The Lighthouse
NEW TESTAMENT NOTES

Jude

Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

Introduction to the Letter from Jude

Theme: Contending for the Faith against Apostates and their influence within the congregations of Christ. Jude gives great attention to detail concerning the character of these apostates and their final end.

Date: No date is given. We can only guess at an approximate date based upon the internal characteristics of the letter. He does not speak of James as dead or someone in the past, but someone presently known. The content of the letter harmonizes with the very same conditions described in Second Peter chapter two and he seems to be directly referring to 2 Peter 3:3-8 in verses 17-18. In fact, the similarity of language and examples are strikingly the same. As in the case of Second Peter there is no mention of the fall of Jerusalem or the destruction of the temple. With the exception of the later letters of the apostle John, the apostolic written ministry had been concluded, Peter and Paul were in prison but not dead yet, James was still the Pastor at the church in Jerusalem and the fall of Jerusalem had not yet taken place. Hence, the letter should be dated late in winter of 67 A.D.

Writer: The writer identifies himself by claiming he is the brother of James. He speaks of James as though he is so well known that it is unnecessary to distinguish him from any other James. The only James that takes a prominent position over an extended period of time in the book of Acts is James the Just or the half brother of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12; Acts 15-21). James is still the chief pastor of the church at Jerusalem at the close of the third missionary journey of Paul (Acts 21:12) and most likely during both the first and second imprisonment of Paul when this letter was written. So Jude is another half-brother of Jesus Christ or son of Joseph and Mary.

Audience: He addresses those who are familiar with the Old Testament, and thus presumably he is addressing Hebrew Christians as does Peter, James and John.

Outline:

A. **The Contenders of the Faith – vv. 1-3**

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B. **The Challengers to the Faith – vv. 4-19**

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The Letter From Jude

The Contenders of the Faith – vv. 1-3

J ude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified [set apart] by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: [1]

2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation,[2] it was needful[3] for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith[4] which was once delivered[5] unto the saints.

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[1] "**To them that are sanctified…preserved…..called**" – He is giving three descriptions of their initial salvation by the Father. He uses perfect tense verbs showing these are completed action that continue completed. They were "set apart" by divine election before the world began by the Father (Eph. 1:4). That elective choice by the Father was "in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:4) and they were effactually called in time to the experience of that elective state through the "mercy….peace and love" poured out upon them.

[2] "**The common salvation**" – It was the "common" salvation in the sense that it characterized every New Testament congregation existent in the first century (Heb. 2:1-4) and that it had one "common" source with Jesus Christ in the Great Commission(Mt. 28:19-20) and was delivered by one "common" source - the apostles (Acts 2:41-42; 16:4-5). It was "salvation" in its broadest sense (Rom. 8:28-33) encompassing the past, present and future aspects of salvation or "the faith" or body of doctrine and practice conveyed to the apostles by the Lord Jesus Christ – "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

[3] "**Needful**" – Teaching sound doctrine is necessary. Today many have turned the congregational service into an evangelistic service. We are to "go" to the lost, but the public worship service is designed to equip the saints by "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In nearly every epistle, doctrine precedes practical application. Doctrine is nothing more than teaching the word of God.

[4] "**Earnestly contend for the faith**" – The words "earnestly contend" translate a Greek term that describes a person in a wrestling match who is struggling with all his might to keep from being pinned by his opponent, but is seeking to pin the opponent. Paul said at the end of his life "I have kept the faith" and through his epistles we see the struggle he endured in defending the faith once delivered. His enemies were many, the opposition was strong. See article in Green box on next page.

[5] "**Once delivered to the saints**" The Aorist tense demonstrates that Jude was specifically speaking of the apostolic doctrine which had already been delivered orally to the congregations and which was now being delivered and further defended and expanded in writing by inspiration of God through the prophets, of which Jude was one.

The Faith

When Jude penned these words, "*the faith*" had already been "delivered" (Aorist tense verb), but the scriptural canon was not yet completed. Hence, the scriptures contain "*the faith*" but include much more than "*the faith*." That is, the scriptures contain much more than mere essentials of orthodoxy. Within the scriptures there is a **skeleton** of absolutes. The completion of the canon of Scripture provides the full layers of muscle, skin, etc. on that **skeleton**. Those core beliefs are called "the faith" by Jude.

Moreover, the aorist tense verb translated "*delivered*" refers to a completed action which most believe refers to the giving of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. The Greek term translated "*once*" (hapaz) is elsewhere translated "*once for all*" (Heb. 10:10), further emphasizing it is a final, and completed action.

The words "*earnestly contend for*" represent a Greek term [*epagononizomai*] from where we get our English word "*agonize*," and literally means to "*agonize upon*." Furthermore, this term has the wrestling event in the Greek Olympics for its background. If you can imagine that you are in a wrestling match, and realize the energy, and ability required to pin, and subdue your opponent, then you have an idea what Jude believes will be required to defend the faith.

