
Those Who Pollute the Faith

Jude 1-13

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Illustration: different kinds of pollution-

Physical : The incredible pollution in present-day southern China.

Intellectual: The erosion and pollution of clear thinking

Spiritual: the pollution of the faith, doctrine and duty

How are we to hear the Lord's warning against these polluters of the faith? We probably should have issued you asbestos blankets. Our text tonight is a flamethrower. If you do not like fiery texts and thunderous denunciation, then you absolutely must stay and hear this. You need it.

We are taking up the book of Jude in our series on Eschatology. Why? Because Jude highlights the danger and duty of those living in the days before the end. It is the faith that is under assault and the faith that must be aggressively defended.

Its Assuring Reminder

(v. 1-2)

¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

The book opens as most of the New Testament letters do with identifying the author and the recipients. The author is Jude, the brother of James. He is the slave of Jesus Christ.

The recipients? Well that is us. Jude is writing to all believers. Maybe there was a particular church he was writing to, but he intends for this to be to and for all of us. How do I know that? Because of how he identifies the recipients. This meant not only to say who he is writing to but to reassure and comfort them.

We are called. We are summoned to God through our salvation. This is not the calling of my dad standing on the back porch calling me home for supper. This is the imperial summons from the King that summons me to come to Him.

We are beloved. We have been summoned because we are loved. We are loved of God. We are His beloved. We are enveloped and immersed in His love. Further, we are beloved by all those who are in God the Father. We are loved by the beloved.

We are kept. We are guarded, kept, preserved, held in safe-keeping for or by the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are protected and kept from the personal and worldwide apostasy that marks the days before the end.

So this book written to assure us that as loved people, we are protected from falling, by and for Christ, who called us to the salvation He provides.

Its Present Need

(v. 3-4)

Sometimes a great need can change a good purpose. So it is with this author and his book.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Responsibility

(v. 3)

Jude is alarmed that they may not be prepared nor have the stomach for the fight at hand. So he implores them to be *contenders for the Faith*. The word “contend” is a strong word, a fighting word. It will not do for us to simply stand by and allow the Faith to be pruned or polluted. We cannot allow it to be pruned of its necessary roots, trunk, branches or fruits. It must not be polluted by adding to it what is not true, not Scriptural, not from God.

As Dick Lucas has helpfully pointed out, he does so by giving us four important qualities of the faith we are to defend.¹¹

The Faith is closed in its content. While each generation has had to rearticulate the faith in its setting, we are not to be reinterpreting the faith. The truths in the Word of God have been sufficiently interpreted by the Word of God so that we are seeking new meaning, but the meaning invested in and interpreted by the Word.

The Faith is closed in its authorship. The faith is “entrusted” to us. The body of doctrine, the faith, is a treasure put into our care. What is being done to preserve and protect that trust?

The Faith is closed in its historical setting. It is a “once for all” delivery. We are not waiting for some new disclosure of God; we are seeking to understand and apply the truths given. Relativism was a danger in Jude’s day. It is a danger today. Post-modernism is simply another form of neo-paganism. It is a denial of the authoritative, once-for-all, historical faith which the Bible transmits and we are to receive and believe.

The Faith is open to all the saints. The truth we are to believe is not entrusted to a small enclave of people within the church. It is not even the property of the Elders/pastors. What you are to believe has been entrusted and delivered to all of you. Thus our responsibility is to be sure that we do so, both in its objective written form (do you have a Bible?) and in its subjective teaching/preaching form (are you engaged with that Bible?).

The Reason

(v. 4)

We are to be contenders for the Faith because of the *corrupters of the Faith*. Now this text is not in grieved tone – there are no tears here. The danger to the truth and to true believers is so great love for flock fuels the flame of denunciation.

They are present in the churches. Just as today, there are people who creep into the churches who are not marked or noted. Paul, John, Peter and now Jude all turn on the bright light in the dark corners where these kinds of people worm their way in. Why don't we, anymore?

They practice godlessness. They live lives that are subtly anti and overtly sinful. Jude says that they are simply, ungodly. Lucas writes, “Although these people no doubt mouthed Christian phrases, quoted the Bible and knew all the new songs, they were not to be taken at face value. No doubt Jude’s readers were shocked at the implication of what he was saying. We should be shocked too as we realize that he is talking about people who may write Christian books, speak at Christian conferences and sound very convincing and liberating. Jude was denouncing their friends and their heroes—and therefore perhaps some of our friends and our heroes—as anti-Christian pagans.” [Lucas, p. 179]

They pervert grace into a license for immorality. How many well known so-called Christian leaders have been exposed in the last few years as adulterers and homosexuals *who then tried to excuse or justify their sin*. One local pastor, after being caught viewing porn on his church computer had the audacity to leave, split and start a new church called, of all things, *the Grace Place*.

