

# Will the western churches survive the 21st century?

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you turn with me to the letter of Jude that we read, that would be a great help.
- Will the Western churches survive the 21st century? That's the question that we're going to be asking in these next weeks as we study this letter of Jude.
- You may think that it's a strangely pessimistic question, until we realise that many of the churches that we read about in the New Testament didn't even survive the 2nd century.
- Churches that were founded by the apostles themselves were dead, gone, finished by the end of the 2nd century. It's quite staggering, isn't it?
- So will the Western churches survive the 21st century? Well, to help us answer that question, we're beginning this evening a series of studies on this last letter in the New Testament, the letter of Jude.
- [ 1 : 13 ] In our church Bibles, if you have one, I think I'm right in seeing it, it sits nicely on one page, so you can see the whole thing. It's a very short letter. In my Bible, it's very annoying.
- It goes over onto the 2nd page. I keep having to turn back and forward. That's because they put a little introduction at the top of it. And the introduction is of no help at all, so it would have been much better to just have the letter of Jude on one page.
- But there we are. Maybe your Bible has it all on one page. The letter of Jude has been much neglected in the church over the years. Certainly most modern scholarship has little time for it.
- They don't like its tone, and they don't like its content. Described generally, says one scholar, as mediocre. And that shouldn't really surprise us.
- Jude, as we've read, doesn't really go in much for beating about the bush with pleasantries, does he? There's no shades of grey in the letter of Jude. There's no finely balanced diplomacy.
- [ 2 : 14 ] It's quite the reverse, isn't it? He talks quite plainly about perversion of the faith, about unnatural desires, about rebellion.
- He talks about judgment and the gloom of utter darkness, reserved for those he's opposing, because he says quite bluntly in verse 19, that these people in the church that he's talking about, yes, in the church, are godless, he says, divisive, worldly, and devoid of the Spirit.
- You don't tend to get that sort of language in the reports to our General Assembly. I don't think Jude would be terribly popular if he pitched up at our General Assembly and used that kind of language, would he?
- Or at our presbytery meetings. So, no wonder then, that the page is very often quietly turned over and Jude and his message is left muzzled in our Bibles.

Even in the robust times of the Reformation, you might be surprised to know Jude was not always terribly appreciated. Martin Luther felt that the Gospel message, quotes, didn't shine very luminously through this letter.

[ 3 : 27 ] He felt it was largely, and I'm quoting again, largely an epistle against bishops, priests, and monks. Well, Martin Luther had plenty to say about those kind of people himself, so maybe he didn't feel he needed any help from the letter of Jude.

I'm not sure. But if we go back a little bit further to the second century, we'll find a very different story. Jude was, in fact, very widely popular and greatly prized in the second century church.

The great Origen, one of the church fathers, welcomed it as, quotes, packed with sound words of heavenly grace.

That's rather different, isn't it? And it's surely no accident that its message was so treasured in the second century because it was so very relevant in the second century.

These were times when the faith, when the very future of the church itself, were very much at stake, especially from threats coming from within the professing church.

[ 4 : 33 ] The second century was a time of great profusion of heresies, and virtually all of them arose from within the professing church. There was docetism, and gnosticism, and marcionism, and countless other kinds of isms.

And men like Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and others became what were known as the great apologists, the great defenders of the faith against all these corruptions and heresies.

Most of them, I say it again, most of them are rising from within, not from outside, the professing church. And, of course, that's exactly what Jude's addressing, isn't it?

We read it. Verse 4 is especially plain, isn't it? And certain people, he says, have crept in unnoticed. And what are they doing? They're perverting the grace of God.

In other words, they're perverting and changing the one true apostolic faith, which Jude says in verse 3, was once and for all delivered to the saints, to all the church of God.

[ 5 : 35 ] So we shouldn't be so quick to deprecate Jude's letter, or his straight talking, or his powerful language that packs a punch.

His letter is urgent. It has an urgent tone and a less than positive tone, precisely because the situation was urgent. The very future of the Christian churches was at stake.

It was under threat. And that meant that the eternal future of individual people was at stake. So in verse 3, Jude tells us that he's compelled to write as he does.

He's compelled to call them to arms, to call them to fight, to contend, he says. That's a very, very strong word in the Greek, to contend, to agonize for the faith.