Finally, Jude is not merely making a *suggestion* that his readers "earnestly contend" nor is he offering it as a *possible option*. This is a *command*. He is urging them in the strongest terms to take on this responsibility.

The book of Jude was written to warn the early Christians of a coming Great Apostasy and how to identify apostate characteristics and characters.

The Challengers to the Faith – vv. 4-19

4   For there are certain men crept in unawares,[6] who were before of old ordained[7] to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God[8] into lasciviousness[9], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

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[6] "**Crept in unawares**" – He is speaking of the membership in the congregations of Christ as they cannot creep in unaware within the spiritual kingdom of God, but must be born of the Spirit to enter the kingdom. They are those who may sincerely profess Christ as characterized by the three kinds of soils in the parable of the sower and the four soils. They may rationally understand and confess the truth but it is not the rational embrace of truth that saves, but rather it is the transforming power of grace that saves. These are the "tares" planted by Satan and ordained by God for the ultimate good of the congregation (1 Cor. 11:18; Jn. 6:64).

[7] "**Before of old ordained**" – God purposely places a Judas within the congregation of Christ (Jn. 6:64, 70; 17:6) for the ultimate good of his churches (1 Cor. 11:18). He is perfectly just to use the non-elect to fulfill His eternal purposes and for the ultimate good of His churches. Remember, election is always unto salvation (2 Thes. 2:13) and never unto damnation. Election presupposes the fall has already occurred and it is from the fallen lump of mankind that God chooses to have mercy upon some. Mercy presupposes a just state of condemnation. He is therefore, perfectly just to allow some already fallen god haters to freely choose to continue in their rebellion while merciful in choosing others to be objects of grace. Therefore, in his eternal purpose for his elect, he uses the willful reprobates for the ultimate good of his people, in spite of their rebellion and hatred for God and His people (Acts 2:22; Psa. 86:10).

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not **[1Cor. 10:5-12]**.

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,[10] he hath reserved[11] in everlasting chains under darkness[12] unto the judgment[13] of the great day.[14]

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[8] "**The grace of our God**" – All false teachers and false religions oppose the doctrine of grace, but not all oppose it in the same manner. A person or group of persons may rationally grasp the doctrine of grace, but it is not the rational grasp of grace that saves, but it is the transforming power of grace that saves. For example there is an online website called "Gay Christians" where the doctrine of grace is spelled out perfectly showing they have a rational understanding of justification by grace without works, but they have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness by perverted sexual passion that dominates and characterizes them. Therefore, the truth they have mentally grasped is turned into lasciviousness by their sexual perverted dominating passion. True grace transforms an "ungodly" person into a person characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and submission to the Word of God as their final authority. The first addition to true faith is "virtue" (2 Pet. 1:5).

[9] "**Lasciviousness**" – The Greek term translated "lasciviousness" is *aselegia*. William Barclay's New Testament Words provides an in depth study of the meaning of this term. He says, "...the man in whose soul *aselgeia* dwells is so much in the grip of sin, so much under its domination, that he does not care what people say or think so long as he can gratify his evil desires. He is a man who is lost to shame.....He is guilty of any outrageous conduct, and care for nothing except to satisfy his desires." This can be sin of immorality or it can be doctrinal sin as in "the way" of Cain or after "the error" of Balaam or in "the gainsaying" of Korah (v. 11). It is any sin that so completely dominates and characterizes that person.

[10] "**Habitation**" – He is referring to their original station or realm in which they were created to dwell – heaven! Satan and a third of the angels rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven into the kingdom of darkness.

[11] "**Reserved**" – They are confined to the realm of darkness. The kingdom of Satan is also called the kingdom of "darkness." This present world is the realm of fallen angels and Satan. They are contained here "reserved" for final judgment. They are not now presently in hell or Gehenna, but reserved here in the service of Satan in this world for that ultimate end.

[12] "**Darkness**" – They have been cast out of heaven. Outside of heaven is the created universe that is dominated by the dominion of sin and is now the kingdom of darkness. All of creation groaneth for redemption and freedom from the kingdom of darkness (Rom. 8:22-25). Satan is the god of this world and the angels that followed him are confined to this darkened realm of existence.

[13] "**Judgment**" – Paul tells the Corinthians that they will judge angels – the fallen angels – who were cast out of heaven and confined to the realm of darkness of this world. Therefore, the saints will be judges along with Christ at the Great White Seat judgment (Rev. 20:12-20).

