

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor
Forgotten Books Series

LOOK OUT FOR THE LIARS

Jude

April 30, 2023

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This is our third sermon in the Forgotten Books series. We are working through some of the shorter and less studied books of the New Testament. We have studied Titus and talked about living what we believe. Last week, we read through Philemon and learned that God calls us to extravagant love. This week, we are going to read Jude. In today's sermon, we will address six questions to determine whether a religious teacher is telling the truth and what to do if he or she is not. The questions are:

- What are they saying?
- What authority do they use?
- How do they live?
- What are their motives?
- What do they leave behind them?
- What do you do when you recognize a liar?

1-WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:1-4

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.

EXPLANATION: Although there are many Judes or similar names in church history, tradition holds that this Jude was one of Jesus’s brothers. We do not know the specific church that he was writing to, but since Jude references James, it may be that the letter was written to the Church of Jerusalem, which James led after Peter.

Jude jumps right to the point, addressing a matter of heresy that had slipped into the church. The people that he was referring to were known as Gnostics. Gnosticism was the belief that the human spirit is essentially good, but that the flesh is evil. People who followed this train of thought generally fell into one of two camps. The first group believed that in order to keep the body holy, they had to inflict extreme abuse on themselves. The other group believed that it was better to pacify the body by giving into sinful appetites. They argued that because the flesh was evil, it did not matter what a person did or did not do with their bodies. This second group was also known as antinomians or libertines. Jude refuted the libertine philosophy when he wrote, *“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.”* Basically, these false teachers were telling people that it was OK to practice immorality because it gave Jesus more opportunity to demonstrate grace.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend was a member of a conservative Baptist church that invited a visiting pastor for revival. During one of the sermons, the visiting evangelist said rather emphatically, “God cannot forget your sins.” The statement did not sit well with my friend. She was certain that God does forget our sins. The pastor continued preaching and stated again, “God cannot forget your sins. He is God. He does not forget anything.” My friend admitted that from that point forward, she could not concentrate on anything else the preacher said because she was consumed with the falsehood of this one statement. When she got home from church that evening, she contacted her father-in-law, who was a missionary and pastor, and he sent her a list of verses that she keeps in her Bible to this day. Among them was Isaiah 43:25 which states, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

APPLICATION: I do not know why that pastor preached what he did, but the story is a good illustration of the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living inside us, and the Holy Spirit helps teach and guide us into truth. Whenever you are listening to or reading the words of a spiritual teacher, you should pay attention to the Holy Spirit's promptings. 1 John 4:1 says, *"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."* In the same way that God convicts believers when they do wrong, He will convict believers when they hear a falsehood being preached as truth. Jude recognized the falsehood that was being perpetuated by the Gnostic libertines. If you seek truth, God will help you to recognize falsehoods as well. The first key to determining whether someone is teaching truth or heresy is to ask yourself, "What are they saying?"

2-WHAT AUTHORITY DO THEY USE?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:5-8

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.

EXPLANATION: Anyone can claim to speak on behalf of God. Throughout history, many people have done so. Not all of them were speaking under his authority. Jude gave three specific examples that might represent three groups of people. The first were the Israelites who were freed from slavery. They were part of God's chosen people, but some of them eventually disobeyed. They got off track and suffered the loss of the Promised Land as a result. The second group were the angels, who were created and were, by their very nature, to be servants of God. Yet, some of them chose to follow after Satan. The third group were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who lived in outright immorality and perversion. All three cases were examples of people who polluted their own bodies, rejected authority, and were disrespectful of Heavenly beings and things.

But think about it. Not all of those groups would have looked evil to us. The Israelites who chose to disobey and reject God’s promises looked just like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb who believed God. I doubt that the angels who fell away were physically very different from Michael and Gabriel and those who submitted to the Lord. Outwardly, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah probably did not sound or look very different from surrounding cities that were not steeped in evil. Sometimes, we cannot identify evil by outward appearances. In addition, sometimes false teachers preach messages that sound good. So, in addition to following the Holy Spirit’s prompting, we can recognize the lies by asking ourselves what authority the speakers are using.

