

Jude 1:1-16

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Malcolm Jarrett

[0:00] Well, good morning, everybody. We're going to start with the reading first, and it's going to be the first 16 verses of Jude.

And just before the book of Revelation. So verse 1, it's the warnings of history to the ungodly. Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.

May the mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all time handed down to the saints.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed. Those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation. Ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into indecent behavior and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want to remind you, though you know everything once and for all, that the Lord, after saving the people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

[1:47] And the angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper dwelling place, these he has kept in eternal restraints, under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them.

Since they, in the same way as these angels, indulged in sexual perversion and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in the same way, these people also, dreaming, defile the flesh, reject authority and speak abusively of angelic majesties.

But Michael, the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him an abusive judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

But these people disparage all the things that they do not understand, and all the things that they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals.

[2:57] By these things they are destroyed. Woe to them, for they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have given themselves up to the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

These are the ones who are hidden wreaths in your love feasts, when they feast with you without fear. Like shepherds, caring only for themselves, clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, churning up their own shameful deeds, like dirty foam, wandering stars, for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.

It was also about these people that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord has come with many thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts. They speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

I'd like to start off by asking a question. What would you do if you discovered someone was quietly poisoning your town's water supply?

[4:29] I'm sure you wouldn't shrug your shoulders and say, probably fake news, or, let's not make a fuss. No, I think you would probably seek to warn people because truth matters and people need to know the dangers.

And that is exactly why Jude wrote this letter. And I say letter, it's a little letter, to warn of the dangers that face the church. And today, as we begin this short journey through one of the smallest

books in the New Testament, and don't let its size fool you, it may be only 25 verses, but it has been said that Jude is like a stick of dynamite, small enough to fit in your pocket, but powerful enough to blow your socks off.

Or perhaps it's like chili sauce. You only need a few drops before you realize you've got more than you bargained for. Many of us judge a letter by its length.

If someone sends us a three-page letter, we assume it's important. If it's a postcard, perhaps not as important. But Jude turns that upside down.

Jude is only one chapter long, but I believe it is one of the most relevant books for Christian living we have today. And it also contains one of the strongest warnings ever given to the church.

[5:58] It's the biblical equivalent of a small packet that looks as though it won't contain much until you open it. With only 25 verses, Jude manages to cover some enormous subjects.

The grace of God, and then the big one, the danger of false teaching, the holiness of God, judgment, spiritual warfare, Christian perseverance, rescuing people who are drifting, and finally, the keeping power of God.

So let's step back. Who is Jude? Verse 1 says, Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.

So just to clarify who Jude is, the name Jude is the English form of the Greek name Judas. It is used to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus' brothers are named and one of them is called Judas. Jude introduces himself in verse 1 as the brother of James.

[7:06] Since James was also a brother of Jesus, this strongly suggests that Jude was a member of Jesus' family. Most likely the same Judas who is mentioned amongst Jesus' brothers.

However, Jude's identity is not built around family connections. His identity is built around his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a description, a great description. And there's a lesson for all of us here. The most important thing about us, it's not our job. It's not our position or our reputation or even our family background. But it is who we belong to. Jude says, I belong to Jesus. He didn't even mention James, who you remember was the leader of the Jerusalem church.

He simply says, brother of James. So humility shines right through each word. But the question is, who do you belong to?

[8:10] Now I believe Jude has something particularly important to say to the church today. Because Jude is writing to believers who are living in a world where the truth of God is being challenged.

And that sounds remarkably familiar today. We live in a culture that increasingly says, believe whatever you like. Truth is whatever you think it is.

Don't tell me that something is right or wrong. Don't judge. In fact, some of them say, don't be so old-fashioned. But Jude comes along and says, there is truth worth standing for.

And there is a particular phrase in verse 3 which is going to be our key thought this morning.

Contend earnestly for the faith. Notice he doesn't say, be argumentative.

He doesn't say, pick a fight with everybody. He doesn't say, go around correcting everyone. But he does say, contend earnestly for the faith.

[9:10] This is something precious that has been entrusted to the church. And we are all called to guard it. Jude wanted to write about something else.

A change of plans. Well, change of plans? Very often at the last minute we have to change them. And I wonder, does that ever happen to you?

Sometimes a doctor would rather give encouraging news, but sometimes he has to tell us something serious. A lifeboat crew would much rather stay in the harbour drinking tea or coffee.

But when a distress call comes, everything changes. Jude heard the distress call. The church was under attack. Not mainly from the outside, but from within the church.

In other words, Jude had planned a completely different sermon. I can imagine him sitting down with his parchment thinking, now what shall I write about?

[10:10] And perhaps he had something encouraging in mind. Let's talk about salvation. Or how about God's grace? Or even the joy of being a Christian.