[14] "**The great day**" – This refers to the Great White Seat Judgment at the end of the millennial reign in Revelation 20:12-15. This is not a day of judgment for the elect (Jn. 5:24) but a day the elect judge the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Genesis 6:1-5 and Jude

Many scholars believe that Jude is referring to angels having physical sex with the daughters of men in Genesis 6:1-5 which produced "giants" within the human race – half angel and half human. We reject this theory. Jesus said angels do not marry or are given in marriage, and the term marriage refers to the sexual act of union. Second, angels are "spirits' without reproductive capabilities or the physical organs and human reproductive system necessary to produce human seed. We believe that Moses is referring to the intermarriage between the line of Cain with the line of Seth or sons of God as they identified themselves (Gen. 4:26). God's judgment was against mankind (Gen. 6:5) rather than angels. These "giants" were not restricted to the pre-flood earth but also existed afterwards (Gen. 6:4 "and also after"). They were not necessarily "giants" in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense of opposition against God (Gen. 6:5). The greatest enemies of God are not the heathen, but those exposed to the truth and turn against it. Being unequally yoked with unbelievers will produce a generation of a mixed breed of humans opposed to God. Such men are "mighty" against God and men of that reputation ("renown"). Jude's reference to angels simply demonstrates where rebellion against God first began in the heavens. The mention of Sodom and Gomorrah is to simply illustrate the coming judgment against the ungodly and the nature of their sins. The chains of darkness refer to the realm where they are cast down from heaven. This present universe is under the dominion of sin and darkness and Satan is the god of this present world.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah,[15] and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication,[16] and going after strange flesh,[17] are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers[18] defile [pollute, contaminate] the flesh, despise [loath] dominion [final authority], and speak evil of dignities [positions of authority].

9 Yet Michael the archangel,[19] when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.[20]

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[15] "**Even as Sodom and Gomorrah**" – The words "even as" demonstrate that Sodom and Gomorrah are introduced as examples of the coming judgment upon fallen angels and the wicked. Fire and brimstone rained down upon these cities and thus are fitting types of the eternal penalty in the Lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). It is "as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah" that will characterize the final generation before the coming of the Lord (Lk. 17:29-30).

[16] "**Fornication**" – *pornia* or the general term for all illicit sex that violates God's restriction for sex within the boundaries of the marriage covenant. All of those sexual perversions described in Leviticus 18 are examples of *pornia* including adultery which also violates the restriction of sex within the bonds of marriage.

[17] "**Strange flesh**" – The term "strange" translates the Greek word *heteros* which means a different kind of flesh. Angels are not composed of material flesh. However, in addition to homosexuality there was no doubt bestiality present or sexual perversion between humans and beasts which is the lowest sexual digression possible.

[18] "**Filthy dreamers**" – These words translate one Greek term *enupniazomai* that suggests spiritual forces at work stirring up evil imaginations as an ongoing action.

[19] "**Michael the archangel**" – The term "archangel" means "chief angel." Apparently there is more than one chief angel as Daniel says that Michael is but just "one of the princes" (Daniel 10:13). The Jewish author of the book of

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10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute [unreasonable] beasts [animalistic], in those things they corrupt themselves.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain,[21] and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

12 These are spots [influence for evil] in your feasts of charity,[22] when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch[23] also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners[24] have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling [extravagant, audacious] words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage [profit].

Tobit claims there are seven archangels and Jewish writings identify four by name, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. Lucifer seems to be the chief among these archangels before his fall.

[20] "**The Lord rebuke thee**" – If archangels do not assert their own authority in confronting Satan, how much more should believers refrain from presumptuously saying "I rebuke you" when confronting demons and demonic influences? Even the unique apostolic authority to rebuke demons was administered in the name of Christ rather than in their own person. Those who boast in rebuking Satan today are to be regarded as among those Jude describes as presumptuous false prophets.

[21] "**The way of Cain**" –The attack upon the faith once delivered is characterized by three different men. Cain introduced a direct attack upon the faith by departing from the time, place and symbol of ordained public worship. He introduces the works of his own hands in the place of the sacrificial lamb, thus "another gospel". He departed from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 4:16) or the place of the altar or the designated place of worship (the house of God). He departed from the appointed time for public worship ("at the end of days" – the Sabbath day – Gen. 4:1). Balaam subverted the prophetic Word of God through instructing Balaak to introduce the seductive aspects of false worship in order to produce disobedience among the children of God (1 Jn. 4:1). Korah introduced internal attack upon the ordained leadership (Acts 20:29-30).

[22] "**Feasts of charity**" – It seems that the Lord's churches when partaking of the Lord's Supper would enter into a fellowship meal prior to observing the Lord's Supper. These false prophets and false professors were "spots" or evil influences among them. He provides several metaphors to describe them (1) waterless clouds; (2) Dead fruitless uprooted trees; (3) Raging restless waves; and (4) wandering stars.

[23] "**Enoch…the seventh from Adam**" – There exists an ancient book among the Jewish literature called the book of Enoch. The book does contain this statement. However, neither the Jews nor early Christians accepted it as a canonical book.

[24] "**Ungodly sinners**" – They are without God and unlike God or "ungodly." These are the "tares" of Matthew 13. They are false professors, false prophets and false teachers.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ[25]

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time **[2Pet. 3:3]**, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves **[form divisive parties]**, sensual **[governed by carnal appetite and passion]**, having not the Spirit **[Rom. 8:9]**.

