

“Proofs and Examples, pt. 1” Jude 5-10 Sermon

Jude having stated his main thesis, that his hearers should contend for the faith because false teachers had infiltrated the church, now uses the body of the letter to defend this position. Beginning in verse 5 he begins to give proofs and examples of the kind of rebellion he is talking about.

Jude, as a true servant of Christ, was not seeking to belittle the church. What they were experiencing was not their fault. Intruders had slipped in unnoticed. The church had not yet come to the point, as far as we can tell, where they began to replicate the sinful behavior of these people.

Jude affirms their knowledge of salvation history but sometimes we need to be stirred up by way of reminder to focus on our faith and be wary of the schemes of the devil. Certainly Jesus’ closest disciples must have had a greater understanding of some of Jesus’ teaching about staying awake at all times after Judas Iscariot defected from their fellowship.

And even more so after they themselves fell away from Jesus’ side when He was arrested and crucified. So too here Jude connects his words about redemptive history with what the church was actually experiencing at the time.

Jude continues his use of groups of three, triads, to emphasize his point. The Bible states that a charge is admitted only on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Jude offers three examples as *proof* that what he is talking about required serious attention on the part of the church.

His first example comes from OT history, namely the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He says here that after Jesus, or “the Lord”, saved them from Egypt, afterward there were some who did not believe and were therefore punished. First of all, we do not know for certain if Jude used “Jesus” or “the Lord” in his original letter. But in saying that “Jesus” saved Israel in the exodus, if that’s the word he used, Jude is not saying that the Son of God had taken on flesh at the time of the exodus.

Only that according to His Divine nature, He was involved in the redemptive event. He is referring to the unity of the Father, Son and Spirit in the work of redemption. He calls Jesus, “our Lord”, several times in this letter. He says to wait for the mercy of *our Lord Jesus Christ* in verse 21 and then he says “*to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory and majesty*” in verse 25.

This title of course affirms the Son’s Divinity, His equality with the Father. The point here though is that though God had chosen the nation of Israel as His object of divine mercy, in raising up Moses and giving the command to sacrifice the Passover Lamb, and giving them His law and abiding with them, nevertheless some did not believe and were punished in the wilderness.

The Lord redeemed a people out of slavery in Egypt. As to the outward *form* all of Israel, that is blood descendants of Abraham, were liberated from bondage in the exodus. Every member of that covenant community at that point, on many levels, enjoyed the blessings that came along with this redemption.

They were freed from slavery, they ate the manna from Heaven, they drank water from the rock, but Jude shows here that within that visible form of the people of God there existed a portion *who did not believe*; “*Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*”

The “belief” here that Jude refers to is not just intellectual agreement that God exists. James tells us that even the demons “believe” in this way and they shudder (Ja. 2:19). The demons that Jesus confronted recognized Him as the Son of God. The “believing” that Jude speaks of entails trust and commitment.

True faith involves embracing the promises of God and living by those promises all the way to the end of our sojourn on earth or until Christ comes.

This portion of the people saved from Egypt, never did this, they continually looked back to the comforts of Egypt rather than look forward by faith to the joys of the Promised Land with God. Though outwardly circumcised they were never circumcised in the heart. Paul agrees with Jude here about that generation.

The apostle told the church in Corinth they should not be like them. He said in 1 Cor. 10 *“do not be idolators as some of them were...we must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed”* Though these people in Moses’ day shared in the outward form of the covenant community and in the outward blessings, inwardly they were something different.

So too in Jude’s day. Jude affirms two things here; 1) their (false teachers) presence is real. 2) their judgment is coming.

Next Jude moves from the visible realm to the invisible realm by mentioning the rebellion of angels. He refers to these supernatural beings as “angels”--their very name defines what they were created to do and to be. They are supposed to be messengers of God. “Angel” comes from the greek word that means “to announce”. They were created to be God’s ministering spirits, mighty in power and holy, they were to serve God, but Jude says they abandoned their proper dwelling, their proper place.

Their proper place was Heaven, near to God and ministering to Him. But they left behind that wonderful privilege to become forces of darkness who follow their master Satan, the prince of darkness into rebellion against their Creator.

Jude will eventually get to the judgment of these false teachers on earth but he first ascends to the judgment of God against rebellion in Heaven. If angels, excelling in power and glory than that of humans, and enjoying the eternal light of God’s radiance, are now subject to darkness because of their apostasy how much more will He punish rebels on earth.

