

Place Lurgan Baptist 21:10:2008

THE CHAOS OF THE CULTS

Reading: Jude

1. FIGHTING FOR THE FAITH

Do you remember the Waco disaster? Let me refresh your mind. On 28th February 1993, four United States FBI agents were killed as authorities raided the Branch Davidian cult headquarters in Waco in Texas. It all ended in even great tragedy on the 19th April when the whole place burned to the ground after United States agents launched an assault using tanks and tear gas. We are told that at least eighty five members died, including the leader David Koresh, a self styled “*messiah*.” Koresh, whose real name was Vernon Howell, assumed leadership of the cult in 1986 after ousting its leader George Roden in a deceitful way. Earlier, in 1979 he had been expelled by the Seventh Day Adventists. In 1985 he had visited Jerusalem, and some time later he announced that he was the Messiah. The cult world provides an enormous challenge for us today. I want you to understand that I am not leading through this series of studies because cults are interesting, but because cults are dangerous. We have just read from the Book of Jude, the last book but one in the Bible.

The last book in the Bible is the Book of Revelation. *Do you know what its theme is ?* Its sets before us the

tremendous truth of the Lord’s return, and right before the book of Revelation is this little Book of Jude. You see, characteristic of the days just before the Lord comes are several things the Bible tells us about. For example in (2 Tim Ch 3) Paul says “ *that in the last day’s perilous times shall come.*” The moral atmosphere of those days will be marked by immorality and gross sin. Another of the characteristics is given to us in (1 Tim Ch 4) where it says, “ *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.*” The Lord Jesus Himself said, “ *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” (Matt 7:15) He said, “ *Take heed lest any man deceive you, for many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many for false Christ’s and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.*” (Mk 13:5,6, 22)

Do you recall the solemn judgment that Paul pronounced on those who preached another gospel ? He said, “ ***But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed.***” (Gal 1:8) John the apostle of love says, “ *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” (1 Jn 4:1) And right here Jude says, “ *that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” Now there are three things I want to do by way of introduction.

1. THE DUTY WE HAVE

For after pointing our resources Jude lays before us our responsibilities. He tells us that we are to be,

(A) EXTENDERS OF THE FAITH:

Look at (Jude 3) Do you see what Jude is saying ? He's saying that he started off in one direction, and then wound up going in another direction. He was going to write about the common salvation. But then God's Holy Spirit began to move him in another direction. The word "*diligent*," gives us our English word "*speed*." In other words Jude could hardly wait to talk about salvation. That was the passion of his heart that was the fire in his bones that was the obsession of his life. He just wanted to talk about salvation. *Do you feel like that ?* Salvation is what we ought to write about, sing about, preach about, shout about, and talk about because there is nothing like being saved. James Merritt says "***There is one thing, that should happen to every sinner, and one thing that should never happen to any saint. Every sinner needs to get over being lost by being saved and every saint, should never get over being saved from being lost.***" Now if that is true, then we'll want to talk about salvation, we'll want to extend the faith. (a)

(b) CONTENDERS FOR THE FAITH:

Do you see how Jude puts it "*Earnestly contend for the faith*" (Jude 3) Now the Greek word for "*contend*," gives us our English word "*agonise*." It was a word that

referred to an athlete in the Greek Olympics straining to win a race, straining for the finish line. My when others corrupt the faith we are to contend for the faith. When others deny the faith we are to defend the faith. John Calvin said, "**A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw God's truth being attacked and would remain silent without giving any sound.**" Now there are those who say, "*we don't need to fight. We just need to get along with one another, love one another, accept all differences and celebrate diversity. We don't need to rock the boat.*" Let me ask you, is it better that belief should rock the boat, than that unbelief should wreck the boat ? My is it not time that we stood up and spoke up when the sacredness of our Lord's person and work is at stake ? Is it not time that we took our stand for the old time religion ?

Charles Spurgeon once said that the greatest compliment ever given to him was not spoken by a friend, but by one of his most bitter enemies and here is what the enemy said. "*Here is a man who has not moved an inch forward in all his ministry. At the close of the 19th century he is still teaching the theology of the first century, and is still proclaiming doctrine current in Nazareth and Jerusalem in the first century.*" Do you not like that kind of non-movement ? (1)

(2) THE DOCTRINE WE HOLD

For Jude refers to it as "*the faith*," Now there is a difference between "*faith*," and "*the faith*." You see,

one refers to act of believing, the other refers to what we believe. Now this is,

(a) A CLEAR FAITH:

It is definite. The faith here constitutes the Christian faith. Jude is talking about a body of truth. He's talking about a system of doctrine. He is talking about the fundamentals of Christianity. Do you recall how Luke describes it? He says that the early church "*continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine,*" (Acts 2:42) James Merritt tells us that between 1910 and 1915 a group of theologians, pastors and lay people published a series of fundamentals. They set forth five non negotiables of the Christian Faith.

