

The Call To Earnestly Contend

Jude 1:1-4

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We're going to read the four verses that we're going to cover in one setting. Follow with me in your Bible beginning in Jude, verse 1. It starts with the author's name, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called," and then he wishes them, "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied," verse 2. Then, notice verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation," that was his intention and purpose in writing the book of Jude, he said, "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith," and in the Greek it would read like this, 'once and for all,' "delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares," this is the description of the apostates that we're going to read about in this book, "who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Someone said, and I thought it was interesting, the beginning of the Church Age started with the book of the Acts of the apostles; the end of the Church Age ends with the book of Jude, when we actually see the acts of the apostates. The church opens with the Acts of the apostles in the book of Acts, but at the end of the Church Age, which I believe we're living in right now, we're living at the end of that dispensation known as the Age of Grace or the Church Age, that any day now the Lord is going to rapture His Church and catch the Church up to be with Him in Heaven for the tribulation, then we come back in the Second Coming, and we reign with Christ for a thousand years.

When we pray about a restoring of our land, it won't really happen until Jesus Christ returns. We're living in a day and age that God predicted would happen when men would fall away, they would apostatize, we read about it in 2 Thessalonians 2, that before the day of the Lord would come, there must come a falling away first. One of the evident signs that we're living at the end of time is the falling away from the faith, "...which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints." It's what we commonly call apostasy, and Jude is about these apostates. I'll explain what they are, what they taught, and their character as well.

The book of Jude is believed to be one of the most neglected books of the New Testament. I would concur that it is one of the most neglected, not just because of the length of it but because of the subject matter. A lot of people don't want to deal with the judgment of God, the wrath of God, or the apostasy in the Church; they want to preach 'happy' things—happy thoughts, positive message—so they skip over. One of the benefits of preaching through the whole Bible and books of the Bible—every verse and every chapter—is that we get what God has for us in His Word.

Its place in the New Testament is what is called the general epistles, and by that we have Hebrews, and we don't know who the human author was but is often put into that category, the

book of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, and then the book of Jude. These are the general epistles: Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, and then the book of Jude.

Notice with me, if you would, verse 1. It starts with, “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,” there we have what we call the human author. Why do I use that kind of term, ‘the human author’? Because the Bible is given by inspiration of God. It’s not given by dictation, it’s given by inspiration, and this concept of inspiration means that God breathed out upon them and the words they wrote were the very words that God wanted them to write. I like the term ‘superintended’—God watched over in His providence. He made sure that what they wrote was the very Word of God. We may not understand how that works, we think more of a dictation, but that’s not how it worked. God superintended the human authors—using their own personalities and their own styles and the historical circumstances they were in—that the very words they wrote were the very words of God. We’re going to come back to the subject of the doctrine of Scripture in just a moment.

Who is this Jude? The word and the name ‘Jude’, in the English is the English version of what in Greek is the word ‘Judas,’ and in the Hebrew it’s the word ‘Judah.’ This is really interesting. It was a very common name in the New Testament period of time because of two things: Judas Maccabeus, who was the one who led the revolt against the Maccabeans against the attack on the temple during the intertestamental period, but also because of the tribe of Judah, which means ‘praise.’ This ‘Jude’ or Judas, it’s interesting that the book which is about apostates was written by a man whose name is Judas, the same as the primary apostate in the Bible. The greatest example of an apostate is Judas Iscariot. He was a disciple, but he wasn’t genuine, he wasn’t authentic, so he actually was an apostate; and when he fell away, it’s a picture of this book of Jude. It’s an interesting name, ‘Jude,’ or Judas or Judah, as we find it in the Scriptures.

Jude calls himself, “the servant of Jesus Christ.” The word ‘servant’ is the Greek word *doulos* which means bondsman. A little more information about this ‘Jude.’ It’s called here, the “... brother of James.” Who was James? James wrote the New Testament epistle of James. He was one of the leaders in the early church, and these two were brothers—Jude and James—and guess what? They were half-brothers of Jesus Himself. It’s interesting that Jude doesn’t say, “Hey, I’m the half-brother of Jesus, so I got an in. You better listen to what I’ve got to say. I’ve got clout and I’ve got authority.” No. He comes with this humility and just says, “I’m a servant of Jesus Christ.”

