“History: Did You Know…?”

February 21, 2016

Romans 15:1-7

Do you think history is worth your time and effort? *“We are allowing students to graduate college with the historical knowledge of a 12th grader. Not a single liberal arts college, except the military academies and only five of the top 50 public universities require even one survey of American history.”* [Michael Poliakoff, Vice President of American Council of Trustees and Alumni in an article by Cal Thomas on 6/4/2015 on the anniversary of D-Day found on www.washingtonexaminer.com].

*“Only 18 percent of U.S. colleges require students to take a class in U.S. history or government in order to graduate.”* [Anne Neal, President of American Council of Trustees and Alumni in an article by Blake Neff of www.dailycaller.com].

*"History is a discipline in decline. There is a profound ignorance not only among students but among their teachers as well.”* [Oscar Handlin, University Professor Emeritus at Harvard University; found on www.goacta.org].

Now, should I preach history? I’ve titled today’s sermon “History: Did You Know …?” Shall we pray? *“LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Can you use your imagination with me today? Imagine if you will, a place where there are very few books and very few schools and a place where you did not have your own copy of the Bible to read? Yet, in this very same place, history is very well-known. Where might that place be?

I found it. Would you please take your Bible with me and open it to the Book of Jude?

Here is where Jude falls in the history of the Early Church. Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote this letter before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed under the Roman General Titus in the year 70 A.D.

And just where is this place where there were very few books and where very few people had their own copy of the Bible?

To answer that question, follow with me as I read Jude verse three. Jude 1:3 *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

*(4) For there are certain men crept in unawares, 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. (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.*

*(6) And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (7) Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

*(8) Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. (9) Yet Michael the archangel, 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.”*

The people Jude wrote to were neither illiterate nor were they uneducated even though they had no public schools to attend and even though they had no copy of the Bible they could call their own.

And how do I know that? Simple. Jude writes about the history of Egypt. He writes about the history of the angels. He writes about Sodom and Gomorrah. He writes about Michael, the Archangel. And look on down at verse eleven. He refers to the “way of Cain,” verse eleven; the “error of Balaam,” and even the “gainsaying of Korah.”

You and I have an education. We have our own copy of the Bible. But do we know about the history of Egypt and the angels, about Sodom and Gomorrah, and the time when Michael disputed with Satan about the body of Moses? And about Cain and Balaam and about Korah?

And you’d wonder, wouldn’t you, how could the Christians of the First Century could be so well-informed when it comes to the Scriptures.

Folks, we are living in the last days. And today fewer and fewer people know what the Bible says and what the Bible teaches. So, there are some very important lessons we can find in this little epistle.

The Bible is filled with truth. Here’s what we find in Jude. We find Jude, the brother of Jesus reminding the Christians of things that happened thousands of years earlier.

Verse five. Jude 1:5 *“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.”*

Did you know that the LORD destroyed a number of people who came out of Egypt?

Folks, Jude knew his Bible. And his readers had at one time known this piece of Bible history; but had forgotten it. Maybe you too have read it and forgotten it. It’s found in the Book of Numbers and I want you to see it with me.

Here’s the story. Numbers 14: 26 *“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, (27) How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. (28) Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:*

*(29) Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me. (30) Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.*

*(31) But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. (32) But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. (33) And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.*

*(34) After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. (35) I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.*

*(36) And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, (37) Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. (38) But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.”*

Twelve leaders, one from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel were sent into the Promised Land to scope it out and to return with a report on what they could expect when they got there. Ten of the men gave a very worrisome report. He’s that report.

Numbers 13: 25 *“And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. (26) And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.*

*(27) And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. (28) Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.*

*(29) The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. (30) And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*

*(31) But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. (32) And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*

*(33) And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

These men so influenced the people who had come out of Egypt that they began to complain against the LORD and to worry and refuse to go forward into the land of Canaan in faith.

