

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**

55. The History of Heresy Part 25

WOSM Tuesday 01/22/08

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 men" 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 we are continuing in our study of one of the most important times of the Christian Church- a time when the Church nearly lost its understanding of the Deity of Jesus Christ and when heresy nearly destroyed the Gospel. This is what the heresy of Arianism was all about.

Now I have been trying to show you over the last several broadcasts how that putting Sound Doctrine on the back burner got the Church in real hot water in the fourth century. The effort by the Church to try to escape their responsibility to guard the Truth resulted in the Arian heresy becoming so big that it nearly destroyed the Church.

The lesson here, if we will learn this lesson, is that when heresy enters into the Church- and periodically it will- we must deal with it Scripturally and head on or else it will grow to become a huge issue.

We must be real careful that we do not do great damage to the revealed Truth of God by minimizing or by marginalizing the exactness

of Scripture when it comes to Doctrine- especially about the Doctrines of Grace and of Jesus Christ and of the Sovereignty of God.

The Council of Nicaea met in the city of Nicaea on June 19, 325. 300 bishops from around the world gathered to hear and see and comprehend exactly what the Bible taught about the Deity of Christ.

Arius, the heretic was teaching that Christ was a created being and not God wrapped in human flesh. Arius said that Christ was neither Divine, nor was he truly human, but was a “mediator” between God and humans- something in between God and humans- a kind of demi-god, if you will. In fact, this is exactly how Arius spoke of Christ.

According to Arius, Christ was the firstborn of all creation- higher than any other angelic creature- God- like- but a creature made by the Creator nonetheless. This is precisely the very same Doctrine held today by modern day Jehovah’s Witnesses. In fact, because Arianism is the foundational Doctrine of the Jehovah’ Witness organization- they use the very same arguments that Arius did in the fourth century to justify why Christ is not Deity.

Like the Jehovah’s witnesses do today- Arius over emphasized those passages of Scripture that illustrate Christ’s humanity at the expense of those passages that illustrate Christ’s Divinity. Everything that Arius said about Christ’s humanity was true- he just didn’t bother to include the Scriptures that deal with Christ’s Divinity in his argument. So even though Arius was speaking partial truth- he was grossly incomplete and that incompleteness gave a false impression of Christ-and Arius knew that.

Beloved, the Bible clearly reveals to us that Christ was fully human. He lived; He breathed; He ate food: He got tired; He wept; He bled and He died. But the Bible is also very clearly reveals to us that at the same time that Christ was fully human- He was also fully Deity. Let’s look at **John 1:47-49**:

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

49 Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

Now I have no idea what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree but when Jesus told Nathaniel that He had seen him- Nathaniel knew that Jesus was God and Nathaniel gave Christ the adoration that is reserved only for God. Now this is very significant. If Christ was not God- Jesus would have been wrong to allow Nathaniel to worship Him. If Jesus was not God and was not entitled to worship- then Jesus would have been encouraging Nathaniel to commit idolatry by worshipping Him. But Jesus allowed Nathaniel to worship Him- Jesus received worship from Nathaniel precisely because Jesus knew that He as God and that it was proper for Nathaniel to worship Him.

Only God is entitled to worship. It is idolatry to worship anyone or anything except God; conversely- it is also wrong not to worship the one true living God. So by receiving worship from Nathaniel- Jesus is either a sinful and evil man or He is God- it has to be one or the other.

The Apostle John was faced with a similar circumstance as this in **The Revelation 22:8&9:**

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

9 But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

John was so overwhelmed by the Vision that God had given him that he was about to bow down and worship the man who stood by him. But because worship is reserved only for God- the man stopped John and told him to worship God only.

And finally when Jesus had washed his disciples' feet He told them clearly that He was God in **John 13:12-14:**

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?

13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am.

14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Again, if Christ were but a mere man or a even a prophet or a

teacher- He would have been sinning by encouraging or by not stopping those who were worshipping Him. But if Christ was fully God- then it is proper and correct to worship Him.

We must understand, brothers and sisters, the reason that the Church developed Doctrine was to combat false teaching. When you do not know or have not been taught about Jesus or Grace or God the Father correctly- then you will fall into heresy. That is because we are all fallen human beings. You see, we do not have to be taught how to be wrong- we automatically default to being wrong. But we do have to be taught how to be right- and so if we are to have a right view of Jesus or a right view of Grace or a right view of God the Father- we must be taught.

