

Title: Who says?  
Text: Jude 8-10  
Theme: What is your authority?  
Series: Jude #4  
Prop Stmtnt:

Read Text:

Joseph and Mary had at least 6 children other than Jesus who was born to Mary. Jude is the youngest of the brothers who came to faith in Christ following the resurrection. Jude became a leader in the early church and he writes this little book to the early believers around 60 A.D. This book is rather easy to follow. Jude identifies himself, his audience and his affection in verses 1-2. He tells them in verses 3-4 his purpose for writing. False teachers are corrupting the church. Jude describes the message, the methods and the motives of these false teachers, and warns of the judgment that awaits them. Beginning in verse 5 he gives an example of the kind of thing that he warns these believers to be on guard against. There are people who will infiltrate the church who will seek to distort the message and sometimes do it not so much by what they say, but by what they don't say. The point is this: God judges sin and whoever is teaching God's Word has to tell the whole story. If I know that a particular text of Scripture is going to be controversial and hard to hear and I choose to skip it or gloss over it, what am I doing? I am presuming that I know better than God does what you need and don't need. That is absurd. If I only teach the parts of God's Word that I think you will like, I am placing my word, my view, my opinion above God's. If I never warn you about the justice of God and never tell you about God's wrath against sin, then I am being unfaithful. An unfaithful message will produce an unfaithful church. In verses 5-7 Jude gives 3 examples of God's judgment that are clearly established in the OT and well known by the people of God. We looked at that last week but that leads to practically rejecting all of God's Word which is addressed in verses 8-10. Verses 8-10 focus more on the methods of these false teachers. How do they do it? Verse 8 begins with the words, "Yet, in like manner these people also..."

1. **Beware of those who claim private revelation.** (8)

*relying on their dreams*

A few years ago, a man stopped by to see me. He attended a church in the area and was frustrated with his pastor. He said that in his church they let people stand up and share a word from the Lord that anyone had from a dream, vision or revelation. He claimed that he had a word from the Lord that the pastor was involved in an affair and he was frustrated because the pastor wouldn't let him share that. Now, I'm not sure that he was the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I said, "if it is not true, then of course he wouldn't let you say that and if it was true then he wouldn't let you say it either." People can claim anything from a dream or vision. But, has God ever used dreams or visions as a means of communicating with someone, getting someone's attention or giving his Word? Yes, he certainly has. Jacob, Joseph, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, Paul and of course John (Revelation) are all examples of this. But, is God still adding to His Word? No. the faith "*was once for all delivered to the saints.*" (Jude 3)

Beware of those who claim private revelation and use that for their argument or cause. Can God speak to a person in a dream? Sure. But, how do you know if it is God and not your own thoughts, or worse, an imposter? God would never, ever, ever speak, direct, guide, in a way that is contrary to his Word. Some of you have had experiences where you said, “I felt the Lord telling me....” and you went to describe something that is completely consistent with God’s Word. If however you said, “I felt the Lord telling me that I should steal my neighbor’s SUV.” Or, “I should cheat on this exam or plagiarize this term paper.” I can tell you most assuredly that it wasn’t the Lord.

Whenever someone says, “the Lord told me” or “God spoke to me about this in a dream” make certain that your discernment antennae is on high alert. There are two dangers to avoid. 1) Accepting all claims to visions and dreams as being authoritative. That is dangerous and has proven to be disastrous. And in response to that, 2) some reject that God would or could speak to someone through a dream. And I think we have to recognize that God can use dreams, particularly in people who do not have access to his Word. Grammatically, this phrase, “relying on their dreams” is connected to the next three phrases; each of which describes how these false teachers use private revelation as an excuse for their own sin and try to get away with it. So...

## 2. **Beware of those who use private revelation for their own desires.** (8)

### *defile the flesh*

To defile the flesh or to pollute their own bodies is an expression that speaks of engaging in any form of sexual immorality. Any person engaged sexually with anyone other than his or her lawfully wedded spouse (of the opposite gender) is defiling his/her own flesh. Sexual immorality is a sin against one’s own body. Why are there so many warnings in our culture about practicing “safe sex.” Because, fundamentally, sex outside of marriage is not safe and never will be safe. But, the biggest problem is not sexually transmitted diseases, though that is certainly a factor, it is what you are doing to your own person. Your flesh, your body is part of you.

