

1. An Overview of Jude (Jude 1–25)

Wednesday Bible Study // September 6, 2023

Summary

The Main Idea of the Book of Jude

The Church has received a glorious salvation, but false teachers want to lead believers away from Christ. Christians must be vigilant to remain in Christ, even while he keeps and protects his people during such threats.

Major Themes in the Book of Jude

1. **The Glories of Salvation.** Although this theme is minor relative to others, it emerges throughout Jude's letter. From his original purpose ("to write to you about our common salvation" [v. 3]) to the way that he narrates salvation (in terms of God's love, Christ's mercy, the grace of the Spirit to keep us in our Savior, and more), Jude presents a picture of salvation that should fill us with joy, wonder, gratitude, and a sense of freedom. Jesus' grace should be a consistent refrain of your study of Jude this semester.
2. **False Teachers.** Jude writes to help churches remain faithful despite the influence of false teachers. False teachers had infiltrated these churches and led people away from Christ, and Jude spends most of his time describing the evil character and teaching of these people. Their character (or, their *works*) is summarized in v. 4: they "pervert the grace of our God into sensuality." That is, they think that the graciousness of God implies that they can be indifferent about their moral lives. Their teaching (or, their *words*) is summarized in v. 4 as well: they "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." That is, they reject the apostolic testimony about Jesus. By distorting Jesus' character and nature, they deny him altogether.
3. **Divine Grace and Human Responsibility.** One of the most puzzling parts of the letter to many is Jude's insistence that God keeps his own (vv. 1, 24) and that we must keep ourselves (v. 21; and implied by Jude's numerous warnings to the churches against apostasy). How do God's keeping of us and our keeping of ourselves go together? One fruitful way to understand the relationship of divine grace and human responsibility is by pondering Phil 2:12–13: "Therefore, my beloved...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." These verses supply all we need to resolve the practical tension between God's grace and our work. We are taught here that we have a responsibility to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Following Jesus involves effort to resist temptation, grow in holiness, and do good works. But the source of and motivation for our striving is

the work of God in us. What is the nature of this work? It is “both to *will* and to *work* for his good pleasure.” That is, both the inclination to do good and the acting of that good will is the fruit of God’s grace. As Thomas Manton puts it, “You must not lie upon the bed of ease, and think that God must do all. *He does all indeed, but in us and by us.*”¹

4. **The Authority of Jesus Christ Through His Word.** Finally, authority is a massive theme throughout Jude’s letter. Jesus is called “Master” (v. 4), and “dominion and authority” are ascribed to God (v. 25). The false teachers, however, are defined by their rejection of authority. We must understand Jude’s (and the Bible’s) presuppositions about authority to understand his letter rightly. True authority is vested in God. He is the source of all authority (Rom 13:1). We, as his creatures by virtue of our creation and his children by virtue of our redemption, should be subject to him (1 Pet 5:6). On this side of the cross and resurrection, God’s authority is concentrated in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom “he raised [...] from the dead and seated [...] at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” Furthermore, God “put all things under [Jesus’] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:20–23). Jesus rules over all, and in the Church he rules especially by his word (the Scriptures) and Spirit. Everywhere we see the concept of authority in the book of Jude, we should remember that it is intimately connected with the person of Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, and his holy word, the Bible, communicated to us by the Holy Spirit.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism* 1

What is our only hope in life and death? That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Jude Connection: The false teachers want to lead Christians away from Jesus. But if Jesus is our only hope, how could we bear to be led away from him? Even in the hardest of circumstances, we should say with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

Memory Verse: Jude 3

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

¹ Thomas Manton, “An Exposition, with Notes, Upon the Epistle of Jude,” in *The Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 2020), 341.

Discuss

Introduction

1. How do you hope to grow in Christ this semester?
2. What themes in Jude are you excited to explore? What do you think will be most helpful?
3. What confuses you about the book of Jude? What big questions does this portion of God's word raise?