- 1. The Infallibility of Scripture:**
- 2. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ:**
- 3. The Virgin Birth and Miracles of our Lord Jesus:**
- 4. The Substitutionary Death of the Lord Jesus**
- 5. The Physical Resurrection & Return of our Lord:**

Do you see where it all begins? It all begins with the Infallibility of the Bible? The river of all truth flows from this Scriptural fountain, and must never be contaminated with the mere opinions of men, regardless of how scholarly they might be.

(b) A COMPLETE FAITH:

Do you see that word "*once,*"? It means "*once for all delivered.*" What is Jude saying? He is saying that what

we have in our Bible is the full and final revelation of God's truth. There won't be any more Bible written.

The Bible is the only Word we have from God, and the only Word we need from God. With the Old Testament and the New Testament we don't need any other Testament. My we don't need a revelation of new truth, we just need an application of the old truth. We don't Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy, golden tablets or visions and dreams. All we need is what we have the Inspired Word of the living God. Turn to the last chapter of the Book of Revelation. Look at (Rev 22:18-19) You see, you can't add to it, you can't take from it. There is no new revelation going on today. There are no apostles today. And these people who are talking today about new revelation and a word of prophecy that God has given them to tell folk to do things are talking nonsense. (a) (b)

(c) A COMMUNICATED FAITH:

Do you see how Jude puts it? "*The faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" (Jude 3) The word "*delivered,*" means "*to be entrusted with or deposited with.*" Paul says in (1 Thes 2:4) "*But as we were allowed of God to be in trust with the gospel.*" My we are stewards of this truth. This faith was not discovered by the saints, it was delivered to the saints. We are going to be held accountable as to how we protected it, preserved it and preached it. Do you know something? This book is worth fighting for. Of course we ought to "*speak the truth in love,*" (Eph 4:15) Of course it is right for all people to worship according to their conscience. But when

it comes to “ *the faith*,” we ought to be firm and unyielding. (1)(2)

(3) THE DANGER WE HIGHLIGHT

Look if you will at (Jude 4) The word for “ *crept*,” refers to a criminal exiled from a country, who slips back across the border under cover of darkness. It’s the picture of a crocodile who can slip into the water without making a ripple. Do you know something ? There are spiritual crocodiles lining the banks of the river of Christianity, waiting to slip in and devour colleges, churches and denominations. Apostates, modernists, and the cults those who deny “ *the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*.” Listen to a statement made over 450 years ago by Martin Luther.

Christendom must have people who can beat down their adversaries and opponents and tear off the devil’s equipment and armour, that he may be brought into disgrace. But for this work, powerful warriors are needed who are thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures. Yet each Christian should be so armed that he himself is sure of his belief and of the doctrine, and is so equipped with the sayings from the Word of God that he can stand up against the devil and defend himself when men seek to lead him astray.

I tell you when it comes to “ *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*,” Jude was no passivist. He believed it was right to fight when you fight for right.

Now in this opening study let me try and set the scene for all that will follow. In order to do that I want to,

(1) EXPLAIN THE CULTS

Someone has said that “ *the cults are the unpaid bills of the church*.” What that statement really means is that the success of the cults is primarily due to the failure of the churches. You see, cults only walk where churches fail to tread. They only grow in the soil that church fails to tend. They only succeed where churches never try. Now what is a cult ? How do you define it ? Well, think of,

(a) *THE MEANING OF THE WORD:*

What is a cult ? Well, if you talk to ten different cult experts, you may well be given ten different definitions. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines the word as “ *devotion to a particular person or thing as paid by a body of professed adherents*.” Walter Martin defined a cult this way, “ ***By cult we mean a group, religious in nature, which surrounds a leader or group of teachings which either denies or misinterprets biblical doctrine. Most cults have a single leader, or a succession of leaders, who claim to represent God’s voice on earth and who claim authority greater than that of the Bible. The cultic teaching claims to be in harmony with the Bible but denies one or more of the cardinal doctrines presented therein.***”

Matt Slick says, “ *The definition I use for “ non Christian cult,” or “ non Christian religion,” is a group that may or*

may not include the Bible in its sets of authoritative scriptures. If it does include the Bible, it distorts the true biblical doctrine that effect salvation sufficiently so as to void salvation. If it does not use the Bible, it is a non-Christian religion, and does not participate in the benefit of divine revelation.” If you want another definition here is one in two words. **A cult is counterfeit Christianity.** Now a cult is not just another religion like Buddhism, or Islam, or Hinduism. They do not pretend to worship the Christian God. They claim to serve other gods. But a cult claims to adhere to the Christian faith. It says it believes the Bible, but in reality a cult is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. A cult is counterfeit Christianity. (a)