The Commitments to the Faith – vv. 20-25

20 But ye, beloved, building up[26] yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,[27]

21 Keep **[to maintain the state in which one is]** yourselves in the love of God,[28] looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion **[pity or mercy]**, making a difference[29] **[distinction from others]**:

23 And others save **[rescue]** with fear **[alarm]**, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh **[Zech. 3:2-4]**.

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,[30] and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

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[25] "**Remember the words…of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ**" – Jude seems to be directly referring to the last writings of Paul (2 Tim. 3:1-11) and Peter (2 Pet. 3:1-8). This leads us to think that Jude wrote after these letters had been written by Peter and Paul from Rome, but before the fall of Jerusalem.

[26] "**Building up yourselves**" –

[27] "**Praying in the Holy Ghost**" – To sing, pray, preach, prophesy or walk "in" the Spirit simply means that such things are done under the control, influence and direction of the Spirit and refers to being "filled" by the Spirit. The contrast is to sing, preach, prophesy or walk "after the flesh." Hence, everything you do is either done according to the flesh or according to the Spirit.

[28] "**Keep yourself in the love of God**" – The objective genitive can mean either (1) the love God has for us or (2) the love we have for God. It is the latter not the former that is in view. God's love for us is based upon grace not works and is eternal. However, our love for God is defined by obedience (1 Jn. 5:3; Jn. 15:9).

[29] "**Making a difference**" - In contrast to false prophets and false professors, there are saved people who are weak in faith and their lives are being defiled by sin. We are to redeem our time (Eph. 5:16) by living in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). When we "walk" after the flesh, that time or portion of our daily life is destroyed or lost forever for the glory of God. We are to make a distinction between weak Christians caught in the snares of Satan and the lost. These are living in "fire" or judgment/condemnation of their daily life. We are to pull them out while hating those things that are defiling their life. The metaphor of a spotted garment may be a reference to the clothing of Leper's that would ceremonially defile anyone who touched them (Lev. 15:4, 17).

[30] "**Keep us from falling**" – In verses 20-23 we have our responsibility (Philip. 2:12), while in verses 24-25 define the ability is found in God's power and not in us (Philip. 2:13 in contrast to Rom. 7:18).

JUDGMENT DAY!

Movies and cultic Christian denominations depict final judgment as determining final destinations according to your works. That is false. Judgment determines only your rewards in heaven or in hell. Here are four reasons why judgment day does not determine final destinations.

1. Final destinations are determined at the point of your faith in the gospel: Justification was a completed action (aorist tense) at faith for Abraham (Rom. 4:11). Our justification at faith is a completed action (Aorist tense - Rom. 5:1) and our standing is a perfected action (Perfect tense - Rom. 5:2). Eternal life is a present tense possession at faith (Jn.5:24) with no future tense judgment (Jn. 5:24) but a perfected state of salvation at faith (Perfect tense - Jn. 5:24). Unbelievers are already under condemnation (Jn. 3:17-18) and under the wrath of God (Jn. 3:36).

2. Final destinations are determined prior to physical death: At death saints go to heaven to be with Christ (double aorist infinitive - 2 Cor. 5:8). The saints were in heaven because at his return he brings them "with him" to be raised first (1 Thes. 4:14).

3. Final destinations are determined prior to the resurrection: The order in which the saved and lost are resurrected reveals it has already been determined (first versus second resurrection - Rev. 20:5-7). The type of body they are raised with reveals it has already been determined (glorified, incorruptible, spiritual - 1 Cor. 15:40-57) versus a body subject to pain and misery. The identification of the resurrection as the resurrection of the just versus the unjust reveals it has already been determined.

4. God only justifies the "ungodly" (Rom. 4:5) without works, but the theory of final justification by works demands justification is only of the godly.

Judgment day for the saints and for the wicked only determine REWARDS in heaven or in hell but not our destination. The fearful thing about the judgment of saints is that we will be in our glorified perfect state which makes us see sin like God see's it and all our secret sins will be revealed. Our sense of shame will be at its greatest sensitivity and our sense of failing to please Christ and the sense of his displeasure toward our works will be heightened. That is why tears will be wiped away (Rev. 21:4). It is the FEAR OF FAILING TO HONOR CHRIST that will grip our souls as we stand before him and all our secrets will be revealed before all of heaven.

  The Great White Seat Judgment in Revelation 20:12-15 is the judgment of the lost only by Christ and the elect (1 Cor. 6:2-3). The elect are not subject to this judgment (Jn. 5:24).

What is "The Faith"?

In any study, or discussion, it is of utmost importance to first define the terminology being used. Productive communication depends on all parties in a discussion, understanding and defining the same terms, the same way.

One of the primary problems of religious confusion is that the same Biblical terms are used within the circle of Christendom, but with radically different meanings.

