

A Spotters Guide to Ungodly Influencers in the Church: 2) Certain Punishment and Clearly Predicted

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Date: 19 June 2022

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn to our Bibles now, and as you know, if you've been here the last few Sunday evenings, Paul Brennan is leading us through the letter of Jude, a very short letter in the New Testament, after the three letters of John and just before the last book of the Bible, Revelation.

And we're going to be looking particularly at verses 14 to 19, but I'm going to read the whole letter again. I think it's very, somebody said to me last week, it's great reading the whole letter every week.

We're really getting it into our heads. We're getting the context for what we're speaking about. So let me begin at the beginning and read through the whole short letter. 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, 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.

Why? Well, 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 who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 23] I want to remind you that once you 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, served as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner, these people, also relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, 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 said, The Lord rebuke you.

[2 : 23] But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 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. These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, looking after themselves.

Waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted. 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. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied.

Saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

[3 : 36] These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They're loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last times there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions.

It's these who cause divisions. Worldly people devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith.

Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt.

Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garments stained by the flesh. 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, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time, and now, and forever.

[5 : 02] Amen. Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us once again this his word.

Well, evening folks. Please do have the short letter of Jude open in front of you. And as Willie mentioned, we're thinking, especially tonight, about verses 14 to 19.

So Jude, and verses 14 to 19. Now, it's not easy to spot something that's been going on under your nose.

You're blind to it for whatever reason. It's just how things are. You haven't really paid attention to it. And somehow you've just missed it. A book I began reading this week begins with these words.

And these, I don't think are, I don't think it's a factual account. I think it's other than that. An older goldfish swims past a couple of small fry.

[6 : 02] And he says to them, how's the water boys? And they look a bit confused. And they say, what's water? See, the thing is, goldfish probably don't see the water itself.

They see what's in the water. They see what's refracted through the water. But we assume they don't see the water itself. It's what they swim in. It's there.

It's their environment. Universal. It's all around them, but invisible. They don't see it. It shapes everything they do, everything they see, but they don't see it.

And it can be a bit like that for us. The book of Jude is showing us things that we perhaps haven't seen.

It's often the case that we just don't see what is in front of us. And Jude is writing to a church, as we've been seeing. He's writing to a church that had missed the danger right in front of them.

[7 : 04] Like the goldfish that just don't see the water. So, the people in this church had missed the danger that was right under their noses. And in the middle section of the letter, it stretches from verse 5 to 19, Jude is helping his readers and us to learn how to spot the danger right under our noses.

In this book, he is helping his readers to spot the ungodly influences who are in the church. And they're people that he warns very strongly about. Look at verses 3 and 4.

And if you've been here these past weeks, you'll be familiar. Jude is, he wanted to write, verse 3, about our common salvation. That was the letter he wanted to write. But he found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Why? Well, verse 4 tells us, That is why Jude writes, There is an unseen danger right in front of their noses.

And we may well sit uncomfortably in our seats as we spend another week sitting under the teaching of God's word in these middle verses of the book. They are difficult realities to absorb.

[8 : 30] But this is God's word for you, his people, this evening. And God isn't here to entertain us, to give us vague platitudes.

No, this is his loving word. This is loving word of warning for his dear flock. The Lord Jesus treasures above all things his people.

And so this letter is a loving warning to his people to see the danger. In this letter, he is equipping his people to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

See, God isn't in the business of entertaining. But he is in the business of equipping. And equipping and strengthening his people. And the gospel Jude causes people to fight for, it's the only gospel.

It is the only means by which men and women can be saved. And when it comes under threat, when the gospel comes under threat, when the church comes under threat, well, there's nothing more important for his people to contend for.

[9 : 42] There is nothing of more value to the Lord Jesus than his people, than his church. That is why Jude wrote this letter. It's why he had to write. And he writes to protect the church, to rescue God's people from being led astray by the wicked people he outlines in these verses.

