

Privilege is not immunity

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[0 : 0 0] If you'd like to turn with me again to the letter of Jude and have it open before you, it'll be a great help. Will the churches of the Western world survive the 21st century? That's the question we're asking.

Or at least that's the question that this powerful little letter of Jude is asking as we study its message together. And it's a very real question because Jude is up against something that we today are also up against too.

The subtle influence, as he says in verse 4, of those who have crept into the church scene and begun to destroy the very foundations of our common salvation.

The faith once for all delivered to the saints. It does seem extraordinary, doesn't it? Almost impossible that so early in the church's history, in the first century, this kind of thing could have been happening.

We've got used to it today, we've got a whole lot of church history behind us, we expect that kind of thing. But Jude is plain in verse 4, isn't he? Even then, look at what was at stake.

[1 : 1 0] The grace of God, he says, that is to say, the very truth of the gospel itself was being perverted into sensuality. Being made a license for immorality, as the NIV puts it.

And the unique lordship of Jesus Christ himself, as the only lord, the only son of God, was being denied. So no wonder Jude feared for the very future of these churches.

Abandon these things, and you are abandoning totally our common salvation. Abandon these, and the true faith, the historic Orthodox Christian faith, the faith once for all delivered to the saints, well, it will be utterly lost.

But the churches couldn't seem to see it. Isn't that extraordinary? These perversions, so serious that they threatened the very fabric, the very survival of the church, Jude says in verse 4, they've been smuggled in unnoticed.

They crept in without anybody realizing it. The churches have been victims of a subtle rebranding exercise, so that the gospel had been perverted before their very eyes, just as so often we see today, without anyone really noticing.

[2 : 3 3] People have, throughout the history of the church, again and again been taken in by clever marketing people, who know how to get the message under the radar screens, and into our minds, so that we don't even realize that we've been had.

And that's the tactic that Jude is wanting to expose for us in this letter. We saw it last time. It's very clever. It's very effective. What was happening?

Well, they were subtly shifting the focus in our thinking about salvation from the future and onto the present. In one sense, it seems a very tiny shift, but in another sense, it is a momentous, a huge shift.

Because, you see, the true biblical faith, the salvation that we share, is a salvation fixed on the future. A salvation that promises glory in the presence of Jesus Christ when he comes.

That's what verse 24 says we're kept for, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's what verse 21 says we wait for, the full flowering of the mercy of Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

[3 : 45] That's our promised salvation. And it is a glorious reality. And yet it's also true, and a central part of our salvation, that we will face struggles now, today, while we wait for that glory.

Now is a time for contending, says Jude. The true gospel faith means living now in the light of a certain future, and therefore it means living in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ today, with patience, with perseverance, with obedience to him, and to him alone.

But you see, a rebranded faith has crept in, in Jude's day, and in our day. And it's different. It's a faith fixated on the present.

The whole future perspective has been subtly shifted out of the centre of our thinking, and sometimes out of our thinking altogether. And so of course, all that's left is to focus on the present day, on what salvation means now, in my present life, in this body.

And you can see that if that's the case, then obviously the only thing that really matters will be what I get now. satisfaction now. If you downplay and forget all about the future glory, the real goal of salvation, well, there's no sense in perseverance now, in waiting, in patience.

[5 : 20] No. Instead, what matters, obviously, is blessing now, and satisfaction now, and spiritual experience now, fulfilment now, today. And if you conveniently airbrush out of your theology and marginalise any sense of a future judgment to come, well, of course, then there's no need at all, is there, for restraint today.

No sense in holiness. No need for submission to God's law in the present day. It's all just living for the present. It's all just about seeking fulfilment from the gospel today.

If it means anything at all, it means satisfaction in this world, in this world's terms. And do you see how the lusts, how the appetites, how the rewards of this present world have crept in and flooded the thinking of the Church of Jesus Christ today?

Go down to any Christian bookshop and you will see that almost all of the books that you are reading are about fulfilment now, satisfaction now, fullness of experience today.

