

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

47. The History of Heresy Part 17

WOSM Thursday 01/10/08

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain persons" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 really were by studying the seven major groups of heresy. And we have already covered the Antinomians, the Judaizers, the Gnostics, and the Modalists. And today- I want to begin to go over one of the most interesting of all the heresies and one of the most important times of the Christian Church.

This time concerns the error of the Arians, and as this story unfolds, you will understand why this period of time was a watershed moment in Church History. Beside the false teachings of Pelagius in the fourth century, the Arian controversy was one of the most dramatic and important battles in all of Church history and were it not for the selfless and heroic efforts of one single Bishop- we would all be Jehovah's Witnesses today. I really think that this would make a fascinating movie.

The Arian heresy is a time when the Christian Church nearly capitulated totally to error. If the Christian Church then was as tolerant of Doctrinal error as it is today- Christianity would have died in the fourth century. There is no doubt about that. Today we have within the Church a terrible plague called, "tolerance". Today we view

Peace more important than Purity. We view Tolerance more valuable than Truth and we view being Agreeable more vital than we do being Aggressive for the Gospel. As I have stated before, there exists today a weird and strange “nobility” about being vague or confused about Objective, propositional Biblical Truth and there is a pseudo “humility,” that is really nothing more than disguised human arrogance, that teaches that whatever any old dog drags through the front door of the Church is to be accepted and welcomed with open arms. This attitude is foolish and dangerous to the success of the Gospel.

Beloved, make no mistake about this, we live in a day when there is an almost universal unwillingness to learn and to teach and to love and to proclaim Sound Biblical Doctrine. And these modern, spiritually liberal attitudes that permeate the modern Church make us sitting ducks for these ancient heresies to make a huge comeback in our day.

It is precisely because of our unwillingness to stand for Truth at any and all costs as to why we are seeing 1900 year old Gnostic teachings becoming popular all over again.

We must be constantly reminded that the most serious error is that error that masquerades as Truth. When the devil comes to you with horns and a pitchfork- he doesn't fool anyone, but when the devil himself comes as an angel of light- the devil deceives those who are weak in the Faith.

So those of you who believe that evil exists and those of who believe that the devil is alive and well and living on the earth must also believe that the devil is busy doing the very same things that he has *always* done- steal, kill, destroy, and deceive. This is why over and over and over again in the Scriptures we are told to watch; to be alert; to stand guard; to be aware; to not be ignorant; to stay on our toes; to pray with understanding; to be rooted and grounded in Love. Look at what Paul said in **2Timothy 3:10-17:**

10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,

11 persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

13 But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and

being deceived.

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now as I have told you before, my Christian brothers and sisters, the history of the Christian Church is a lot like our own American History. Our glorious freedom as Americans and our wondrous liberties and our unimaginable prosperity and safety and peace and security was not simply given to us. We didn't trip and fall into it. It wasn't handed to us. We had to fight to get it and we have had to fight to preserve it and defend it. Our freedom and liberty is bathed in the blood of millions who were willing to fight and were willing to die to preserve our way of life- precisely because evil people out there wanted to take it away from us.

So too, Church History is not a gentle history. Evil men- Jude calls them "ungodly persons" periodically creep into the Church for the sole purpose of tearing down that which Christ has built. And the Church has had only two choices- fight to defend the Gospel or allow it to be destroyed. To think any other way is naïve and childish.

The hatred that we see that some radical Muslims have against Christians and Jews is nothing compared to the hatred that the devil has against those Blood bought saints who dare to proclaim the Gospel and are not ashamed of what it is.

And you certainly don't have to believe me about this. I urge you to read Church History for yourself and see the great lengths that the Church went to- the battles that they fought- the agony that they experienced- the sacrifices they made- to make sure that what we have today is the very same Gospel that Jesus gave to the Apostles.

For those in the Church today to waltz through life with a cavalier attitude about the enormous sacrifice that thousands of righteous souls paid so that we could have things that we don't even value today is no

different than people who have been raised in a free country and in the lap of luxury and who don't appreciate it.

For anyone to suggest that we are to throw away 2,000 years of struggle and battle simply because to defend the faith today makes some people squirm under their collar is the height of arrogance and cowardice and I will have no part of it. We are not asked, dear friends- we are commanded in Scripture to defend the Faith and we are not doing a very good job of it of late. Beloved, we must realize that the devil is serious. He is going to hell and is going to burn in hell throughout all eternity and he is angry about that because he doesn't have much time left. So rather than grow apathetic on the very threshold of the coming of the Son of Man- we need to rise up and make our calling and our election sure and we need to proclaim loudly in this day of compromise the glorious Gospel that alone is the power of God unto salvation.

The Church wrestled with the Arian Controversy for several years. So let's examine this period of our Christian History so that we may get a proper grasp of the day in which we live today.

