

The Warning of God's Judgment

Jude 5-16

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Turn in your Bible to Jude.

In a closet of our home lies a small box. There's nothing obviously conspicuous about this box. But inside the box are very important letters. Inside the box are letters that Jayne and I wrote to each other while I was in college and we were dating. Jayne was here in Ohio, I was going to school in Iowa and we wrote often. These letters are somewhat embarrassing today to read because they are so romantic and heartfelt and mushy and sometimes silly. Why do we keep these letters? Are we afraid we will forget? Why do we read letters from 1976 that make us blush and become embarrassed? It isn't because we are afraid we will forget. It is because reading these letters brings back more than memories.

The Bible is full of calls for us to remember things. The reason, of course, lies not in our stupidity, but in the importance of memory in biblical terms. We are not told to remember something simply because we might temporarily have forgotten it or because the pressures of the day tempt us to adopt different priorities. Remembering in the Bible is a duty, an act of will.

God told Moses to instruct the Israelites to wear tassels on their clothes, "so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute your selves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes".

When Christians celebrate the bread and cup together, they do it "in remembrance" of the Lord Jesus. We are not in danger of forgetting the fact of Jesus death; but he wants us constantly to recall its significance and remember that he will return.

Jude knows perfectly well that his readers already know the basic Bible stories he is going to tell them, but it is clear from their behavior that they do not understand them.

The Warnings: Three Examples from the Old Testament (5-7)

Jude gives us first a series of three warnings from the Old Testament. These are three examples of the fact that rebellion against God does not succeed.

"Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

In verse five we see the people of Israel. We see that God delivered his people out of Egypt. This deliverance came to dominate Old Testament thinking as a pattern of God's saving redemption of his people. Christians took over this model as a way of teaching about the cross and the salvation of Jesus Christ accomplished there. Jesus himself taught us to do that, calling his death an Exodus, in Luke chapter 9 verse 31. The alarming part of this account for Jude is God's later intervention when he destroyed the generation that he had earlier rescued. The drastic difference between the two divine interventions was caused by one simple factor. In the second, the people of Israel did not believe. Despite the numerous promises God had given them, and the numerous proofs of his power, when they were actually faced with the task of acting upon those promises they showed a lack of faith.

We too lie between two great events in history. **Behind** us is the cross, which provides the only possible escape from the judgment which lies **before** us. The only way to gain the benefit from that is to believe it **now**. But there our people in our churches who look and sound like the people of God, but who will not be saved on the last day, because they rebel against God's promises and rule. Like the Israelites in the desert, they do not believe, and in consequence they will face God in judgment.

In verse six we see a second example of an Old Testament judgment on the angels of heaven. Jude is likely referring to the strange incident in Genesis six when men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. The angels have some position of authority, their areas of God given responsibility. But they were not satisfied with the role God had given them, and crossed the boundaries by intermarriage with humans. The angels could not keep their place, so God has kept those same angels until the future judgment. God's judgment, then, is inescapable, even though it may be delayed.

Jude's third warning from the Old Testament in verse seven speaks of the Gentiles in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, a well-used biblical example of judgment. In fact, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah is mention 20 times in the Bible. The destruction that hit Sodom and the other "cities of the plain" serves as an example to us of God's final judgment.

- Israel had contempt for God's rule.
- Angels had contempt for God's glory
- Gentiles had contempt for God's law.

The angels had the blessings of heaven, the Israelites as God's people and Sodom of the world. But the angels upon their apostasy lost heaven, the murmuring Israelites were shut out of Canaan, and the sodomites were, together with their fruitful land, destroyed.

These are not just examples; they are warnings of what will happen in the future on a far greater scale. No happy restoration to God awaits those who suffer a punishment of eternal fire.

In every generation there are defectors, deceivers, and scoffers that infiltrate the church. We must be prepared to proclaim the gospel – and we have to get the gospel right! And so to the church today we proclaim with Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

The Dreamers (8-10)

In between the Old Testament examples and another series of examples Jude talks about those who rely on dreams. Verse eight, “yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. In like manner to what? To those in verses 4-7 above.

“These dreamers” identifies the source of their false teaching – it comes from the fantasy realm of their own sinful minds. They lack the foundation of the truth so they just make it up. False teachers need a basis of authority. And since it isn’t God’s Word, it is visions and dreams, God speaking to them, etc. It looks as if the issue facing Jude was that under the cloak of a pretended revelation from God, these dreamers are laying claim to a position of inspired leadership within Jude’s church, and the members are too sleepy to notice what is being smuggled in under their noses.

Paul had visions and revelations but he never allowed them to become of any authority for him. In fact, In 2 Corinthians 12 he says that they gain him nothing so he doesn’t boast in them. They can never be verified so what is the point? And he had so many of them that he may have been tempted to boast and so God gave him a thorn in the flesh.

We see three things that identify these dreamers.

First they defile the flesh. A major sign of the presence of these dreamers within the churches is the loosening of sexual morality and the acceptance of behavior that other generations of Christians would have found it impossible to justify.