But Jude's message to the Church today is a loud shout. Wake up, he says. Wake up and see where all of this is going to end. Realise the danger that you're in and do something about it before it's too late.

[6 : 43] There is real and present danger. The very future of the churches of Jesus Christ is at stake. And friends, that is a message that we in the West in general and we in this nation in particular that we really do need to heed.

Of course, the future of the Church of Jesus Christ, the Bride of Christ is not in doubt. Jesus said, I will build my church and hell itself will not prevail. And Jude is just as clear.

God does have an ultimate sovereign purpose for his church, for those he has called, who are beloved, who are kept for Jesus Christ. But nevertheless, God's privilege and his call bring a solemn responsibility.

A responsibility for the church in the present, today. We must contend for the faith, says Jude. We must keep ourselves in the true biblical faith or else the future will be bleak.

God will not be mocked. His privilege brings responsibility not immunity. And that is the message, the clear message, the very sobering message of the main central section of Jude's letter in verses 5 to 19.

[8 : 06] You need to remember, says Jude, something very, very important. Do you see that word in verse 5? In our version, it's remind you. I want to remind you. It's there again in verse 17.

Remember. It's the same word in the Greek. It marks out verses 5 to 19 as one great single argument in this letter. You need to remember, says Jude in verse 5, something that you once fully knew.

Or perhaps better, I want to remind you, though you were informed of this once and for all. That's the word he uses. It recalls the faith delivered once and for all.

What he's saying is, I want to remind you of something that you do know that is basic to the gospel faith that you believe in, something integral to the common salvation that we share that was once for all delivered, but something that you seem to have anesthetized in your mind.

Something that you've stopped taking seriously in your Christian life, in your church life, which is one reason that you're taken in so easily by these erroneous teachings. Something so vital to take seriously that I'm going to spend the most of my letter speaking about this difficult and unpleasant subject.

[9 : 30] What is it? What must we remember to take so very seriously that Jude wants to teach us? Well, it's there very obviously, isn't it, in the passage we read.

That Jesus is a saviour who is also the judge of all the world. Don't forget that, says Jude.

Don't forget that ever. Don't forget that the Lord has judged all through history and that he will judge at the end of history for eternity. Don't think in the churches of Jesus Christ you can shelter in your privileged calling.

Privilege confers responsibility not immunity. and Christian churches today and Christian people today we need to remember Jude's warning as well.

We need to realize the danger of being lulled into a false sense of security. Jude is saying that to us. He's saying don't be fooled. See where this is going to end up unless you wake up, unless you take action.

[10 : 44] Look beyond the present to the future to the coming day of salvation. the great day that it will be yes, but also a great day of judgment.

That's Jude's message all the way through these verses. It's very plain. It's very hard. But do you see I want you to see how Jude goes about reorienting our thinking from the present to the future.

Do you see how he helps us once again to get a right proper future perspective on things? I think it's very striking. He does not do what the rebranders of the faith do. They focus on themselves.

They present their own experiences. They seek authority in what they themselves feel must be right for the present day and our present world. They talk about what God is saying to the church today.

They like to ask well, where is the Spirit leading us in the church today? They say things like well, never mind obscure texts from the Bible especially the Old Testament.

[11 : 52] Let's listen for what the Spirit is leading the church into today. That's the kind of language we hear a lot today isn't it? But that's not Jude's approach is it?

Jude the half-brother of Jesus the brother of James the leader of the church in Jerusalem he doesn't say the Lord has revealed to me something that I am going to tell you.

He doesn't say I'm the Lord's brother I therefore have authority to tell you this and you must do what I say. He doesn't say that does he? You'd think maybe that's what he would say. That's probably what you or I would have said.

But no, we saw in verse 1 he doesn't even mention that he's the Lord's brother. And in verse 5 he doesn't appeal to special authority either does he? He doesn't appeal to fresh revelations.

What does he do? Well what he says is look back. Look back to what God has said in the past. Look to what the Spirit has said in unalterable words in history words which cannot be changed cannot be modified.