By the way, 1 in 5 Americans have or have had a STD. The healthcare cost of this is in the billions of dollars, but that is not Jude’s point is it? Jude is saying that there are people who gain an audience in the church whether publicly or privately and they abuse that position of influence by claiming that it is okay for them to engage in sexual activity because God has given them special permission. No he hasn’t. He never has and he never will. If any person in the church attempts to use their status or reputation to win your trust and then take advantage of you, that person is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Stay away from them.

I need to talk about this for a bit. The Word of God is awesome. It amazes our minds, it captures our hearts, it fires our imagination, it fuels our worship, it engages us at the very core of our being. It not only exposes us at the deepest level, it speaks to us, heals us, and encourages us. The Word of God is so deeply personal because, as Peter said, “*you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*” The greatest and most profound thing that could ever happen to you happened to you by the Word of God. God’s Word matters deeply to you, therefore, those who share God’s Word with you, through teaching, preaching, personal study with you, even at times through music have what feels like

access to your soul. The Word of God creates a relationship of trust. But, it is the Word that is powerful, not the preacher or teacher. But, the preacher and teacher is the means of delivery that God uses, and therefore, there is an enormous responsibility upon him not to abuse that role and use it for his own desires. Trust between a pastor and his people, a teacher and his class, an elder and his flock, is a beautiful and sacred gift to both. And it has to be guarded. Being gifted, being successful, being influential, being well known, is never an excuse for claiming to be an exception to God's Word. You could be one of the most engaging and gifted apologists, theologians, conference speaker in the world, your books could sell in the hundreds of thousands, but God does not give that person or anyone a special dispensation for sin. It happens and it is hard to hear and devastating to those who experience it. There is no special revelation that gives someone a pass for immorality of any kind. Beware of those who act as if they have a secret message that gives them a special pass.

3. **Beware of those who use private revelation to reject authority.** (8)

*reject authority*

What Jude is describing is the seeds of what became known as "Gnosticism." While it was a major influence that the early church had to deal with, this heresy has always been lurking around the church in some form or fashion. Gnosticism is the teaching that there are certain people (Christians) who have special insights that the rest of us don't have. Therefore, these people are special. They get special knowledge, special power, and therefore, special privileges and special rules. They take advantage of the sincere desires that people have to know God's Word and live for him and they tell people that there are secrets to doing that and they know the secrets.

As soon as someone says, "Hey, want to know a secret?" We are tempted, aren't we? What is at the heart of that temptation? The heart of it is that we can know something that others don't know. I believe that this is an expression of our desire to be like God. Isn't that what Satan did in Genesis 3? Hey, want to know a secret? I know something that you don't know and that God doesn't want you to know. When you eat of the fruit of that tree, you will be like God and God is threatened by you! "Really?!" And they were hooked. Let me let you in on a "secret." There are no secrets. Everything that we need to know is here, revealed to us by God. And anyone who uses private revelation, like a dream or a vision to say that he has special prophetic powers to tell you what is going to happen (which YouTube is full of), run. Stay away. These people are imposters! Under guise of special revelation, they draw people into viewing themselves as being the source of authority and wisdom instead of God and in so doing they reject God's authority.

Jude is writing under the direction of the Spirit of God who wants us to be discerning. Only God is absolute authority and because God is absolute authority, anyone who pushes in on that or tries to influence you in a way that you become dependent on them is attempting to become god in your life. This is how cults operate. There is the one person at the top who has special revelation and you need his permission or council to make decisions. That is NOT how the church functions. Run from anything that smells like that.

4. **Beware of those who use private revelation to claim "power."** (8-10)

*blaspheme the glorious ones*

These false teachers in relying on their dreams not only use that as a cover for their own sinful appetites and for acting as if they can ignore God's authority, but they blaspheme the glorious ones. What does that mean? When we look at verses 9-10, we find out what Jude means. Based on the example that Jude uses in 9-10, we should understand "the glorious ones" as being angelic beings who were fallen. Even though demons are FALLEN angels, they are still fallen ANGELS. And you don't mess with the angelic world. Demons are glorious but not in a good way. Angels and demons are real and they are powerful. We respect that.

