



JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”
Week 21: “Five Elements of False Teachers”
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Review:

- A. It’s been five weeks since we last immersed ourselves into our study of Jude, and so I definitely think a review is in order.
- B. I will be teaching each week now through the remainder of the book of Jude, and so we should find our familiar routines quickly enough.
- C. However, where are we in this tiny book? Last time, we wrapped up **vs. 15**. Here we saw that Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, has looked back to an ancient Old Testament figure by the name of Enoch.
- D. Jude’s been making the point all the way through this book that apostates and false teachers are going to suffer judgement for the way they have twisted truth, acted ungodly, and spoken against Jesus Christ.
- E. The Book of Jude has reinforced his point with historical examples from the Old Testament. He has used stories that all his readers know to drive home this truth that false teachers and apostates will most certainly suffer God’s judgement.
- F. In the last few verses, he has also made his case by lifting text from The Book of Enoch and from the life of Enoch himself.
- G. Jude has, in these verses, looked forward in time to when Jesus Christ will return. And Jude has made the clear case that Jesus will return in judgement.
 1. He will return with His angels who will have a role in this coming judgement. (Notice, in The Book of Revelation, that angels participate in EACH of the Trumpet and Bowl Judgements).
 2. All the things that sinners have said and done will be held accountable.
 3. All their ungodly acts, all their ungodly ways, and all the harsh things that have been said against Jesus Christ will be brought to light to convict them.
- H. Therefore, Jude has, up to this point, been making a powerful case about the grievous sin of apostasy: The departing from God’s truth.
- I. He has been particularly focused on false teachers who have not properly fed the flock, and who have watched out for their own interests instead.
- J. Up through the end of **vs. 15**, we’ve waded through a short encyclopedia of wrongs and sins by these apostates and false teachers. Jude has not left any stone unturned.
- K. By this point in Jude, I imagine most of us have done a little bit of self-assessment. We’ve glanced inwards a few times, and we’ve occasionally peeked in the mirror of our hearts.
- L. We’ve probably asked ourselves here and there, “Am I like these apostates? Am I ever guilty of acting in the awful ways that these false teachers act?”

NOTE: This now brings us to **vs. 16** where Jude reminds us that **it’s not only about the big stuff**. He cautions us to be wary of the smaller things as well. Taking things that by comparison don’t seem quite so bad.

It's helpful to take a running start into this verse, so I'll read both **vss. 15 and 16**.

I want to begin the process of unpacking **vs. 16** by offering two over-arching or general thoughts. I'm framing these as "don'ts." These are two things we DON'T want to do or be.

I. First, DON'T diminish the 'little sins'

A. NOTE: We need to compare this list of 'shortcomings' in **vs. 16** against the tone Jude has just set in the verse before.

IMPORTANT: We need to ask ourselves, "Does Jude declare the offenses of **vs. 16** as deserving the judgments outlined in **vs. 15?**" - - The uncomfortable answer is, "YES."

1. You see, each of us are guilty of grumbling and of finding fault. In fact, for some of us, this has become a pattern of who we are and how we express ourselves.
2. Each of us is guilty of wanting our own way, of wanting to exercise our own rights.
3. Each of us want to think more highly of ourselves than we should. To be perfectly honest, we've all manipulated things for our own gain.
4. It's time to pause here and take a deep breath. Each of us need to re-evaluate some rather important matters.
5. We're going to discover in the weeks ahead how Jude instructs us to preserve ourselves in the love of God.
6. As the Book of Jude wraps up, he transitions to some very important instructions for us to 'build ourselves up.'
7. (And now, The Second DON'T from **vs. 16**)

II. And that is, DON'T design your own tolerances to accept the world's standards. (In other words, don't let yourself think it's OK to act the way the world does).

A. NOTE: I feel that **vs. 16** is giving us a quick snapshot of the methods of the world: complaining, fault-finding, flattery, self-importance, and so on.

1. These things are human nature to a large degree. They are natural expressions of our sinful constitution.
2. But, if we are not careful to guard against these things (and I believe this is an active and daily discipline), then we end up looking and sounding the same way the world does.
3. We end up becoming too tolerant of these attitudes in ourselves as well as in others. We feel like we're not so bad since everyone else is the same way. It's that lure of 'safety in numbers.'
4. I'm guessing that most of us are more concerned with our right to grumble about something than the fact that we are grumbling in the first place.
5. Jude's point here is that this is wrong. He instructs us to be SO careful here!

III. Now, that naturally leads into issues that are a bit deeper; they are the next level down. Let's unpack Jude's issues against apostates that he details in vs. 16:

A. There are five identifying elements of false teachers in this verse.

1. These five qualities have defined false teachers from well before Jude's time all the way up to the present moment.

2. These five qualities will continue to define false teachers until the Lord's return.

B. First, they are grumblers (other translations: 'murmurers' [most common])

1. Jude's point is that these men are ultimately murmuring against God.

NOTE: This is consistent with the phrase in the prior verse which reads *'...all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'* It's a similar element.

