

Destined for Judgement and Denying Jesus

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[0 : 00] We're going to be looking again at the New Testament letter of Jude, so if you'd like to turn there with me, we're going to read part of that again. Paul Brennan's been leading us through this for the last couple of weeks, and we're going to focus particularly today on verses 5 to 10.

There only is one chapter of Jude, but I'm going to read from verse 1 through to the end of verse 10. Beginning at verse 1 then of Jude.

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

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.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed. Long ago were designated for this condemnation ungodly people who pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 25] 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.

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.

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, just as they serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

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

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 he said, the Lord rebuke you.

[2 : 35] But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand. And they're destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Amen. May God bless to us. There's his word, solemn and difficult as it is. Well, please do have your Bible open and the short letter of Jude open in front of you, looking at particularly verses 5 to 10 this evening.

Now, Jude, in this short letter, is calling on the church to contend, to fight. And it's hard to pick up your spiritual weapons when you can't see an enemy.

And in this section of the letter, Jude is seeking to unveil what has, up to this point, gone unnoticed. He is revealing the enemy within that they've not seen before.

Now, Jude's big message is that it's time to contend. It's contending time. It's time to put on the boots. It's time to put on the running spikes. It's time to put on the boxing gloves, to get in the ring and to contend for the faith.

[4 : 01] It is time, says Jude, to contend. He's laid out his case, as we saw last week in verses 3 and 4. Just cast your eyes over that.

He had desperately wanted to write a letter about their common salvation. But he couldn't do that. He wanted to talk about the great and glorious truths of the gospel, but he couldn't write that letter. And he couldn't do it because there was a more urgent, pressing matter that he couldn't leave unaddressed. He had to write a letter calling the church to action, pleading with them to contend. To contend for the faith because there was a hidden danger in their midst. There are unexpected leaders in the church who present a very real danger.

It's a danger to the faith. And Jude's plea, we saw in verse 4, is that the church would contend for the faith. The very future of the church is at stake.

[5 : 02] The time has come to contend. Now the church, hearing this for the first time, would have been shocked by what Jude says here. They were settling down for a nice letter about their common salvation.

But verses 3 and 4 come and boom. Jude says it's time to contend. They would have sat up straight in their seats and started to listen a bit more closely. It's a big claim that Jude makes.

And there are four key things that Jude says in verse 4. His key reasons for this call to contend for the faith. Just look at verse 4. First, these people have gone unnoticed.

Second, they are destined for judgment. Third, they pervert God's grace as a license for sensuality. And four, they deny Jesus as Lord.

Big claims. And these four realities, these four realities about these hidden leaders, are the realities upon which Jude makes his case for the necessity to contend.

[6 : 10] Because of what he says in verse 4, verse 3 makes sense. Verse 3 is the call to contend. Why? Well, verse 4 tells us. And in verses 5 to 19, the middle body of the letter, Jude builds on the case he makes in verse 4.

He kind of gives the evidence. Here's why I'm saying these things to you. And by giving all the details, he refers, as you'll see, to various examples from the scriptures and elsewhere, as he seeks to persuade them of the unseen danger in their midst.

And by giving all this detail, Jude is seeking to convince those who are listening and us of the existence of these people who present a very real danger.

And having been persuaded of their existence, he seeks to urge us to take up spiritual arms, to contend for the faith. And how we do that, we see in verses 20 to the end of the letter.

So Jude is seeking here to really make his case, to press home the reality of these unseen people in their midst who present a very real danger. And the two main things that are the markers of these people, as he keeps referring to, the two things which give them away are, one, their beliefs, and second, their behavior.

[7 : 32] Their beliefs and their behavior. In terms of belief, Jude says in verse 4, they deny our only Master and Lord. And these aspects, Luke really unpacks in verses 5 to 10.

The second thing that he highlights is their behavior. And Jude says that these are ungodly people who pervert the grace of God into sensuality. They're all for loose living.

And that aspect, Jude particularly deals with in verses 11 to 16. In addition, Jude elaborates on the fact that these people are destined for judgment.

You see that particularly in verses 5 to 7, but it's all the way through this middle section, all the time. He's talking about the fact these people are destined for judgment. And the fact that these people have slipped into their midst, the fact that they're present, Jude deals with in verses 17 to 19.

So all that Jude says in verse 4, he unpacks in verses 5 to 19 in more detail. It's a very carefully structured section. It falls into roughly two parts, verses 5 to 10 and 11 to 16.

[8 : 47] And each follows the same pattern. Each begins with an Old Testament example. So have a look at verses 5 to 7. And that gives all sorts of examples from the Old Testament.