(b) THEIR MULTIPLICATION IN THE WORLD:

Today there are over 3,000 different cults and cultic leaders in the U.S.A. and you would be wrong to assume that young people are the only ones attracted to the cults. In Britain many middle aged people have joined cults like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons and Scientology. The emergence of these cults has also coincided with the decline of church attendance and membership, especially in the case of young people. Now why are the cults growing so rapidly today ? Because of,

1. A Lack of AUTHORITY:

You see, folk are looking for someone to say what is right and what is wrong, this is right and this is wrong because God says so. The liberal says, “ *I’m not sure what God has said*, but the cult says, “ *we are sure come on over.*”

The liberal says, “ *sometimes the Bible is right, sometimes the Bible is wrong.*” The cult says, “ *Our Bible is always right. Come on over.*” Is this not what the world is looking for ? Someone who knows who he is, knows what he believes and knows where he is going. And if we don’t stand up and say “ *thus saith the Lord,*” you better believe the cult is. 1.

2. A Lack of ACTIVITY:

In the church. Do you recall what the Christ of the Candlesticks said to the church at Laodicea ? “ *So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*” (Rev 3:16) Is that not where we are today ? If people are saved, that’s fine, in people are not saved that’s fine. I am not bothered. ***How many of you have ever had a Mormon or a Jehovah’s Witness knock on your door ?*** Is it not an amazing thing that we sit at home when it comes to outreach, while people all around us are on their way to hell, and the Jehovah’s Witness will go to every door in our neighbour and he does not even believe in hell. I don’t whether Rome was burning while Nero fiddled, but I do know that hell is burning while the church is sleeping. You see, the cult has looked at the church, and then looked at the world and said if you’re not going to get them, we will. (1)

(2) EXPLORE THE CULTS

I want us to examine them a little more closely and see if there are marks, traits, characteristics that are common to

all. What makes a church or a group non-Christian ? How can you distinguish a cult from a Bible believing church ? Matt Slick founder of the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry and David Legge, of Preach the Word have given us some helpful guidelines in order to distinguish between a cult and a Christian church. I have tried to make these guidelines as simple as possible and so I want us to explore the cults in,

(a) TERMS OF BELIEF:

1. They claim to have a New Revelation from God:

Many cult leaders claim to have a direct pipeline to God. Mormon leader Brigham Young for example claimed, “ *I have had many revelations, I have seen and heard for myself, and know these things are true and nobody on earth can disprove them.* ” Journal of Discourses 16:46 According to the Mormons “ *new light,* ” has been revealed through Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and many of their “ *inspired writings.* ” In cults greater credence is given to “ *new revelations,* ” than past revelations such as those found in the Word of God. Indeed cults deny the sole authority of the Bible, the full deity of Jesus Christ, they devalue the work of the cross, and deny salvation by grace. But do you recall what Jude said ? The “ *faith has been once delivered,* ” we have in our Bible the full and final revelation of God’s truth.

2. They claim to be Exclusive:

Cults believe that they alone have the truth, that they are the only true church, and as far as the rest of us are concerned we are apostates and damned. Of course, this all means that if you leave the group you are endangering your soul. So the third thing is,

3. A Loss of Salvation:

People are urged to remain faithful to avoid being “ *disfellowshipped,* ” or disbarred from the group. Indeed many who have left the cults to become Christians have been disowned by their family. (a)

(b) TERMS OF BELONGING:

If you belonged to one of these cults what would you discover ? Two things.

1. Strong Leadership:

You see, unquestioning obedience is compulsory. As prophet or founder this leaders word is final. The late David Koresh of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas is a tragic example, as many members of the cult followed him to a fiery death in 1993.

2. Financial Emphasis:

Compulsory tithing is demanded within many cults, and even the transfer of property to the group. (a) (b)

(3) EXPOSE THE CULTS

(c) **TERMS OF BEHAVIOUR:**

1. Cults seek to be Isolationist:

Their objective is to lessen one's dependence on others, family, church, friends, so as to make them more dependent on the cult thereby gaining more control over the different aspect of a persons life. *For their goal is control their members physically, intellectually, financially, and emotionally.*

2. Cults Indoctrinate their Members:

Their beliefs and standards are continually reinforced and opposing views are ridiculed and often misrepresented. Some groups discourage their members from thinking independently. The “**thinking**,” as it were has already been done for them by the cult leadership, the proper response is merely to submit.