2. What does this grumbling or murmuring look like?
 - a. The idea here is this is not a loud or outspoken display. Rather, it is a lingering undertone of discontent, a constant expression or posture of dissatisfaction.
 - b. HERE IS JUDE'S POINT AND IT'S AN IMPORTANT ONE: This murmuring and grumbling is the natural 'first response' of the apostate person.
 - c. These individuals are inclined to react this way against God for His directions, for His sovereign will, for the trials He permits in our lives to grow us, and for His instructions for living.
 - d. There are a host of reasons such folks grumble, however the bottom line is they prefer their own choices, and they resent God's choices.
 - e. These are people that will follow their own choices, even if it's clear that God's Word says otherwise.
 - f. They then blame God and find fault with Him if anything goes wrong with their choices.
3. God does not like this attitude (***One is: Numbers 14:36 & 37***)

"So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it— these men who were responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord."

Background: There were 12 spies that were sent in to scout things out. Two came back with a good report, and 10 came back with a bad report. As a result, the Israelites were 'grumbling' (***vs. 2***). God deals first with those who *"...made the whole community grumble against Him,"* (Those are the verses we just read)

- g. Let me frame all this by asking you a pointed question: "Is bitching your brand?"
- h. I ask it that way because we don't use the words 'grumble' or 'murmur' much anymore, but we've sort of accepted the modern vernacular instead.
- i. So, are you 'branded?' Are you known by your murmuring? When other folks think about you, does your constant complaining come to their mind?
- j. When we are young, we are naïve. The world is butterflies and hummingbirds. It's all good.
- k. But then we get older. The world gets rougher. Our eyes are opened, and we start sustaining a few bruises from life, and we start to grumble. We start to complain.

- l. Also, the older we get, the more we get dinged and affronted, the more we may grumble. Soon, 'bitching is our brand.' It's what we are known for, and that's bad.
 - m. Life DOES have a way of wearing us down and of giving us grief. But this is where we need to be growing in our faith, and to respond with God's grace and serenity.
 - n. There is no room for the believer to be known as a constant grumbler.
- C. The second identifying element of false teachers in vs. 16 is this: They are faultfinders. Other translations say: 'discontents,' 'malcontents,' bemoaning their lot, etc. (I'll stick with faultfinders)**
1. I think of this as a graduation of 'grumbling.' It's the 'magna cum laude' of murmuring, it's that 'next level up' if you will.
 - a. (Ocumenius – a Bishop from 990, wrote in his commentary): *"Grumblers are people who mutter against others under their breath, whereas malcontents are those who are always looking for ways in which they can attack and disparage everything and everybody."*
 - b. Important distinction: You can mutter and murmur to yourself, which is bad enough, but fault-finding and active malcontent always seeks to involve others.
 - c. Putting that another way, grumbling can be a passive fault we have. We do it sometimes without giving it a second thought.
 - d. However, faultfinding is an active exercise. It's deliberate. It's planned.
 2. Faultfinders are openly disruptive. They have an energy and a will that draws others in and preys on those who are not strong in their own standards and convictions.
 - a. We all know grumblers. We tend to become weary of them.
 - b. Likewise, we all know faultfinders, and we are often a bit surprised at their audacity and corrosive nature.
 - c. False teachers that engage in faultfinding are those individuals who have determined to divide and cause disruption. I've known some of these.
 3. Let me give you a word of caution: There is a natural progression being illustrated here in **vs. 16**, and it is this: murmuring and grumbling, if left unchecked, will lead to 'finding fault.'
 - a. The reason for this is straightforward. Sin is not static.
 - b. Sin will always seek to grow. Sin always tries to consume us, to destroy anything good, and if given sufficient opportunity, it will do these things!
 - c. Think about this. We studied '*the way of Cain*' back in **vs. 11**.
 - d. Cain's sin of anger was at one level. It could have been corrected. But it went unchecked instead. It led to murder, and that was a much worse level.
 - e. Sin wanted 'to have' Cain, and to control Cain because, again, sin is not static.

(Genesis 4:6 & 7) - "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

- f. Back to finding fault. We see the process here that 'grumbling, if left unchecked, leads directly to fault-finding, and that inevitably leads to disputes, disruptions, and social conflict.
- g. We need to keep in daily exercise the instructions of **Philippians 2:14** – 'Do everything without complaining or arguing,' [in other words, 'grumbling or disputing']

D. The third identifying element of false teachers is: they 'follow their own evil desires.' (Other translations say: 'after their own lusts,' 'walking after their desires,')

NOTE: The lives of these false teachers have a direction, just not the right one!

1. The late Dr. J. Vernon McGee makes an interesting point about this:

"Those desires could be good or bad – not necessarily desires which are base like immorality. It could be anything that leaves God out."