Into the Text

1. What repeated ideas and themes do you notice in Jude's letter?
2. What was happening to the churches to which Jude was writing? *Are you experiencing similar things to the churches in Jude's day? If so, how?*
3. What hope does Jude offer to the suffering churches? *Does Jude's encouragement to those churches also encourage you? Why or why not?*
4. What distinguishes the false teachers from faithful believers? *Think about your life. Does it match the descriptions of the false teachers or the faithful believers better?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today's discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today's discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Ask God to bless your small group with deepening friendships and growth in Christ.
 - Ask the Father to help you understand Jude and to grow you in grace by it.
 - Pray against false teachers and for increased faithfulness to Christ.
 - *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
- Some ideas:** What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God's help in your life? How do your friends need God's help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

2. Called, Beloved, Kept (Jude 1-2)

Wednesday Bible Study // September 20, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. Who is Jude in Christ? (v. 1a)
 - A. Jude is a leader in the Church and the brother of James (and therefore of Jesus).
 - B. Jude is principally a *servant* of Jesus Christ.
 - C. Believers are likewise defined as *servants* of Jesus.
- II. Who are we in Christ? (v. 1b)
 - A. Called: drawn to Jesus Christ by the Spirit according to the Father's grace
 - B. Beloved: loved by the Father from all eternity, by the Son even as he prepared for his death, and by the Spirit who sows God's love in our hearts
 - C. Kept: preserved in Christ forever and kept in the sheepfold by the good Shepherd
- III. What do we receive in Christ? (v. 2)
 - A. Mercy: the undeserved forgiveness of our sins
 - B. Peace: the righteousness of Jesus himself, which qualifies us to be God's friends
 - C. Love: the right to become children of a loving heavenly Father

Commentary

Jude begins his letter by reinforcing the identities and benefits that believers receive through the grace of Christ. He does so first by calling himself a “servant” of Jesus Christ. This humble identification is notable. For one, Jude is a trustworthy authority in the Church: his letter was recognized as Scripture, after all. Also, Jude is the brother of James, a respected pillar of the Church (Gal 2:9). Finally, Jude is the half-brother of Jesus himself. We know this because James was also Jesus’ half-brother. We notice, therefore, that while Jude has every right to introduce himself as a trusted leader in the Church and a brother to Jesus Christ himself, he instead refers to himself primarily as “a servant of Jesus Christ.” He *did not* say, “Jude, brother of Jesus Christ and of James.” He calls attention to his status as Jesus’ servant. We should follow his example. Every believer in Christ is, after all, Christ’s servant (1 Pet 2:16). Just as Jude subordinated *everything* that formerly defined him to his servant-relationship to the Master, Jesus Christ, so we should subordinate all that we are to Jesus. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

But there is more to a disciple’s identity than servitude. Disciples are also *called*, *beloved*, and *kept* for Jesus Christ. To be “called” is not simply to have heard the gospel. “Calling” refers to God’s secret work through the gospel and by his Spirit to draw us to himself

(Rom 8:30, 9:11; 1 Cor 1:23–24). It is “by his grace” (Gal 1:15); it refers to his *effective* operation upon us. Christians are those whom God has drawn to Jesus Christ (Jn 6:44).

To be “beloved” is a little more self-explanatory. “Beloved” is what the apostles often call the Christians they address (e.g., 1 Cor 4:14). Christians are those whom the Father especially loved from all eternity (Eph 1:4–5), and those whom Jesus loved “to the end” as he prepared for his death on the cross (Jn 13:1).

Finally, to be “kept” is to be preserved in Christ forever. Jesus himself tells us that because he is the Good Shepherd, he never loses his sheep (Jn 6:39, 17:12). He holds us fast, even when our grip on him is weak. Christians are those whom God holds close and will not let go. If you trust in Christ for your salvation, these three wonderful words—called, beloved, kept—describe *you*.