Now when Jude says that these fallen angels are in eternal chains under gloomy darkness, it is not as though they are in an actual dungeon somewhere. It is only that God has bound them to their sin. They are under the utter darkness of God’s wrath, carrying around the heavy chains of their own rebellion and slavery to their sin.

Having once been ministers in a heavenly world they are now fallen and chained beings of the underworld, a world of darkness.

Now as if the punishment of supernatural beings was not enough proof Jude offers one more example and that is the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah; *“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”*

Jude highlights the sexual immorality that was found in Sodom and Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities, and therefore one of the reasons God destroyed these cities. Jude emphasizes the sexual immorality in these cities, which included homosexuality, and connects their sins with the rebellion of the fallen angels.

Jude might be agreeing here with Jewish tradition that interpreted an event in Genesis 6 as describing fallen angels coming to earth and taking wives to themselves from the daughters of men.

Whether or not this interpretation is correct and whether or not Jude agrees with it has been debated. But what is clear is that Jude emphasizes a proper order that God established for angels, and for all his creatures for that matter. A willful and ongoing, and unrepentant perversion of this order is rebellion against God and He surely punishes such rebellion.

Jude describes Sodom and Gomorrah sexual immorality as literally pursuing “other flesh”. That is to say the people of Sodom and the other cities gave themselves completely over to illicit sexual sins. The only expression of physical sexual intimacy between two people that honors God is that which is found between one husband with one wife within the covenant of marriage.

Anything else is improper, immoral, especially that which is unnatural, namely homosexuality. Again, we are talking about unrepentant sins. True Christians may struggle with desires of this kind and even fall into sin, of this kind, but true Christians will pursue repentance over the long haul.

The judgment that came upon these cities for unrepentant sin is recorded in Genesis 19 where we learn that the Lord rained down sulfur and fire upon them and reduced these cities and the people within to ashes, never to be rebuilt. Jude describes the punishment of these cities as an “eternal fire”, that is to say the judgment was a revelation of the eternal wrath of God against sin and it was complete and final.

That “fire” then serves as an example for all generations of God’s holy hatred of sin. Wicked intruders will not be able to get away with their sins forever. And so Jude gives three very strong examples of God’s judgment. Why does he do this?

He wants to assure his hearers that God will judge these certain people who crept in. But we as Christians should not think that Jude is implying that true believers can ultimately apostatize and fall away. We might think of all the ways that we have rebelled against God and have done that which is improper. Is Jude then attempting to frighten us to think that we too could fall away?

No, absolutely not. Remember we are God’s beloved, we are kept for Jesus Christ (v.1). God multiplies mercy, peace, and love to us in our struggles. At the end of the letter Jude glorifies God with a doxology saying, “*to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...*” (v.24).

This does not take away from the fact that true believers should not consider these examples as sincere warnings about the dangers of unrepentant sin. Paul uses the same example of Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness to teach the Corinthians that we should not be like them.

But Jude and the rest of the Bible teaches that false teachers like these will be exposed as having never belonged to the community in the first place and that God’s children, those who are called by God, will heed the warnings and by grace persevere to the end. God ultimately will keep them but they, by God’s grace, will seek to keep themselves in the love of God (v.21).

Jude now moves from these examples to describing specific behavior from the false teachers. Again he uses a grouping of three. He says, “*in like manner these people also relying on their dreams...*” that is, they claim to receive visions in dreams from God, they claim to have God’s authority.

As an example you might think of the way some televangelists these days say that they hear things directly from God. Professing the name of Christ they claim to have the authority that is reserved for Christ alone. Jude then describes three types of sinful behavior.

In other words, Jude says the rebellion in their hearts makes itself known in their behavior. He says they defile the flesh. This refers to the act of making oneself unclean by way of sexual immorality. It refers to the staining of one's purity by indulging in this behavior.

They reject authority. This is not separate from defiling the flesh as something completely different but simply an outworking of the kind of sin already present in the impurity of illicit sexual behavior. To indulge in sexual immorality is one way people deny or reject the lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives. They effectively say, "I am Master of my body and soul" So then it would only be natural that they reject all types of authority that God has placed over them including, and maybe especially, the authority in the church.

They claim to be master in every sphere of their lives. So they reject authority. And finally they blaspheme the glorious ones. Glorious ones is probably a reference to angels in heaven. These people slander or dishonor even the supernatural order. Their rejection of authority knows no bounds. In this last description of slandering those in authority, namely angels, Jude gives an example of the right behavior.