Verse 9 tells us about a battle between Michael, the archangel and Satan over the body of Moses. The backstory on this is not in the Bible, but the account that Jude refers to illustrates the point that he is making. The story that was handed down was that when Moses died, Michael was sent by God to give Moses' body a proper burial. Satan, however, confronted Michael and contested him by arguing that Moses was guilty of murder and therefore the body of Moses by all rights belonged to him. Moses was not worthy of a proper burial. Michael, could have pointed out that Satan is in no place to argue about what is right or wrong, decent or indecent, moral or immoral. Satan is the most wicked and vile creature in the cosmos who is given completely over to evil. But, Michael, the archangel, even in his powerful position did not rebuke Satan, but says, "The Lord rebuke you." Michael appeals to the Lord (Jesus) to rebuke Satan and Jesus does, which forces Satan to flee so Michael can complete his task.

Jude appeals to this and is saying that if Michael, the archangel, the one named in Daniel as the great prince, the one who in Revelation 12 leads in the battle against the dragon and the evil angels is so humble that he does not presume to rebuke and condemn the devil but appeals to the Lord to do it, then how ignorant, how foolish, how dangerously fat-headed and blind can these false teachers be who presume to denounce and trash-talk demons on their own? They are playing with fire and they are going to be burned.

One of the evidences of these false teachers is bravado. True masculinity and godly manliness is not the same as bravado. It is quite the opposite. These false teachers presume to be so spiritual, so powerful that they mock and make fun of demons. Angels are real and they are powerful, and they are part of a world that we do not know that much about and a world that we need to be aware of, and humbled by. It is true that we are not under Satan's power, but only a fool would mock him. Satan and his demonic forces are not to be worshiped, but they are to be respected. These false teachers were showing off and presuming to have authority that was not theirs. They were putting themselves in danger.

In v.10 Jude says that these false teachers are way out of their league. For them to presume to mock and challenge the angelic world betrays the fact that they have no idea of what they are talking about. There are many movies that are dark and occultic. Those making those movies may be doing it for entertainment and profit, but they have no idea what they are messing with and we don't touch that stuff. Jude is saying that anyone who presumes to denounce demons is going to lose everything because he has no idea of what kind of a world he is messing with. And the fact that he is talking like this reveals that fact. You don't mess with that world without consequences.

## Summary:

In the weeks leading up to the last presidential election, there was a rash of people who had dreams and visions and prophecies in which they announced that God told them that Donald Trump would be re-elected. They were wrong and what is worse, they misrepresented God and they look crazy. But thousands of people believed them about this and other things. It is wrong and it is damaging to the reputation of the gospel. Beware of people who claim private revelation and who want you to follow them. In recent years, the stories of clergy abuse have been overwhelming and sickening. There are people who abuse that trust and ruin people's lives. Only God is Sovereign and has absolute authority. Not us, we cannot handle that. Jude warns us about this. Beware of people who try to make the circle of influence and power smaller and smaller and who try to control everything. What did Jesus do? He shared his authority. What did the apostles do? They shared their authority. What does the church do? It vests its authority into the elders who share it back with the members. What does a good pastor do? He places himself under the authority of the other elders.

How can you/we guard ourselves from being one of these? How can you/we guard our church from one of these? I can think of two things:

- 1) Look carefully and consistently at the life of Christ.

Christ was gentle, meek, lowly and humble. He could confront and be bold when he needed to be, but his life was a life of sacrifice for others which culminated in his death on the cross. He died so that we could be forgiven. He died so that we could have eternal life. He died so that we could live with him and enjoy him forever. He died so that he could share his kingdom with us and so that we could rule and reign with him. Look at the humility, the generosity, the sacrifice, the patience and deep, deep love of Christ. Christ is our focus and Christ is to be our personality. Then...

- 2) Look carefully at the polity, practice and personality of a church.

The polity of the church speaks of the structure of leadership and how decisions are made and how people are treated. Polity, politics and policies are related words. Is there a culture of trust in the congregation? Is there accountability and an openness to inquiry or are things unnecessarily secretive and held by a select few? A culture like over time tends to provide an unhealthy atmosphere. And what is the personality of the church? Is there a lot of self-promotion? Is the leader's face and name plastered everywhere? Does the church have a branding department? Imagine going to heaven and meeting Paul and telling him that you worked for the branding department in your church. Imagine how much better the early church would have been if they only had a branding department? Ok, I'm being snarky, but you get the point. Our mission is NOT to preach ourselves and craft our image through technology. Our mission is to make much of Christ. We cannot make much of Christ if we think that the church is there to make much of us.