It's not because he isn't writing about the common salvation that they shared, but it's because he's writing about that salvation in the way that it needs to be addressed at certain times in order to ensure that the church is not destroyed.

[ 6 : 48 ] He's writing about the salvation, but he's writing about it in the way that people then needed to hear it and take seriously. Well, the very future of the church was at stake.

That's just something important for us to note because a responsible church leader, somebody who's been given charge of the flock of God, can't always write what they want.

They can't always preach what they want. They can't always preach and teach what they would choose to do if they could do as they were pleasing. And nor can they just focus always on the positive, on the lovely things, on the warmly encouraging things.

It's important that we realize that. That's the difference, isn't it, between the visiting preacher and the pastor who has to care for the sheep all the time. When I go to preach in another church or at a conference or something as a visitor, I love to choose a message of real particular encouragement.

I love to choose something general, something positive that will encourage the people. And that's right and proper, of course. I can't see myself, for example, going as a visitor to another church and choosing something well, like Matthew chapter 23, the seven woes to the institutional church.

[ 8 : 06 ] Not what I would choose. But when I'm here, week by week, and week in, week out, I don't have that luxury. I can't just preach the lovely things, the purple passages.

Well, I suppose I could, and no doubt it would make me very popular. But what it would do is it would put this church in great danger. Because God's Word is full of hard things, it's full of tough things, it's full of warnings that we must hear, or else the very future of the church is in danger.

And that means that our Christian lives would be in danger too. And Jude knows that. Jude knows that a faithful minister of God's Word can't just be a positive teacher.

He knows that he must teach the necessary negatives. And therefore, he must risk offense. He must risk rejection. He must, if he's to be a true servant of Jesus Christ and not a false one.

He must, if he's to be a true under-shepherd of the flock of God, like the true shepherd, the Lord Jesus himself, and not a false one. And it's when the wolves threaten that Jesus tells us in John chapter 10, doesn't he?

[ 9 : 25 ] It's when the wolves threaten that you can tell the difference between a true shepherd and a false one. It's the hireling who flees, says Jesus. The hireling who won't tackle the threats to the flock because he doesn't care for the sheep.

And just so, it's the uncaring, unloving pastor who will avoid the hard sayings of Scripture, the hard sayings of Jesus himself. There's things I've had to preach from this pulpit that I would have, well, almost rather die than have to preach.

And I dare say there'll be things like that again in the future, things that you find very hard to hear from this pulpit, things that I find extremely hard to say. But friends, let me tell you this, if the day ever comes that every message that you hear from this pulpit is one-sided, is popular, is a happy message, that's not because I will have become more compassionate or caring or loving.

It'll be because, very likely, I've abandoned the truth. It'll be because I've turned aside to man-pleasing, to wanting to be popular, to have an easier life.

It won't tell you that I've grown to love you more. What that will tell you is that I don't love you at all. And I need you to pray daily for me that that day never comes, never comes for me, never comes for any of the rest of us in leadership in this church who have to bring the truth of God to you.

[ 11 : 05 ] I have to ask you to pray that. I pray that myself. So we mustn't dismiss Jude, we mustn't ignore Jude, we mustn't condemn him for his robust and clear letter which packs a real punch and it does, doesn't it?

We're going to see that. He was constrained by God to write as he did. It was necessary, he says in verse 3. And it was God who constrained the church to preserve this letter for us.

That's why it's in our Bibles. So we're going to give it our full attention this autumn term. We're going to turn to it for most of our Sunday evenings, allowing, I think, for times when I'm away and there may be others preaching.

I should think we've probably run to about nine studies. It may seem an awful lot for a short book. But we really do need to get to grips with this powerfully urgent letter. In recent weeks we've studied one long book, Job, and we've taken rather a bird's eye view through it, jumping through rather quickly.

Before that we took another long book, Daniel, and we worked through it chapter by chapter. This now is a rather different thing. We're going to spend a long time on one very short little portion of Scripture. Quite a different exercise, just 25 verses.

[ 12 : 21 ] But I think we'll find that there's a great deal of treasure for us to dig up here. Things to lift out and polish and admire and begin to appreciate. Not least in Jude's exposition of the Old Testament which forms most of the middle part of the letter.

Jude applies it directly to the church today. That's one of the major contributions of his letter. And we're going to find that the pressing issues that the churches faced back when Jude was writing bear amazingly striking similarity to the present issues in our churches today, especially in the Western world.