But then something happened. Jude realised that there was an urgent problem. And he says in verse 3, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith.

In other words, he wanted to preach one sermon, but circumstances demanded another. Sometimes a preacher has that experience. You prepare something you think would be a great sermon.

You have your notes. You've got your illustrations. You've even found a joke that actually works. And then sometimes something happens and you realise that's not what is needed for today. Jude's message became urgent because something dangerous had entered the church. The faith has been entrusted to us. Jude, still in verse 3, says, the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

[11 : 23] What does he mean by the faith? He isn't simply talking about believing. He's talking about the Christian message, the truth about God, about Christ, about salvation, about sin, grace, and the gospel.

And notice, it was handed down. Christianity isn't something we invent. We don't get together every generation and say, right, what shall Christianity mean this century?

The apostles received the gospel, they proclaimed it, and the early church received it, and it has then been handed down to us. We are stewards of something precious.

Think about a family heirloom. Suppose your grandfather gave you something valuable and said, look after this, it's been in our family for generations. You don't throw it in the garden and say, I think I'll redesign it.

You protect it and you preserve it before passing it on. And that's the picture Jude gives us. The gospel is not ours to rewrite. We are called to faithfully preserve and proclaim it.

[12 : 36] But what is the gospel? Well, it means the good news, something we all need to hear. Repent and accept. You cannot become a Christian unless you accept God's gift of his son Jesus Christ.

Now, we make choices hundreds every day, but the choice on whether you accept Jesus or reject him will be the biggest choice you will ever make in your life here on earth.

God's family, there are lessons here for us all to learn. Nobody enters God's family because of who their parents are. You cannot inherit Christianity. Your parents may have loved Christ, still do.

Your grandparents may have served Christ. You may have attended church all of your life, but every one of us must come personally to Jesus Christ. God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters.

But we must be careful when we listen to a sermon that it is the truth from the Bible and to be aware of false teachers bringing false teaching.

[13 : 47] And that's why Jude was so concerned. Verse 4 says that certain people had crept in unnoticed. And that is an important expression. Jude doesn't say they marched through the front door announcing, hello everyone, we're here to corrupt your theology.

No, they crept in. They looked acceptable. They sounded religious. They were close enough to the church to influence it. And that's what makes false teaching so dangerous.

False teaching rarely arrives wearing a badge saying false teaching. It often arrives looking respectable. It may use Christian vocabulary. It may talk about God.

In fact, it may even talk about Jesus. But gradually it changes the message. A counterfeit banknote doesn't look completely different from the real thing.

And that's the whole point. If it were bright purple with fake money printed across it, nobody would accept it. The danger is that it looks close enough to the real thing.

[14 : 54] And Jude says these people have slipped into the church and were distorting God's grace. In verse 1 we have three very important words. Called, beloved, and kept.

What a great description. The first word, called. Our salvation begins with God. We didn't wake up one morning and decide to rescue ourselves.

God took the initiative. It was God who first loved us and so he sent his beloved son Jesus Christ to die on a cross and pay the price for our sins.

Therefore, giving us the opportunity to choose Jesus rather than choosing what the world has to offer. And the grace of the Lord Jesus always astounds us how great it is.

Jude, who is writing to the beloved in God the Father, says they were turning the grace of God into an excuse for immoral living. This is one of the great dangers of misunderstanding grace.

[15 : 58] Grace does mean that God forgives sinners. It also means we cannot save ourselves. And it does mean salvation is God's gift.

But grace does not mean God doesn't care how we live. Paul asks a similar question in Romans 6. Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

And his answer is absolutely not. Grace doesn't encourage us to sin. Grace teaches us to leave sin behind. Just an illustration.

Imagine somebody gives you a magnificent new suit of clothes. They say these are for you. They're a gift. You wouldn't reply wonderful now I can roll around in the mud because the suit was free.

No, the gift changes how you behave and God's grace should change us. Grace is not permission to remain the person we were. Grace is God's power to become the person he calls us to be.

[17:00] The second word beloved. Think about that word beloved. Not merely tolerated or accepted but loved. There are people who spend their whole lives trying to earn acceptance, trying to prove themselves, trying to be good enough.

The Christian begins from acceptance rather than working for acceptance. Romans 5 tells us God demonstrates his own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The cross has settled forever the question, does God love me? The third word, ket, and this is perhaps my favourite word in that verse, ket.

Jew begins with keeping us and ends with God keeping us. That is no accident. He starts and finishes with assurances. Our security rests not in our grip on Christ but his grip on us.

Someone asked a little girl, are you holding daddy's hand? She answered, no, daddy's holding mine. And there is a world of difference. If she were holding his hand, she might let go.

