

Contend for the Faith

REVIEW: Last week we began a series on the book of Jude. We covered the basic topics that you always look for when beginning a new book study - Author, Date, who they are writing to, and why are they writing. In fact, why they are writing is what makes up the book.

Jude wanted to write to them regarding seemingly general topics about their mutual faith, but then felt led to write to them to encourage them to contend for the faith because certain individuals snuck into the church that were using the grace of God as a license for sin.

INTRO: This morning, Jude goes into a deeper description of some of the things that these people were doing, and relates how what they were doing was similar to others that came before them that fell under God's judgement.

I. Opening reminder

A. Please keep in mind that the book of Jude is one big rhetorical speech.

1. It is written in similar fashion to a persuasive speech you might have done in school
2. Anyone remember taking speech class and having to write a persuasive speech? That is what Jude is doing

B. Because the book is a persuasive speech, Jude's goal is obvious

1. He begins our passage today by trying to identify the false teachers with traditional examples of notorious sinners
2. By doing so, he pushes his readers to reject these people that have snuck in and to look on what they are doing with horror

II. We begin our passage starting with verses 5-7 where Jude starts with examples from the OT of sin and judgement

A. Jude transitions from the opening of his letter by way of a disclosure formula

1. It was a common occurrence in ancient letters
2. It was normally a statement like "Let me remind you" or "I want you to know"

B. The question is what is he reminding them of - what he just said, or what he is about to say

1. In the NIV the translation is the word "this" - that seems to point backward and comes with a problem - the word is plural
2. The correct translation would be "all these things" - it also means that it more naturally points forward to what Jude is about to tell them
 - a) So he is saying, "Even though you already know these OT stories, let me remind you of them"
 - b) Which may give a little more insight to who he is writing to
 - (1) They may have been Jewish Christians, but do not have to be

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(2)But whoever they were, they obviously had an understanding of the OT

C. The first example Jude gives is of the generation of Israelites that God delivered out of Egypt

1. Most of us know the story of how God, through Moses and the miracles of the plagues of Egypt convinced Pharaoh to let God's people go
2. After Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after Israel, God drowned them in the Red Sea
3. If you continue on with the story, we find out that those people that escaped Egypt never saw the promised land (except Joshua and Caleb)
 - a) They saw how big and strong the people were in the land and did not trust God to deliver on His promise to give them the land
 - b) God sentenced them to wander in the desert for 40 years until they all died off
4. Jude qualifies the deliverance by the phrase "at one time"
 - a) This is not a phrase about the point in time of history
 - b) This is talking about God's decisive deliverance for all His people
5. Jude's point in bringing up this example is to warn them
 - a) Just because God decisively rescued you from sin that you can presume upon His grace and mercy
 - b) This is what last week's message and the opening verses are all about
 - (1) These "certain individuals" revel in the fact that God has rescued them from sin
 - (2) Yet they use that as an excuse for why it is okay for them to continue to sin
 - c) Jude is saying, "Look at the example of the nation of Israel. God saved them - yes! But He did not hesitate to punish them when they did not trust God for future promises"

D. The second example that Jude cites is a harder one to understand - v. 6

1. There are many speculations as to who the angels are that did not keep their positions of authority
2. One suggestion is that Jude is referring to the fall of angels that happened when Satan rebelled
 - a) There is some evidence in the OT
 - b) Revelation was not written so at this point so we cannot look ahead and use John's story from Revelation 12
3. The more likely explanation comes from the tradition of Jude's day
 - a) It has to do with the "sons of God" cohabitating with the daughters of man mentioned in Genesis 6:1-4

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- b) Jewish interpreters identified the “sons of God” with angels and they attributed much of the world’s evil to their influence
 - (1) You would find the greatest elaboration of this idea in the intertestamental book of 1 Enoch
 - (a) That is a book that did not get recognized as being in the Christian Bible
 - (2) Jude quotes directly from this book in verse 14-15 so in is a pretty sure bet that Jude had this story in mind
 - (a) In fact, if we had time and I was so inclined, I would take you on a trip through Jewish extra-biblical literature to show you that this is indeed the way Jude and his readers would have perceived this verse from Jude
 - (b) There is a pattern in that literature that shows that Jude’s readers would have been familiar with
- c) The question that we have not answered: Is this the correct interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4
 - (1) In short, I would say yes, I believe that it is
 - (2) We do not have time to get distracted from why Jude used this story, and what point he was making, so I will make no effort to prove my conclusion
 - (3) Whether that is or is not the right interpretation of Genesis 6 is not important to understanding Jude’s reason for using this story
- 4. Because Jude’s readers knew this story, he used it to prove the point about judgement for anyone that steps outside God’s design
 - a) There are two ways in which a rhetorician would have used a story like this
 - (1) One, he uses the story whether he believes it is true or not
 - (a) This would be like me making a sermon out of the story of Les Miserables
 - (b) Yes, the story is loosely based on a friend of the author, but do I believe these were actual events? No! I used it because it was a good story that illustrated points that I wanted to get across
 - (2) Second, a rhetorician might use the story because he believed it was true, and so would the people that were listening to him
 - (a) I think that is true here
 - (b) This story is sandwiched in between two other stories that we know to be true
 - (c) That seems to be evidence that Jude believed the story true
 - b) So the reason Jude uses this story is because his readers knew it, believed it, and could see the false teachers in it