And so if it was necessary for Jude to write in this way, we can be sure that it's equally necessary for us to read Jude today, to mark his words, to learn, to inwardly digest words that speak to us today.

One scholar, J.N.D. Kelly, writing of both to Peter and Jude, puts it like this in his introduction. These letters, he says, these letters reveal remarkable spiritual insight and power.

The problem they wrestle with, too, is real and obdurate. In particular, the tension between law and liberty and Christian ethics is as live an issue today as it apparently was in the first and second century.

[ 13 : 46 ] And their warning of divine judgment, their interest in the second coming, and the appeal they both make to the teaching of the Lord and his apostles as the decisive touchstone are as challenging to a church hypnotized by the fashionable claims of secularism and confused by conflicting voices as when they were first written down.

I think that puts it very well and it's all the more powerful considering it comes from a scholar who's really from the critical school and who has some rather strange ideas about some of what Jude says.

It's all the more powerful. So tonight, we're just dipping our feet into the water. We're getting ourselves acquainted with Jude and his message, so we're just going to do four things.

I'm asking four questions. Who, to whom, why, and what? Who is writing? To whom is he writing? Or who is he writing to, if you didn't have a sticky grammar teacher like mine, up with which to put?

Why is he writing? And what's his message? Obviously, that last question is going to run right through the series, but we want to just get a handle on the big picture tonight.

[ 14 : 59 ] So first then, who? Verse 1, Jude introduces himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. So who is this Jude, or Judas, in fact, as it reads in the Greek?

Don't really need to explain, do I, why he turned his name into Jude rather than Judas. There's only one famous Judas. And of course, the Beatles song would never have quite sounded the same, would it, if it hadn't been for Jude?

Well, some scholars take all sorts of extraordinary steps to try and decide who this person Jude was. some of them seem to be obsessed with the idea that people who wrote the New Testament were pretending always to be somebody that they weren't.

But even Kelly, who I quoted, tells us that there can be no doubt whom this writer is telling us himself that he is. There's only two pairs of brothers in the Old Testament, James and Jude, and that's the brothers of the Lord Jesus himself, the half-brothers of Jesus.

You can read of that in Matthew 13, verse 55. That's the James, his brother, who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the letter of James almost certainly.

[ 16 : 09 ] Read about that James in Acts 15 and in Galatians chapter 2, Paul says he was a pillar of the church. So that's Jude, the brother of James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus himself.

And there's a message just in that simple fact alone, isn't there? You remember, don't you, during Jesus' earthly ministry that we're told none of Jesus' family, none of Jesus' brothers believed in him. John 7, 5 tells us plainly, none of them believed in him.

So here's a half-brother of Jesus who grew up with the enormous privilege of being around Jesus Christ, the Savior, all his life. And yet only after Jesus' death and resurrection did he come to real faith and discipleship.

And from there, on into Christian leadership. Background alone isn't enough, is it? There must be real faith, there must be a real decision to stand up and own the faith of your background, to be yourself a follower of Jesus Christ, not just as a family tie, but as a submission to servanthood, to slavery, is what the word actually says, a slave of Jesus Christ.

No privileged background, not even one as privileged as Jude's, growing up with Jesus himself. No privileged background can substitute for that. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

[ 17 : 35 ] Privilege brings huge responsibility. That's one of the big themes of Jude, the privilege that you have demands responsibility of us. I don't know if that's a word very particularly for some of our young people.

It's very likely that you have been around the Saviour all your life. You've grown up in a Christian home, just like Jude. But you can't rest on your background alone.

That privilege demands that you should take hold of your calling with both hands to grasp it, to be a servant of Jesus Christ. It could be that you're just heading away from home.

You're going to college or university. That's a big test. It's a time of great moment for you. Are you going to stand for Jesus Christ?

Maybe you've just come to Glasgow from a Christian home. Well, what about you? These days and these next few weeks may be turning points in your life. Your whole future may be decided.

[ 18 : 39 ] It's a huge blessing, isn't it, to have a Christian home and a Christian upbringing. But all that blessing will only come to fruition if you yourself become a servant of Jesus Christ.

It's then that all the privilege that you've known will begin to bear fruit in your life. It's the children of believing families that ought to be those who are marked out for Christian leadership because they have such great privilege, the nurture of the faith from the very earliest days.

