

ONE HIT WONDER: JUDE

Jude was written for a general audience. Meaning, it was an open letter that was meant to be circulated among, and read by, multiple churches. So, it wasn't addressing a particular church or a particular situation, it was written for wider consumption. We don't know a lot about Jude except that he was a respected leader in the early church, and like the apostle James, he was also the brother of Jesus.

Jude is identifying himself as a servant of Jesus and a brother of James. It's important to note that he doesn't claim any Apostolic authority. It's commonly thought that he became a Christian after the resurrection and so didn't journey with his brother on earth as did the other disciples. In this way he didn't claim to be a brother of Jesus but simply a servant. I love the humility of this man.

There were some people who scattered throughout the various churches, who were teaching that being saved by grace gave them license to sin since their sins would no longer be held against them. Here's the thinking they were trying to spread. If my sin means that I need forgiveness, and I find that forgiveness through the grace of God that flows from Jesus, then isn't my relationship with sin now changed? Meaning that it's no big deal? Doesn't my sin just keep getting met with God's grace and forgiveness, so it's not a big deal whether I sin or not? I mean, if I ask for forgiveness, I'm forgiven, right? So why not just sin away!

And this is what he wrote: ¹ **Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ** ² **Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.** ³ **Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.** ⁴ **For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.**

⁵ **Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.** ⁶ **And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.** ⁷ **In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.**

⁸ **In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.** ⁹ **But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"** ¹⁰ **Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.**

¹¹ Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion. ¹² These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. ¹³ They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame, wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. ¹⁴ Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones ¹⁵ to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”[e] ¹⁶ These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

¹⁷ But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. ¹⁸ They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” ¹⁹ These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. ²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

There are many interesting and strange things in this book, we will get to those shortly. For now, let’s look at the big picture of the book. The grace of God is not a game and God’s not an idiot. God’s grace is not to be mocked, it’s not to be cheapened. For those of us who have come to God through Jesus and prayed for and received grace, we’ve entered into a new life.

It’s a life purchased at great cost. To refuse to honour that cost and follow the one who gave everything for us would be to dishonour our Lord and saviour and everything that new life stands for. This isn’t about a mandate to live a sin-free life. We are to live as much as possible a life that is not dominated by sin.

The best, simplest definition of grace is that which is freely given, and totally undeserved. It’s getting what you don’t deserve and not getting what you do. That is what we have in the love and forgiveness offered to us by God through what Jesus did on the cross. As the Bible says in the book of Ephesians. ⁸ **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—** ⁹ **not by works, so that no one can boast.** Ephesians 2:8-9.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor during the time of the Third Reich who worked for the underground resistance against Hitler. He was eventually captured and then executed in a Nazi concentration camp.

He wrote a book called *The Cost of Discipleship*, which is considered one of the great Christian classics. In it he talks about this idea of cheap grace.

Here are some of his words:

“Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. “The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. “Grace without price; grace without cost! Through such grace the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. “Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. “Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, ... grace without discipleship, grace without the cross.... “But... real grace [is costly]. “Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow.... Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son. “[Cheap grace] is Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” Which is no Christianity at all.

That's what Jude wants to remind them of. That cheap grace is no grace, and if your life has not been touched by the grace and forgiveness of God, you are under judgment. Your sin is still on you. The death penalty remains. As we talked about earlier in this series, God is like fire. The fire that warms can be the fire that burns.

Then, Jude gives three examples of that heat: the judgment that came on the people of Israel who did not believe, the judgment that came on the people living in Sodom and Gomorrah for sexual immorality, and the judgment that came on some of the fallen angels, or demons, who turned against God.

The Bible teaches that there is a spiritual, or supernatural world. One that is inhabited by beings, by creatures, and by intense activity. It's not just God and us, but there are other beings as well, most notably, angels. Angels are creatures created by God. As created beings of God, they have intelligence and a will. They are moral creatures, and like us, can choose to either obey God or disobey God.

They are not human, they are spirits. They do not have physical bodies as we have, though when they interact with humans they can and often do assume a human form. And there's a lot of them! While we only have the names of a few of them such as Gabriel and Michael. Jesus made reference to being able to call down 12 legions of angels if he needed them.

A legion in the Roman army varied from between 3,000 men and 6,000 men, so Jesus' reference alluded to anywhere from 36,000 to 72,000 angels.

The picture given in the Bible is of a highly structured realm and order. Even in relation to being assigned to particular locations and places. The most important separation between the angels is this: There are good angels and there are bad angels. Not all the angels that

God created have stayed loyal to God. Some rebelled, lost their place and holy condition, and now they oppose the work and will of God.

⁶ And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Jude 6.

That is what a demon is, a fallen angel who chose to rebel. That is also who Satan is. A fallen angel who chose to rebel against God. Probably an archangel, among the most powerful of all the angels. According to the book of Revelation, it seems he led at least one-third of the angels with him in rebellion. The heart of his fall was pride. He wanted to sit on God's throne.

What Jude tells us here is that some of those fallen angels were immediately bound for judgment, even before the end of time. Again, another example that Jude gives about how God is not to be trifled with. Jude was so taken with how flippant some were being about grace and lifestyle in the face of the realities and stakes of the spiritual realm, he gives the example of the archangel Michael who, when arguing over the body of Moses, didn't dare to take it upon himself to personally engage Satan spiritually, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

We really don't know what Jude was referring to here. Again, there were some books written that never made it into the Bible. Folk law tells the story that when Moses died, God sent the archangel Michael to bury him. But Satan disputed his right to do so, for Moses had been a murderer and therefore his body belonged to him. Even when so provoked, Michael did not presume to condemn him. He simply left the matter with God.

The rest of the letter was just more of the same. He mentions Old Testament examples of the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah. With Cain, he's referring to the famed story of Cain and Abel, and how Cain killed his brother Abel out of selfishness and greed and hatred – the first murder in human history.

Balaam was also a man motivated by greed, and Korah was a man who revolted against God's appointed leadership. All ended up on the receiving end of judgment. There were consequences to their behaviour. Then Jude ends on a positive note.

²⁰ But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Jude 20-23.

In the face of those getting grace wrong, he tells them to help each other to keep getting grace right. To do all that they can to show grace toward others, but not at expense of truth. Here Jude tells them how: Build each other up in the faith, keep encouraging each other on, keep praying, and don't lose hope that in the end, all will be made right. Those in Christ will remain in Christ, and those apart will face the judgment their choices will have demanded.