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- (1) He never went so far as to identify what the sin of these angels was
- (2) He was more interested in displaying the judgement that came upon them

5. One final parallel we need to take notice of

- a) At the end of Jude, verse 21, Jude asks the people to keep themselves in God's love
- b) As we saw last week, those loved in God the Father were being kept for Jesus
- c) Here we see that the angels did not keep their assigned positions
- d) Therefore, God has kept them in darkness
- e) It's a bit of a role reversal, and no doubt intended to set a stark contrast between those in God's love and those that do not keep their positions

E. The third example that Jude uses is Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns

- 1. Even today, Sodom and Gomorrah are basically at proverbial status
 - a) Christian or not, Jewish or not, people use the story of what happened to these towns to illustrate all kinds of points
 - (1) Rightly or wrongly
- 2. Jude here, however mentions specifically why God judged the cities
 - a) "they gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion"
 - b) The charge of sexual immorality is easy enough to understand
 - (1) In the story in Genesis 19 the townsmen tried to have sexual relations with the men visiting Lot (the angels)
 - (2) Most of us understand this because SS or not we have heard the story
 - c) The charge of perversion is less clear
 - (1) The Greek phrase literally means going after other flesh
 - (2) Some think that this is the reversal of the Genesis 6 story
 - (a) In Gen. 6 angels sought to have sex with humans
 - (b) In Gen. 19, men are seeking to have sex with angels
 - (c) The problem with that interpretation is there is no indication the men in Gen. 19 knew they were angels
 - (3) So the more probable way this should be understood is the men of the towns were seeking "other flesh", meaning flesh other than that which God provided by women - or homosexuality
- 3. In this example Jude says that the cities "serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."
 - a) Let's face it, the destruction of the cities was spectacular and final

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- b) Even Jude's contemporary writers saw in the topography of the region evidence for God's judgment - the place was barren, smelled of sulfur, smoke, etc.
 - 4. This may also help us understand why Jude did not follow chronological order in these events.
 - a) If he did it would have been, angels first, Sodom and Gomorrah second, and the desert third
 - b) By following the order he does, this builds to a climax
 - (1) Physical death in the desert
 - (2) Binding in darkness
 - (3) Punishment of eternal fire
- III. Next Jude turns the corner and starts to apply examples directly to the false teachers v.8-10
- A. The first set of examples we can see applied in the false teachers by inference, here there is no doubt as Jude refers back to the false teachers
 - B. The change here is that Jude does not connect the false teachers with the judgement that he was just talking about, he starts talks about their sin
 - C. What we already know what the men are guilty of
 - 1. They are treating God's grace lightly and sinning
 - 2. They in some way have overstepped their station - like the angels
 - 3. They are guilty of sexual sin
 - a) To say they are guilty of homosexual sin may be taking the passage farther than it should go
 - 4. In fact, the opening of verse 8 says, "in the very same way", suggesting the false teachers are guilty of the categories of sin he just talked about - not necessarily the exact sins
 - D. In verse 8 Jude lists 3 sins the false teachers are guilty of committing
 - 1. First, "on the strength of their dreams, these people pollute their own bodies"
 - a) The word dreams is an odd one to be used here
 - b) It is the same word used when speaking of prophets receiving visions
 - (1) The same word is used in the OT to refer to false prophets visions they claimed to have
 - c) It seems as if the false teachers in Jude are basing their behavior on visions or dreams they claim to have from God
 - d) "Pollute their own bodies" literally is "pollute flesh"
 - (1) By using this phrase, Jude is closely associating them with the Sodomites that went after "other flesh"
 - (2) It is not clear if Jude is saying they are guilty of homosexual sin
 - 2. Second, they reject authority

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- a) The word for authority comes from the root word for Lord
 - b) Jude has already told us that these men “deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord”
 - c) It can hardly be anything else than Jude telling us that these guys reject the Lordship of Christ
3. Third, they heap abuse on celestial beings (literally, they blaspheme glories)
- a) Due to time constraints, I will not go into all the ways they could be disparaging angelic beings
 - b) Suffice it to say, they were not treating the spiritual world with the respect that it deserved
 - c) It is possible, given the next verse that they were not giving the evil spirits the proper place
 - (1) This should sound familiar to us
 - (2) Acts 19 we saw some men claiming to be Jewish exorcists that did not treat the spirit world with the respect it deserves
 - (a) If you recall they tried to cast out demons by saying, “In the name of Jesus, who Paul preaches...”
 - (b) Also if you recall, they got whooped so bad they ran away bleeding and naked
- E. As we reach verse nine we hit a problem - the source of this story
- 1. The archangel
 - a) The Jews developed the ranks of angels in the period of time between the testaments
 - b) Michael, mentioned three times in the OT, and twice in the NT is always listed in this highest ranking
 - 2. The problem is this story is not found in the OT, or any fully surviving literature from ancient times
 - a) The reason we know of the story’s existence is because of early church fathers that evidently were familiar with the work it came from
 - b) The work’s name is *The Assumption of Moses*
 - c) Whether Jude believed the story was true or not is again unknown
 - (1) He may have quoted the story for effect
 - (2) Seeking for the truth to become clearer as a result of an illustration, even if the illustration was a story and nothing more
 - 3. More important is how Jude is using the story
 - a) Jude connects this story with verse 8 when talking about abusing celestial beings
 - b) His point in using the story is that even Michael the archangel would not take on Satan, but turned to God Himself