[18:16] Because he was holding hers, she was perfectly safe. That is the Christian life. We, persevere because God preserves. As Jesus said in John 10 28, no one will snatch them out of my hand.

And that should be a comfort for every anxious believer. Verse 2, may mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Notice, not simply added, but multiplied.

The Christian life isn't meant merely to survive. God delights in giving abundant grace. Mercy for yesterday's failures, peace for today's struggles, and love for tomorrow's uncertainties.

Every day we need all three. Martin Luther once said, we need the gospel every day because we tend to forget it every day. And how true that is.

I wonder, how's your memory? Mine certainly isn't as good as it used to be, as my wife keeps on reminding me. Jude reminds us that God takes holiness seriously.

[19:26] In verses 5 to 7, Jude gives three examples. Israel coming out of Egypt, angels who rebelled, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

The details are different, but Jude's point is the same. God is loving, but God is holy. Israel experienced God's deliverance, but many still rebelled against him.

The angels had privileged position, but some rebelled. Verse 6 says, the angels who did not keep their own domain. The word domain refers to the position, sphere, or authority God has given these angels.

They were created to serve God, but they stepped outside the boundaries God had established for them. In simple terms, they weren't content with the place God had given them.

That fits the main theme of Jude, rebellion against God's authority. Sodom and Gomorrah became notorious for their wickedness, and I think we all know what happened there.

[20:31] Jude is reminding his readers, don't confuse God's patience with God's approval. That's a very important lesson, because sometimes we think, well, if God hasn't judged me yet, perhaps what I'm doing is acceptable.

No. The fact that God is patient means God has given us an opportunity to repent. Peter says something similar in 2 Peter 3.

God is patient because he doesn't want people to perish, and that's great news. But patience shouldn't be mistaken for permission. Verse 9, Michael and the devil.

Jude then gives us a fascinating example involving Michael the archangel and the devil. Jude says Michael did not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against the devil.

Instead he said, the Lord rebuke you. There's a certain amount of humility here. Michael knew his authority came from God. This should make us think carefully about spiritual warfare.

[21:36] Sometimes Christians, however, can become fascinated with the devil. They talk more about Satan than they talk about Jesus. They see demons behind every problem.

They can become so focused on spiritual warfare that they almost forget who has won the victory. Jude reminds us, our confidence isn't in ourselves, our confidence is in the Lord.

We don't need spiritual bravado. We do need spiritual dependence. Verses 12 to 13 where Jew becomes quite vivid.

He gives several pictures. Hidden reefs, shepherds feeding themselves, clouds without water, autumn trees without fruit, wild waves, wandering stars.

So let's take a few. Clouds without water. Imagine you're desperately thirsty and you see clouds gathering. rain. You think, at last, rain.

[22 : 38] I can imagine that's what the farmers have been thinking recently. But nothing happens. That's the picture of someone who promised spiritual nourishment but doesn't actually provide it.

They look impressive, they sound impressive, but there is nothing there. That's a warning to the church. We must measure teaching by scripture, not personality.

Someone can be entertaining and still be wrong, or be confident and still be wrong. Someone can have thousands of followers and still be wrong. The question isn't, do I like the speaker?

Don't answer that. The question is, what is he saying? Is it true? Shepherds who feed themselves. Jude also speaks about people who are like shepherds who feed only themselves.

A shepherd's job is to care for the sheep, not eat the sheep. The Christian leader is called to serve. Jesus said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

[23 : 40] Christian leadership is not about, look at me, a warning for pastors and teachers. Every Christian has influence. Parents influence children.

Grandparents influence grandchildren. Older Christians influence younger believers. Church members influence one another. The question is, am I feeding others spiritually or am I mainly feeding myself?

Jude 14-16, the character of the false teacher. Jude quotes Enoch and speaks of coming judgment and then he describes these people as grumblers, fault finders, driven by their desires, boastful, flattering others for advantage.

Notice something, false teaching isn't just an intellectual problem. What is it? It's a heart problem.

What we believe affects how we live and how we live can eventually influence what we believe.

And that's why Christian maturity isn't simply knowing more Bible verses, although very important. It is becoming to be more like Christ. You can have a head full of Bible knowledge and still have a heart full of pride.

[24 : 55] The Pharisees knew the scriptures, but Jesus said they have missed the heart of God. So Jude isn't simply saying watch out for wrong ideas, he's saying watch out for wrong hearts.

Let's return to verse 3. What does it mean to contend? Contend earnestly for the faith. The Greek word translated contend earnestly was used of athletes giving everything they had in competition. Now this isn't passive Christianity. Truth matters, doctrine matters, and the gospel, the good news, matters.

Why? Because people's eternal destiny matters, meaning the body of truth handed down by Christ and his apostles. Truth doesn't change with culture.