The brothers of Jesus are mentioned, if you’re taking notes, in Matthew 13:55. In Matthew 13:56 it mentions that He had sisters but doesn’t name them. After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph consummated their marriage and had children, as any other husband and wife would have, so Jesus actually had brothers and sisters. He was, of course, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of virgin Mary, so He didn’t have a physical, biological earthly father other than Joseph becoming His adoptive father. You can imagine how difficult it must have been for His siblings to grow up in the house when your brother’s the Messiah, “Why can’t you be like your big brother, Jesus?” Perhaps they were in the playroom and Jesus stood up on the toy chest and said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life!” and Jude said, “Mom, Jesus is flipping

out! He thinks He's the Son of God, the Messiah. He needs help."

Actually, there's indication that His family did not believe in Him. His brothers did not believe in Him as the Messiah, the Savior, until after His resurrection and He appeared to them and convinced them of who He was. During His ministry, His family came to Him to "rescue" Him. They thought He'd lost His mind, so they wanted to save Him from His insanity. They didn't really believe in Him. Of course, Mary and Joseph knew the truth, they knew who He was. But after His resurrection, His brothers, James and Jude, became believers, followers, and leaders in the early church. James was also the one in Acts 15 that led the counsel meeting as to what the Gentiles' relationship would be to the law and how they would receive them into the church of Jesus Christ. The author is the half-brother of Jesus.

The date in which Jude wrote is not perfectly clear, but the best conclusion is sometime between 66 and 80 A.D. The theme of Jude is the same as the theme of 2 Peter, but it would seem chronologically that 2 Peter was written first and then the book of Jude was penned after Peter's letter. He talks about the apostates being here, Peter talked about they will come, yet future, so they probably came in that chronological order: 2 Peter, then the book of Jude. He doesn't mention the destruction or dispersion of the Jews in Jerusalem so probably before 70 A.D. and sometime after 66 A.D.

What was the purpose of the book of Jude? This will be kind of seen and understood and developed all the way through the book of Jude. You can't understand a book of the Bible unless you understand the purpose that it was written and the circumstances for which it was written. We'll get there in just a second, but the purpose was that we "...should earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints." He says, "I wanted to write about our common salvation," I wanted to write a positive letter, a happy letter, about salvation and what we share in common in the goodness of the Lord, but says, "I felt led by the Holy Spirit to go a different direction when I sat down to write, that we had apostates in the church and they're very dangerous, so I wanted to warn you about them, I wanted to describe them to you, and then tell you the safe way to protect yourselves from them."

Let me give you three reasons for this letter, kind of in a concise outline of the book. First of all, Jude wrote the letter to call us to "...contend for the faith," verse 3, I already mentioned that. Secondly, he wrote to warn us about the apostates, and we'll see that in verses 4-16. Thirdly, he wrote to encourage us to grow spiritually. I love verses 17-25. Someone has divided the book of Jude into first of all the anatomy of the apostates, verses 1-16, to secondly, the antidote for apostasy, verses 17-25.

I know this is a little bit 'classroomy,' and I'm giving you information, we're going to get into the text, but let me give you a threefold outline of the book of Jude. Again, it can be broken down with much more detail. In verses 3-4, we have the danger of apostates; in verses 5-16, secondly, we have the description of the apostates; and thirdly, verses 17-25, we have the defense against the apostates. We have the danger, the description, and the defense against apostasy.

What about its relevance today? First Timothy 4:1, and we got it a week ago Sunday morning, says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times," there it is, "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," demons. Jesus warned about wolves in sheep's clothing. Paul the Apostle met with the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20 and said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Jesus taught about the sowing of tares among the wheat, the false with the true, and all through the Pauline epistles, Paul's letters, he talks about false teachers and apostates as well.

What is sad today, and one of my concerns about the church, is that we lack discernment. We think anyone who claims to be a Christian, anyone who has a large following, anyone that's on tv or on the radio (and I'm not against that kind of stuff, we have a radio ministry), anyone that's popular and preaching the gospel and has a Bible and says they're a Christian is from the Lord; and we need to be biblically discerning as to the content and the truth of the message they are preaching. This is why the book of Jude is not popular—everyone wants to be happy and get along and love one another, "I'm okay, you're okay. Everything's cool," and have a positive message. They say, "Doctrine divides us." But the truth is, how we behave is based on what we believe, so you can't underestimate the importance of sound doctrine or right belief.