The Bible uses the term "*faith*" in four basic ways:

1. The most common use of "*faith*" is the idea of commitment of *trust* or *belief* in something (idea, promise, and truth) and/or in someone.

For example, when faith is placed in a wrong or distorted gospel, it is called a "*vain*" faith (1 Cor. 15:10)

When saving faith is professed, but exists without any evidence or fruit of regenerative life ("*good works*" - Eph. 2:10) then it is called "*dead*" faith (James 2:14-17).

Therefore, faith in the true gospel, in connection with a true conversion experience to the gospel, would be recognized as *saving* faith.

2. Another basic use of "*faith*" in the New Testament refers to the fruit of "faith" accompanied by other fruit of the Spirit   manifested in the Christian's life. This "faith" may be in regard to a number of things (specific Bible promises, areas of manifest trust; our general walk "*by faith*"; etc.). Also, it may refer to a special measure of faith (Rom. 12:3) in regard to a spiritual gift.

3. Another Biblical use of "*faith*" is when it is used with the definite article "*the*", and thus, "*the faith.*" The definite article specifies that this faith is a specific kind or quality of faith. Obivously, when there is more than one kind of faith used in Scripture, the specific kind being communicated in the context must be separated from other types. The immediate context is always necessary to define what kind of faith is being referred to.

For example, in salvation contexts it refers to the true state of salvation which was entered by faith. For instance, the Apostle tells the church at Corinth:

> *Examine yourselves whether ye be in **the faith**, prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*. - 2 Cor. 13:5

Notice that in this passage, to be "in the faith" is regarded by the apostle as equal to "Jesus Christ in you." This type of usage is what grammarians call a metonymy, or where the object or consequence of faith (salvation in Christ) is regarded as "*faith*" itself.

A "metonymy" is "*a figure by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it*

stands in a certain relation" (E.W. Bullinger, **Figures of Speech Used in the Bible**, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 538).

   In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul is challenging them to examine themselves closely to make sure that they have entered into the state of salvation. Since faith is the *subjective* entrance point into this state of salvation, the state of salvation is represented by "the faith" required to subjectively enter salvation.

   It is under this same use as a metonym with the definite article, it is also used to refer to the body of apostolic doctrine or "the faith once delivered." Since the apostolic doctrine is the object of faith, it is called "*the faith*." This use refers to the essentials of New Testament Christianity as a system or body of faith and practice.

   However, the careful reader has already noticed that "*the faith*" has been used previously as a metonymy for the subjective entrance into the state of salvation. Therefore, the natural question that arises is, how can the reader of Scripture distinguish between the two. The answer is they are distinguished by the immediate context in which it is found. **The former is found in contexts that deal with *personal subjective* salvation, while the latter is always found in the context of apostolic doctrine and practice**. However, in such doctrinal contexts, the *objective* doctrine of salvation in its broadest sense (election, regeneration, progressive sanctification, and glorification) is no doubt included. In many contexts, there may be emphasis upon some specific doctrine in its relationship to the whole body of faith.

   Jude 3 is an example where "*the faith*" refers to defending the doctrine of salvation in its broadest objective sense, as apostolic doctrine, and practice that was "*once delivered*." Another clear use after this manner is 1 Timothy 4:1:

   > *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*. - 1 Tim. 4:1

   False professors have never entered into "the faith" as a subjective state of salvation, and so they can never depart from "the faith" subjectively (1 Jn. 2:19). However, they can depart from the objective doctrine of salvation. True Christians cannot depart from the objective state of salvation (Jn. 6:39) but can depart from "the faith" objectively as apostolic doctrine (Gal. 3:1) but can be led astray by false doctrine, and depart from "*the faith*" as an objective system of doctrine and practice (Eph. 4:14-15). Notice in the passage above, that "the faith" is in contrast with "*doctrines*" of devils. Hence, this is a context of contrast between the apostolic system of doctrine with a false system of faith originating with demons. All false doctrine originates with the "*spirit of error*" (1 Jn. 4:6).

   Another clear reference to "the faith" as a body of doctrine, and practice, once delivered by Christ through the apostles is Titus 1:9, 14, where it is required as a qualification for ordination to the pastoral office:

   > *Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by* **sound doctrine** *both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers.......This witness is*

*true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they be **sound in the faith**. - Tit. 1:9, 14*

Notice the context is "*doctrine*" not the subjective state of salvation. In this passage "*the faith*" is the standard for determining orthodoxy, and doctrinal fitness for qualification to be ordained. These passages represent only a small portion of many others that will be used to demonstrate this particular use of "*the faith*."

The Synonyms of "The Faith"

As stated before "the faith" is a metonym for the doctrine and practice which is embraced by faith. However, this metonym has several synonyms. A synonym is a word that basically means the same thing as another word, but is spelled differently, and may add some different nuances or shades of meaning that complement it.