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(1) So evidently the false teachers are feeling so sure of themselves that they are treating Satan or the power of darkness with flippant attitudes

F. He finishes our section by returning to the false teachers directly saying “these people”

1. The NIV would have been better served for continuity by translating “abuse celestial beings” as slander
2. Then the whole section would have flowed better
3. They slander what they do not understand (angels and the powers that are beyond them)
4. What they do understand is reduced to instinct - like animals
 - a) Most likely a reference to their sexual urges
 - b) Like animals, they have no moral compass and do whatever they feel like
5. Eventually, these things will destroy them

IV. Application

A. The first thing to apply is the issue of homosexuality

1. We touched on it briefly last week
2. Please understand that Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of far more than just homosexuality
 - a) Ezekiel lists other things which they were guilty of, like arrogance
 - b) A luxurious lifestyle
 - c) Lack of concern for the poor
 - d) So before we go all “Super Christian” and freak out over homosexuality, please review that list about S & G and see what you may be guilty of
 - (1) And please don’t say that you are concerned for the poor
 - (2) When I ask you what are you doing to help them and you say, “nothing” - you must not be that concerned
 - e) So lesson one is let’s not get all high and mighty over this
3. Lesson two is that homosexuality is the sin that became what S & G was infamous for
 - a) Even today, the term homosexuality is too general in a court of law
 - b) The proper legal term: Sodomy
4. Lesson three, there is no way when you study the OT, NT, and extra-biblical Jewish literature that you will ever come away with the idea that homosexual acts are endorsed by God
 - a) It has always been condemned by God and a study of all the relevant literature will bear that out

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- b) There are several arguments that I could go into that people use to say homosexual activity is okay
 - (1) Rather than get too side tracked by one topic, what I will do is recommend a book for you
 - (2) *Is God Anti-Gay* by Sam Allberry
 - (a) He is a Pastor that struggles with SSA
 - (b) The book is short, but gives some sound reasons from the Bible
- 5. Today, the culture is pushing the idea of homosexuality harder than ever before, and Christians will have to make some choices about what they really believe
 - a) Will we follow the crowd for fear of being labelled hateful
 - b) Or will we follow the teaching of humanity for centuries, and the teaching of the Bible
- 6. Again, to bring balance, homosexual sin is sin, just like all sin
 - a) Sadly, the Christian church has a track record that condemns homosexuality but only pays lip service to divorce, or sex before marriage
 - b) If we are going to hold that one is wrong, do not be a hypocrite and pick and choose which sexual ethic to rip on and which to merely wink at
- B. The second thing we need to apply is seeing the false teachers for what they are
 - 1. Today we saw in more detail what they were doing
 - 2. And how what they were doing stemmed out of their attitude
 - 3. Jude was not light in condemning them, and we should not be either
 - a) When it is obvious that a person is behaving inappropriately
 - b) What I just said is not a license to start ripping people that you disagree with
 - c) These false teachers were seriously off base
 - d) We are not talking about simply disagreements in theological position, but serious issues at the core of the faith
- C. The third thing to apply is the attitude that the false teachers held
 - 1. They reject authority - they are arrogant
 - 2. I was just doing some reading this week that shed light for this sermon
 - a) Marcion was a heretic from the 1st and 2nd century
 - (1) I won't go into his specific heresy except to say that to get there, Marcion started with his own idea about the Bible and used that to sit in judgment over the Bible
 - (2) His reason about scripture was his standard for how to understand scripture

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- b) What the false teachers in Jude are doing is starting with their own ideas about Scripture, God and the Christian life, and that is becoming how they filter everything else
 - (1) Instead of humbly submitting to God's Word as the authority
 - (2) They rule over it in their own hubris, cutting out the parts of the faith that do not appeal to them
- 3. The arrogance of these false teachers is on display for the world to see
 - a) Any time we think we are over Scripture, our pride is on display
 - b) We submit to Scripture, Scripture does not submit to us
- D. Finally, we need to be careful about visions
 - 1. Can God still use visions to speak to us today? Certainly
 - 2. Should we be very careful to weigh those against what we already know God has revealed to us in His Word? Of course!
 - 3. We need to be wiser than the false teachers and not use anything
 - a) God's grace
 - b) Visions
 - c) Our pet interpretations - anything
 - d) As a license to sin