That's a great challenge to all of us who are parents, isn't it? It's not just belief that we desire for our children. We want them to lead for Christ.

We want them to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. That's the way we're to bring them up. But it's also a challenge for those who are children, for young people, for students, isn't it? Will you be a servant of Jesus Christ like Jude?

Why doesn't Jude mention that he himself is a brother of Jesus? Well, no doubt, humility, is involved. He is only a servant of the risen redeemer, the lord and master of all.

[ 19 : 51 ] It could be that everybody knew anyway, that's very likely, but more importantly, I think because Jude's whole letter is written to challenge those who do put a focus on themselves and their ways and their own personal authority and teaching.

Jude, by contrast, despite all of his credentials, is calling on the church not to follow him but to follow the one faith. As he says in verse 4, the faith once for all delivered to all the saints, the common faith.

His only authority will not be some special pleading of his own family. It'll be the word of truth, the gospel itself. That's the faith, it's the only faith. So Jude is a servant of Jesus Christ Christ.

And that's a sure mark of a genuine Christian leader. He's humbled and he's humble. Well, that's who. Second, to whom? Verse 2, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

That is, to those who hold to the universal Christian faith, to the saints, to those who are in the church of Jesus Christ. We're not told exactly where this church is or more likely these churches as we are, for example, in Paul's letter to Corinthians or to Ephesus or so on.

[ 21 : 15 ] But it's very clear that Jude knew very well the churches that he was writing to. It's obvious that he knew the people. Verse 3, he calls them beloved. Again in verse 20, beloved. He knew about their past, he knew about their current situation.

Seems likely that there were churches in Palestine, Jewish churches. And if that's true, according to Richard Byrom, one of the scholars who writes on Jude, it may very well be one of the very earliest letters of the New Testament.

Now there's several things to say about these people that Jude was writing to, real people in real churches. It's very important. First, these are real words written to real people in churches just like ours.

There's nothing vague and general about this letter of Jude. It's not a general meditation on the nature of faith, on the doctrine of God, or on any sort of abstruse matters of theology.

No. Like all the New Testament letters, it's down to earth. It's specific, it's pointed. It's words directly from God to a particular people at a particular time and place, and for a very specific purpose.

[ 22 : 31 ] He writes, appealing to you, he says, to contend for the faith. In other words, these are writings that look for reception and also response from the people.

That's how God has given us his word in all the scriptures. It's very personal, it's targeted. It's not a textbook of theology. Much of these things are important.

My shells are full of them. But the focus of God's revelation is on people, direct words for his church.

And the form of his revelation is as important as the content of it. It addresses us, just as it addressed the original hearers. It addresses us precisely because the churches and their needs and their dangers have hardly changed at all since the very earliest days.

And that's the truth. Indeed, one of Jude's great messages in this letter is that from the very beginning, right back from the time of the book of Genesis, the issues facing God's people have hardly changed.

[ 23 : 38 ] And we'll see that as we go on. All the examples that Jude uses are from the Old Testament. God's words are for his people, are for his church, as they stand.

He doesn't write for academics. He doesn't write so that scholars can fiddle about and write books about these things, although, of course, scholars can help us.

He doesn't write so that theologians can systematize everything with clinical precision and order into correct doctrine, although, of course, correct doctrine is important and helps us.

No, God's word is for specific people, for specific churches, and therefore they must be heard by his church. church. And that's why what we do Sunday by Sunday is expand books and sections of the Bible as they stand, as entities in themselves, because that's the way God's given them.

We mustn't muzzle the word. We must allow Jude to speak to his readers. And we'll hear Jude speak to us today as we listen with care to what he said to his first readers then.

[ 24 : 46 ] That's the first thing. Second, it's written to whole churches, not just to individuals, and that's very important too. Jude's great concern is for the health and preservation of whole Christian communities.

That's plain all the way through. His quotations from the Old Testament have a corporate aspect to them. It's about the whole people of God. In verses 20 to 23 that we read at the end, he talks about building yourselves up, edifying yourselves.

That's a corporate thing. It's a thing you do one to another. You can't do it, in fact, to yourself. So we must be ready to apply Jude's teaching on the corporate level.