Secondly they reject authority, or possibly more literally they reject Jesus’ Lordship. They deny the sovereign Lord by their lawless behavior. If you want to live your own way, Jude says, you have to adjust your doctrine accordingly, for if you accept Jesus Lordship either your doctrine will make your life blush or your life will make your doctrine blush, and be ashamed. So a second sign of these dreamers will be a willingness to give up what was normally understood as a biblical standard.

Finally these dreamers blaspheme the glorious ones - angels. It is possible that these people were insulting angels or denying their existence, but Jude is more probably referring to the

tradition that God's law was given at Sinai by angels. This third statement takes us back to those in verse five who wandered in the desert because they did not accept the terms of obedience given them in the covenant. Jude may be underlining that the third and most serious sign of the presence of these dreamers is a rejection of the category of obedience to God's law.

There is almost a play on words in connecting verses 9 and 10 with verse 8. False teachers are willing to blaspheme holy angels, but super, holy angel Michael will not even blaspheme the devil. Unlike the Archangel Michael, however, these people blaspheme all that they do not understand. When people are faced with Christian teaching they do not understand, some respond by exploring it with interest. The Jews living in Berea heard Paul speak and then examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. On Mars Hill, some of the Athenians said, "we want to hear you again on this subject."

John Stott has described evangelical Christians as, "...those who possess a submissive spirit, namely they are resolved to believe and obey whatever Scripture may be found to teach. They are committed to Scripture in advance, whatever it may later be found to say. That means that when we come across a Christian doctrine that we find difficult to grasp, a passage of the Bible that we find hard to reconcile with other passages, we assume that there is an intelligent solution to the problem, and when we understand it clearly we shall obey it unconditionally." How very different that attitude is from the sneers of those in Jude's church who were attempting to make other Christians bear off course!

The Profile of the False Teacher (11-13)

In verses 11 through 13 we see God judging rebellious leaders as he gives examples of Cain Balaam and Korah's rebellion.

Cain is the poster boy apostate, Balaam – a prophet for hire, Korah – Moses cousin usurping Moses authority. The example of Korah is like a group in the emerging church who no longer believe in preaching. They simply want to meet in small groups and have everyone share their thoughts on a passage. They, as Korah did, reject the idea of called, qualified, and trained men in the pastoring of the church.

They are hidden reefs at your love feasts. These Christians were subverting the aim of the meeting and of the love feast and were turning it into a place of division. Hidden reefs shipwreck. And since they are hidden, people don't see them coming. Does 1 Timothy 1:19-20 come to mind? "By rejecting the true gospel, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."

They were greedy shepherds. They shepherd themselves. We expect our pastors to be loving and caring toward us and to feed us with God's Word. But Jude had to warn his church

against those shepherds that Ezekiel references in chapter 34, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?” The people against whom Jude is writing were claiming to be teachers, and had convinced everybody that they were good shepherds. But the sheep were starving. Their teaching served only to feed their own egos and self-importance; it did nothing to convert and build up God’s people.

They were waterless, empty clouds. In the land of Palestine a cloud was a sign of much needed rain, but these clouds produced nothing. Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.

They were barren trees. Here Jude is underlining the gap between promise and performance. These false teachers are very disappointing. There is no fruit in their ministry. When *their* “gospel” is preached, no one is ever converted or those converted are never transformed.

They were wild waves of the sea. Have you ever been to the beach after a storm? Not only are there sticks all over the beach but there is a filthy scum that covers the sand.

By the way, stars don’t wander. They have a very precise orbit. Wandering stars would be worthless for navigation. Before compasses and radar, the only sure guides for a traveler on a dark night were fixed constellations in the sky. Wandering stars would not only be confusing, but worthless in setting a heading and direction for men.

The Characteristics of the Ungodly (14-16)

And finally we see one more familiar example in verses 14 through 16.

Verses 14 and 15 we see Enoch. If you remember, Enoch was a holy man that did not die but was taken to God while still alive. And while we don’t have this prophecy recorded in our Bible we see an important point in chapter 15. And that point is that God will execute judgment on all who are ungodly. Notice how many times God labels using the word ungodly.

And what characterizes these men?

They are grumbling, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud mouth boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

- These men find fault with others.
- These men follow their own evil desires.
- These men boast about themselves.
- These men are grumbling nuisances (Think children of Israel in the desert).
- These men flatter others for their own advantage.

CONCLUSION

These false teachers cater to their hearers rather than speak the truth. This is in contrast with true teachers of God's Word, who are devoted to speaking the truth in love rather than seeking their own advantage.

Paul warned against the flattering speech of false teachers when he wrote: *"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*

Many in today's world have little respect for authority. We operate as if the rules can be, or should be, changed to fit our personal needs and desires. Commercials encourage us to "have it your way." In reality we can't always have it our way. We must conform our lives to a higher truth, a higher authority - the word of God.

God's Word is not going to change to accommodate us. We are the ones who must change to conform our lives to what God wants for us.

If we want to faithfully represent our Lord we must constantly remind ourselves that our commitment is to the Word of God, not to flowery speech or ear-tickling strategies. With gratefulness for what God has done for us in Christ, we need to share the heart and mind of Jude—for the sake of the Gospel and others. For God's glory and our good.