APPLICATION: 1 Peter 1:20-21 says, “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things.*”²¹ *For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” Anyone who claims to be a Christian teacher should be preaching under the authority of God and his word. If someone presents a message that is in opposition to God’s word, then that person is a false teacher. The libertine teachers were presenting new ideas into the body of Christ, and verse 8 tells us that they were doing so on the basis of their dreams. They told people that they received divine revelation, but what they said was not in compliance with the teachings of the law (Old Testament) or the teachings of Jesus (New Testament). When trying to discern truth, ask yourself:

- What are they saying?
- What authority do they use?

3-HOW DO THEY LIVE?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:9-15

*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 ones¹⁵ 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.”

EXPLANATION: Jude gives a variety of examples to demonstrate the way false teachers often live. Look at some of the words and phrases.

- They slander what they do not understand.
- They act instinctually and irrationally.
- They rush for profit.
- The reference to Korah’s rebellion refers to a story from Numbers 16 where Korah and others rose up in defiance of Moses and the authority given to him by God. It indicates a disrespectful and rebellious attitude towards God’s leaders.
- They are self-centered, full of hot air.
- Their lives do not produce kingdom fruit.
- Their acts are unabashedly shameful.
- They are ungodly and defiant.

APPLICATION: The world likes to quote Matthew 7:1 which says, “*Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*” But it’s important that we, as Christians, remember Matthew 7:15-20. “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*” If you want to know whether a teacher is speaking truth, ask yourself:

- What are they saying?
- What authority do they use?
- How do they live?

4-WHAT ARE THEIR MOTIVES?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:16

These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

APPLICATION: Liars usually have one primary motive—to make themselves look better. As Christians, our motive should be to bring glory to God. Psalm 115:1 says, “*Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.*” If someone always seems to be garnering attention for themselves or seeking their own advancement, beware. God does not share his glory.

- What are they saying?
- What authority do they use?
- How do they live?
- What are their motives?

5- WHAT DO THEY LEAVE BEHIND THEM?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:17-19

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.

ILLUSTRATION: A character in a novel once said, “I don’t go looking for trouble. Trouble usually finds me.” While that story was fictitious, I am sure you know people who could say the same thing.

APPLICATION: False teachers often leave a wake of destruction behind them. Jude said that they are divisive. They stir up conflict wherever they go. Jesus called

his followers to be of the same mind and spirit. In Ephesians 4:3, we read that Christians are to “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*” If you want to know if someone is a truth teller, ask:

- What are they saying?
- What authority do they use?
- How do they live?
- What are their motives?
- What do they leave behind them?

6-WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE A LIAR?

SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:20-25

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.

EXPLANATION: The first defense against liars is to know the truth. Build your faith by knowing God’s Word and by praying that the Holy Spirit would help you discern truth from falsehood. When you discern that someone is teaching falsehood, your best course of action is to remove yourself from under that person’s teaching. However, Jude also gives specific instruction about what you should do in relation to others. He addresses three groups of people.

The Doubters—This is referring to those who may fall prey to the lies, the people who may be doubting God’s Word and questioning whether this new message is better. Jude says to be merciful to them. How is Jude being merciful? He is telling the church the truth. He is not doing it in a harsh or critical way, but he is exposing the lies and the liars for what they are. He is being merciful because he is warning them.

The Followers—These people have gone beyond the point of questioning. They are whole-heartedly following false teachings. Jude says to snatch them from the fire. They are in great danger. They are being led astray. There is a greater sense of urgency with these people. As a fellow brother or sister in Christ, you should go to them and explain what is happening, using the Bible as your guide, and pray that they listen.

The Promoters—This group is past the point of being influenced and have become influencers. They are actively promoting the false teachings. Jude says to show these people mercy with fear. The phrase “clothing stained by corrupted flesh” likely refers to sin. In other words, you should not hate them, but you hate the sin, and you should be cautious. They are not likely to listen to truth and are likely to try to persuade you to change your mind. Pray for them, but be wary of falling into their trap.

CONCLUSION: Jude is a tiny book with a powerful message. Our world is full of liars, but we have two mighty weapons to help defend us—God’s word and the Holy Spirit. By knowing the Word and trusting the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we can steer clear of the lies and follow the truth.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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