Finally, Jude pronounces a blessing upon the churches: “May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you” (v. 2). We might first think of these blessings as states of mind, and in one sense, they are. But before they are subjective, they are objective. We need to receive mercy from the Lord because we are sinners (Eph 2:1–5). We need peace with God because we recognize ourselves to be enemies of him in our flesh (Jas 4:4). We need God’s love because outside of Christ we were haters of God (Rom 1:30). Praise be to God! In Christ, we receive sufficient mercy to cover all our sins and reconcile us to God (Tit 3:5); sufficient peace to become friends of God (Rom 5:1); and sufficient love to become God’s sons, and for him to become to us a Father (Rom 8:15). Notice that these benefits are “multiplied” to believers: we receive them in abundance! We respond to our reconciliation, justification, and adoption by having mercy on one another, aiming for peace with one another, and loving one another.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *Heidelberg Catechism* 51

How does [Jesus’ ascension] benefit us? First, through his Holy Spirit he pours out gifts from heaven upon [his people]. Second, by his power he defends us and keeps us safe from all enemies.

Jude Connection: Because Christians are called and beloved, they receive God’s grace amid hardships, including the assaults of false teachers and other enemies. It is good news to know that Christ defends us and keeps us safe as the resurrected and ascended Lord of all.

Memory Verse: **Jude 1**

In Christ, I am “called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.”

Discuss

Introduction

1. What does Jude intend to do in these first two verses of his letter?
2. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. How does Jude describe himself in v. 1? Look at Gal 1:19. What can we infer about him?
2. Why does Jude call himself a “servant” of Jesus? *Do you consider yourself a servant of Christ (if you trust in him)? How might doing so change your life?*
3. How does Jude describe Christians in v. 1?
4. Look at Rom 8:30, Gal 1:15, and 1 Cor 1:23–24. Based on these verses, what does it mean to be “called”? *How does this shed light on your salvation (if you trust Christ)?*
5. What does it mean to be “beloved in God the Father”? *Do you consider yourself beloved by the Father? How might your life change if you did?*
6. What does it mean to be “kept for Jesus Christ”? Look at John 6:39, John 17:12, and Phil 1:6 for some help. *Do you depend on the grace of God to keep you believing in Christ?*
7. *Christians are called, beloved, and kept. What identifies you? Is it your status in Christ (if you are a believer)? How would identifying in and with Christ change you?*
8. What is mercy, and why do we need it? (Look at Tit 3:5 for some help.)
9. What is peace, and why do we need it? (Look at Rom 5:1 for some help.)
10. What is love, and why do we need it? (Look at Rom 5:5, 10 for some help.)
11. *How do you receive mercy, peace, and love? What difference could it make in your life?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today’s discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today’s discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Ask the Father to help you consider yourself called, beloved, and kept in Christ Jesus.
- Ask the Father to multiply mercy, peace, and love toward you and your small group.
- *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*

Some ideas: What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God’s help in your life? How do your friends need God’s help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

3. Contend for the Faith (Jude 3-4)

Wednesday Bible Study // September 27, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. Jude's original intent in writing: to exult in the Church's common salvation (v. 3a)
- II. Jude's necessary subject (vv. 3b-4)
 - A. Contend for the faith...
 - B. ...because false teachers are leading the faithful astray.
 1. Error 1: they pervert the grace of God into sensuality.
 2. Error 2: they deny Jesus Christ.

Commentary

These verses form Jude's "thesis statement." They contain his main exhortation to believers—"contend for the faith"—and the reason for it—false teachers have infiltrated the churches.

It is easy, given the obvious need to focus on vv. 3b-4, to overlook the first clause: "although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation..." (v. 3). We notice that Jude meant to write about the salvation that he shares with his audience. Why might this have been Jude's original intention? The answer is prescient. We often imagine that God's word is a textbook—once we've learned the necessary information, we can move on from the word. However, it is better to think of God's word as *food* or *nourishment*. That seems to be how Jude thought of his proclamation of the gospel, this "common salvation" to which he refers: the churches already knew about the salvation they shared with Jude in Jesus Christ; they didn't need more information. But Jude was "*very eager*" to write to them nonetheless, because their salvation in Christ is *precious* and they were prone to forgetting the glories of the grace of Christ. Our salvation is a treasure; angels long to understand and experience what has been given to us in Christ (1 Pet 1:10-12). We should remind ourselves of it and rejoice in it together, even if we know the propositions that describe our salvation like the backs of our hands.