3. Cults Cultivate a Persecution Mentality:

Believing that they alone have the truth, they conclude that anyone who is not in their group must be against the truth and against them. Cult leaders make claims that any views opposing the cult's beliefs are a form of persecution. Now having to (1) and (2) I want us finally,

Look with me at (1 Jn 4:1-2) Now that word “*try*,” can be translated “*test*,” or “*prove*.” In Bible days the word was used to with reference to putting metals to the test to see if they were genuine. You and I are commanded in the Word of God to apply spiritual tests to the things we hear. Have you ever heard this statement ? “*It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere in believing it.*” The only thing wrong with that statement is, it is wrong. You can sincerely believe that a loving God would never allow anyone to go to hell, but if you die without Jesus Christ that is exactly where you will spend eternity. You see, the issue for us is not sincerity, the issue for us is truth. You might have a Mormon neighbour and he is a wonderful fellow. Devoted family man. Good citizen, excellent worker. He will be sincere in his faith. The only problem is he will be sincerely wrong. You say, how can I expose the cults ? Well, here are three tests.

(a) What do they say about THE SCRIPTURES ?

What is the source of their authority ? Ask them, “*On what do you base your teaching ?*” *How do you authenticate your doctrine ? What is the source of their authority ?* If the source of their authority is anything other than or in addition to the Bible, you are dealing with a cult. Don't forget what John says, “*If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto them the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*”

(Rev 22:18-19) Even though many of these groups claim to be biblical they elevate some other written material to the same level or to a higher level than the Bible. You see, in order to justify their particular doctrines they have to correct Scripture, reinterpret Scripture or add another source of authority to Scripture. Guess who wins if there is a contradiction between the Bible and their so called inspired book ?

Anthony Hoekema is a cult expert and he says when cults raise their own books to the level of Scripture “ *God is no longer allowed to speak as He does in the Bible. He may now speak only as the sect deems proper. Thus the Word of God is brought under the yoke of man.*” So here is the first question you need to ask, “ *what do you say about the Scripture ? What is your source of authority ?*”

(b) What do they say about THE SAVIOUR ?

Look at (1 Jn 4:2) Or we could translate it like this, “ *every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh is not of God.*” Now “ *Jesus,*” is the name of the Saviour’s humanity and “ *Christ,*” is the name title of His deity. Now do you see what John is saying ? He is saying that any teacher who does not confess the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ is to be identified among the antichrists. (2:18) My the crucial question is always this, “ *what think ye of Christ, whose son is He ?* (Matt 22:42) You see, what folk think about Jesus Christ is the touchstone of correctness and truthfulness in matters of faith. Ask them, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living

God ? But don’t stop there. Ask them do you believe that the Lord Jesus is coequal and coeternal with the Father ? That He was not created by God rather He was a Creator with God and has always had His own independent eternal coexistence. Question them, for they at times may use the same words that we use but they don’t mean what we mean by it. (a) (b)

(c) WHAT DO THEY SAY ABOUT SALVATION ?

Is his message of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ ? You see, every cult preaches a gospel, but its not the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Listen again to Paul’s words, “ *But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed.*” (Gal 1:8) Now what is the New Testament gospel which Paul claimed to have preached ? Well, its found in (1 Cor 15:3-4) where Paul says, “ *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried, and that He rose the third day again according to the Scriptures.*” Ask them the question, is this the gospel that you are preaching ? Is there method of salvation the grace of God ? Do they believe in salvation by grace through faith with the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the only basis for the forgiveness of their sins ? Are they personally trusting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord ? Are they depending on any thing else to take them to heaven ?

One of the things that we are going to discover is that a cult by in large believes in salvation not by grace

through faith but a salvation by works through more works. For example the Mormons say “ *redemption from personal sins can only be obtained through obedience to the requirements of the Gospel (Mormon ceremonies) and a life of good works. He that receives the message (of the Book of Mormon) and endures to the end shall be saved, he that rejects it shall be damned.*”

(Pratts Works Paper 1) Thus the work of the Cross is nullified and salvation reduced to a system of good works plus a belief in the fraud of Joseph Smith. My the Bible says “ *For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.*” (Eph 2:8-9)

You see, the issue of this whole matter with the cults is not sincerity, it is truth. I like what one man said about truth. He said, “ **you can tamper with the truth, and you can tinker with the truth. You can redecorate it, and you can camouflage it. But you cannot change the truth.** Do you know what the Lord Jesus said ? “ *Thy Word is truth.*” (Jn 17:17) James Merritt says “ *The issue is not just who is right or just who is wrong. The issue who is telling the truth. When God gives this book, He gave us the standard of truth, He gave us the yardstick of truth, by which every other group, preacher, religion is to be measured.*” Now that’s what we want to do in this series of studies. We want to bring every group to the touchstone of truth and we let truth make the judgement.