That means it involves all of us. He wants a response not just from me or from you as individuals, but from the whole church. It's written to all of us. Third, Jude's many warnings, and some of them are dire warnings, aren't they, about judgment.

These warnings must apply to real Christians in real churches. We'll come back to that, but we can't get away from the fact that he's writing to beloved brethren, to Christian people that he knows, to people that he says are called, beloved, and kept for Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 07 ] And yet, before these beloved people called and kept, he holds up warnings and examples of verses 5 to 19, he applies them again and again directly, these Old Testament examples, to the New Testament church.

Remember, he says, in other words, learn the lesson, he says in verse 5, that a saved people afterwards were destroyed because of unbelief and rebellion.

Pretty stark stuff, isn't it? But we've got to take that seriously. These things in the Old Testament are written for us. Paul says the same things in 1 Corinthians 10.

So be careful, he says, to the church in Corinth, if you thinking you're standing firm, be careful, unless you fall. So these things we will read in the letter of Jude are real warnings, even for us, for real Christians, for real churches.

We mustn't let our theology of the sovereignty of God, we mustn't let that blunt the point that Jude is definitely making. It's the message of Scripture. That brings us to the third question.

[ 27 : 15 ] Why? Well, we've already touched on this, haven't we? These churches, with Jude's beloved people in them, these churches are at risk. They're in jeopardy, they're in danger, and their very survival, in fact, their very salvation is under threat.

Why? Because within the churches, there are people with influence who are peddling false teaching. Teaching that's capable, he says in verse 4, of perverting the grace of God, and thereby denying the uniqueness of the lordship of Jesus Christ, the only sovereign, the only master.

And so Jude's prayer in verse 2 isn't just a standard greeting to his letter, is it? They really need God's mercy, and his peace, and his love.

They need it in abundance, because they are at risk. The very survival of apostolic churches is at stake. And Jude's under no illusion of that.

Isn't that staggering? I wonder if we take that nearly seriously enough today. My title for this series is the question, will the western churches survive the 21st century?

[ 28 : 28 ] Or what do you think? If we think about the centuries since the Reformation, the church in the west has been the great missionary church, hasn't it? And yet now, it's increasingly a story of Christian churches being riddled with the pressures to pervert the grace of God into sensuality.

At the moment, the particular headline movement is the pro-homosexual practice lobby, but there's lots of others. And the pressure to deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only sovereign and Lord.

That's true in Scotland, that's true in our own denomination, it's true in others too. And yet many people seem to glibly assume that, well, it'll all be fine, everything will just go on as it's done before.

What would Jude say to that? Jude would say, wake up, recognize the danger, you're stumbling into disaster, this is a real and present danger.

Already you're off course, you must remember and learn the lessons of the past. You must turn to God alone who can keep you from stumbling. You must rebuild on the foundations of the true gospel, the most holy faith.

[ 29 : 43 ] Realize, remember, rebuild. These are three concepts that we're going to see coming up again and again in our study of Jude. So will the churches survive this century in the West?

In Britain, in Scotland? Let me tell you, it's an open question. It really is an open question. It will all depend upon whether the churches in these lands will hear and heed the message of Jude and whether they will truly contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

There's no room for complacency. History alone teaches us the folly of that. Just think. Read Revelation chapters 1 to 3, the letters to the churches in Asia Minor warning them about lampstands being removed.

Every one of those churches ceased to exist. Just think back to the Reformation, to 16th century France, which was a nation alive with a burgeoning evangelical faith as missionaries streamed out from the great cities, Strasbourg, Geneva, and so on.

Look at France today. It's one of the deadest places in Europe, spirits. You just ask Ewan Dodds, he's there just at the moment, preaching the gospel to people there.

[ 31 : 03 ] Think about Puritan New England, the place of the great awakening in the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards and revivals. Look at what happened. As these fine gospel focused Puritan churches degenerated into Unitarianism and deadness, killed off Christian faith.

All these things happened. And so often, you will find, if you read the history books, that the poison spread from within the professing church.

Not from persecution outside. In the history of the church, persecution has usually brought life and vitality and growth. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church.

But false teaching within the church, that, that's deadly. So why is Jude writing? Why is his letter in our Bible?

Because, friends, every Christian church is one generation away, at the most, from extinction. Even churches that are called, beloved, kept for Jesus Christ, says Jude.

