Tonight I would like to begin a short series of messages on the Book of Jude. Jude is that little book tucked in between The Letters of John and The Book of Revelation. Go ahead and turn to Jude in your Bibles and before we get into tonight's scripture, I would like to give you some important background on this brief book.

The Book of Jude is one of the shortest books in the Bible. It is one of the five books in the Bible that has just one chapter; the others being Obadiah in the Old Testament, and Philemon.....II John....and III John in the New Testament.

The Book of Jude was written by Jude, the half-brother of Jesus. (Mark 6:3) It is interesting that none of Jesus' four half-brothers, James......Joses......Jude......and Simon believed in Him as the Messiah or followed Him during His earthly ministry. It was not until after Jesus arose from the dead that Jude and Jesus' other half-brothers became believers.

At the time JUDE wrote this letter, the early New Testament Church was under extreme pressure. Outwardly, they were under attack by the Roman government, who sought to stamp out this new movement and stop the Church dead in her tracks.
Inwardly, the Church faced an even greater threat from false teachers who were teaching things that were contradictory to the true word of God. Because of the heresies being taught by these false teachers, many converts to Christianity were “falling away” from the Christian faith, or becoming “apostates.”

It is this issue of “apostasy” or “falling away from the faith” that is the predominant theme of the Book of Jude. But Jude doesn't just address the problem of apostasy in the Church in his own day and time. He sternly warns us of the widespread apostasy that will come upon the Church in her final days before the return of Christ.

It has been said, “The Book of Acts describes the Church at the beginning of the Church age, while the Book of Jude describes the Church at the end of the Church age.”


The Book of Acts tells us about the deeds and teachings of men of God through whom Christ began to build His Church.

The Book of Jude tells us about the deeds and teachings of godless men who will do everything they can to destroy the truth at the end of the Church age.
WHY STUDY THE BOOK OF JUDE?

Why do we need to study the Book of Jude? Consider these comments by John MacArthur:

“This book, (the Book of Jude) gets lost in the shadow of Revelation. But if there is any letter in the New Testament that the Church today needs to hear, it is this one, the Book of Jude. The Church today is weak and compromising and tolerant and shallow, unwilling largely to give biblical truth its rightful place and certainly disinterested, if not outwardly opposed to going to war to protect the truth. The Church today seems to have very little interest in defending the truth against all the assaults.”

(http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/Scripture)

The key verse in this brief Book is verse 3......

Jude verse 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

It is from this key verse I have drawn my title for this series of messages. I am calling this series “CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.”

Well, let's get into tonight's study.

Please follow along with me as we read Jude, verses 1- 4.......
JUDE, verses 1-4 (NKJV)

1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,
   To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and
   preserved in Jesus Christ:

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

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our
   common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting
   you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all
   delivered to the saints.

4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were
   marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the
   grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord
   God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

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There are three points I would like to touch on in these first four
verses.

I. Jude's PRAYER (vs. 1,2)
II. Jude's PLAN (v. 3a)
III. Jude's PLEA (vs.3b, 4)
First of all, let's look at.....

I. Jude's PRAYER (vs. 1,2)

1. Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

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

1. You remember in the introduction I told you that Jude was the half-brother of Jesus. Think about that!

   - Jesus and Jude had the same MOTHER.
   - Jude grew up in the same home as Jesus of Nazareth.
   - Jude ate at the same table as Jesus of Nazareth.
   - If there home was small like ours' was when I was growing up, it is very possible that Jude slept in the same bedroom with Jesus and his other brothers when they were growing up.

2. A lot of people could say, “I was one of Jesus' neighbors when He was growing up,” or “I was one of Jesus' friends when He was growing up.

   But only a handful of people on this earth could say, “I am the brother of Jesus.”

3. But I want you to notice that is NOT how Jude introduces himself in verse 1. He introduces himself as “Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ.”

   Now the question is, why did Jude introduce himself as “a bondservant of Jesus Christ” rather than as “a brother of Jesus Christ?”
4. Actually, there are a couple of reasons. One reason was that in those early days of the Church some people were already elevating Jesus' blood relatives to the level of deities. In other words, they were “worshiping” Jesus' family members in a way that Jesus alone was to be worshiped. The Catholic Church is a perfect example of this. They have “elevated” Jesus' mother Mary to the level of deity. They worship Mary in the same way they worship Jesus, even to the point of worshiping statues of Mary.

But the other reason Jude chose to identify himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ was because he valued his spiritual relationship with Jesus even more than his physical relationship. Jude considered being “a bondservant of Jesus Christ” a far greater privilege and honor than being Jesus' half-brother.

5. In the later part of verse 1 and verse 2, Jude offers a prayer............

   v. 1b To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:
   2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Jude begins and ends this brief letter with a prayer for his fellow Christians. Jude deeply loves his brothers and sisters-in-Christ, and he is well-aware of the great persecution they have suffered at the hands of the Romans and the great deception they have suffered at the hands of false teachers.
Many of the Churches in Jude’s day had been “torn apart” by these false teachers. Many members had left the Churches and there was division among those who remained. So Jude prays for a spirit of mercy.....peace.....and love to prevail in these Churches.

This is Jude's PRAYER.

Secondly, I would have you to notice.....

II. Jude's PLAN (v.3a)

3a Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation,

1. Jude's original plan was to write a letter to his fellow Christians on the wonderful subject of salvation......or as he calls it, “our common salvation.”