There are several synonyms found in the New Testament for "*the faith*." A peculiarity of all these synonyms is that they are always found in the singular with the definite article "*the*" in context of doctrine.

The singular number with the definite article indicates that the writers spoke of a specific and united body or system of doctrine well known to the churches in the New Testament.

Perhaps the specificity and popularity with this body of doctrine was due to the well known fact that it was "*once delivered*" by Christ in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Jude 3) to the apostles, who were faithful in defending and delivering it to the churches, as recorded in the book of Acts.

> *....teaching them to observe all things whatsoever, I have commanded you..... -* Mt. 28:20

> *And they continued steadfastly in **the apostles doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers* - Acts 2:42

> *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in **the faith**, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*. - Acts 14:22

> *And so were the churches established in **the faith**, and increased in number daily*. - Acts 16:5

In all cases above, it was only disciples, those already saved, baptized and members of New Testament churches, that are being built up in "*the faith*."

There are a number of synonyms for "*the faith*" that will be considered next:

1. The Tradition
2. The Doctrine
3. The Truth

1. The Tradition: Because "*the faith*" was ***passed down*** by the apostles to the churches, first orally, then in writing, it became known as "*the tradition*." The word "*tradition*" is the translation of the Greek term ***paradosis*** and simply means that which is "*passed down*."

   The term "*tradition*" is used two ways in the New Testament. It is used in a negative way when speaking of uninspired interpretations, and teachings of men that conflict with the scriptures:

> *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your **tradition**?.......Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your **tradition**...... But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines **the commandments of men**.* - Mt. 15:3, 6, 9

   On the other hand, it is used for those teachings of the Apostles which were inspired of God. The oral teachings of the Apostles were regarded as the inspired Word of God. Writing to the Thessalonians Paul said:

> *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when **ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.* - 1 Thes. 2:13

   When Paul distinguished between the oral and the written, or when he spoke of specific teachings, as opposed to others, he used the plural *"the traditions."*

> *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold **the traditions** which ye have been taught, whether **by word, or our epistle**.* - 2 Thes. 2:15

> *Now I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in all things, and keep **the ordinances**,* [Gr. pardoseis] *as I delivered them to you.* - 1 Cor. 11:2

   However, when speaking about them as one united expression of apostolic doctrine and practice, he used the singular "*the tradition*."

> *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from **every brother** that walketh disorderly, and not after **the tradition** which he received of us.* 2 Thes. 3:6

   The Faith was passed down from Christ to the Apostles and from the apostles to the churches. It provided the standard of orthodoxy to unite the churches in doctrine and practice. Any "*brother*" who willfully and consistently violated this standard of orthodoxy was to be

withdrawn from by the churches.[31]

   The internal purity and stability of the churches depended upon reprimanding, and if necessary, withdrawing from "*every brother*" who stubbornly persisted in false doctrine, and/or practices contrary to "*the tradition*" they received from the apostles.

2. The Doctrine: The term **doctrine** simply means "*teaching*", and coincides perfectly again with the command found in the Great Commission -   - "***teaching** them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Mt. 28:20).

   As mentioned previously, many believe Jude is specifically referring to Matthew 18:18-20 as the delivery point when the faith "*was once delivered*."

  The total teachings of the Lord[32] are referred to as "*the doctrine*" or "*the doctrine of Christ*" (Heb. 6:1) and the individual doctrines are called "*the principles*."

> *Therefore leaving **the principles** of **the doctrine of Christ**, let us go on unto perfection.....*- Heb. 6:1

   It has already been seen that the total teachings of Christ handed down to the apostles in the Great Commission are called "*the apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42).

   As the rule of orthodoxy "*the doctrine*" defines sound faith, and practice. *"The faith*" could be used by the churches to test anyone who came into their midst claiming to be a teacher from God. The churches were commanded to mark, and avoid anyone who came into their midst teaching things contrary to "*the doctrine*" or body of faith they had learned from the apostles:

> *Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to **the doctrine** which ye have learned; and avoid them.* - Rom. 16:17

3. The Truth: Because the apostolic doctrine provided the basis for what was to be considered "*truth*" as opposed to error, it was often referred to as "*the truth*."

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[31] Paul uses the present tense ("*walketh*") showing a continuing action, not merely a onetime occurrence, but a persistent behavior or characteristic practice. Furthermore, the word "*disorderly*" presents a picture in the Greek language of a person consistently marching out of step with the rest. In other words, he marches to the beat of his own drummer. He stands in opposition to the rest of the congregation, and congregations of Christ in this matter. This does not refer to minor differences of interpretation that exist between churches of like faith and order, or between members in a congregation, unless that difference, no matter how small, is made an issue that causes division. At that point it is not the difference of interpretation that is the problem, but the attitude determined to cause division which is the problem.

[32] It is one thing to come short in obedience to "*all things*" Christ commanded, but quite another thing to intentionally depart from, reject, repudiate doctrines that Christ taught.