It gives three. Jude is a fan of threes. Everything comes in threes. So you see there in verse 5, he talks about those who left the land of Egypt. Then he talks about this example of the angels, and then Sodom and Gomorrah.

All those you find in the Old Testament, as we'll see. Then Jude makes an application to these people. So look at verse 8. He applies it to these people.

Then he'll give an example from a non-biblical source. This is where it gets weird and interesting.

But you see there in verse 9, you get this thing about Moses contending with the devil.

And then you get again an application to these people. They're in verse 10. So Old Testament example, application to these people, a non-biblical example, and application to these people.

[9 : 44] We get the same in 11 to 16. Look, in verse 11, you get the Old Testament examples. Cain and the way of Cain, Balaam's error, Korah's rebellion.

And then it gets applied to these people in verse 12. Then you get a non-biblical example. This time from Enoch in verse 14. And then he applies it to these people.

You see that in verse 16. So it's very carefully organized. He's really structured it very carefully. And so we're going to look particularly tonight at verses 5 to 10. And this section deals particularly with

these people.

He keeps referring to them as that. These people again and again. And verses 5 to 10 deals with these people who are destined for judgment and who deny Jesus. Those are the two key things we'll see in verses 5 to 10.

They are destined for judgment and they deny Jesus. These people, they deny the authority of Jesus. And that in turn legitimizes their promotion of sensuality and that in turn leads to their judgment.

[10:53] Remember Jude's purpose in all this? He is seeking to persuade his dear Christian brothers and sisters of the need to contend for the faith.

He's pleading with them. His urgent appeal is that they would take up spiritual arms and contend for the faith. There is a danger they don't see. And Jude is wanting to open their eyes to the real danger in front of them.

And that's why he goes into all this detail in verses 5 to 19. There's a very real danger they've missed. And Jude is now exposing the enemies of the gospel for who they truly are.

So two key things to notice in this section. First, look at verses 5 to 7. We see here that privilege counts for nothing.

Privilege counts for nothing. Rejecting God's authority will always lead to judgment. Judgment. Rejecting God's authority will always lead to judgment. What we see here in these verses is that no one is immune from judgment.

[11:59] Privilege. It counts for nothing. Anyone. Anyone who rebels against the Lord and his authority no matter past achievement no matter their position is subject to judgment.

That's the point that Jude makes in these verses. Think back several years to the MP's expenses scandal. I don't know what was going through the minds of some of those members of parliament but surely some of them had delusions of grandeur.

The privilege clouded their judgment so much they thought they could just do as they wanted. No one was going to catch them. They could just carry on regardless. But in the end they were found out.

Privilege counted for nothing in the end. They were not immune from facing the consequences. And so it is with all within the visible church who rebel against the creator God.

Privilege counts for nothing. And that's what Jude does here with these three examples from the Old Testament. People had great privilege but they were not immune. He begins there look at verse 5 he begins with the nation of Israel after they've left Egypt in the Exodus God's great act of rescue and the people make their way to the promised land.

[13:21] But you know the story they would not trust and obey they would not enter the land they showed a lack of faith they refused to go in. and as a result all of the adult Israelites died in the desert including Moses.

All those men and women who left Egypt would die in the desert apart from two men. That was it. God destroyed those who would not believe.

And these were immensely privileged people. They had seen with their own eyes all that God did to deliver them from Egypt. They had seen the plagues they had seen the crossing of the Red Sea amazing deliverance and despite that privilege even they were not immune.

And so it is with people today regardless of past privilege being a part of the visible people of God is no guarantee of eternal security if it is not combined with real repentance repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Judah's warning these people may be in your midst they may be regular in the church they may be pillars of their community and respected but that in itself it guarantees nothing.

[14:46] What counts is ongoing faithfulness to God that is the fruit of real faith. That is what matters. Privilege counts for nothing.

The second example in verse 6 is a rather strange reference we may not know it but it's a reference to a rather curious event back in Genesis chapter 6 and Jude writes there that the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling he is kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Now what's going on there? Well in Genesis 6 you read about angels who have been given areas of huge responsibility significant responsibility and they therefore enjoyed huge privilege however you read about how they became dissatisfied with their position they wanted to intermarry with human

women and because they did that they were judged by God God will not be rebelled against and he has kept those angels he says here in gloomy darkness until future judgment and just as surely as the fact that God will keep his beloved safe and secure we've seen that in this letter already that promise of keeping and safeguarding as surely as God will keep his beloved he will keep these rebel angels under security until the judgment day it's very sobering isn't it

