Articles by G. M. J. Lear

G. M. J. Lear

First published in Food for the Flock (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

The Epistle of Jude (Sept 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 9, Sept 1960.

This article by the eminent servant of the Lord, G. M. J. Lear, Argentine, South America, will be welcomed by our readers. It is an excellent exposition of this difficult little epistle. One cannot fail to see its value in the light of current trends.

This short epistle is a message for the last days; therefore, we need to be reminded of its contents in these times in which we live. It may be divided quite naturally into seven parts, each part containing a triplet of important elements.

A Threefold Description (V.1)

This is given of those to whom the epistle is written. First of all, they are sanctified by God the Father, set apart by His sovereign will to be His own from all Eternity; in second place, preserved in Christ Jesus, the One who died for them and now lives to save them to the uttermost; and finally, called, effectively called, by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is here a complete presentation of the Holy Trinity operating on behalf of these believers.

A Threefold Desire (V.2)

In the second verse, Jude pronounces a benediction upon us, and expresses his wish for us that we might have; first, mercy, which has special reference to the past with all its record of failures; second, peace, which is our present possession through the goodness of God, “My peace I given unto you.” In third place, Jude hopes

that we enjoy love, love which abides forever, assuring all our future both in Time and in Eternity.

A Threefold Warning (Vv. 3-7)

In view of the fact that apostasy is so rampant and that ungodly men have crept in among the saints, a threefold warning is raised, and we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith. In this exhortation the writer uses the intensive form of the verb as it may be seen in Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter in.” This precious faith that is now ours, is so important that we ought to strive with more earnestness than a convicted sinner does to obtain salvation. The fact of apostasy is seen in these ungodly ones by their denying our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ (V. 4 R.V.).

The word “despotes,” Sovereign Master, is here applied to the Son as in Luke 2:28-29, it is applied to the Father. These apostates denied this sovereignty and equality. Modernism, pressed to its logical conclusion, must lead to this. The critics of the Bible soon become the critics of Christ.

Jude brings to our minds the seriousness of apostasy, the leaving of a scriptural position that once had been divinely given, by the use of three examples: first, the unbelieving Israelites who fell in the wilderness (V. 5). They had received outward privileges and blessings to which their inward state did not correspond; they went, therefore, backward instead of forward, and perished in the desert; second, the fallen angels. Little as we know about these creatures, we are told that they left the place that God had given them, and are, consequently, reserved unto judgment for it, in the passing of which

judgment believers are to be associated with Christ (1 Cor. 6:3).

Now, the third example is made up of the cities of the plain. These, departing from the ordinances of God, gave themselves over to uncleanness. The first of these warnings demonstrates the opposition of the world; the second, that of Satan; and the third, that of the flesh. All are in opposition to the will of God.

A Threefold Corruption (Vv. 8-11)

The threefold corruption mentioned in these verses indicates the true character of these days of apostasy. First, we read of men, “They have gone in the way of Cain,” a manifestation of fleshly confidence. In second place, that, “They ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward,” covetousness of present gain. This may not always be in the way of emoluments or monetary advantages, it may be the lust for the popular path, the winning of the praise and approval of men. In third place, we read of men, “They … perished in the gainsaying of Core,” the way of envy and strife. In the rebellion of Core (Korah), this took the form of reducing Moses and Aaron to a common level with all the people. Such an act, in figure, would be the bringing down of Christ from His unique Apostleship and High Priesthood to the level of erring humanity. Any of these dangers, and we see them around us today, leads to apostasy. They are all characterized by the exaltation of self and the consequent degradation of our Lord and Master. Furthermore, they place humanity on a pedestal as not needing the atonement through the blood of Christ.