And then Moses tells us what God did with these people.Numbers 14: 29*“Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me. (30) Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.*

*(31) But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. (32) But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. (33) And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.”*

Jude knew is Bible well. But he also knows our own hearts, doesn’t he. He takes us back to 1446 years before Christ. And he uses a story from the Books of Moses to remind the Christians of the sin of unbelief. Jude 1:5 *“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****.*

God had miraculously transported the Jews from Egypt across a huge body of water, the Red Sea. And now these very same people began to walk in unbelief. And Jude’s history lesson is a lesson for every heart.

But Jude wasn’t the only one to delve into the history of Israel after they had come through the Exodus. Paul also refers to it when he writes to the Corinthians. Here’s how he uses this very same story. I Corinthians 10:5 *“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

*(7) Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (8) Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. (9) Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

*(10) Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. (11) Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”*

So, how does it profit me to know that section of history? When we say that the Bible is filled with truth, what do we really mean? We mean that God is the God of all truth.

The history of the past is critical to each life in the present. All truth comes from God Himself. And we need all the truth; especially the truth of history. The truth of history is the truth of God. Bible history has been recorded for you and me to learn and profit from and to be warned from.

Did you know that God was very serious? And did you know that He is especially serious about complainers and worriers and those who refuse to obey and move forward in faith? And did you know that He was that serious about unbelief?

This story is history. It’s a true story. But it’s not mere history, is it? Nor is it merely a true story. It’s a reminder of your relationship to the LORD. History, especially the history or Israel is recorded to speak to your heart. God really doesn’t want complainers. He really doesn’t want His children to live in fear and worry. And He certainly doesn’t want unbelievers to influence His people.

Look again at Jude’s words. Jude 1:5 *“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.”*

The key phrase here is “them that believed not.”

Do you ever find yourself thinking like these Jews? Do you ever find yourself acting like them? Do you ever find yourself complaining like them? Do you ever find yourself deciding to not believe something God has said?

Usually what happens when we read and study history, we become judges instead of letting the Holy Spirit be our Judge. We see how terrible these people were. We note how ungrateful they were after all God had done for them. And we read about them being complainers. And we forget that the Bible is a mirror of our own hearts. It shows us --- us.

And if we neglect to take the Bible to heart, we end up allowing spiritual calluses to grow about our hearts.

Folks, you don’t have to learn something new every time you read and study your Bible. Instead, what you and I really need is to be open to the Holy Spirit reminding us of our own sins.

So, what is God’s answer to the complainers and those who walk in unbelief? His answer is death. Death is always the end result of sin. James tells us that “sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.”

So, now what? What are you going to do with the history that Jude brings to your attention? These sins are the sins of the heart. They aren’t the outward ones like lying and stealing and idolatry. Folks, God had already answered that convic-tion in your heart. He’s taken all your sins upon Himself and received the punishment you deserve. And He’s calling you to Himself. He’s calling you to receive His free gift of forgiveness for all your sins; both the ones no one knows about and the outward ones.

Will you let God bring His conviction to your heart and turn you into a right direction? Will you submit to His ways? Will you surrender your right to be right?

Jesus shed His blood for your sins. That’s history. And that’s the truth. And that blood is the only ground that brings you into a right relationship with God.

Yet, we all sin. So, what is there to be done if you as a Christian are guilty of unbelief and murmuring and being fearful and worrying? Repent. Change your mind.

Come to Him in humility and the awareness that your sins are the only thing that keeps you from enjoying a close walk with Him. Come in confession. Say the same thing about your sins that He says about them.

See them for what they are; an extreme offense to Him. Then in confession, accept the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse them and restore you to a place of close fellowship with your Creator and Savior.

He says this in I John 1:9 *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

History should move you to action. So, what will it be today? Will you submit to Him? Will you surrender to Him? Will you come back to Him? It’s your choice. Let God have His way today? Will you pray “I will obey you, LORD, I surrender my thoughts to your thoughts? I confess my complaining spirit. I confess my unbelief.” What will it be?

Will you surrender yourself to His strength and control? Here’s the Prayer of Surrender. *“Father, I surrender my whole life to you today; again. You have saved me for Yourself. Do with me whatever You choose. I am available for You to strengthen me to deal with everything I have to face today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Sing Hymn # 116 “Name Of All Majesty”