> *We are of God: he that knoweth God **heareth us**; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we **the spirit of truth**, and the spirit of error.* - 1 Jn. 4:6

John had identified "*us*" in 1 John 1:1-3 as those who heard saw and touched the Lord Jesus Christ - the apostles. Twenty-three out of the twenty seven books of the New Testament were written by apostles. The remaining four were written by New Testament prophets, and so, the church's foundation of truth consisted of the inspired writings of "*the apostles and prophets*" (Eph. 2:20).

Paul writing Titus in regard to the qualifications, and responsibilities of the office of Bishop (pastor - see Acts 20:13, 28) said:

> ....*Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they be sound in **the faith**; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from **the truth**.* - Tit. 1:13, 14

Doctrinal soundness is the subject. Both the phrases "*the faith*" and "*the truth*" are synonyms in regard to sound doctrine.

Writing to Timothy, Paul describes those who come door to door attempting to deceive and destroy the faith once delivered:

> *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of **the truth.** Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist **the truth**: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning **the faith**.* - 2 Tim. 3;7-8

Paul is warning Timothy against those who teach an opposing system of faith/doctrine and uses "*the truth*" as a synonym for "*the faith*." In direct contrast to these false teachers, of whom Paul describes are ever learning, but never able to accept the apostolic body of truth, he says:

> *But thou hast fully known **my doctrine**, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,* - 2 Tim. 1:10

Again, after warning Timothy:

> *For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from **the truth,*** - 2 Tim. 4:3,4

He concludes this epistle by claiming "*I have kept **the faith***" (2 Tim. 4:7b). In regard to "*the faith*" as a subjective state of salvation, he claimed that was something which he committed unto Christ to keep (2 Tim. 1:12). However, "*the faith*" as a system of doctrine was committed unto him by Christ to observe, guard, keep, and earnestly contend for - and this he did faithfully.

Paul uses "*sound doctrine*", and "*the truth*", and "*the faith*", as synonyms for the apostolic system of doctrine and practice delivered to the saints.

It was the responsibility of the ordained officers (bishops and deacons) of the churches to teach and defend "*the faith*" which was once delivered. Hence, one qualification is that they must be "*sound in the faith*."

Using this same standard to qualify who could be ordained (Tit. 1:9-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13), and who could retain membership (2 Thes. 3:6) in the churches, eliminated heresy, preserved unity, and sustained the church as "*the pillar and ground of **the truth***" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Shortly after describing the church under such sound leadership, Paul warns:

> *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***; - 1 Tim. 4:1

Again, the subject is "*doctrine*" and the warning is that some shall depart from the apostolic system, or body of faith and practice. They will be led away by "*doctrines of demons*."

Conclusion: In studying these synonyms for "*the faith*" we have discovered that the faith was *passed down* to all churches, and thus it was identified as "*the tradition*."
  It was considered to be the teaching that Christ delivered once for all, and as such, was identified as "*the doctrine*" of Christ.
  As the standard of orthodoxy, it provided the standard for "*the truth*" in order to identify, and protect the churches from those who embraced the "*spirit of error*" and "*doctrines of demons*."
  In many of the passages cited, two or more of these synonyms are found together in contexts that deal with defending apostolic doctrine from those who err.
  Some other possible synonyms for "*the faith*" may be "*the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27) and "*the way*" (Acts 24:14). Paul did not have sufficient time in merely three years to teach all the Scriptures to the church at Ephesus. So the "*whole counsel of God*" must refer to the essentials of "*the faith*."
  If the exact contents of "*the faith*" could be identified, it would provide the same standard for orthodoxy today to discern truth from error, and define what is, and what is not a true New Testament church.

The Standard of Orthodoxy

There is a general consensus of opinion by theologians, that there is a standard of orthodoxy that can distinguish between non-orthodox and orthodox Christianity.

1. Dr. Walter Martin, a well known authority on defining what is a cult versus what is orthodox said:

> *A cult, then, is a group of people polarized around someone's interpretation of the Bible, and is characterized by major deviations from **orthodox** Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.*

2. Dr. Josh McDowell, an international authority on cults versus orthodox Christianity says:

> *A cult is a perversion, a distortion of Biblical Christianity, and/or a rejection of **historic teachings** of the Christian Church.*

3. Dr. James Sire, an authority on cults said,

> *Any religious movement that is organizationally distinct, and has doctrines, and/or practices that contradict those of the Scripture, as interpreted by traditional Christianity, as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations, and as expressed in such statements, as the Apostles Creed.*

All agree that deviant or cultic Christianity is a departure from Biblical Christianity, or what they refer to as "orthodox" Christianity. However, there is a problem in defining what exactly the meaning of "orthodoxy." is

James A.Silba presents this problem very well when he says:

> *The first problem with the definition of a cult, as an unorthodox religious group is that it leaves unsolved the question of **Christian orthodoxy**. Sire's definition seems to include all traditional Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) under the standard of orthodoxy, thereby, bypassing the many debates that have split the Christian Church through the ages.*
> *The narrower standard proposed by Martin is that of evangelical Christianity, a criteria that excludes several well established Christian churches, and sects, which are judged to be unorthodox, and hence, liable to be called cults....Many....have at times referred to the Catholic Church as a cult.*

Silba points out correctly that none of the experts can agree about the definition of orthodoxy. Nobody wants to define orthodoxy so that it excludes them. However, if you make it so large it includes everyone; it is then made moot, and worthless.