2. Jude's original plan was to write about the wonderful grace and mercy of God that sent Christ to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

3. His plan was to write about our glorious redemption Christ paid for on the cross; and the wonderful forgiveness we have because of the shed blood of Jesus.

4. Jude was all excited about writing about our great salvation. But the Holy Spirit changed Jude's plan! The Holy Spirit inspired Jude to address something entirely different.
5. As we have already learned, there was a very serious crisis in the Churches in those days, and that crisis had to do with the growing number of false teacher and the increasing number of apostates......or people who were “falling away” from the faith.

6. What a valuable lesson Jude teaches us here about obeying the leading of God's Holy Spirit. Many times that “stirring” in our spirit or our conscience is the Holy Spirit leading us in a different direction or leading us to do something we have been neglecting to do.

By his example, Jude is teaching us how important it is to follow the direction of the Spirit.

Well we have considered Jude's PRAYER and Jude's PLAN

III. Jude's PLEA (vs. 3b, 4)

3b I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. What does Jude mean when he says, “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints?”
Let's break this statement down and take a closer look at it.

- When you **contend earnestly** for something it means you “fight for it” or “to take your stand for it!” The Greek word Jude uses here literally means “Go to war” or “Go into battle” for the Christian faith. Defend your Christian faith! Stand up for your Christian faith! Don't retreat from your Christian faith!

- Now what does Jude mean by “the faith? **Contend earnestly for THE FAITH.**” The “faith” refers to the fundamental doctrines and teachings of the word of God. Jude is admonishing us to be **defenders of the TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD.**

  Remember Paul warns us in II Timothy 4 that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (II Tim.4:3,4)

- Now look at the last part of Jude's plea......

  v. 3b “Contend earnestly for the faith **which was once for all delivered to the saints.**”

  **What does Jude mean by that?** He means the teachings which Christ taught His apostles, and the apostles taught the early New Testament Church. **This is the faith or the “truth” that was once delivered to all the saints.”**
There is **no on-going revelation** from God. What truth Jesus taught the apostles and the apostles taught the early Church, that is the faith we are to contend for.......that is the truth we are to defend.

2. Having given us this plea to “**contend earnestly for the faith**” Jude now reveals why this is so critically important.

He goes on to say in **verse 4**.......

**v. 4** For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Notice the subtlety with which these false teachers had infiltrated the Church. Jude says, “**for certain men have crept in unnoticed.**”

That is the way “false teachers” operate. Never do they go into a Church and announce themselves as “false teachers.” They do it in a very subtle way. They get to know the people......and little by little they earn the people's trust......and before long they get asked to teach a class in the Church or even get asked to preach in a worship service. And often these individuals have very charismatic personalities that totally disarms people and causes them to lower their guard. And before long the “false teacher” is teaching the people things that sound like the truth, but aren't the truth.
4. Jude even tells us the prophets of old forewarned us about these “false teachers.” He says, “long ago these men were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men.”

5. Jude goes on to point out the two heresies or two doctrinal errors these “false teachers” were teaching that created havoc in the Churches.

First, they were changing God’s grace into a license to practice sin and immorality. “Go ahead, indulge in whatever sinful pleasures you desire, after all God will forgive you and you will still go to heaven.”

And secondly, they denied that Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

6. We see both of these false teachings being widely taught in virtually all of the cults in existence today. While these cults attract followers by giving them a sense of belonging and a sense of being loved, behind closed doors these cults are rife with sexual immorality and perversion of every sort. And followers are groomed to obey the cult leader as the Savior.

7. But this isn’t something that is exclusive to “cults.” There are “false teachers and preachers” on TV and standing behind the pulpits of many of today’s Churches who “peddle” their lies each and every week to unsuspecting listeners.

Our American Churches are “primed for apostasy.” Many professing Christians never open a Bible. They haven't got a clue what they believe.
8. For generations this country was basically led by Christians and Christian principles, but we lost it! Why? Because we stopped "contending earnestly for the faith." We stopped defending the truth of God's word. And now we are reaping what we have sown.

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CONCLUSION

As we bring tonight's message to a close I want to share with you a true story.

ROBERT ROBINSON was once a godless reprobate, until he came to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior through the preaching of George Whitefield in England.

At the age of 23, Robert Robinson put his Christian testimony in poetic form. It went like this.......

"Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace; streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above; Praise His name I'm fixed upon it----name of God's redeeming love."

But wait, there's more to the story.........

ROBERT ROBINSON eventually "fell away" from the Christian faith and turned his back on Jesus Christ. He went back to living a very godless, carnal life until one day he boarded a stage coach seated across from a woman who had her face buried in a book.

ROBINSON asked the woman, "What are you reading?" "Oh, its a wonderful poem" she said. Listen to the words:

"Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace; streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise......."
ROBERT ROBINSON just sat there in silence, completely overwhelmed by guilt as she read the final words of his testimony from so long ago.

Then the woman looked up and said, “Recently this poem has been made into a most lovely hymn, listen to this.” At that point the woman began to sing the last stanza of the hymn which goes like this......

“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart, O take and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above.”

“STOP!  STOP!  PLEASE STOP” said Robinson to the woman! He said, “I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that verse many, many years ago. I would give a thousand worlds to get back to where I was back then.”

Perhaps the words of that hymn where it says, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love” strikes a cord in your heart. Perhaps for a long time now, you have been longing to get back to a place you used be in your relationship with Christ.

You know its not too late don't you? You know you can do that right here tonight as we come to our time of invitation.