Now, we can move on to the central concerns of the letter. Due to circumstances plaguing the churches, Jude determined that it was "necessary" to write to them. What were these circumstances? He elaborates them in verse 4: "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." First, we notice that these problematic people are leading the churches toward two serious errors. The first error is the perversion of God's grace into sensuality. This error was not novel. Paul, too, encountered

people who took his teaching about the grace of God¹ and assumed that it should lead to licentiousness. He answers this misrepresentation of his teaching in Rom 6:1–2: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” The false teachers Jude describes taught that because God is gracious to sinners, sinners need not obey God’s commands. But nothing could be further from the truth! The grace of God in the gospel is meant to create and secure our obedience, not do away with it. Consider the teaching of Tit 2:11–14, for instance:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* (Italics mine.)

The second error has to do with a denial of “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” John Gill distinguishes two different kinds of denial: doctrinal and practical.² It is possible that these false teachers were denying Christ outright. Perhaps they said he never existed, or they denied his divinity, or they gave him the status of a great prophet but ignored his salvific work. But there is another kind of denial that is more sinister: practical denial. Based on the description of false teachers in 2 Pet 2 (which is very similar to the book of Jude), it is likely that the denial of Christ that Jude has in mind is closer to the “practical” kind:³ these false teachers are “forsaking the right way” (2 Pet 2:15). They are “ungodly people;” they are trampling Christ underfoot (cf. Heb 10:29).

In addition to these two errors, we notice that the false teachers were “long ago...designated for this condemnation.” What could this mean? We must go back to what we know generally about God’s eternal counsel: he sovereignly decreed everything that would come to pass from before the foundation of the world (Isa 46:8–11; Eph 1:3–14), including the rise of false teachers in the churches. Then, we find the expression of God’s sovereign decree in prophecy. The OT prophets, NT apostles, and Jesus himself all warn the churches about false teachers. Take Jesus’ words in Matt 24:24–27, for instance:

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

¹ What did Paul (and Jesus, and the Bible) teach? The teaching of the Scriptures is that we are saved by God’s mercy alone, not our good works; that the righteousness of Jesus is counted to us, not because we are *actually* righteous but because we have received it by faith; that we become righteous not first by acting righteously but because God works righteousness in us by his grace.

² From the relevant place in Gill’s commentary on the entire Bible.

³ This does not mean that their errors did not have a doctrinal component or lead to doctrinal error. In later lessons, we’ll consider the false teachers’ *words* and how they misrepresent (and thereby deny) Christ.

Jude reminds the churches that the false teachers are no surprise to God. In fact, he sovereignly superintends their actions and therefore has the power to “condemn” them at the proper time. Jude intends to give the churches confidence in God as they experience an onslaught of false teaching.

Given this context, Jude’s foundational exhortation to the churches is, “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). While this can be taken as a command to publicly defend the faith and confront false teachers, it could also mean that individual believers, families, and churches will have to fight to hold on to the faith amid false teaching. There is perhaps no more pertinent exhortation to our students, as they are experiencing many things that threaten to lead them away from Christ. They must *contend* for the faith; that is, their remaining in Jesus will require diligence, prayerfulness, thoughtfulness, and action. I hope that you will be able to unpack what it means to “contend” in your small groups. But one observation must be accentuated: we don’t “contend” for worthless things. Jude presumes that the faith of Jesus Christ is worth contending for. And of course, it is—Christ has secured our precious, invaluable, “common salvation.”

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism* 34

Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God’s Word? Yes, because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, also renews us by his Spirit; so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ.