Paul used the term in writing to Timothy, a pastor, that he give himself to sound doctrine. That word 'sound' in the Greek is a medical term and means that which is healthy or life-giving. I think the church is sick today because we do not have doctrinal preaching, and we're afraid of doctrine. The word 'doctrine' just means teaching. We have a lot of preaching but very little teaching or instruction, especially that which is expositional—that means you read the text and you explain the primary meaning of the text in its biblical context. That's what the preacher is supposed to do. I think we lack discernment, and the book of Jude is a call to arms. It's a call to discernment. It's a call to be a Berean. It's a call to be on the lookout, to stand fast, and to "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints."

Tonight there are three things in verses 1-4 that I want to do. I want to look at the army that's to contend, the commission to contend, and thirdly we're going to look at the enemy that we contend with. We'll look at them one at a time. First of all, the army, and it's mentioned in verses 1-2, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James," here's the description of the army that is to contend, "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and," those that are, "preserved in Jesus Christ," and thirdly those who are, "called." Then, he wishes them in his salutation, "Mercy...and peace, and love, be multiplied."

In verse 1, Jude writes "...to them that are sanctified." This phrase 'to them,' it's clear here that he's not writing to a particular church as far as we can tell. He's not writing to the believers in Ephesus or the believers in Colossae or the believers of Galatia or the believers in Philippi, so this is a general epistle. It could be that there was one group that he was writing to. Bible scholars kind of freak out trying to figure out who they are, but it's all in vain because he doesn't say—what the Bible doesn't say, we don't know, so there's no sense in speculating. Who he wrote to does not change the content of what he wrote, but he was writing to believers. I love

this description about them. He goes on in verse 3 to say, “I wanted to write about salvation,” and it seems like he wanted to put a little bit in there about salvation on a positive note before he got into the apostates.

There are three things Jude says about this army, the church. He says, “...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called,” I would add there by the Holy Spirit. You say, “Well, it doesn’t say that,” but I think it’s implied, so you have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of sanctifying, preserving, and called. If you were going to put them in a theological, logical order, it would actually be first of all that God sanctifies you, that He calls you, and then He preserves you.

What does he mean there by “sanctified by God the Father”? I’ve mentioned it before, but I’ll mention it again, that the whole work of salvation can come under a heading known as “Sanctification.” I know that many times I’m teaching and I explain that we’re justified, past tense; we’re being sanctified, present tense; we will be glorified, future tense; and salvation has three tenses—sanctified, justified, glorified, right? (some of you are nodding your head like, “Okay,” you’re with me.) But all three of those, and I hope I’m not completely confusing you—justification, sanctification, and glorification—can come under one big heading of “Sanctification,” and that when we’re saved, He calls us to Himself, from the world unto Himself. Once we get saved, He calls us to holiness. When He calls us to Heaven, He calls us to go to Heaven, so we’re the called. The whole concept of salvation in the Bible is often used as God sanctifying us.

The word ‘sanctify’ is the same concept of being holy or being a saint. Holy, saint, sanctify all come from the same root word and all mean the same thing. It means to be set apart as holy. Salvation is God calling you to Himself, setting you apart, and making you holy positionally and practically, but here he uses the term ‘sanctified,’ and that’s the work of God the Father. I love the fact that there in verse 1 Jude says, “...by God the Father,” and God the Father loved us. Some translations actually have, NASB, “...loved by God the Father,” so He sanctifies or saves us because He sets His love upon us. I love that.

Notice, verse 24, we’ll get there in another four weeks or so, that He keeps us safe from falling. This is a closing benediction, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory,” so He sets us apart and makes us holy in the work of salvation. Salvation begins in the heart of God. You don’t just some day, as you are living in your sin and rebellion and war against God, say, “You know what? I just really want to become a Christian. I want to get right with God. I want to read the Bible. I want to go to church. I want to really be a holy, zealous Christian,” unless God starts to convict you, draw you, and saves you by His grace. God starts the process. I didn’t seek Him, He sought me; and I sought Him because He sought me. Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

I know that in my conversion, I experienced that so radically. All of the sudden I was going this way, following the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life—and God’s

Spirit starting convicting me. My sister left a Bible in my bedroom. I picked it up and started reading, and God started drawing me. Then, I received Christ and turned around the other way and went the other direction. All of the sudden I thought, What's happening? This is amazing! I'm reading my Bible and liking it! I went to church and it was like, "This is awesome!" I couldn't believe it. I grew up in church. I was a prodigal, I ran away from church; and then got saved and went back to church, "Wow, this is really cool! I love these people!" I was the only young person in this older, conservative traditional church. I had long hair and a big beard—I came out of hippiedom. They all started freaking out, "Wow! A hippie! Hippie, come to our church! This is awesome!" There was no one like me. There was no one my age, but they loved Jesus. They were my brothers and sisters in Christ. They mentored me, encouraged, and disciplined me. What a beautiful thing that was! I knew that "...old things are passed away...all things are become new."

This work in the heart starts with God sanctifying us, and, as I said, verse 24, "...keep you from falling." Then, He preserves us. That's the concept there, He preserves us. Verse 21 actually sets His love upon us and keeps us by His love, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Then, notice, "...preserved in Jesus Christ," so He keeps us or guards us. The word means to guard or to hold firmly. It means to watch or to keep, so what a blessing that is!

Jesus said in John 17:11, when He was praying His great High Priestly Prayer, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given Me be with Me, that they may see Me in My glory." Then, He calls us, as I said, by His Holy Spirit. This is what He does in time as He calls us by the gospel.

Verse 2, "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love," so He does not give us what we deserve, mercy. Peace, because of Christ's work on the cross we have peace with God, we have the peace of God, and His love we experience, Romans 5:5, "...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," so the cross is a demonstration of God's love and we experience God's love.

In closing this first section, Warren Wiersbe says, "If you have truly trusted Jesus Christ, you are in His army. God is not looking for volunteers; He has already enlisted you. The question is not, "Shall I become a soldier?", rather, the question is, "Will I be a loyal soldier?"

Again, I talked about being an apostate and falling away from church, but when I was a little boy growing up in Sunday school, maybe you did as well, we used to sing the song, "I'm in the Lord's Army." Remember that song? Well, the Lord drafted me. He called me. He's preserved me, and the question is not, "Will I be a soldier?" but "Will I be a good, faithful soldier?" for each one of us to answer.

Notice the commission. The captain of the army is Jesus Christ, mentioned twice in verse 1; the army is the church, sanctified, preserved, and called; but the commission is in verse 3, "Beloved," again, that means that we are loved by God, "when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation," that 'common salvation' means that we all share together equally in salvation. There's not one person more saved than another. Did you know that? You're not

super saved and some are kind of saved. All of us, as believers, are either saved or not saved. Now, sanctification, that second phase of living for the Lord, is a process that some have progressed further along in, but we're all saved equally—the ground is level at the foot of the cross. We're all saved the same way. God doesn't save some people different than other people, and we all have the same eternal life. We also have the same Holy Spirit. We all have the same God the Father, and we're all children of God.

Jude says, "I wanted to write to you about this common salvation," but said, "it became evident that it was needful," notice that statement. It was necessary, "...needful for me to write unto you...that ye should," here's our phrase, "earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints."

The words 'exhort you,' in verse 3 is the verb of the noun Paraclete. That may not mean much to you, but the word 'Paraclete' is used for the Holy Spirit and literally means one who comes alongside you to comfort you. When Jude says, "...and exhort you," it's almost like he's being a paraclete. He says, "I'm coming alongside of you, and I'm trying to encourage you. I'm trying to exhort you that you need to earnestly contend." That phrase 'earnestly contend' we get our word 'agony' from. It means to agonize or to work hard. It's taken from the realm of athletics. Technically, it's not talking about warfare, it's talking about a competition as we strive and agonize. Some think it may be a wrestling match. Some think it's a boxing match. Maybe it's running a race, but if you've ever done anything athletic or that's strenuous like that, you know how agonizing it can be.

I've never boxed, but I got gloves for my son and I when he was little. He was about five or six. I got on my knees and we played around. I didn't hit him, but he started hitting me. We got about six, seven, and eight, he really hit me hard one time, right in the nose. I just threw the gloves off and said, "That's it. Dad's not boxing anymore," when your seven-year-old boy decks you, you know, it's time to stop. I remember as a boy growing up, too, we used to wrestle out in the grass, out in the yard. All the kids would gather and we'd have wrestling matches. We'd get each other in a headlock and face first in the grass and get all that itchy stuff going on. I remember how exhausting and how strenuous it was! That's the 'earnestly contend.' In the Greek it's one word, to agonize. What are we agonizing for? "...the faith," verse 3, "which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints."

Now, it's important for you to understand. I know I have referred to this passage many times, but it's 'the faith,' not faith, 'the faith.' When you ever have the statement, 'the faith,' it's not talking about your personal, subjective, individual trust in God; it's talking about the body of truth—doctrine—that we, as Christians, hold which is what we would call orthodox Christianity, what we believe. Here in the Bible, it's actually saying that we need to "...earnestly," earnestly strive to hang onto and defend and protect, "...the faith," the doctrine, the truths, the teachings of the Scripture, "which was once," and for all...why is that important? It doesn't say, 'Once upon a time,' it says, "...once," and for all.

God has given us the truth. It's a finished revelation. There's a last book in the Bible, anyone

comes along and says, "I have a new revelation. I have a new doctrine," and it can't be substantiated or taught in the Bible, we need to reject that. You've heard me say it before: If it's new, it's not true; if it's true, it's not new. You might hit a doctrine from a different angle, you might shed more light on old truths, but if a preacher or a teacher of the Bible is doing as he's supposed to—preaching the Word—he's not going to be saying anything that hasn't been said in over two thousand years of church history. If he is, run for your life! "Oh! This guy's deep," or "This guy's just new and has these great amazing ideas," and he rejects 'the faith,' run for your life! Because this is what we're seeing in this time, in this day and age. We're seeing leaders in the church who are abandoning 'the faith,' the doctrine of orthodox Christianity "...which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints," and Christians who are undiscerning, who do not know their Bibles and are not Bereans, checking the Scriptures to see if it's so, are being deceived and led astray. It's so important. 'The faith' here is a reference to the doctrines, the body of belief, that we hold as Christians.

This is where at this point, and I'm going a little longer already than I wanted to so I won't tarry on them, I want to give you seven things that we're to contend for which are 'the faith.' This is Christianity 101. This is essential doctrine, and by that what we mean is that if you reject these doctrinal truths in the Word of God, that you're rejecting Christianity, you're rejecting orthodox Christianity. Now, it doesn't mean you can't be confused or misunderstand these doctrines and still be saved and need to be straightened out, you can still be saved; but if you're saved, you're saved in spite of them not because of them. There are people who are genuinely saved but are confused about what the Bible teaches. This is why it's so very important, and I don't want to sound like I'm putting anybody on a trip, and I think it's the pastor's job and the church's job to educate God's people in God's Word, but you have a responsibility as well yourself. You have a responsibility before God to know what the Bible teaches.

Do you know what you believe and why you believe it? You need to understand these doctrines of what the Bible teaches. Whether you like it or not, you're in the Lord's army. Whether you like it or not, there's a war going on, we must earnestly contend, and you must know what you're contending for if you're going to contend so you won't be deceived.

Let me give you the seven, kind of in rapid fire. First, I started with the Scriptures, the inspiration of the Bible or Scripture. We must believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Write down 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Now, there are different ways to define that. The problem is these false teachers and the apostates have the same vocabulary but a different dictionary—same vocabulary, different dictionary. You say, "Well, it sounds pretty good to me," but how do they define what they say? You need to understand what they mean by 'inspiration,' and it has to be orthodox in the way they interpret that.

We believe in God superintending human authors so the very words they wrote were the very words of God and that the Bible is inerrant or we could say infallible, that God is a God of truth, He cannot lie, He does not lie, and that the Bible is true in all that it affirms, in all that it teaches. It uses history, poetry, and other forms of writing, but it's all true. There are no errors or lies in the Bible, and we need to interpret it literally. We need to approach the Scriptures with

what is called the literal interpretation. I believe in technically what is called the verbal inspiration of Scripture, that the very words—all of them—are given by inspiration of God. Why do we start with Scripture? Because everything we believe is based on the Bible, not church tradition, not by experience, not by our intellect, but by the Word of God.