Jude is helping his people to spot them, to spot the danger. He helps us to see who they really are. Last week, in verses 11 to 13, we saw their true motivation.

These influences in the midst, Jude revealed and showed us their true motivation. And their motivation was worldly, not godly. And he also helped us to see their true fruit, which was worthless and not good.

And this evening, in verses 14 to 19, Jude is adding more color. He's painting this picture for us of these people who are a real danger in their midst. And in these verses, he shows us, first, something about their ultimate destination.

And second, the fact that they are persistent presence in the church. So these are two things we'll look at tonight. First, verses 14 to 16. And Jude shows us the punishment that these people must face.

[11 : 02] He says, these people are ungodly and therefore deserving of punishment. Now, these verses in 14 to 16, they're very clear, but they're also very sobering.

Jude says that these people were spoken about long ago. And they're heading for judgment because of all their ungodliness. He begins, it was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied.

Let's just deal with that first, the fact that this comes from Enoch. And again, you won't find this exact quote in our Bibles. Remember that this middle section is a very carefully structured section.

It falls into two parts, verses 5 to 10. And 11 to 16. And each follows the same pattern. So both begin with a set of three Old Testament examples.

Verses 5 to 7. That begins the first section. And the second section begins in verse 11 with three Old Testament examples. Then, Jude makes application to these people.

[12 : 10] These dangerous influences in their midst, he makes application to them. You have that in verse 8 and again in verse 12. And then, he gives an example from a non-biblical source.

So in the first half, that's verse 9. You know, this thing with the archangel Michael disputing with the devil. We thought about that a couple weeks ago. And again, he does the same here in verses 14 to 16.

A non-biblical source. And then, he makes application to these people. Verse 10 and again in verse 16. Same pattern. And in the same way Jude quotes from a non-biblical source in verse 9, he does so again here in verse 14.

He's quoting from a Jewish book known as One Enoch. And although it is drawn from outside the Old Testament scriptures, it comprises material fully in line with what we do read in the scriptures, particularly Deuteronomy 33 and Isaiah 66.

Very similar sentiments in those two passages. And Jude's purpose in quoting is to further demonstrate the assertion he made in verse 4.

[13 : 23] Have a look back at verse 4. The first thing he says about them is that they were unnoticed, but they were long ago designated for this condemnation. These people, these ungodly influences, they've been destined for judgment from the very beginning.

And the focus of this prophecy from Enoch is the Lord will certainly come and he will judge every aspect of ungodliness.

These false teachers who Jude is saying are in your midst, they were destined for judgment from the beginning. That's what he's saying with this quote from Enoch.

Look at what it says. Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they've committed in such an ungodly way and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

You can't miss the emphasis here, can you, in this quote. The Lord is coming to execute judgment on all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness. These people, says Jude, are ungodly.

[14 : 39] They are doing ungodly things. And they're doing those ungodly things in an ungodly way. He says these people are totally devoid of God in reality.

They are ungodly. And therefore, because they are ungodly in every aspect, they are destined for judgment. Jude is making this point about judgment strongly, not only because it's true, but also perhaps because these false teachers, they have in their influence and their teaching, perhaps they've downplayed the future and certainly the coming judgment that Jude talks about.

They've downplayed the fact that there's a judgment coming. Perhaps they've dropped any mention of eternity and they certainly don't like talking about the coming judgment.

It's just a bit unpleasant and unpalatable. We just sort of play that down. Folk don't want to hear about that. Let's not go on about judgment and what's coming. Let's focus on the here and now.

That's what these ungodly influences are perhaps doing. And at first, that message is a barely perceptible drift towards a sort of soft prosperity gospel.

[16 : 02] There isn't an open attack on the Bible's teaching on judgment, but it's sort of quietly dropped. Just don't mention it anymore. And as time goes by, like a ship that's initially one degree off target, you go long enough and you're going to be hundreds of miles off course.