It doesn't become outdated. God's word is never revised by public opinion. One generation receives it, guards it, lives it, then faithfully passes it on to the next generation.

[25 : 59] Just like runners in a relay passing the baton. We are not inventing truth, we are passing on what we have received. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1 verse 14, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Jude says this faith was once for all delivered. That means the gospel is complete. Nothing needs added, nothing needs to be removed.

The reformers expressed it simply, scripture alone, Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone to the glory of God alone.

Our task is not to try and improve God's message but to proclaim it faithfully. To contend also pitches a struggle. It means to fight for something precious.

But we need to be careful here. Christianity doesn't give us permission to become argumentative Christians. There's an old joke about two Christians arguing over whether Christians should argue.

[27 : 06] One said we shouldn't argue. The other replied, yes we should. The first said, no we shouldn't. And the other said, yes we should. I think they were proving the point rather well.

We are called to contend for the faith but we are not called to become quarrelsome. Peter says we should be ready to give an answer for the hope within us with gentleness and reverence. So, stand firmly but speak graciously. Know the truth but love people. Defend the gospel but don't become defensive people.

So how do we apply Jude? Three things we can do today. First, know the truth. If we're going to recognize error, we need to know the truth.

The answer to false teaching isn't simply, don't listen to false teaching. It's, know the genuine article. Spend time in scripture.

[28:06] Read it. Study it. Ask questions. Listen carefully. Don't just accept something because somebody says it. The Bible says, I heard a preacher say, ask.

So what does the Bible say? When Billy Graham preached, he would repeatedly say, and the Bible says, the Bible says this. Second, love the truth.

We can know truth intellectually without loving it. The psalmist didn't simply say, I have information about God's word. He said, I love your law.

We need Christians who don't merely tolerate biblical truth. We need Christians who treasure it.

Thirdly, live the truth. Truth isn't merely something we defend.

It's something we demonstrate. Jesus said, let your light shine. The world needs to see what the gospel looks like when it gets into an ordinary person's life.

[29:04] It should look like forgiveness, honesty, patience, generosity, faithfulness, and it looks like loving your neighbors, also refusing to join in gossip.

It looks like saying sorry, and it looks like standing for truth without becoming harsh. In conclusion, Jew began by wanting to write an encouraging letter about salvation.

Instead, he found himself warning the church to defend the faith. And perhaps again, another lesson for us here. The Christian life isn't always comfortable. There will be times when we have to stand.

There will be times when we have to say, no, that's not what scripture teaches. There will be times when pressure to compromise will be strong. Jude reminds us the faith is worth defending because the gospel is not just another option or an opinion.

It is the good news of Jesus Christ. It tells us that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves. It also tells us that God loved us enough to send his son to die on a cross who rose again.

[30:15] It tells us that forgiveness is available and tells us that eternal life is found only in Christ Jesus. the message is too precious to water down.

So let's contend for the faith, not angrily, not arrogantly, not with a spirit of superiority, but with courage, conviction, humility, and love.

And perhaps our prayer this week should simply be, Lord, help me to know your truth, to love your truth, to live your truth, and faithfully pass it on.

Closing with a warning from Paul, who was given a warning to the Ephesian elders that fierce wolves would come in amongst the flock, Acts 20, 29.

Jesus himself warned that false prophets come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves, Matthew 7, 15. The greatest danger is often not the obvious enemy, but the convincing imitation.

[31:18] A classic illustration is counterfeit currency. Bank clerks are trained by handling genuine notes over and over again. The better they know the real thing, the more quickly they detect the fake.

In the same way, the church's greatest safeguard is not becoming experts in false teaching, but becoming deeply familiar with God's Word. Buying Bibles is a wonderful start, but it doesn't make us spiritually mature any more than buying a violin makes us a concert musician.

The instrument has to be used. So remember, know the truth, love the truth, live the truth. Let's just pray. Father, thank you for your word and for the challenge and encouragement we have received from the book of Jude.

Help us to take seriously the call to contend for the faith. And to remain faithful to the truth you have given us. In a world where so many voices compete for our attention, help us, Lord, to recognize what is true and to hold firmly to Christ.

Keep us from being careless in our Christian lives. Give us wisdom to recognize false teaching, courage to stand for what is right, and humility in the way we speak to those who may have

wandered from the truth.

[32 : 37] Thank you that our confidence does not rest in our own strength but in you. When we are weak, you are strong. When we are tempted, you are able to keep us. When we stumble, you are able to lift us up.

Help us this week to live out what we have heard today, not simply to know your word but to obey it, not simply to hear about Jesus but to follow him faithfully. And as we continue through Jude, open our hearts to understand more clearly the seriousness of the Christian faith and the greatness of God who has called us to himself.

And so we commit ourselves and our families and our church into your keeping in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.