[13 : 02] Listen to those words from God and see how clearly and how powerfully they speak to the church today. That's Jude's message. That's how God speaks to his church with power and authority today.

He does it through the scriptures. Through what the once unchanging God said once in history and is saying again all through history and today and always.

That's how the Spirit speaks to the church today. not leading us off into so-called new truths but doing exactly the opposite turning us back to old truths.

Isn't that striking? And in fact in Jude he is turning us to some very particularly obscure texts in places by the way. But that's God's word for the church today says Jude.

His word of warning to all of us about what happens when the world and the church and Christians forget that God is a saviour yes but also a God of judgment.

[14 : 11] It's a warning but at the same time it's a comfort isn't it? Because Jude is saying that this is nothing new that you're facing. He's saying that you need to recognize that the enemies that you face the struggles you face are simply the age old struggles of the one true faith.

It's always been this way in the church of God. God hasn't lost control in our day. Our problems are not unique neither were the problems of Jude's first readers and we must remember that too it's important that we should remember that.

It's very easy isn't it to look around at the state of our churches today and to throw our hands up in horror and cry woe is us and want to run away into a holy huddle but we're not living in the worst apostasy the world has ever seen.

It's been like this from the beginning says Jude. This is our common salvation it's always been a struggle. It's always been a matter of contending for the one true faith.

It always will be like that. Get used to it. That's Jude's message. It's always been a need and there always will be a need to contend with the enemies of the true faith both within the church and outside the church.

[15 : 22] We just need to recognize them for what they are. They may change their clothes from generation to generation but ultimately they never change their spots. they are always the same. And that's why we have the Old Testament.

That's why Paul says in Romans 15 verse 4 the things written in former days are written down for our instruction. That through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures you may have hope.

It's the same in 1 Corinthians 10 when he tells the Corinthian church that the things that happened to the Israelites happened as an example but they were written down for our instruction.

It's just the same your experience. That's what he's saying. And so when Jude is faced with the real and present danger of teaching and influences in the church that are taking it away from the true foundation of the gospel he turns to the Old Testament.

And he says to us today in the New Testament church read the scriptures. Listen to what God said and did and see how it's so relevant today. It's so relevant.

[16 : 26] And that's what he does in verses 5 to 19. Repeatedly he's turning us to the scriptures isn't he? He's saying look recognize the enemies. See the pattern. See the problem.

What you're facing today is just what they faced back then. In fact five times he does exactly that. Can you see that? Five times in verses 5 to 19 he gives a piece of teaching four times from the Old Testament and one from the apostles and then he says this is that referring to these people.

The people he's up against today. So verses 5 to 7 that we read the Old Testament teaching and then verse 8 in like manner these people. What you're facing today is just the same.

Same in verse 9 and then verse 10 but these people. Verse 11 the history application in 11 and 12 these. Same in verses 14 and 15 with the application in verse 16 these.

And finally the teaching in verses 17 and 18 applied directly in verse 19. It is these that you're dealing with. You see all through his message Judah has got a very simple refrain.

[17 : 40] remember the Lord judges. He's judged in the past when his people have rebelled and he will do so again.

And he will judge ultimately. There's a great day of judgment looming as verse 6 says. And beyond that as verse 13 says there is a gloom of utter darkness reserved forever.

So don't live as though the present was the whole story. Remember the fundamentals of the gospel says Jude and live today in the light of that reality not in a fantasy not in a fog of unreality.

Is that a message that we need today? Well it must be mustn't it because it's in our nature. To forget so easily the things that we know to be true.

Just because we don't like to think about the consequences. We're thinking about that this morning. We put things out of our minds so so easily. I was sitting writing my notes on Friday morning and an email came in.

[18 : 52] It's terribly distracting when a ping goes. You just have to stop what you're doing. Especially if you're being distracted writing a sermon. So I looked up on my email and here it was one of these junk mails that come in. I just thought well I'll have a look at it.