And perhaps that's what's happened with these ungodly teachers in their midst. They've downplayed the future. There's no judgment to come. But Jude is saying no.

Absolutely not. There is a judgment. It is coming. And these people, these people who have infiltrated you, who are starting to get into your midst, they're pulling others off course.

They are in reality ungodly people and they are deserving of judgment. They will face the same terrible outcome that we saw there in verse 11 with Cain and Balaam and Korah.

They're headed for the same thing. It's terrifying. But ultimate destinies are at stake.

[17 : 14] And by demonstrating and flagging up where these people are really headed, what's coming, Jude is saying this is a serious matter. These aren't just people who are a bit off track.

No, this is where they're headed. They're a real danger. You need to see it. And Jude would have taken no pleasure whatsoever in writing these words. It's a sober matter.

But it's serious. It's real. And then he goes on to give more specifics on the sorts of ungodly behaviors these people are exhibiting in verse 16.

Here is why these people are deserving of the judgment he talks about in verses 14 and 15. Look at what he says there in verse 16. He's applying what he said to these people.

He said, These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loud mouth boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

[18 : 18] He says they are grumblers. That sounds like quite a sort of low-level problem, doesn't it? But he's not taking aim at the eeyores amongst us, thankfully.

I think we'd all benefit from being a little less eeyore and a bit more tigger. But it's not talking about that. It's not talking about someone's sort of glass-half-empty sort of view on life.

No, this sort of grumbling is far deeper, far more serious. It is a spirit of grumbling that actually takes aim at the goodness of God and God's amazing kindness to us.

These people are like those who haven't been rescued from terrible slavery in Egypt and on their way to the Promised Land, as you read in Numbers, what happens? They begin to grumble.

Just three days after that amazing rescue, they are grumbling. against God's appointed leader, Moses. It's what Judah's alluded to already in verse 5 and again in verse 11 with Korah's rebellion.

[19 : 21] These are men who follow their own desires rather than God's revealed will and plan. These men grumble against God, against His word, against His leaders.

These men want to go back to Egypt. Egypt. These men want to lead you back into slavery and back to Satan. Even when they get to the very brink of the Promised Land, they can see it.

But still they grumble. Still they want to go back to Egypt. And that is an attitude that's been found in amongst God's people all through the ages.

It wasn't exclusive to those people in the wilderness heading to the Promised Land. It's an attitude found in every era of God's people. It's still a big problem in the church that Judah's writing to and still today for us.

They are malcontents, he goes on to say. These people are never satisfied with their lot. They do not rejoice in the Christian life.

[20 : 27] Clearly, they rather see God's grace as a license for sensuality. They perhaps look at the non-Christian worlds, see how they live and they want to join in.

God's ways aren't good enough. They're not content with what God has revealed and what he wants for his people. I was reading Dick Lucas' comments on this little section.

He says this, these people are not happy with being Christians. They are forever gazing over the fence at the non-Christian's greener grass. So they think. People who are free not only to behave as they wish, but to do so with a clear conscience and with as few inhibitions as they choose.

They are, says Jude, those who are following their own sinful desires. They're malcontents. God's ways aren't good enough.

And so they turn God's grace into a license to do whatever you want. Live as you like. And Jude would have us heed the warning of Proverbs 23, verse 17 to 18.

[21 : 40] It says there, let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all day. Surely there is a future and your hope will not be cut off.

So let's learn to spot those own tendencies in our own hearts. This isn't just a problem that other people have. Let's look within first.

Let's guard our own hearts, our own attitudes. There's a little spirit of grumbling and malcontent in all of us, I think. But just watch yourself. Don't despise God's amazing grace.

Don't begrudge God's amazing goodness to you. Just watch out for that attitude that starts to distrust and not be thankful for all the Lord has given us.

It's dangerous if left unchecked. Dangerous for ourselves, but also for the church. An unchecked attitude of grumbling in the church, it will bring disaster.