God's judgment is inescapable even for angels they are not above it and so too for these people warns Jude these people may seem untouchable almost on another level like these angels but even they are not above God's judgment don't be foolish warns Jude don't think they'll get away with it not even the angels can escape judgment when they pervert God's grace into sensuality and the third example is no easier to read the third example in verse 7 refers to Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns now these towns enjoyed huge privilege they were situated in a wonderfully fertile beautiful land they enjoyed the fruits of that land hugely privileged and yet they were not immune from the holy judgment of God rebelling against

God in this instance you can read about it in Genesis in this instance it was sexual immorality and it resulted in punishment they gave themselves up to sexual immorality any form of sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage between men and women and a particular example there in Sodom and Gomorrah is an attempted homosexual gang rape Sodom and Gomorrah was not a happy place and the consequence of Sodom and Gomorrah's rebellion against God was you see there the punishment of eternal fire the sorts of behavior exhibited in these three examples will always lead to judgment no matter who you are no matter your privilege your pedigree be warned says Jude don't be dazzled by the impressive

[18:43] CVs of these people who have slipped in to your midst perhaps it was because of their impeccable credentials that these people have been given a free pass oh that's so and so he knows this person they're fine let's not worry about them perhaps the usual sorts of discernment were bypassed because of who they were these are impressive people they're fine and so there is I think a warning for us to beware the impressive evangelical reform CV beware those who flash the credentials beware those who are in reality above accountability nobody really knows them they're on a different platform now it may well be the case it may well be that those with impressive CVs are good and trustworthy God has gifted them to the church thank God for such people but don't let your guard down don't suspend judgment just because of who somebody is pedigree it can deceive it can blind us to what's really there privilege is no guarantee of anything and there is also as you read these examples there is also an intensification of the judgment as Jude moves from example to example they're not organized chronologically that's not how they appear in the

Bible they've been rejigged and what you see happening is the sort of distance between the sin and the judgment shrinking as you move through the examples so there is a significant delay isn't there in terms of judgment in God's people who left Egypt in the exodus in some cases it was 40 years but with the last example with Sodom and Gomorrah it is instantaneous so significant so catastrophic was the event that Sodom and Gomorrah is now known today as a reference it's a byword for debauchery and for judgment Jude is deliberately turning up the heat as he goes through these examples don't mess with God he's saying don't think that these people who are in your midst are going to escape the inevitable God will not leave rebellion unpunished rebel against the Lord and judgment will come and Jude is saying it doesn't matter who you are don't be deceived is

Jude's message to his dear brothers and sisters these people they're dangerous be prepared therefore to contend Jude is establishing by giving these three examples he's establishing what he said in verse four remember look what it says there long ago these people were designated for condemnation and Jude is backing up that statement these examples show it the fact of judgment on those who rebel it's there to see in the Bible and it's just what the Lord Jesus taught isn't it rebellion Jesus said means death whoever believes in the son has eternal life whoever does not obey the son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him see rebellion ends up in one place only that's

Jude's solemn warning privilege it counts for nothing rejecting God's authority authority as the people in these three examples show rejecting God's authority will always lead to judgment if not now then on that great day to come it's a sober warning but Jude is giving it so that his dear brothers and sisters would be prepared to contend when the time came see these people for who they are do not be naive that's the first thing he's showing us the second what we see in the next

couple of verses he unveils something of the attitude of these people that lies at the root of their rebellion so the rebellion leads to judgment but what's the root of their rebellion and here's the second key thing submission to Jesus is what really counts submission to Jesus is what really counts replacing God's authority with our own will always lead to judgment we see this in verses 8 to 10 these verses reveal to us what is at the root of their rebellion it all comes down to authority that's the very heart of these verses look what it says these people rely on their dreams defile the flesh reject authority and blaspheme the glorious ones these people deny

Jesus Lord they will not submit to him ultimately theirs is a different gospel their gospel is a license for immorality why well it's because these people do not rely on the revealed word of God as their authority unlike Jude who reminds of what God has done and said in the past these people rely on their dreams that is they're relying on some sort of claimed personal revelation from God rather than relying on what God which is also strange we'll get to that but the parallel he makes at the end of verse 8 and verse 9 where he talks about

[24 : 58] Michael refusing to pronounce a judgment on the devil the ultimate evil angel I think that suggests that Jude is referring to evil angels there at the end of verse 8 when he talks about the glorious ones so here's Jude's logic in this little interesting section end of these are difficult verses but here's what I think it's saying Jude is saying that these people these intruders they insult demons evil angels but even Michael even the archangel did not even presume to pronounce judgment on Satan himself how can these intruders be so prideful as to insult demons these intruders these people they have ideas well above their station not even Michael would dare to judge Satan instead he says at the end of verse 9 the