However, does the Bible provide its own guidelines to determine the essentials of orthodoxy?

The Contents of "The Faith

Dr. John MacArthur, a well known international Bible teacher said in his book ***Reckless Faith,*** when considering this very issue, under the chapter entitled "*What Are the Fundamentals of Christianity*" said:

> *Does the Bible itself identify specific doctrines as fundamental? Indeed it does.* -
> John F. MacArthur, **Reckless Faith**. Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill: 1994, p. 108

The Biblical canon had not yet been completed when Jude wrote his epistle or said "*the faith that was once delivered*" (Jude 3). The faith had been delivered previous to Jude writing his epistle, as he spoke of its delivery in the past tense, but the scriptures had not yet been completed, as his own epistle was part of that ongoing process. Neither had the book of Revelation been written when Jude said this. Therefore, "*the faith*" and the scriptures are not one and the same. The scriptures contain "*the faith*" but they contain much more than the essentials of orthodoxy[33].

Instead of giving our opinion, as to what doctrines should be regarded as essential to define orthodoxy, the reader will be provided three Biblical principles that can be used to establish the standard of orthodoxy. In addition to these three Biblical based principles, the principles found inherently in the Great Commission will be provided to further define what is the standard of orthodoxy.

We believe there are three basic Biblical principles that reveal the contents of "*the faith*" once delivered to the saints. These three principles are self-evident, and are as follows:

Principle #1: *Every doctrine and practice that the Bible clearly states, or necessarily infers to be non-negotiable, must be regarded as essential to the definition of orthodoxy.*

Such doctrines are marked in Scriptures by words like "must" or limited in number like "one" or explicitly denies any other alternatives. For example:

1. Limited numerically: "*one*" God, Spirit, baptism, faith, way to heaven, Savior, gospel, etc. - Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5; etc.

2. No alternatives - "*if any man preach any other gospel...let him be accursed*" - Gal. 1:8-9 "*except a man be born again he cannot*...." (Jn. 3:3) etc. "*repent or perish*" - Lk. 13:3

3. Limiting definitions or absolute contrasts - "*if it be of grace then it is no more of works, otherwise, grace is no more grace*.." - Rom. 11:6

These are doctrines the Bible clearly and explicitly states we must not deny or we must believe. These are also Biblical truths the Bible infers to be necessary without explicitly demanding they are necessary (e.g. incarnation, etc.)

Principle #2 - *Every doctrine, and practice that is essential to distinguish New Testament Christianity from other world religions and/or predicted false doctrines that characterize predicted apostate Christian religions.*

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[33] The Bible contains many geographical, biographical and cultural details. It also contains things that are relatively non-essential in comparison to other issues. Even Jesus made a distinction between the weightier issues over other issues in Scripture (Mt. 23:23).

Some examples of this principle that separate Biblical Christianity from other world religions are:

1. The God of the Bible
2. The Person and work of Jesus Christ
3. The Incarnation and resurrection of Jesus
4. The Bible as final authority for Christians
5. The way of salvation by grace without works

Some examples of predicted false doctrines that characterize predicted apostate Christian cults are:

1. 1 Tim. 4:1-5
2. John 16:1-5
3. 2 Tim. 3-4:6

These distinctions are essential or there could be no way of telling any difference between Christianity and other world religions, or discerning between New Testament Christianity and predicted apostate Christianity.

Principle #3: *All doctrines and practices that are essential to preserve New Testament Christianity*.

The Scriptures clearly teach that New Testament Christianity, as established by Christ, and the apostles, will be preserved until Jesus returns (Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:26; Jude 3; etc.).

For example the basis for truth must be preserved or truth cannot be discerned. The doctrines of inspiration and preservation of the scriptures (Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) are essential to have an objective basis for discerning truth from error. If the scriptures are not preserved for future generations, and/or not trustworthy, then there is no basis to determine truth from error.

For example, the essentials for making disciples must also be preserved for conveying the truth from one generation to the next. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) provides this process "*till the end of the world*."

Another example of what is essential to preserve New Testament Christianity is regarding the church as "*the pillar and ground of the truth*." There can be no such thing as a "New Testament congregation" if the scriptures do not clearly spell out what are the New Testament essentials that define it (officers, ordinances, government, doctrine, etc.)? If not, then we have no idea what is, and what is not, a true scriptural congregation.

In our next chapter we will look at the mechanism or process Jesus has provided to preserve "*the faith*" until He returns.