2. Dr. McGee's point is this: the qualifying factor of 'evil desires' is anything that removes God from His proper place. It's anything that replaces a righteous focus with a carnal one.
3. In that light, an 'evil desire' could be a boat. It could be a certain career or more alphabet soup behind one's name.
4. It could be social posterity, a good job, or even a specific kind of attention from a person or from people.
5. The point is false teachers find a certain amount of personal gain, but this gain is not based on the right priority and so in their hearts they are discontent.
6. This principle is consistent with the heart that does not want what God wants. This is the person who is, frankly, more earthly minded than they are heavenly minded.
7. Their focus is not on eternal rewards and consequences. Instead, their focus is on the 'here and now.' It's on temporary gains and achievements.
8. They make choices contrary to the will of God because their personal character is not aligned with the things of God.

NOTE: (Personal observation): I think many people who are guilty of this tendency to follow their own 'evil desires' have something to prove.

9. They are motivated to see themselves a certain way, and that drives all their decisions,
10. They exist in some sort of self-made construct, and as a result they have become convinced of their own views,

11. These people, when they are confronted or challenged in any way, tend to be short, abrupt, or rather black and white in response,
12. They've placed excessive value on walking after their own desires, of satisfying their personal goals, and so they are not effective in service as they imagine themselves to be.

E. The fourth quality about false teachers in vs. 16 is, "They boast about themselves"

NOTE: (Other translations say: *"their mouth speaks proud things," "they speak arrogantly,"* or *"they speak with great swelling words,"*

NOTE: Let me put this to you my way: "They overestimate their virtues, and they underestimate their vices."

1. One commentator says about this quality: *"They use extravagant language, which is fizz and foam because there is no real content or meaning to grab on to."*
 - a. (Again, Dr. J. Vernon McGee puts it quite bluntly) – *"Jude, in affirming the identification of the false teacher, observes that they boast about themselves because they have no confidence that their teachings are of God. So, they promote themselves to their own shame."*
 - b. As Will Rogers might say, "They are all hat and no cattle."

IV. LET ME MAKE A PERSONAL COMMENT OR TWO, MAYBE THREE:

- A. I've seen this particular quality way too much in Christian leaders or Christian notables.
- B. For example, they are marinated in boastful ideals regarding their education. I've had some of them remind me to refer to them as "Dr." this or that. They've fallen prey to the fallacy that more degrees = more gifting or more ability.
- C. Many of these people are little more than professional groupies. You can hardly spend ten minutes talking to them and they have already name-dropped three or four prominent folks they know or have connections with.
- D. Sometimes it's their achievements. They've received 'this award' or 'that recognition.' They were noted for 'doing this or that.'
- E. These people want YOU to see them as THEY see themselves. They don't want a mirror; they want photoshop.
- F. In the end, all their credentials, education, and experience do not amount to anything in God's eyes. That's the point **vs. 16** is making here in *'boasting about themselves.'*
 1. There's an interesting and IMPORTANT side point to be made here: In order to love God deeply, there are some things you must hate deeply.
 - a. How do we understand this? How can we grasp this need to 'hate deeply?'
 - b. (THINK OF IT THIS WAY): What would you do to protect your children and your family?

- c. In other words, anything that threatens those who are closest to, you would respond to instantly with a protective instinct. You protect WHO you love!
- d. It should be the same way with our walk with God. We should learn to 'hate' anything which erodes our relationship with Christ and which imposes on our love for Him.
- e. Here's a summary point which we need to fully grasp: pride and boastfulness is an outward sign of an inward problem.
- f. It's an indication of a wrong relationship with God. **(Cf. Proverbs 16:5):** *"Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the Lord."*

G. (Here's the last identifying element of false teachers from this verse): *"They flatter others for their own advantage"*

NOTE: As I've mentioned with the other qualities, here's what other translations say: *"they flatter others to get what they want," "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage," "flatter persons for profit."*)

NOTE: What's the big point here? They use people for personal gain, and one of their chief tactics is they applaud and manipulate others. They do this because they are looking to men, and not to God, for their own promotion and opportunity.

1. I feel this is a huge problem with the apostate person who has abandoned God's truth for man's ways.
 - a. I personally think this is one of the hallmarks of most churches today, which is sad because it is one of the hallmarks of the world!
 - b. It's probably truer than not that more churches are run today as a business rather than as a Biblical model of Christian community and fellowship.
 - c. As a result, we see that gaining the favor of men for personal advantage, or managing others' perceptions for personal motive, is commonplace.
 - d. But it is wrong! When the world's methods invade a body of believers, truth and fellowship and accountability are compromised.
 - e. This manipulation of others for personal gain and because of built-in bias has ramifications beyond one's own status in Christ.
 - f. Good fellowship is adversely affected when we respond to others with some sort of agenda at stake:

2. (Cf. James [brother of Jude] 2:1-4):

"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

3. When we show favoritism and special treatment, or to Jude's point: when we use others to our own agenda or advantage, several things are made evident:
 - a. God is not lifted up as 'glorious' (**That's clear in what we read in *James 2:1***)
 - b. We fail to see others as God sees them, and we fail to see ourselves as God see us.
 - c. We have chosen to respond as the world responds, which simply means we are not showing the Holy Spirit's control in our lives.
 - d. KEY: It reveals one's personal values as unaffected by the truth of the Gospel