I need to be distracted for a few minutes. And the heading of the email was this. Why the next housing crash will be worse. Ten reasons why we've forgotten the past.

I thought that sounds a lot like Jude's letter to me so I read on. Do you want to know what the first one was? Number one, says this financial writer, we overspend without a care.

The first rule of sensible budgeting, he says, is spend less than you earn. And that's pretty good, pretty straightforward. But in the United Kingdom today for every hundred pounds we earn we spend a hundred and ten pounds.

He says we have forgotten the most basic rule because we consider only the present day. When house prices only go one way, up the way.

[19 : 55] When interest rates are low. When credit is so easy to get. I thought, well that's just exactly the message of Jude, isn't it? It's just the same in spiritual life.

I won't give you the other ten reasons why you should be selling your house and starting to rent. If you want to know you can come and ask me afterwards. But Jude's warnings are much more important. And I am going to speak about those.

Jude's first reminder, his first reason why we have forgotten the past is a very solemn one, isn't it? It's like those warnings. We get a very enormous letters nowadays on the front of cigarette packets.

This cigarette will kill you as you open it up and have another fag. Here's Jude's warning. Privilege is not immunity.

That's the message, isn't it, of verses five to seven. They say it loud and clear. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security. That's what Jude's saying. Don't think that you can do as you please and God will sit idly by just because you've received great blessings from God.

[21 : 03] No, privilege confers responsibility, not immunity from God's judgment. No group is beyond the judgment of God.

Even the church can never be complacent. No leaders are ever above the judgment of God. No leader, however gifted, no great one, can ever be arrogant.

No society is ever immune from the judgment of God. You cannot have a cavalier attitude, a contemptuous attitude to God's law.

Heed the warning, says Jude. And in his warning here, as in the other verses, Jude gives us these clear examples from the Old Testament where privilege was no immunity from God's judgment.

Let's look at them just briefly. The first example you see in verse 5 is the example of Israel's disbelief. Jesus, who saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe.

[22 : 07] Our version says Jesus there. Some of the versions, the NIV says the Lord. Some of the manuscripts differ, but there's no difficulty at all. It's quite clear all the way through Jude's letter there's only one Lord, one Master, one Sovereign, Jesus Christ.

But what a shocking statement, isn't it? Here is perhaps the most privileged generation of all God's people in the Old Testament. The very ones who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, a bunch of benighted slaves.

And they're promised by God a home with him in a land flowing with milk and honey. The very ones that he'd stooped to rescue. He'd taken them on eagles' wings through the desert.

He'd taken them to Sinai where he'd come down and revealed himself to them. He'd called them to be his own precious possession, his jewel, his covenant people.

He built a tabernacle so that he could come and live in the midst of them, sharing their campsite as they went on the way to the promised land. And yet, you know the story, don't you?

[23 : 15] You read it in Numbers chapter 13 and chapter 14. On the brink of the promised land, they rebelled. They grumbled against Moses and the Lord. They refused to enter the land. Joshua and Caleb, well, they pled with them, but all they wanted to do was stone them.

And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people despise me? How long will they disbelieve in me in spite of all the signs I've done among them? And just as Jude said, he destroyed all of those who did not believe.

Your dead bodies shall fall in the wilderness, and for forty years your children shall suffer all your unfaithfulness until your dead bodies, the last of them, lies in the wilderness.

That's what happened, isn't it? An entire generation of God's own covenant people, his church, lost in the wilderness because of unbelief.

privilege, you see, is not immunity. And Jude's point couldn't be clearer, could it? He applies it directly to the New Testament church in verse 8.

[24 : 24] So it is with you, he says. You're in danger in exactly the same way, in just the same way these people who are in amongst you, who are influencing you, are jeopardizing the church in your generation.

God does judge the church. And you can't be complacent. Remember and respond now before it's too late. That's what Jude is saying. And friends, that is also what God is saying through Jude to the church in our generation, is it not?

Watch out. Don't live in a fantasy world forgetting the past and ignoring the future. God will not be mocked. See, we in the West, we in this country, in Europe, in America, we have been a privileged people spiritually, haven't we?

We in Scotland have an enormous spiritual heritage of privilege, especially over the last four centuries or so. We've had the Word of God in plentiful supply.

We've had freedom to worship God. We've had so much weight of godliness in our heritage. But over the last century or so, we've seen rationalism and liberalism eroding away the truth of God.

[25 : 46] Church is turning away from the true grace of God, from the gospel, from the lordship of Jesus Christ, again and again. And we too have seen many lost generations, haven't we?

We've seen the church in the wilderness going round and round in circles, losing influence, losing power in society, while its membership gets older and older and dies off.

I sometimes think it's only the National Health Service and modern medicine that's kept the churches going so long in so many places. Well, it's true, isn't it? That's the reality.

Lost generations. Because churches have lost the gospel. Because churches have disbelieved in his Word, have refused to obey the Word of God.

And there are monuments to that. All over this land of ours, you just need to go into any city, any town, and you'll see churches once places of worship, once places of living faith, but now, what are they?

[26 : 49] Pubs, restaurants, clubs, antique shops. That's the worst of the lot, isn't it? And when we see these things, it's just what Jude is saying to us.

Don't forget. Christian churches and Christian people, we need to remember that the God who saved, that the God who redeemed a people out of Egypt afterwards destroyed them because of unbelief.

And if we forget that, says Jude, you also are in danger of your churches heading for disaster. There will be no future for your churches. God's purposes won't be stopped.

Of course they won't. And nor will his church die out. But what he is saying to us so clearly is that particular churches, even whole generations in particular places can write themselves out of the script.

And history is littered with lost generations, bones in the desert that speak of unbelief. Reputation and past glory just isn't enough.

[27 : 59] Past grace is not enough. It's faithfulness to the gospel today. It's faithfulness to the gospel today. It's faithfulness to the gospel today. It's faithfulness to the gospel today. Now sometimes people find this hard. How does this square up with a sovereign God, with a sovereign salvation?

Doesn't he keep us by his grace? Well, yes he does. But one of the ways that he keeps us is through his words of warning. And real faith, true faith, doesn't reject the warnings of God.

It receives God's warnings humbly and obediently. Real faith doesn't harden its heart like that rebellion in the past. That's the significance of these words that we read in Hebrews chapter 3.

You might just like to turn back there because I think it's something that helps us to see the very same argument. He's speaking about exactly the same thing, isn't he? He's applying the same lesson to the New Testament church.

In Hebrews 3 and 12 he says, Take care, brothers, lest there be among any of you an unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. That's why he's telling us we always need to be alert.

[29 : 08] We need to be encouraging one another, exhorting one another today, so that you are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Because you see, sin and unbelief is subtle.

It creeps in unnoticed, especially when our only thought is of the present. So what is our focus to be, according to the writer here? Well, in verse 14, it's to be the future.

It's to be holding our confidence to the end, he says. That's why we mustn't harden our hearts today. Look at verse 18 and 19 again. Who is it who didn't enter God's rest?

Those, verse 18, who were disobedient. Who couldn't enter, verse 19, because of their unbelief. Now do you see those two words, disobedience and unbelief? That's so helpful, isn't it?

Because in the Bible, disobedience is unbelief, and unbelief is disobedience. See, the rebranders of the faith in the church today, they don't go around saying, we don't believe anymore.

[30 : 08] Of course they don't. They love to use the language of faith. They talk all about the community of faith, about being affirming and open and inclusive in the community of faith, of being at one with all the faithful.

Oh yes, they use the words of faith. But they disobey the commands of God. They lead others to do the same. They rebel, just like the church did in the brink of Canaan.

And that is something that God calls unbelief. And for that, he destroyed a whole generation.

And that is where the current trend of so-called progressiveness in the church is taking you, says Jude. That's the first example.

Israel's unbelief and the consequences. Turn back to Jude and see the second example that shows so clearly, in fact, this link between unbelief and disobedience. In verse 6, it's the example of the angels' disobedience.

[31 : 11] 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.

Now, of course, this is a bit more mysterious than the first example. It's hard, perhaps, to identify it absolutely specifically. He could be referring to the very first rebellion of Satan as his angels before the world was made.

But it may be that he's referring particularly to the example that we're given in Genesis chapter 6 where we're told that the sons of God, the angels of God, the messengers of God left their proper realm of heaven and came to the earth to engage in sexual union with human beings, crossing the boundaries that God had forbidden.

But either way, the point's quite clear in what Jude says. Here are exalted beings, messengers of God, servants of God, highly privileged, enjoying the presence of God and yet instead they're seduced into rebellion by the lusts and the rewards of this world and its fleeting pleasures.

Here are some of God's highest servants blessed in extraordinary ways, heavenly ways, with heavenly gifts and yet they abandon that unique privilege to defy God himself for their own pleasures.

[32 : 33] Did they think that they were above the judgment of God? Did they think they were in a different league to just mortal beings? Perhaps they did, but they weren't.

Maybe they thought they'd got away with it, but no, says Jude. They are in eternal chains now and they face the judgment of the age to come. Well, there are always those in the church, aren't there, who think that they're above God's law.

Often it is, those who are especially gifted by God, exalted by God, have authority from God to be servants, to be messengers of God, teachers of God's Word.

It's so easy to get inflated views of status or importance in the church if you're a scholar, if you're a leader, if you're a preacher, something like that. You get the idea that somehow it's all right for you and you'll get away with rebelling against God's proper area of authority that he's given you.

You're to serve him as a messenger of his Word, but you think that somehow you can be above that and play fast and loose with your ambitions. It's just what Paul wrote to Warren Timothy about, wasn't it?

[33 : 53] Those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God with an appearance of godliness, look very holy, but totally denying its power.

It's amazing to see over the years how leaders in Christ's church can delude themselves like that. Forget that they're charged with a message of authority as messengers of God's truth.

Yet they throw it all off. they can lose all the constraints and peddle a message instead that serves their own lust. We've got used to it I suppose, haven't we, with the kind of TV evangelists that we see from the United States.

But friends, it's a lot closer to home than that. I heard of a minister just recently known to me who increasingly in his preaching was criticizing the traditional evangelical understanding of the faith, criticizing others, preaching increasingly pro-gay sermons.

It wasn't any surprise then really, was it, when after a little while he abandoned his family, went off to live a gay lifestyle. It's hearing about somebody just the other day who was exposed through having an affair with another member of his congregation and then after that it all came to light that there was a whole litany of things that had been going on in the background that no one had known about.

[35 : 20] But you know, we're all believers, we're all messengers, we're all proclaimers of the gospel of God. All of us have been exalted and gifted by God with that great message and that great authority.

None of us is above the judgment of God though. And Jude says it goes right back to the angels. The corruption among God's most gifted servants but the message is just as clear, isn't it?

Privilege is not immunity. If even angels are judged by God then what chance do the most gifted leaders have?

Even the silkiest tongue, even the most famous face will not be immune from God's judgment. Beware of these kind of thoughts. That's what Jude's telling us.

Israel's disbelief judged by God. The angels' disobedience judged by God. What of the third example? The example of Sodom and Gomorrah's dissolution.

[36 : 25] Well these whole cities, verse 7 tells us, were destroyed because they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire. They gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversity, says the NIV.

Why did Jude choose that example? Well, once again it's because these cities of the Jordan Valley were greatly privileged by God. If you go back to Genesis chapter 13 you read that Sodom and Gomorrah was in a fertile plain well watered by God.

It was like the very garden of the Lord, he says. A place of huge privilege. That's why Lot chose to go and live there with his flocks. But like so often wealth and prosperity and blessing didn't lead to godliness.

It didn't lead to thanksgiving and righteousness. Quite the opposite. Ezekiel chapter 16 tells us that the people of these cities were proud and overfed and unconcerned.

That they were arrogant and cavalier in doing detestable things before God. You know the story in Genesis chapter 19. It's just one example that illustrates that culture and what it was like when the two men visited Lot's house and the men of the city came and said bring these men out so that we can have sex with them.

[37 : 51] There can be no doubt at all despite what some scholars want to say. No doubt at all that rampant homosexual practice was a feature of that culture. But Judas plainly referring to widespread sexual immorality of all different kinds.

And that too is often, isn't it, the feature of materially blessed societies. Such a feature of our decadent western society today, isn't it? Where we've forgotten God's many blessings.

We've forgotten our Christian heritage. We've forgotten our fear of God. And we live constantly for present day satisfaction all the time. Seeking our pleasures in material wealth.

Pursuing ever more luxury. Ever more perverted sexual gratification. I read another email the other day.

I get a lot of these. It was saying do you really want to make a lot of money? Invest in vice. Buy stocks in gambling and in the pornography industry.

[38 : 59] Because that's where you'll make your money today. But God destroyed those entire societies. And Jude says the tokens of that disaster remain in the sulfurous devastation of the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea.

It's a reminder, he says, of something far worse. Something that's still to come. Something that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, talked about a lot. the eternal fire of hell.

Have you forgotten all about that, says Jude? It seems you must have because look at verse 8. You're welcoming these things, he says, with open arms into your churches today.

Exactly these influences that God so fearfully judged. These people relying on their dreams, that is, relying on on their fresh revelations of what the Spirit is saying to the churches today according to them.

Their rebranding of the Gospel that obliterates the need for God's transforming grace, that replaces it with a message of affirming sensuality and sexual perversion, that denies the plain teaching of Jesus, the sovereign Lord and Master.

[40 : 15] These people have totally taken you in. That's what Jude says. they've made so many holes in the bulwark of the true faith that the floodwaters of the world have just engulfed the churches.

And the churches are behaving just like the world, defiling the flesh, verse 8, rejecting authority, blaspheming the glorious ones, God's angels who uphold his moral order.

And Jude's right, isn't he? Isn't that just what we see in our newspapers about the churches in the 21st century? If we're to be relevant to the 21st century, we can't cling on to the morality of the past anymore.

We can't risk alienating so many of the population. That's what the rebranders say. We don't consider these obscure texts of scripture to be authoritative anymore.

That's just for an ancient culture. That's not for us today when we know so much more about all of these things scientifically and sexually and all the rest of it.

[41 : 23] But you see, Jude says, if you think these things, you have forgotten something very, very basic to the gospel of God. That the Lord is the Savior who also judges rebellion in his world and rebellion against his ways.

and none are immune from that, says Jude. Privilege is not immunity. No, privilege means responsibility. Societies blessed by God with wealth and prosperity can't be cavalier and contemptuous of God.

Especially those that have had a rich Christian heritage. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah, says Jude. Those in positions of authority and with a message from God Most High, those who don't keep to their proper position of authority as servants of the word of God, they cannot be arrogant.

They are not above God's judgment, no matter how clever, no matter how persuasive they are. Remember the angels, says Jude. And churches blessed and privileged immensely by God in the past, they can't be complacent, no matter what pedigree they might think they have.

Remember Israel, says Jude. Look to yourselves. Be careful. Be very, very careful. God does not forget and don't you forget that.

[42 : 54] You've got responsibilities to God himself. Responsibilities to his church, responsibilities to one another, to remember the true God, to remember the one true faith.

So Jude says don't live. in a fantasy world of the present. Remember the past, the God who has judged in history. And remember the future of the God who will judge on the great coming day.

And live now for the true gospel faith, for the true master Jesus Christ. That's the only way that the churches will survive this next century.

if we heed Jude's message and if we remember and don't forget these hard warnings that he's given us.

Well, let's pray together. do good■■■ to can change Winter III■■■