The Arian Error rose up from within the Church. It came because of quiet infiltration. Just like Jude said, real bad people crept into the Church and brought with them this heresy. This false doctrine took hold in the Church due to the personal charisma of a few false teachers during a climate of tolerance late in the third century. The Church had successfully battled against the Modalist heresy and frankly, they were just tired of fighting. The leaders of the Church had grown weary of well doing and they didn't have the stomach to engage another false teaching. So they tried to ignore it- hoping it would just go away- but instead it just got bigger.

Because of this climate of tolerance 1700 years ago- the Arian heresy kept growing in the Church until it actually became the dominate view before anyone ever rose up to denounced it. So the lesson here is simple and it is amazingly the very same logic that underlies our current War on Terror.

Because of the unbelievable devastation that weapons of mass destruction can wreck on our nation in a moment of time, we cannot afford to wait until we are attacked before we respond. We have to strike first. We have to go in while the danger is just beginning to bud and strike it down or else it will be too late.

The same is true with heresy. The Church in the fourth century waited until Arianism became the dominant view of the leaders of the Church before anyone rose up to denounce it. They simply didn't want to fight anymore so they let the false teaching grow. So we have to understand that not wanting to preserve the Truth; and having no heart to defend the Faith; and being unwilling to proclaim Sound Doctrine doesn't stop heresy from coming in and deceiving people. The only thing that tolerating false teaching does is make it much harder to defeat the error. As long as there are terrorists who are willing to die to destroy us- we will be at war against terrorism. It doesn't matter how much it costs or how long it takes. We must defend ourselves or we will perish.

And as long as there are evil ungodly men who desire to creep into the Church to destroy the Christian Faith; and deny the Deity of Christ; and try to change the Gospel- we will be at war over the Truth. And it doesn't matter how long it takes or what it costs. To not fight is to surrender to the devil.

By sharpening our spiritual discernment, we can understand that the popularity of a movement does not necessarily indicate God's blessings on it. The Arian Controversy proved that. In fact, the very opposite may well be true. The more popular a spiritual movement has become, the more we may need to carefully and thoroughly scrutinize it with Scripture- rather than just blindly follow it and agree with it.

Listen to me. No one who is worth their salt in God will ever mind anyone holding what they say or what they write or what they teach to the Berean test of Scripture. And anytime someone doesn't want what they say or what they write or what they teach to be analyzed and brought under accountability to the Bible- that person is dangerous and should be avoided. And any time that we as Christians are willing to simply accept what is taught or what is written or what is spoken blindly without using our God given Holy Ghost discernment and if we are unwilling to hold what is spoken, written or taught accountable to Scripture, because we couldn't be bothered or because it is just too much work- we are abdicating our responsibility as lively stones of the living Church of God and are in fact in rebellion to that which God requires of us as His people.

The very same thing that was true in the fourth century and the same thing that is true today was also true in the days of Noah. What

Noah did and what Noah preached was not popular at all in his day- but he was right as rain. The Bible says that Noah preached righteousness for 120 years; built a boat in the middle of the desert; and called the nation to repent because there was coming a flood like they had never seen. And they laughed him to scorn. They mocked him; called him unloving; called him intolerant; called him unchristian and called him a naïve fool. I can just hear them now. *“Why doesn’t Noah know anything? It has never rained, and it never will rain and who does this God think He is by telling us to repent and to serve Him. We want to do what is right in our own eyes and we will not go under the legalism and the restraints against our flesh like God and Noah say that we should. No sir, we have our rights, you know”.*

Yes they did, they had the right to die in the flood too- which they did. But we must remember that after 120 years of faithful labor, Noah only had eight people in his Church and they were his family- so I don’t know if that really counts- because back then the family really didn’t have a choice. Was Noah a failure? Was Noah out of the Will of God? Was Noah doing something wrong? No, he was not. Noah was absolutely faithful. The problem was not that Noah needed to adopt the latest gimmick of soul winning or the newest fad on Church Growth. Noah didn’t need to soften his message or to change what he was doing at all. God told him to do exactly what he was doing and God blessed him for being faithful- even when no one agreed with him.

Beloved, Jesus said that the last days would be as they were in the days of Noah and we are seeing that today. And if we are to successfully defend the Church against heresy, we must be willing to proclaim the Gospel rightly, fully and fearlessly, and we must be willing to stand against the tide of popular opinion and the unwillingness of many to not be ashamed of the Gospel.

I tell you that Arianism nearly took over the Christian Church in the fourth century, but through the tireless efforts of one single man- God rescued the Church from capitulating to the corruption of false teaching and God preserved His Church to be the pillar and ground of the Truth. So today you and I must gird up the loins of our minds and we must be willing to stand for Jesus in this present evil day and you and I must willing to earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Well, I’m out of time for today- but please

join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the **Epistle of Jude**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.