They promote heresy. They deny the Deity and Sovereignty of the Jesus. This is heresy. Right in the church of Peter and Jude’s day as in ours, we have people who are cool, winsome, elegant, eloquent, cultural who are heretics. Now they may be denying other doctrines, but nevertheless they are accepted as part of the church. So we see the “inseparable marriage between bad theology and bad morals”. [Lucas, p.181]

They are predestined for judgment. This statement is in the center of the text but it is the highlight of the text. Their certain condemnation was determined and declared long ago. Jude is pointing to both the prophecies of the Old Testament, of the gospels representing Jesus’ predictions and that of the prophets and apostles of the New Testament. In other words, their condemnation is neither something new nor unexpected.

Its Historical Examples**(v. 5-11)**

So let's have some historical examples of this.

The Reasons for their Sure Destruction**(v. 5-7)**

Here are three Old Testament examples.

⁵ 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.

The first is Israel who, though they were delivered from Egypt, were destroyed in the wilderness for their unbelief (v.5). They were in the crowd. They came up out of Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea. They received the Law and watched the Tabernacle built. And they refused to enter the Land because they did not believe the promises. Over the next forty years, except for Moses, Joshua and Caleb, every adult Jew died. So, do you still think this is not important?

The next are the fallen angels, who rebelled against their Sovereign King (v. 6). They refused to submit to God, were unsatisfied with authority given them and crossed the boundaries into this world (Genesis 6). In a “grim pun, the angels, itching with lust, could not *keep* their place. But God will not be rebelled against, and He has *kept* these same angels until the future judgment.” [Lucas, p.185] They are too fearsome and corrupt to be allowed to roam around. They are chained in darkness until the judgment. So, do you still think this not important?

The final illustration is the infamous Sodom and Gomorrah and their homosexual immorality (v.7). The twin cities and the areas around them were filled with immorality and “going after strange flesh.” Following on the illustration above, this is perfect. There were angels lusting after human women. Here are human men lusting after other men, not realizing they were angels. Gross? Grotesque? Vile? Revolting? Yes, all of this. But where is our visceral reaction to those sneaking heresies into the church? Likewise, while Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire, they also will suffer the eternal torment of everlasting punishment of hell. So, do you still think this is not important?

The Root of their Errors**(v. 8-9)**

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

The next triplet reflects the prior just in the opposite order. The structure is clearly this with the center pointing to the primary issue.

- A – The Unbelief of the Jews
- B – The Rebellion of the Fallen Angels
- C – The Immorality of the Sodomites
- C' – They Defile the Flesh
- B' – They Reject Authority
- A' – They Blaspheme “Glorious Ones”

Where does all this come from? Is it just prideful fantasies and vain imaginations? Are the filthy dreamers having erotic fantasies about sex with angelic beings? If so, why would this not be plain and easy to deal with?

What is happening is that these people are claiming to have visions through which authoritative revelation is coming. In other words, they have another word from God which has affected their understanding of doctrine and morality. They are relying on their visions, their dreams, instead of relying on the authority, sufficiency and reliability of God's Word.

I cannot but conclude that these people are not only turning the grace of God into license for immorality, but permission of homosexual sex and partnerships. So in Jude's day you already have people coming into the church who, based on their own thoughts or dreams or visions are advocating the acceptance of homosexuality in the church.

The Results of their Apostasy (v. 9-11)

⁹ 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." ¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

So, what is this all about? This is difficult and there are lots of opinions about this. The question is: how does the repeated word "blaspheme" help us make the connection. And, on your own, notice the similarity of this text with 2 Peter 2:10-13.

⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

Did you catch it? Peter uses the exact same phrases, clarifying that it is angels that are being blasphemed. Let's see if we can make sense of it.

In a Difficult Contrast (v. 9)

This text is alluding to an apocryphal story in common circulation in that era. It centered on the death of Moses. The story said that Michael the archangel was sent to bury Moses but the Devil had claimed the body. Michael dared not make a blasphemous judgment. Rather, he called on God to rebuke the devil.¹²

The word "blaspheme" simply means "to slander, to defame, to speak evil about one in such a way as to destroy one's reputation." [Louw-Nida] These people defame, slander the glorious ones (v. 8), the angels. Michael, the arch-

angel, however, would not pronounce a slanderous judgment *against Moses* but instead, called on God to *rebuke Satan*. This is clearly an allusion to Zechariah 3:1-3:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."

As one has so helpfully written, "As we read this story through Jude's Old Testament spectacles, it loses its obscurity and gains sharp focus. Jude's antagonists have misunderstood the whole nature of Christian salvation by not realizing what an awesomely great act God performed when he banished the legal charges against us. Not even Michael can declare Moses innocent, and not even Michael can remove the accusations of the law; he simply *did not dare*. Only the sovereignly gracious God can do that, and he will do it on the day of judgment. But by trivializing what God has done, the false teachers dare to 'change the grace of God into a license for immorality' (verse 4)." [Lucas, p.194.]

What is implied here and emerges in the next verse is that these people were blaspheming angels and were slandering God's faithful people. Like Moses of Genesis and Joshua of Zachariah, we are all brands plucked from the fire whose filthiness has been exchanged for Jesus' righteousness.