Memory Verse: Romans 6:1–2

“Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

Discuss

Introduction

1. What does Jude intend to do in these verses of his letter?
2. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. Why did Jude originally intend to write to the churches?
2. Do you think the churches already knew the gospel? Why would Jude write to them about something they already knew? *Do you need reminders of things you already know? Why do we need to be reminded of the gospel regularly?*
3. What was happening to the churches that caused Jude to change his subject? (See v. 4.)
4. How does Jude describe those he writes about in v. 4? Look at Rom 6:1–2 and 1 Jn 2:18–25. Do these passages help you understand the false teachers' errors? How?
5. What does it mean to “pervert the grace of our God...”? *Are you guilty of this error?*
6. What does it mean to “deny...Jesus Christ”? *Are you guilty of this error?*
7. What is Jude’s command to the churches in light of the threat of false teachers?
8. *Do false teachers threaten to lead you away from Christ? What does it look like to “contend for the faith” in your own context?*
9. *Why should we contend? What is it about the faith that makes it worth contending for?* (For further meditations on this question, see Matt 13:44–46 and Phil 3:1–11.)

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today’s discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today’s discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Ask the Father to show you the joy of salvation in Christ.
 - Ask God to protect you from false teachers and give you strength to contend for the faith.
 - *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
- Some ideas:** What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God’s help in your life? How do your friends need God’s help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

4. The Fate of the Unfaithful (Jude 5–8)

Wednesday Bible Study // October 11, 2023

Summary

Outline

1. Three historical reminders of the fate of the rebellious, sinful, and false (vv. 5–7)
 - A. The destruction of unfaithful Israel (v. 5)
 - B. The judgment of the rebellious angels (v. 6)
 - C. The punishment of immoral Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7)
2. The false teachers are likewise immoral, rebellious, and blasphemous and will suffer the same fate (v. 8)

Commentary

Jude knows that “whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4). So, given that the churches are threatened by false teachers, Jude turns to biblical history to illustrate the fate of those who lead the faithful astray, and the fate of those who follow such leaders. Verses 5–8 function primarily as a *warning* to the churches of what will happen to those who desert Christ.

Notice, first, that Jude’s reminder is to those who “once fully knew” the lessons which his examples teach (v. 5). Like his desire to write about their “common salvation” (last week), this statement teaches us how to think of the Bible’s function in our lives. The information it teaches us is important, but if we read and study God’s word merely to learn facts, we are missing the point. We must also be *mastered by* the word of God, so that God’s priorities and affections become ours. What does Jude mean when he says that the churches “once fully knew” the lessons he is about to share? He does *not* mean that they need to be reacquainted with the facts of redemptive history. Rather, he means that that history has not captured *their hearts*. The examples of judgment should stir their and our hearts to hate sin and love Christ more. If they truly *knew* these lessons, their affections would be warmer. Jude’s reminders, therefore, are not simply informative; they are admonitions to know the Scriptures *for the sake of a holy life*.

Now, we come to Jude’s three examples of punishment. First, “Jesus...saved a people out of the land of Egypt” and “afterward destroyed those who did not believe” (v. 5). Jude is referring to Israel’s exodus from Egypt (Exod 2:23–15:21) and the subsequent punishment of those who grumbled and rebelled against God (e.g., by making the golden calf [Exod 32:1–35] or

by dissuading Israel from entering the promised land [Num 14:36–38]).¹ After being miraculously freed from bondage in Egypt, certain Israelites stopped trusting God. As a result, they were punished, even “destroyed,” for refusing to trust the One who freed them. Likewise, anyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ but afterwards ceases to believe will be subject to judgment. Perseverance in the faith is necessary for salvation: “the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 10:22; cf. Matt 24:13; Mark 13:13; Col 1:21–23; Heb 6:4–8).