He says, "*But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'*" (Jud 1:9 ESV) This reference to the archangel Michael and the Devil is something that is not found in Scripture.

Angels fighting with the Devil is not something foreign to the Bible though. We see the angel Michael fighting against other supernatural beings in Daniel. We see Satan contending with God Himself about the righteousness of Job. This specific example in Jude is most likely taken from a non-Biblical book called "Assumption of Moses". And this work is part of a larger body of Jewish writings called the Pseudepigrapha.

Jude will directly quote from the Pseudepigrapha later when he quotes Enoch (v.14). Pseudepigrapha means essentially "false authors". The works claim to be written by well-known figures in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Pseudepigrapha was written within the time frame of around two hundred years before Christ's coming to around two hundred years after.

These books are Jewish writings claiming to be written by authoritative figures like Moses but they are "falsely ascribed" thus the title, pseudepigrapha. This would be like if someone wrote a book and signed it falsely with the name Mark Twain, hoping people would receive it as a true work of Mark Twain and therefore honor it.

These writings are not inspired texts but they do give us a window into how the Jews around the time of the coming of the Messiah interpreted or understood the OT scriptures. They often serve then as a kind of fairly reliable Jewish commentary on the OT. This is how Jude is using this work. Jude refers here then to an elaboration of what we do know from the bible about the burial of Moses' body recorded in Deuteronomy 34.

There we learn that Moses' body was buried in Moab according to the word of the Lord, but that no one knows the place of his burial. Apparently from what Jude gives us in verse 9, the Devil was accusing Moses presumably stating that because of his sin against God, his body did not deserve a proper burial.

Jude references this story about Michael the archangel who *is* mentioned in Scripture and the Devil who is also a very real supernatural being in Scripture and of the accusations the Devil was making about Moses' body.

The Devil was bringing into question the justification of Moses and thus slandering God and His judgment. Whereas the false teachers in Jude's day, were not afraid to slander supernatural beings, functionally then taking God's place on the judgment seat, Michael, the archangel, excelling in power and glory, and apparently part of a higher order of angels, indeed the chief angel, archangel, even *he* did not think he had the right to judge Satan.

And Michael did not think it proper to do this even though the Devil was clearly in the wrong, as he always is. Rather Michael submitted to the judgment of the Lord by saying, "*The Lord rebuke you*". The archangel Michael would not pronounce blasphemous judgment against the prince of darkness.

But these people, greatly inferior to Michael, freely accuse and slander the supernatural and deny the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Notice how Jude compares the humble submission of Michael before the Lord and the seemingly uncontrollable and haughty blasphemies coming from the false teachers; "*but these people blaspheme all that they do not understand...*" Again with these people there seems to be no limit on who they are willing to condemn and no amount of self-control in doing so.

Jude says they are destroyed by these things. Claiming to have the knowledge to judge angels Jude shows that they are no smarter or better off than unreasoning animals, driven purely by instinct; "*...they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals understand instinctively*"(v.10). The one thing they did understand, i.e. their sinful appetites and how to satisfy them, in the end destroys them.

Against this scathing description of these false teachers shines the light of glory of Christ's perfection. Ultimately we were all at one point rebels against God and His lordship. We too were bound by the chains of the darkness of our sin. But God *called us* out of that(v.1)

We therefore should not be like the people Jude describes. The focus in the Christian faith should be on our Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ left His proper dwelling place in Heaven, not because of rebellion, but because of His and His Father's love for us and because of His perfect obedience.

As Paul said, Christ, though existing in the form of God did not count equality with God as something to be grasped. Instead He emptied Himself and took on the form of what? He took the form of rebels, like you and me, human flesh. In human flesh He did not defile the flesh. He was sinless, completely and perpetually morally and sexually pure in body, mind, and soul.

He did not reject the authority of His Father. He submitted to His every command. And in so doing He willfully submitted to the authority of the Jewish council and the Roman government, which in the end got Him crucified. And why did he do this?

Because *we* had rejected *Him*. We denied Him. Beloved, now that Christ is raised, when Satan stands ready to accuse us, He does not have to say, "the Lord rebuke you" because He is the Lord and by His death, by undergoing the eternal fire of God's wrath, He has cleansed us of our impurity due to sin. Let us then live for Him and trust that He will judge those who do not.