With an Ironic Consequence

(v. 10)

So there is an ironic consequence. They blaspheme what they cannot understand, both the supernatural powers of angelic beings and the justified status of the sanctified ones. What they cannot understand, they just speak evil of so as to cause others not to respect it.

Here is the irony – they are destroyed by what they can understand intuitively, that is physical perversion. In Romans 1, lesbians and homosexuals "receive in themselves the due penalty for their error." What they do is plainly against nature. Thus, they are destroyed in themselves by the perversion they commit and the poison that results.

By a Thematic Condemnation

(v. 11)

Just to be sure that we understand, the results of the apostasy are exposed by a thematic condemnation. Jude now gives us one more triplet, pointing to three well known persons in the Old Testament.

Cain represents those who substitute their own way to God for God's requirements (v. 11a). Instead of bringing the required lamb from his brother's fold, he brings a substitute bushel of vegetables from his field.

Balaam represents those who slander others for the sake of money (v. 11b). While he was thwarted by God, he still sought to prophecy against Israel for the sake of money. What he eventually did was showed that Israel could be destroyed through immorality. See the connection?

Korah represents those who reject divine authority (v. 11c). He rejected the leadership of Moses and thus rejected the authority of God. They followed in his steps all the way down into the open cavern of hell.

The upshot of all this is that they were denying the final authority of the Bible, substituting their own revelations and visions, chucking the parts of the Bible they didn't like so as to justify their wickedness. They apparently were attempting to not only justify immorality, but also homosexuality. They may have been doing so because it gave them acceptance in the world and the financial support to boot.

Sound familiar?

Its Graphic Analogies

(v. 12-13)

Well, we tend to think of these kinds of people as being outside the church. We have already seen that they were inside the church. Now, hang on – the next paragraph is startling and striking in the graphic analogies used to describe these in church apostates.

¹² These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

They are dangerous. They are like hidden reefs, lurking below the surface ready to destroy the unwary. The word here also can mean, “blemish”. If so the idea is of contamination. They are the dirty, filthy bacteria laden dishes at your love feasts and Lord's Tables.

They are selfish. They are self-focused Shepherds using the resources of the church to feed their bellies and further their ambitions. They were the fat-cat pastors who used the people of God for their own purposes.

They are unstable. They are wind-driven storms that look like they are really going to produce but don't. They are all wind, thunder and lightning, but no rain. They are erratic, lurching from one thing to the next.

They are unproductive. They are fruitless trees during the harvest time. Their lack of real fruit means that they are actually dead and need to be uprooted.

They are shameful. They are foaming wild waves whose mists and sea caps are the result of all the turmoil, the winds and storms. But what is being cast up is shameful. It is foamy residue floating on the washed out beaches of their impiety and immorality.

They are condemned. They are wandering stars that roam the outer darkness. What a graphic image of the utter futility and fearsomeness of their future doom. Doomed to go round and round in outer blackness where the fire is not quenched and their worm never dies.

Reflect and Respond

May we heed to call to contend for the once-for-all faith entrusted to us. We cannot sit passively by and allow the modern “creepers” to pollute doctrine and thus poison the churches.

May we be discerning of these kinds of people. They certainly infest many of the churches around us. They are a pestilence to good churches, good pastors, good people. We have had them here. God has given grace to past and present leaders to confront them and contend with them.

Error always comes through people. Behind it may be the machinations of the enemy of our souls; but, it is always brought into the church by people. This is sad. It is frightening. And it will cause division. Error will always divide God’s people.

May you be preserved by God from this kind of apostasy. If you are sitting here now and are reading, listening to and drifting toward people who teach heresy today, you must stop it now. Turn your ears and eyes away from their speaking and their writing. It will destroy you. If Paul said these people were to be told to stop teaching and shut up, then you need to stop listening as well.

The faith is under assault from pagans in the church who deny the attributes of God, the great truths of the gospel, and the necessity of holy living. they will call us harsh, ungracious, not cool, not in-tune with times. We may not be blue like jazz, have an open God, an new perspective on Paul, return to Rome, embrace homosexuality. But we are God’s people holy, beloved and kept for Jesus Christ. And so, we will not passively sit by and let these prune or poison the faith. We will contend because we are sharers together in the common faith.

So, the final word? Jude 25-25

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Notes

¹¹ Lucas, Dick & Green, Christopher, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 172-176. The outline headings are taken directly from this most helpful commentary.

¹² This interpretation was suggested by Dick Lucas. I have adopted and adapted it some. I don’t think that the Law is in view here. It is closely tied to the actual heresies that the “creepers” were advocating and may have been denying the existence of supernatural beings, both angels, Satan and demons. We don’t know. It is best to simply let Jude say what he is saying and let the obscure parts pass as being obscure to us, but not to the original hearers. What is clear to us is what is meant to be asserted and applied from the text.