Because heresy was trying to overrun the Church, the Church had to develop a systematic and Biblical response. That response is called Doctrine. So if Doctrine is the medicine to ward off the disease of heresy- then the absence of Sound, Biblical Doctrine in both the individual believer's life and the Church in general is an invitation for the plague of heresy to enter in.

As I have told you many times, the Bible was not written in subject order. The Scriptures about the Deity of Jesus Christ are not just located in one place. It takes time to carefully and completely search the Scriptures and extract accurately all of those passages that deal with both the Deity and the humanity of Christ and put them together and hash them over and struggle with them and wrestle with them in order to come to a clear and accurate understanding of the most unique Person who ever lived.

I realize that this takes time. I realize that this is not easy. But God said that this is what we are supposed to do. And if we belong to Him, who are we to tell God that we don't have time or that we don't place as high a value on the things that He values? God never intended Bible Study to be easy or to be done in haste. But without studying the Bible- how do we know Truth; how do we learn Doctrine; and how do we get an accurate and full vision of Who Jesus is?

God made this thing so that it will occupy our time. I really believe this. It is far easier to just sit home and watch the game. But what about the fact that God said to study His Word? What about the craving that all saved people have to know and to learn about God? What do we do about the Bible? If God didn't want us to read it and

study it and learn it and know it and love it and live it- then why did He give it to us- to sit on the coffee table and gather dust?

Beloved, what else on earth is more important to know beside the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of the living God- the various characters of “All My Children” or the latest episode of “American Idol” or the juicy novel we just bought or the latest murder mystery or planting petunias in our garden?

Look, we’re not dumb. Do we really think that God went to such great lengths to give us the Bible and allow men to literally die to give us the Bible in English so that we wouldn’t study and know it?

I guess it’s just American nature to want to try to stream line or find a short cut or try to simplify the study of God’s Word, but you know- it just won’t work that way. God desires for each one of us to set aside dedicated, consecrated and consistent times of in depth,; line upon line and precept upon precept study of the Bible and we are going to be hard pressed to explain to God why we didn’t see any purpose in it or that we didn’t have the time.

The Church in the fourth century didn’t have any formal written doctrine beside the Bible. The Church didn’t have access to the tools that we have today like Commentaries and Concordances and Dictionaries and historical books. No, just buying one book would take a year’s wages, so most people- even in the Church didn’t even own a Bible. There were no libraries,; no Christian book stores; no internet; no computers; and no way for the average Christian to know and understand deep theological issues.

So I can understand why the Church was fought so hard in the fourth century. But what is much harder to grasp is why we are so fought today- because we have all those tools available to us and most people today don’t know as much about Doctrine as they did in the fourth century. The only possible excuse we have today for not knowing this stuff is that we just simply don’t care. And that is a sin.

So, the Church had to convene a council to decide this issue and they issued a document to summarize all the long and detailed discussions of what had gone on. That document was condensed down into what is called a Creed. A Creed is a summary of a Confession and a Confession is the systematic doctrinal statement of the Church. So as the Church hammered out a Doctrinal statement- they summarized the Confession by producing a Creed.

In the middle of this particular Creed was the part that dealt with the Deity of Jesus Christ. Here is what it says:

And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God,
Light of Light,
Very God of very God;
Begotten, not made,
Being of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made.
Who, for us men for our salvation,
Came down from heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
And was made man;
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried;
And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
And ascended into heaven,
And sits on the right hand of the Father;
And He shall come again, with glory,
To judge the quick and the dead;
Whose kingdom shall have no end.

This Creed became known as the Nicene Creed and is still today a very useful and productive tool of the believer to use as a summary about the dual nature of Jesus Christ. It uses the Greek word, homoousia when it says that Jesus was of one or the same substance with the father- affirming what the Bible says about Jesus.

I tell you that we need to thank God that men like Alexander and Athanasius were willing to stand tall for the Word of God in the fourth century. Had they not refused to compromise of what the Bible teaches about Christ- we would all be Jehovah's Witnesses today. But they did stand up and they were willing to be reviled and ridiculed for being faithful and they were willing to fight so that they Church could maintain Sound Doctrine. Truly these men took it to heart when Jude told us all to earnestly contended 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.