Lord rebuke you Michael saying it's not my position to rebuke Satan I can't do that only the Lord himself can do that but these people they go around blaspheming the glorious ones they're their own authority see Jude's point here is to make it clear that these people these intruders they do not submit to Jesus Lord they are a law unto themselves now just a quick aside because it's probably a question in your mind in verse 9 this rather off piste illustration it comes we think from a document called the assumption of Moses it's not in the Bible you won't find it there in your Bibles but probably Jude knows that his readers would have been familiar with this story the document it comes from was probably read and known and perhaps the assumption of Moses where this illustration is taken from was one of the sources that these dodgy teachers were using to back up their dodgy teaching and

Jude is perhaps beating them their own game by using this illustration from the source they use to back up their own authority the very document they use to bolster their own authority undermines it perhaps I'm not 100% sure on that but that's maybe is it but the point Jude makes not even the great archangel Michael would dare do what these intruders are doing not even one of the most powerful angels that God has ever created would dare to do what these people are doing in your midst they are dangerous they're a law unto themselves look on to verse 10 but these people blaspheme all that they do not understand and they are destroyed but all that they like unreasoning animals understand instinctively Jude is not holding back is he he's taking these guys down he doesn't hold back these people blaspheme all they do not understand they do not have a clue what they're talking about they're out of their depth in fact the only thing they do understand is their own animalistic instinct they act not informed by the word of god but they act on instinct their own animal desires is what's really guiding them and the parallels with our own 21st century culture are striking aren't they a privileging of the inner desires over everything else following our own animal instincts carl truman in his recent and significant book the rise and triumph of the modern self draws the parallel and highlights the similarities between the first century and our century ours is a culture that urges us to reject all authority and to look within in order to discover our true selves and to determine our own truth we are the arbiters of our own destiny we are the authors of our future we determine what's right and that sort of psychology was evident here in

Jude's day and ours and that sort of psychology is pervasive isn't it and it's just another manifestation of the essence of sin which is profoundly self focused and assertively anti God I will not have your ways I'm the ultimate authority not God and that sort of thinking it finds its way into the church the desire to soften our stance on a whole range of issues let's not submit to God's word on this issue let's follow our own instincts here sanctity of life in old age and the yet to be born LGBT issues the pressure to be in step with the broader culture the question did God really say you sure

God says this you really want to stand by that and it's appealing isn't it it's appealing because it appeals to our sinful natures it has a magnetic pull to reject God's authority and follow our own it's attractive and it provides the fertile ground for sensuality when we get to be in charge or anything goes but of course to decide what is right and what is wrong that of course belongs to God alone he alone decides and declares what is right and wrong what is good and evil but sin at its very heart has an intensely powerful desire to be in charge to be our own God we decide what's right we rule ourselves we choose that's the very center of sin isn't it it's a rejection of us being dependent on anything else or anyone else and that is what these people that

[31 : 49] Jude has in his sights are guilty of they did not submit to Jesus authority be alert is Jude's appeal see these people for who they really are be discerning enough to spot who's really in charge here who really has the final say when it comes to the pressure point are they going to follow the way of the Lord and his word or are they going to follow their own dreams and desires and what Jude is doing here what Jude is writing to the first century church is just another way of applying God's warnings to his ancient people through Moses hundreds of years earlier Moses warns God's people take care lest your hearts be deceived and you turn aside to other gods and worship them then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you see

Jude writes for the very same reason that Moses did as he gave God's people on the brink of the promised land the covenant promises and warnings so that they would not be deceived and led astray by those who wanted to turn them from the truth of God to idolatry to false gods to corrupt religion Jude is issuing the same warning there's nothing new under the sun these people they promise freedom and fun but they deliver only death and misery see where they're headed see their destiny is what Jude is saying here look they are going to judgment nowhere else see true enjoyment in life true freedom comes from submitting to the right person we all have to submit to somebody and don't be swayed by these fools says Jude see who their real authority is discern who it is they're really serving and see their destiny you don't want to go there like

Satan before them these people promise the world but they will deliver death and sin always over promises and Jude pleads please see these people who they really are see who they really are see who they really submit to and therefore contend the faith is at stake you must contend contend for the one true gospel and so if it comes to it and we find there are people in our midst who like these people do not submit to Jesus when it comes to it they actually follow their own desires and dreams so you must contend for the gospel see where they're headed privilege counts for nothing see who they really submit to contend and submit to Jesus because he and he alone will keep you from stumbling he and he alone can present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy on that day these people will only deliver you to death so contend contend contend contend for the gospel let me pray father we thank you that you are gracious enough to warn us and these are sober words but we pray that we would take them seriously help us to be those who live by faith and so be willing to contend when the time comes give us strength give us discernment for we ask in

Jesus name Amen