's day in the first century and for us today.

A. The Rebels Who Opposed God in the Wilderness (v. 5)

In verse five, Jude talks about the Israelites who were delivered miraculously out from the bondage of slavery out of the land of Egypt in the days of Moses, only to later rebel against the God who saved them by refusing to trust Him to bring them into the Promised Land in Canaan. They didn't think their God was big enough, wise enough, or

powerful enough to overcome all of the obstacles and giants that awaited them on the other side of the Jordan River:

"5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." (Jude 1:5)

B. Fallen Angels (v. 6)

Then in verse six, Jude reminds us of fallen angels that committed sins that were so heinous that God bound them in a spiritual prison until the great day of judgment:

"6 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 1:6)

Though we cannot be absolutely sure, we believe that these particular angels were the “sons of God” mentioned in Genesis six who cohabited with human women and produced offspring that were described in the Bible as “giants in the earth” and “men of renown” (Genesis 6:4) This period of time was just prior to Noah’s flood when the “wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5).

C. Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7; Genesis 19)

Next, we examined from verse seven the wickedness of sexual impurity in general, and homosexuality in particular through the Old Testament example of Sodom and Gomorrah:

"7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, 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 1:7)

In verses eight through ten, Jude will make the connection to the problems and people that we may face today in our New Testament churches:

"8 Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. 10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what

they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." (Jude 1:8-10)

Notice the reference to Michael the Archangel contending with a devil over the body of Moses. We have no account in the Old Testament that discusses this event, though we know that it did happen because God included it here in the New Testament. The point that Jude seems to be making is that the angel Michael did not take this devil on in his own power or authority, but deferred to the power and authority of God. We will examine these three verses (8 – 10) when we get to the next section of our study (Characteristics that are Present).

Three more Old Testament illustrations are given in verse 11:

"11 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 Core." (Jude 1:11)

D. Cain – A Works-Based Religion Rather than a Faith-Based Righteousness (v. 11a; Genesis 4)

Next, we examined the first part of this verse and considered Cain, the first of the three characters mentioned here. Cain tried to offer up to God the fruit of his hands – his own works as an acceptable sacrifice for sin. God was not pleased with his offering. Cain represents a works-based religion, or a works-based righteousness.

E. Balaam – A Preacher Corrupted by Greed

Last week, we looked at Balaam, who sold out the people of God for money. He was hired by an enemy king to curse the nation of Israel, and even though he was unable to do that, he did show the Moabites how to corrupt the Israelites by infiltrating them from the inside with pagan women and idolatry.

Transition

F. Core (Korah – v. 11c; Numbers 16)

Today, we will look at the last character from verse 11 – Core (or Korah).

"and perished in the gainsaying (ἀντιλογία - antilogia – meaning contradiction or opposition) of Core."

Note – in the Old Testament we read about Meribah, the place where the congregation of Israel murmured against God and against Moses regarding water. The word, Meribah

means “strife.” The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses the word translated “gainsaying” (ἀντιλογία - *antilogia*) for the word, “Meribah” (or strife – see Numbers 20:13; 27:14).

Korah’s problem was that he was not content with the position God had given him, he wanted Moses’ job, and he led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. He was power hungry.

We find the story of Korah and his cohorts in Numbers 16.

1. The Man Korah (v. 1 - 2)

The Levites were divided into three families: Gershon, Kohath, and Mereri; and these families were placed in charge of the Tabernacle and later, the Temple:

"And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari: and the years of the life of Levi were an hundred thirty and seven years." (Exodus 6:16)

Korah descended from the Kohathites. He was Kohath’s grandson (Exodus 6:18 & 21).

Moses and Aaron also descended from the Kohathites. They were also grandsons of Kohath, and were cousins to Korah (6:18 & 21).

The duties of the Levites can be found in Numbers 3:14 – 37. The particular duties of the Kohathites is found in v. 31.

"31 And their charge [shall be] the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof." (Numbers 3:31)

Korah and the Kohathites had a very important job. They were responsible for the setting up and moving of all of the furniture in the Tabernacle, including the Ark of the Covenant.

But, Korah and some other men within the congregation were not content with their God-given position. They wanted Moses’ and Aaron’s job.