[22 : 46] That's why Jude warns against it so strongly. He says, these ungodly influences in your midst, they are grumblers, they're malcontents, following their own sinful desires. Those are serious things.

It's absolutely antithetical to the gospel to have those attitudes, those features in our own lives. And we all can quickly forget God's blessings, can't we?

To forget his goodness to us. And so we must constantly be brought back. Constantly. We need to meet together, to serve together, to pray together. And so guard ourselves against grumbling that at first seems small, but over time it can grow to such an extent that Jude has to warn about it here in such stark terms.

He goes on and tells us that they are loud mouth boasters. End of verse 16, showing favoritism to gain advantage. Don't be distracted, Jude warns.

Don't be distracted by their eloquence. Listen to what they're really saying. These people, he's saying actually, they big themselves up. They're loud mouth boasters.

[24 : 11] They talk up a good game. They show partiality to carry favor, to get in with those who are powerful. They show favoritism to gain an advantage.

See, Jude is helping us see what is really at the root of these dangerous people he warns about. See, their priority is not teaching the flock.

Their priority is not teaching the whole counsel of God. Theirs is not a cross-centered ministry. They will not say the hard things. They will not be prepared to help people face the realities of life.

Hard realities, taking up your cross daily, they will not prepare you for that. They will not prepare us for suffering or for death. They won't do those things because they are hard and Jude tells us they are in it for themselves.

We saw that last week, didn't we? They are shepherds feeding themselves. They are not feeding the flock. They are in it for themselves, they are ungodly and because they are ungodly, Jude says, they will face judgment.

[25 : 25] Please, says Jude, please see them for who they are. Please see what is going on in front of you. Now, it's one thing to say this, it's one thing to read it, it's quite another to face this in reality.

I've just spent the past few days with a friend in ministry and speaking to him and for him this has been a reality. There have been people in the midst of that church, largely unnoticed, who exhibit these behaviors, shepherds who feed only themselves, grumblers, malcontents.

The problem is, on the face of it, these people are lovely middle class people and many in the church just cannot believe that what is actually going on is going on.

Most of the church can't see it and this pastor was telling me, the flock, they can't see it. And when he arrived in the church it was so obvious.

They cannot see that these people are wolves in sheep's clothing. And so that pastor gets a hard time and the wolves are indulged.

[26 : 42] We cannot afford to be that naive, warns Jude. People, even in the visible church, are capable of deceit and great sin. Do not be naive.

And this pastor with tears in his eyes was telling me of the young and the untaught Christians who have been sucked in. They are now under the influence of false teachers. This is real.

This is happening at the moment. Do not be naive. Be prepared to see these people who they really are. See past the pleasantries and remember that these are influential people.

If they weren't influential, Jude wouldn't have to write the letter. Their influential people follow them. That's why he writes this letter in such strong terms. With tears, I imagine, Jude writes, these people are ungodly and therefore deserving of punishment.

Please see it. Please see it. Now, there may not be folk like this in our midst here at the Tron. I pray not. But don't be surprised if this sort of issue does arise at some point.

[28 : 00] Because that's what we see in verses 17 to 19. Jude shows us here the preparation we must make. These people were predicted and will always be present, so don't be surprised.

Look what he writes there in verse 17. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. they said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions.

It is these who cause divisions. Worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. Jude is saying, make sure that you listen to the right people.

Don't listen to these people I've warned you about. Do not listen to them. Rather, listen to the apostles. Listen to those equipped and commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus.

Listen to the men who are the very foundation of the church, the authoritative interpreters and witnesses of the gospel. Let me read to you from the apostles.

[29 : 07] The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. He said, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised in the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is in me, whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed.

[30 : 21] That's Paul establishing his own credentials as an apostle. What has been passed to him and the other apostles was passed on to others. The apostles are the authority. Listen to them, says Jude.