A Threefold Mark Of Apostates (Vv. 12-19)

Three times we read the expression, “These are” (Vv. 12, 16, 19). These repetitions classify the apostates. In the first classification five features are seen. First, they are “hidden rocks,” indicating their treachery. They crept in among the people of God unawares, with the result they caused shipwreck to the faith of some, and do harm to the cause of the gospel. Second, they are “clouds without water,” revealing their hypocrisy. Although they make promises, they never keep them (Prov. 25:14). They shift their doctrinal ground and title as do so many of the cults today. Third, they are “trees without fruit,” showing their depravity. They are like the vine in Isaiah chapter five, they produce no fruit to the glory of God. Their outward behaviour proves the dead state of their inward life. “Twice dead, plucked up by the roots,” describes them. Fourth, they are “raging waves of the sea,” indicating their ferocity for they will not tolerate being restrained in their wilfulness, nor from imposing their wishes and ideas upon others. They show that their moral hearts are deformed, the very hearts that might otherwise have been noble and gracious before God. Fifth, they are “wandering stars,” intimating an eccentricity for straying farther and farther from their proper orbit. These eventually plunge into hopeless blackness forever, the inevitable end of apostasy.

The second group delineated (V. 16) also manifests five characteristics. They are: “murmurers,” not resigned to, much less rejoicing in, the will of God; “complainers,” finding fault with others, their fellowmen; “walking after their own lusts,” showing themselves bent on pleasing self. These three points are in direct opposition to the teachings of grace as stated by the Apostle Paul,

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). The two remaining points are: “great swelling words, an expression that reminds one of the little horn of Daniel 7:8, the symbol of a rebellious mouth; “having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage,” rebellious eyes which seek the glory of men and are, by that very fact, shut out from true faith in Christ (John 5:44).

The final group is distinguished by three signs (V. 19). They may be detected as those “who separate themselves,” affecting a superiority of attainment over others like the Pharisees (separate ones) did in regard to the rank and file of Jews; as those who are ‘sensual,” that is, acting on impulses natural to fallen man who cannot discern the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14) and whose soulish wisdom ends by becoming devilish (Jas. 3:15); and finally, as those “having not the spirit,” therefore, they never belonged to the Lord (Eph. 1:13. Rom. 8:11).

As these signs multiply around us, in them we have the evidence that we are definitely in the last days of the dispensation (V. 18).

A Threefold Resource (Vv. 20-23)

In the midst of all this apostasy, the picture however is not hopelessly dark for we now are given the resource for the Christian in perilous times. We are admitted into the secret of keeping ourselves in the love of God, which actually is “The Practice of the Presence of God.” This practice results in a conscience void of offence before God and men. There are three participle clauses used in this connection, and they suggest three practices in the presence of the Lord. The first is construction. We are

enjoined to engage in this by the clause, “Building up yourselves in your most holy faith,” intimating the need of a real head and heart acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures.

The second is supplication. Another participle clause exhorts, “Praying in the Holy Ghost,” revealing a deep and fervent experience of the soul before God rather than a cold routine of prayer recitations. It means that the Holy Spirit will incite us to pray, that He will teach us what our requests should be (Rom. 8:26-27), and that He will enable us to utter these petitions acceptably (1 John 5:14-16).

What wonderful power there is in anticipation! This is the third resource for the Christian in perilous times. The next clause reads, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Here we have intimated a genuine expectation of the Lord’s coming. This will not only anticipate His mercy toward us individually, but will urge us to see that, as far as lies in our power, others will through us be brought into contact with that blessed, saving grace. Thus we will become more like our Lord, we will love the sinner although we must loathe his sin (V. 23). True hope produces sanctified activity.

A Threefold Expectation (Vv. 24-25)

The last section of the epistle is a doxology which is entirely joyous. In spite of the gloomy picture he has drawn of the conditions prevailing in the last days, Jude is able to look forward with complete confidence, and this confidence he expresses in a doxology which is an outburst of praise featuring; first, the thought of preservation, “Unto Him that is able to keep you from

falling”; second, the thought of presentation, “And to present you faultless”; and third, the thought of exultation, “Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

That He is “the only wise God” will be evidenced by the final outcome of all that has happened in the long and chequered course of the history of the world. “Glory and majesty” will be fully manifested in His wonderful person throughout eternity. “Dominion and power” will be His in all the far-flung distances of His universal empire.