The other men named men involved in the rebellion were Dathan, Abiram, and On who were descendants of Reuben. Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, or Israel. They should have been the leaders in Israel, but Reuben forfeited his birthright by sinning against his father. There were also 250 other prominent men from the congregation involved in this conspiracy.

2. The Mutiny of Korah (vs. 3 – 19)

Notice in v. 3 – Korah’s claim is that since all of the congregation was “holy” or set apart by God, which was true, that any within the congregation could lead them. However, even though everyone within the congregation was equal in the sight of God, it did not mean that God used everyone in the same way. God had a plan for Moses, which was to lead the congregation, and God also had a plan for Korah.

Practical Note – We need to each discover God’s plan for our lives based upon the gifts that he has given each of us and be content to fulfil that plan for our lives. If we are going to do that effectively, we are also going to have to stop worrying about, or envying, the plan God has for others.

Notice in vs. 6 - 7 – the censers were the metal containers that held the hot coals that the priests would put the incense on. Moses was telling these rebels to come before the Tabernacle door with the tools of the priesthood, and see if God lets them in.

3. The Massacre (vs. 20 – 35)

God originally stated that He was going to destroy the whole congregation, but Moses and Aaron interceded for them, and God judged only the leaders of the rebellion.

4. The Mandate (vs. 36 – 40)

Note – vs. 36 – 40 tell us what God instructed to be done with the censers. Since they were offered to the Lord they were set apart and could not be used for any other purpose, but since they were defiled by the rebels they also could not be used to offer incense. So, God instructed that they be melted down into plates that could cover the brazen altar.

The Mandate from God is found in v. 40 – only the family of Aaron could serve as priests. This should clear up any future rebellion.

5. The Malady of Murmuring Continues (vs. 41 – 50)

The rebellion, though put down, had a long-term effect on the congregation. There were many within the congregation who were still upset. They were infected with what Korah had started, and they could not get over it. God ended up killing almost 15,000 of them before it was all over. But, it all began with Korah.

Conclusion

What can we as a New Testament church learn from this Old Testament story.

First of all, we need to understand that the New Testament pastor is not in the same position as Old Testament Moses. Moses was speaking directly for God, and was the final say in every matter. He was God's official spokesman. God spoke to Moses, and Moses spoke to the people.

It is not the same today. The preacher is not a dictator over God's church, but he does have a lot of God-given authority.

"1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

"28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:28-30)

"11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" (Ephesians 4:11-14)

In a New Testament church, the congregation, corporately has the final say, under God.

Having said that, we each have positions within the local church.

The Pastor is the spiritual overseer of the congregation. He is responsible for directing and overseeing the ministry of the Word of God to the congregation. He is the chief teacher, and as an overseer, he is the chief administrator.

The Pastor is called by the Lord, but that calling has to be recognized by the congregation (Acts 13:1 – 3). Usually, in order to vote in a pastor, there needs to be a large percentage of the vote. In our church, the pastor needs to get 80% of the voting members to support him. Hopefully, the congregation will choose their pastors very carefully and prayerfully.

In our church, the pastor then has the right to choose his own staff. The congregation does not vote in our church for pastoral staff.

The congregation does choose deacons (Acts 6:3), but even though the deacons are chosen by the congregation, they also must have the support of the pastor.

So, the pastor of a New Testament church has a lot of power or authority, which can be dangerous if he is the type of guy that wants to “lord it over God’s heritage.”

At the other extreme, there are pastors who are so weak that they don’t take the lead, and that is very dangerous also, because it invites the devil to sow in rebellion from within the pastoral staff, the deacons, or the congregation.

Practical Points

1. Submit to the God-given authorities in your life, but only within the area that they have authority.

"7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation. ... 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you. ... 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.

They of Italy salute you." (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24)

Submission is something we all have to do. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. In the secular world, we have a boss. (Illustrate – Vic at Rayge – He is my nephew, but he is also my boss). We also have policemen and women who are authorities when it comes to the law. We are to submit to them within their area of authority.

2. If you are in a position of authority, make it easy for people to submit to you. Be a gracious, patient, compassionate, just, but strong leader.
3. If there is a clear, blatant violation of authority by leadership, then approach the leader first in an attempt to fix the problem, but then and only if necessary, go through the proper channels to fix it. If you cannot fix it, then quietly leave.