[ 32 : 19 ] And we must take him seriously. We too need abundant mercy and peace and love. If we too are going to contend for the faith, if we are going to be kept from stumbling. So the last question, what?

What is Jude's message? Well, that's going to occupy us for the coming weeks. But I want you to see tonight that it's basically just two things. But two things that people so often seem to get in a great tangle about and see as conflicting with each other.



And yet Jude sees them as going hand in hand and being the key to the whole life of faith. Two things. God's sovereign purpose and our solemn responsibility.

He points us to God's sovereign purpose of a glorious future for his church and, therefore, to our solemn responsibility to live for that future now, contending for that faith.

In the Bible, God's sovereignty and our human responsibility are never seen to be at odds with one another. Never. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It's because God is absolutely sovereign that we are absolutely responsible to him.

[ 33 : 28 ] And so a real grasp of God's sovereign grace in salvation never leads ever to presumption and to complacency. No. It's quite the reverse.

A real grasp of God's sovereignty leads to perseverance, to contending for the faith. We don't say we just let go and let God. We say we listen to God and so we get up and go.

And we do so because we can trust God's sovereign power to keep us. And that's exactly what Jude is saying to his readers. He's saying God is powerful to keep you till the day of glory.

He really is. You can trust his promises to guide and protect you. Despite the assaults all around, despite those who want to derail your faith, you can trust him and therefore you can and you must arm yourselves for the struggle.

The agonizing struggle. Therefore you must persevere to the end. Do you see how Jude has enveloped his letter with the sovereign grace of God?

[ 34 : 34 ] That's the framework. It's the whole structure that holds everything else together. Before he gets to the hard hitting challenge and the warnings not to stumble, not to fall away, before all that he shouts to his readers, God is sovereign.

And he repeats it at the end. Look at verse 1. Called, beloved, kept. You see, God's sovereign power, the power of the triune God is at work.

Their call that speaks of the Spirit's work in regeneration in the past. They're beloved by the Father. That great reassurance of God's love for them now in the present.

They're kept for Jesus Christ. Well, that's the Christian hope, isn't it? The future glory of the full salvation that we wait for. Look at verse 24 at the very end of the letter.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before his presence in glory. Do you see, God's sovereign power, his purpose of grace surrounds us.

[ 35 : 42 ] But for Jude, that doesn't mean presumption, does it? No, it doesn't. We have this great salvation. We are people of faith, but that means we contend for the faith.

We are kept for Jesus Christ, says verse 1, for the day of glory. We are kept from stumbling, says verse 24. God has a sovereign purpose. But what that means, says Jude, is that we have a sovereign responsibility to keep ourselves.

Look at verse 21. Keep yourselves in the love of God. Verse 20. Build yourselves up in the most holy faith. You see, that's the evidence that God's sovereign power is at work in the church.

Not that we're all sitting back doing nothing, but that we're at work. We've understood God's sovereignty not if we're sitting about, speaking about election and predestination and doing nothing, either because, well, we assume we're in and therefore we don't have to do anything, or we fear that we're out and therefore we can't possibly do anything.

Never. That's absolutely foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. Absolutely contrary to Jude's message here. To see how Jude repeats this word, keep.

[ 37 : 01 ] He's absolutely sure of God's sovereign keeping power. For his own, for his people, for glory, and, as a matter of fact, for his opponents as well.

He's kept the angels in eternal chains. He will keep the opponents that he speaks about in verse 13 in chains for judgment also. Yes, God is sovereign to keep.

And yet Jude is just as clear about the church's responsibility to keep themselves from danger. And despite danger, to keep themselves for Jesus Christ and for the one Lord and Master.

And that's what Jude's letter is all about. That's what he's writing. He's telling his beloved people how to keep themselves for the day of Christ. How to keep themselves in the love of God, in the faith that they share.

So will there be a Christian church in the West in the 22nd century? Will there be a Christian church in Scotland in the next century?

[ 38 : 12 ] Well, says Jude, that's in God's hands, of course. But he also says he's put it in your hands. The real question, says Jude to us, is will we contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints?

And that's the question that we need to face in these coming weeks. And with Jude as our teacher, if we will listen to him, then we will find the help that we need to contend for the faith, to keep ourselves as the sovereign God himself, thus, by his Spirit, keeps us as we listen to him.

Well, that's for coming weeks, but let's pray.