Heed their warning. He tells us the apostles predicted that scoffers would arrive and would be consumed with their own selfish desires. Therefore, don't be surprised.

Instead, be prepared. It's exactly what the sort of warning that was issued by the apostle Paul himself. Acts 20.

Here's what he said to the Ephesian church. I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from your own cells will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples.

Therefore, be alert. Or again, in 1 Timothy 4, verses 1 to 5, the apostle Paul says, the spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

[31 : 45] Or 2 Timothy 3, but understand this, writes the apostle Paul, that in the last days, there will come times of difficulty.

For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep, listen to this, those who creep into houses and capture weak women. My friend down south is telling me that's exactly what's happening in his church.

These people are creeping into widows' houses and pulling them away. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at knowledge of the truth.

Just as Janus and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also opposed the truth. Men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith, but they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of these two men.

[33 : 11] You, however, writes Paul, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured.

Yet, from all them the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you've learned it, and how from childhood you should have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Those are just some of the warnings from the apostles. Listen to them, says Jude. Listen to their warnings. Expect these dangerous people and do not be sucked in.

- [34 : 27] Hear the apostles' warning. Follow their teachings. Follow their example, because it's they that hold to the once for all delivered to the saints' faith. faith. And of course, these warnings that hold not just for the church at that time, but also for us.

Note how it begins there. in the last time, there will be scoffers. In the last time, in the last days.

And that is a time that stretches from Christ's ascension to his return. We are in the last days and Jude says, in these days, there will be scoffers in amongst you.

And because we are in these last days, we can continue to expect, as the apostles warned, people of the nature that Jude warns about here.

This is not unique to Jude's day, to this particular church he's writing to. It's going to be a persistent problem, he writes.

- [35 : 37] These things happen. I've mentioned already, I spent time talking with another pastor of whom these matters are real and live. And we've been warned.

And be in no doubt, adds Jude, who the real source of difficulty and division is here. The pastor I spoke to was drawing criticism for being divisive.

But he wasn't the problem. He was contending for the faith. Look who's the real source of problems. Look at verse 19. It is these who cause divisions. Wildly people, devoid of the Spirit.

It is these ungodly people who are causing the divisions. They are the source of the problem. It is not those who contend for the faith, who are the creators of the division.

No, it's the opposite. It is these worldly people. They're seeking their own welfare. They are, Jude goes so far as to say, devoid of the Spirit.

- [36 : 43] They are not true Christian brothers and sisters. They're devoid of the Spirit. They may be in the church. They may claim to be Spirit-led, but they are not Christians at all, says Jude.

Now, that's not a judgment that we can rush to. I'm sure Jude was careful as he wrote those words. We cannot see what only God can see, but we can draw conclusions based on what we can actually observe.

And given the detailed descriptions that Jude gives of these people, his conclusion that they are devoid of the Spirit seems absolutely right. And I'm sure he trembled as he wrote it.

But these people that Jude warns about, they were pulling dear Christian brothers and sisters away from the Lord and towards real danger.

Such people do exist, and we must be prepared. We must be warned. And we must be discerning. See what is really there, and be prepared to contend.

- [37 : 59] We'll see how next time. But these are sobering words, aren't they? But they are fundamentally loving words of warning from our Savior through the pen of Jude.

Jesus loves his church. He loves his church. And there are few things that grieve him more than deceitful people who come into the midst of his church, who drag people away.

He will bring them to judgment. And until that day, we must contend. That is why Jude wrote these words, so we would see the danger and so contend.

let me pray. Father, we're reminded that your word is not just to entertain us, but it is to equip us, and to equip us for all eternity.

So please help us to be a people who live by faith, trusting your word, trusting what you revealed, and to be discerning, to be discerning enough to spot people in the midst who would drag us away from the one true faith.

[39 : 27] So please help us to heed this warning, and to encourage each other to keep going in the faith, because we need encouragement.

So help us, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen.