



JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”
Week 10: “Past Examples of Apostasy, Part 4”
August 18, 2024
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Review:

- A. We are in **Jude 7**. The Last time we studied **Jude** together, we looked at some practical lessons we can learn from Sodom and Gomorrah.
- B. The events of Sodom and Gomorrah were a long time ago, but several key applications were underscored for us in our own time:
 1. First: Great judgment falls on those who have received great blessing.
 - a. Sodom was a rich city, full of natural resources and abundant supplies.
 - b. The people of Sodom took their blessings for granted while not addressing the needs of others.
 2. Second: great judgment falls on those who reject God.
 - a. We are not given specific insights into the ways Sodom and Gomorrah rejected God, but the principles of **Romans 1:18-22** clearly apply here.
 - b. This passage in **Romans** make it clear that those who willfully reject God fall into the same patterns of sin as were the habits of the men of Sodom.
 - c. **Romans Ch. 1** also makes the point that even the most heathen and unreached of people groups are given sufficient knowledge of God to be held accountable.
 - d. And Jesus Himself said that future judgment would be worse for people who reject His message than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah (**Cf. Matthew 10:15, etc.**)
 3. Third: Great judgment comes on a population when the righteous within it are ineffective. (We looked at the example of Lot. This point showed four steps of becoming ineffective):
 - a. **Influence** - He let himself be near the problem when he “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (**Cf. Genesis 13:12**).
 - b. **Inclusion** - Even though he knew Sodom’s condition, he permitted himself to be included with them. He went from being near Sodom to living in that city (**Cf. Genesis 14:22**). He transitioned from being near the problem to being in the problem.
 - c. **Identity** – He identified with their rules and their system (**Cf. Genesis 19:1**) – He participated in their regulatory processes and judicial system.
 - d. **Ignored** – He was not taken seriously. When Lot finally spoke up, nobody listened to what he had to say (**Cf. Genesis 19:9**). We saw this was not only true with those around him, but it was also true with his own family.

NOTE: This week, I want to briefly return to **Jude 7**, and then we'll move on to **Jude 8**. A bridge issue I need to unpack here is the issue of 'condemnation' or 'punishment.'

I. **THE CONDEMNATION** – *"...they serve as an example of those that suffer the punishment of eternal fire."*

A. **Observe a pattern to this point.** Each of the three examples in **vss. 5-7** conclude with a precise account of God's judgment in response to the specific sin that is mentioned:

1. **In vs. 5** – The Israelites did not believe, so God destroyed them in the wilderness
2. **In vs. 6** – The fallen angels did not stay within their rules and boundaries, so God imprisoned them for future judgment
3. **In vs. 7** – Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns "went after strange flesh" (this is how various translations state it), and God burned them up with fire and brimstone.

NOTE: I want to make several observations here that all tie into this issue of apostasy.

B. In each case, a well-defined example of 'departure away from the truth' (apostasy) is judged severely by God.

1. The Israelites had seen God prove Himself over and over, yet they did not trust God at a critical moment when they were ready to enter the Promised Land. They departed from the truth of what they had been told and what they had seen.
2. The fallen angels rejected their divinely appointed 'rules of engagement.' They departed from their proper place and responsibilities, and they blended themselves physically with mankind.
3. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah rejected God's code of sexual conduct. They departed from a proper moral standard.

C. **In each case, the apostasy here is a willful departure away from a righteous standard. In each case, it is a matter of intent.** In each example in **Jude 5-7**, a decision was made to go against the will and standards that God had prescribed.

This was not a passive process, but an active process. A choice!

1. God's judgments in each example are based upon a willful rejection of Him. They knew better!
2. A key takeaway here is every person who is destined for the flames of hell is going to ultimately realize that this was the path that they had chosen!
3. I am not being dramatic or 'over the top' here. NOTE: The fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were judged is stated as an example intended to draw attention to the punishment of eternal fire (**vs. 7b**)

NOTE: I think this sufficiently wraps up Jude 7.

- II. I want to now begin to look at **Jude 8**.
- A. In **vs. 8**, it feels to me like Jude is gathering himself for ‘a second wind.’ He has much yet to say, and he wants to pause and let everyone catch up with him and where he is going.
 - B. **This is important, as Jude has an impact statement that he wants to make!** He understands his readers may not have sufficiently grasped the gravity of everything he has shared with them so far.
 - C. Up to now, Jude has been carefully bringing his readers along in **vss. 1-7**: he’s been setting the tone, putting the stage props in place, and making sure all the visuals are there.
 - D. Now he has the punchline to deliver. He wants his readers to ‘fully get it!’ He wants to tie it all together.
 - E. Let’s look at what he has to say.
 - F. **Vs. 8** opens with connecting statement: *“In the very same way...”*
 1. This is a tighter connection than the first phrase in **vs. 7**. Here, it’s a more precise linkage.
 2. The opening phrase of **vs. 7** was intended to make an indirect association with **vs. 6**.
 3. Having started that ‘review’ process in the minds of his readers, **Jude** now makes a deeper and a more precise connection.
 4. In **vs. 8**, he wants to make a direct relationship between that verse and the greater subject matter of **Jude**. He uses stronger and more definitive language to underscore this.
 - G. **So, it’s here that we need to revisit the original theme:** (What is original subject of Jude?). We find it in **vs. 4**.
 1. **And now, an important review for us is needed.** This is about ‘...*certain men who have secretly slipped in among you...*’ This is about false teachers!
 2. And in **vs 4** we find some powerful points made about them. In looking back to our past lessons, we’ve learned these false teachers are:
 - a. Those who have secretly slipped in!
 - b. Those who are, in fact, among you!
 - c. Those who are, despite all outward appearances, godless!
 - d. Those who exchange a greater truth for a lesser one!
 - e. Those who make corrupt and wrong decisions!
 - f. Those who - by their personal example, show they refuse to recognize Jesus Christ as their true and Sovereign master!

NOTE: This is why, back in **vs. 3**, Jude instructs his readers to “...contend for the faith!” Jude recognizes the gravity of the situation, and he knows that the terms of engagement require an active defense AND an active offense.

III. **Now, over the next couple of lessons, we will probe three questions**

- A. Who, really, are these false teachers?
- B. What, really, do these false teachers do?
- C. Why, really, do these false teachers do it?

NOTE: Wrestling with these three questions should take us through **vs. 10**. But let’s get into this by focusing on the first of those three questions....

1. **Who, really, are these false teachers –?**

- a. Jude says they are ‘dreamers’ (in nearly every translation, there is the same understanding: ‘men who dream,’ ‘dreamers,’ ‘deceived dreamers,’ and so on....very little variation in the language).

Question: ‘Is it a bad thing to be a dreamer?’

- b. (A favorite quote of mine from Edgar Allan Poe): “Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things that escape those who dream only at night.”
- c. Most good things started from the dreamers (a medical innovation that saved lives, a business that improved lives, an organization that helped lives, and so on).
- d. Sometimes, it is helpful – even vital! - to see beyond a current reality!
- e. This is EXACTLY the nature of the problem here in **vs. 8**....

2. Some realities are NOT supposed to change!

- a. Some principles and truths should be respected, and they should be left alone!
 - a. (i.e. Obama pursuing the so-called ‘dreamers’ with his immigration policies: in this case the notion of ‘dreaming for a better life’ has been given priority over justice, and over law and order. That’s not a good thing)
- b. As is the case with ‘bad politics,’ this juncture in **Jude 8** is not a moment where we should think well of the ‘dreamers.’
- c. It may be politically correct to regard the term ‘dreamers’ as a good thing, but here in the Bible, ‘dreamers’ are a problem.
 - a. **So, a question naturally arises here: “What’s the problem with dreamers here in Jude 8?” First, these ‘dreamers’ are out of touch with reality.**

NOTE: (This quality of being a ‘dreamer’ is a key attribute of ‘false teachers’). Now, there are several possible ways of answering this question (the most complete and accurate answer includes all these elements):

3. As the word “dreamers” is employed here in this verse, it is a word that suggests incompetence, confusion, and misunderstanding (here are three commentators):
4. *“...their choices swing wildly and suddenly because they are not properly grounded in the staying power of the Word of God”*
 - a. As an individual, or as a group, these ‘dreamers’ are like a pendulum. They quickly go in one direction one day, and they quickly go in another direction another day.
5. *“They rush quickly into unwise decisions, believing in their own vision, and urging others to do the same.”*
 - a. A mark of a false teacher – a ‘dreamer’ – is they push their own vision and decisions on others, and they are intolerant of anyone who cannot quickly support these things.
6. *“Perhaps these false teachers were claiming to receive new revelation in dreams or personal visions.”*
 - a. I see this happening more and more now. A false teacher – a ‘dreamer’ – touts the claim that their own visions (or maybe a simple dream while they are asleep) are grounds for authenticating themselves and their decisions.

IMPORTANT: I am not saying that God does not still give divine dreams and visions. But I do feel they are rare! Most people that claim to receive these things are phony.

7. If these things are truly from God, every detail about them WILL align with the Scriptures.
8. Every element of that vision will be Biblically correct, it will become 100% true if it is predictive, and it will be in line with the revealed character of God in the Bible.
9. (Sobering). It is very easy to let personal ambition and new ideas over-ride the stabilizing truth of God’s Word
 - a. Remember, some realities are best to accept (like the stabilizing realities, values, truth, and laws of God)
 - b. **(Going back to the question, “What’s the problem with dreamers?”) Here’s a second answer we need to consider: They are not being responsible with the truth (two ways this is seen...)**
10. #1: They are denying a greater truth (again, **vs. 4** makes this point clear)
 - a. They are denying Jesus Christ Himself – both in His Sovereign nature, and as their Master (this recalls the Israelites in **vs. 5**)
 - b. The Israelites’ choices and responses were, in fact, a rejection of God.
11. #2: They are detached from a greater truth (I believe there are two ways this second point is seen...)
12. First, **their consecutive choices** have caused them to **wander**.

NOTE: A popular quote from JRR Tolkien in his Lord of the Rings trilogy is, “Not all who wander are lost.” There is some truth in that. But here, wandering is a not a good thing. These leaders have left a proper place of responsibility; they have ‘abandoned’ their calling. Usually this happens in stages. They have substituted their assignment with pursuits and agendas they should not be focused on (this recalls the fallen angels in **vs. 6**)

13. And second....**their consecutive choices** have caused them to **wonder**.
 - a. Again, this is usually something that takes place in stages. One poor decision invites another. This is not difficult to understand.
 - b. These ‘dreamers’ have left a proper perspective; they are no longer grounded as they need to be.
 - c. As a result, they are prone to question and doubt the things they should not. The greater truths they should cling to are now the very things they doubt and wonder about.
 - d. It’s easy to spot this. They state things which are outside the clear instructions of Scripture (or they promote these errant things on their church sign)
 - e. **NOTE:** Paul tells us to “*not go beyond what is written*” in the Word of God in **1 Cor. 4:6**.
 - f. This is essential for proper grounding – this is absolutely essential to prevent the invasion of apostasy. It is important to live FAITHFULLY by the Scriptures
 - g. If believers stay faithful to the bounds of what is written, they will not end up **wandering** or **wondering**.
 - h. And that is true for individual believers as well as bodies of believers.
 - i. One of the issues Dan and I – and the Elder candidates – have spent some time discussing is the need for Solid Bread Community to remain faithful to what God’s Word has laid out for churches to be.
 - j. It’s easy to pursue those things which find their source in Christian culture rather than Christlikeness. We want to emphasize the latter. This is the proper direction to keep in focus.
 - k. **(Back to the problem of being a ‘dreamer’). Here’s a third answer to the question ‘What’s the problem with dreamers?’ They are the wrong SORT of leader!**
14. NOTE: (This is rather self-evident by now, but I can think of four key reasons ‘dreamers’ [AKA false teachers] are the wrong sort of leader):
15. First, they believe they are something or someone that they ARE NOT! There is a wide gap between WHO they are and WHO they think they are.
 - a. It’s been my experience that other people often see this gap before the leader in question does.
 - b. Why? It’s because these sorts of leaders, these ‘dreamers,’ are deluded! They’ve lost their moorings to God’s Word, and so they’ve drifted into their own perception of themselves.
 - c. Second, they are unstable and easily distracted by personal goals.

- I've seen this too. They leap erratically from one ambition and initiative to the next one....
 - They can be convinced of one idea one day, and a completely different idea the next day.
 - And often these various ideas have more to do with personal goals and personal agendas than they do with their calling or the truth of God's Word.
- d. Third, they do not lead wisely.
- This is because they do not have a strong grasp of the truth.
 - They lead unwisely with a weak understanding of the truth.
 - And again, I've seen that such leaders – such 'dreamers' – do not even WELCOME the truth.
 - It is threatening to them because it makes them take an honest look in the mirror. Being that they are 'dreamers,' they are detached from this reality.
- e. Lastly...and perhaps what is MOST wrong about this sort of leader is this: those who follow them will become like them!
- Remember **Acts 20:30** where it says, *"(they will) distort the truth in order to draw disciples after them..."*
 - One of the reasons 'dreamers' are the wrong sort of leader is they reproduce themselves. They cause others to become unstable and detached from the truth of God's Word just as they are.
 - I've seen that 'dreamers' typically collect around themselves a group of people who preserve what these 'dreamers' most want to believe about themselves and about others.
 - In other words, they create or draw 'disciples' after them. These are acolytes who protect and mimic these false teachers.

NOTE: All of that answers the question, 'Who – REALLY – are these false teachers? They are 'dreamers.' Now we get to the second question: "What – REALLY – do these false teachers do?"

16. "What – really - do these false teachers do?"

NOTE: Jude provides three important and specific points for our consideration. In truth, they are 'charges' or 'indictments,' because that is how Jude presents them...

Jude outlines these in order, and I've listed them each in that order with a word that starts with "I." There is:

- a. **Immorality** – they pollute their own bodies
- b. **Insubordination** – they reject authority
- c. **Irreverence** – they slander celestial beings

NOTE: These false teachers, these “dreamers,” these “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (as we learned they were in **Matt. 7:15**) are guilty of these very serious sins.

And - - “in the very same way” (this is the phrase we read in the beginning of **vs. 8**), they will also incur God’s judgment.

NOTE: Not sure how far we’ll get with these today, but let’s start looking at each of these three points....

17. **Immorality** – “...they pollute their own bodies...” (various translations: “defile the flesh”)

NOTE: This is, without question, a reference to sexual immorality.

- Jude has already mentioned the sexual depravities of the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the sexual sin of the fallen angels.
- It’s even an ingredient in the case of the Israelites back in **vs. 5**. Sexual sin had been an issue for them too after they left Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land.
 - That story is found in **Exodus 32** where we read about the golden calf that the Israelites made and worshipped when they thought Moses had been away too long.
 - The ‘revelry’ and ceremonies of that golden calf worship included sexual sins.
 - Their display of unbelief then was not much unlike their display of unbelief at the threshold of the Promised Land. They abandoned the truth of God, and they yielded to their own temptations and inclinations.
- So, all said - - we can conclude, without any doubt, that sexual sin was also an issue for the false teachers of Jude’s time.
- And it’s a big issue today! Clearly, a hallmark of some false teachers is their very prominent and public sexual misbehavior. (It’s hard to not painfully recall the scandals of multiple prominent church leaders who have fallen.)
 - My own guess is that this problem of sexual sin amongst churches is likely much greater than any of us realize.
 - It’s always the few that get reported - - but these occasions are generally indicators of a much more widespread problem.

ANOTHER RELATED POINT: There is another principle at play here besides the pointedly sexual one....

- One of the biggest problems of ‘body pollution’ in the church today is doctrinal error.
- False teachers introduce beliefs and behaviors that pollute proper worship, pollute proper spiritual growth, pollute proper teaching, and pollute proper fellowship.
- I understand, it’s a different kind of ‘body’ with this angle, and it’s a different kind of ‘pollute,’ but it can ultimately have the same result.
 - **Cf. 2 Peter 2:10** (similar language as **Jude 8**)

“This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings;”

NOTE: The bottom line is we are seeing a process at play here: deviant behavior follows depraved belief. This is underscored throughout the Scriptures as well as in the examples of church leaders and bodies of believers past and present.

NEXT TIME IN JUDE: We’ll unpack the other two charges that Jude lays out in **vs. 8:** “insubordination” and “irreverence.” We’ll see more applications from Jude’s time as well as our own.