Secondly, we have only one true and living God. Some call it the simplicity of God, I call it the unity of God. The Bible is monotheistic, there is only one God. Some people say, “Well, different religions have different gods.” There’s only one God. You either have the true and the living God, or you don’t have God. The true and living God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Genesis 1:1 who created the heaven and the earth. It’s the same God, John 3:16, who “...so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There’s only one true and living God. Christianity is not pantheism or polytheism, it’s monotheism. It’s one God, the unity of God. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”

Thirdly, we believe, and the Bible teaches, that God is triune in His nature, God’s Trinity, that there is a Father, and there’s the Son, and there’s the Holy Spirit. Now, this is sometimes hard for people to grasp, and that’s understandable because God is infinite and transcendent, but the Bible teaches one God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son...God the Father sent God the Son, God the Son died on the cross, rose from the dead, went back to Heaven and sent God the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was being baptized by John the Baptist, He went under the water, the Son of God baptized, the Father spoke from Heaven, “This is my beloved Son in whom my soul delights.” Then, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and lit upon Him, so you have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I’m convinced that I’m going to do, I don’t know, probably in the fall, a series on doctrines of the Bible, and we’ll go into this more in depth, but the Bible teaches one God, three Persons, not three gods. It doesn’t teach tritheism, it teaches one God. All three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are one in essence. They have divine natures and all share equally the same divine attributes, so that’s Christianity.

To deny the Trinity, to reject the Trinity is heretical, unorthodox, and not Christianity. There are some people that are what’s called Modalist, they’re known as Oneness Pentecostals sometimes, and you find it most commonly in what’s called the Apostolic Church. They believe that God the Father became God the Son, and God the Son became God the Holy Spirit, that there’s not three separate Persons but they take on different modes—He became the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—and different modes appear in the Bible. That’s not what the Bible teaches. We can’t fathom or comprehend God in three Persons, but again, it’s because we have a limited knowledge and He is infinite.

Let me give you the fourth, the orthodox teaching of Christ, that is, Christ’s deity and sinless humanity, the doctrine of Christ. This is essential and key and orthodox Christianity. You must have sound Bible teaching on who is Jesus Christ. We could spend weeks on this subject, but it’s believing that He’s the second Person of the Godhead, eternal Son—preexisted Bethlehem,

eternal—that He came to earth and was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary taking on full and sinless humanity, that He lived a sinless life, that He voluntarily died a substitutionary death on the cross, that He was the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world—bore our sins, He died substitutionarily for us—buried, physically dead, and then three days later He rose from the dead. To deny the deity or the humanity, to deny His sinless nature, His virgin birth, His substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection is heretical and not biblical Christianity.

You need to not only just hear me say these things, you need to study the Bible and do your own research. It's so very important—the doctrine of Christ. Not only that, but He ascended bodily back to Heaven and, it's number seven in my list, we'll get there, He's coming back to reign on earth.

The fifth is human depravity. Man is sinful and separated from God. The sixth is salvation is by grace alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. That's what we're contending for. Anything other than that is not Christianity. Only Christianity, of all the so-called religions of the world, teaches that we're saved by grace through faith. All other religions teach that in some way, some shape, some form you must do something—you must perform or work—in order to save yourself. Christianity is set apart from all other religions in that it teaches that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and that faith is in Christ alone, not in our works or our church membership or water baptism, rites or rituals, but in Jesus Christ. Again, an important subject and doctrine.

Seventhly, and lastly, and the list could be lengthier, a Christian believes in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There may be different views as to when Christ returns and what happens afterwards, but a true Christian, a Bible-believing Christian, an orthodox believing Christian, believes Jesus Christ is coming again. Amen? How could you not? John 14, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," is Jesus going to keep His promise? Absolutely! He will come again, "...and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

How do we earnestly contend? We do that by knowing God's Word, being grounded in sound doctrine, and by supporting churches that are preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm just going to mention it because I want to go back to it and we'll kick off next week with verse 4, but we see the enemy, why we are contending, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation," God judges the apostate. It's designed by God. "...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." I'm kind of forcing myself to not go into this fourth verse. I want you to read it over and look at it. It's the description...here I go, of that they're deceitful, ungodly, enemies of God's grace, and they deny our only Lord God, Jesus Christ. They have a deficient doctrine of Christ, and we'll go into that next week. Let's pray.