Jude’s second example involves the angels. “The angels...did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling;” hence, Jesus “has kept [them] in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment” (v. 6). There is debate about which event is narrated here. Some maintain that Jude is describing Satan’s fall and his exile from heaven. This interpretation is perfectly valid, insofar as it is an example of rebellion leading to judgment. However, others argue that since the other two examples given are explicitly narrated in the first two books of the Bible, this event also must be narrated explicitly in the OT histories. Since Satan’s fall is not explicitly recounted there, it is likely that Jude is instead referring to “the sons of God” who took for themselves human wives (Gen 6:1–3). Peter elaborates on these events in his letters (1 Pet 3:18–20; 2 Pet 2:4–10). First Peter 3 suggests that the “spirits” who were imprisoned sinned “in the days of Noah,” which favors the second proposed interpretation. Regardless of which interpretation one takes, one must observe that the angels rebelled against the authority that was over them and became authorities unto themselves. Their pride and arrogance earned them “eternal chains.” Likewise, those who are in Christ have him as Master and Lord (Jude 4). Throwing off his authority is equivalent to denying him and has bitter consequences. It is far better for believers in Christ to live under his authority than to kick against it. And remember, his authority is mediated through his word. Living under Christ’s authority means living in submission to the Bible.

Jude’s third and final illustration is Sodom and Gomorrah. “Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities...indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire” and consequently “serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (v. 7). These cities are consummate examples of rebellion against God throughout the Bible. They committed homosexual acts and other sinful sexual practices, including severe sexual abuse, as is suggested in the story of their destruction (cf. Gen 19:5). As a result, they were utterly destroyed by “sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). These cities represent entrenchment in rebellion against God and his will, especially his design for human sexuality. The words of Ps 2:2 can be applied to them: “The kings of the earth *set themselves*, and the rulers *take counsel together*, against the LORD and against his Anointed.” Their evil is purposeful, premeditated, conscious. The penalty for their sin was complete destruction. This example teaches us that sin is no light matter. Rather, “Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor

¹ Jude attributes the exodus to Jesus because (1) there is biblical precedent to do so (1 Cor 10:9) and (2) the person of Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and all three trinitarian persons work together in their external acts. If you’re curious about why the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must work together in their external acts, and how they can be said to work together and yet fulfill functions peculiar to each person, look up “Reformation 21 inseparable operations.”

adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9–10). Jude’s readers were in danger of falling away from Christ and into wicked sins. Therefore, he warns them sternly of sin’s consequences, to keep them from destroying themselves.

Finally, we read that the examples of the wicked are like pictures of the false teachers. “In like manner”—that is, in the same manner as grumbling Israel, rebellious angels, and evil Sodom and Gomorrah—the false teachers, “relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.” Jude enumerates the cardinal sins of the false teachers. They “defile the flesh.” Remember, they “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality,” indulging in sexual sin, gluttony, and greed (v. 4). They also “reject authority and blaspheme the glorious ones.” Remember, they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ,” rejecting his lordship (v. 4). These are the characteristic sins of the false teachers. By implication, Christians should embody the opposite of the false teachers’ attitudes and actions. We of all people should live pure lives (1 Cor 6:12–20) and submit to the appropriate authorities (1 Pet 2:13ff.).

Finally, it should be no secret that all of us have been or are involved in the false teachers’ sins. The kingdom of God does not open its doors to sinners. But God has made provision for sinners to enter his kingdom. Let me give the full quotation of the verses above from 1 Cor 6:9–11:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This passage and subsequent ones are *heavily legal* passages—they expose sin and teach us what such sin deserves. Even as we let these passages have their full force, we cannot forget the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is God’s answer to sin, and all who trust in him by the power of the Spirit are justified, sanctified inheritors of the kingdom of God.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism 16*

What is sin? Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law—resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.

Jude Connection: This passage and subsequent ones will deal at length with the sins of the false teachers. The students should know what sin is in general as they investigate the particular sins of the false teachers and use those sins to reflect on their own lives and conduct.

Memory Verse: 2 Peter 2:9-10

“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.”

Jude Connection: As the evils of false teachers become clearer, we need hope that God can strengthen us against them. Peter gives such hope to the Church in his letter.

Discuss

Introduction

1. Do you remember what Jude has said so far in his letter?
2. What do you think Jude intends to do in these verses of his letter?
3. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. What three OT examples does Jude use to describe the false teachers?
2. What does v. 5 refer to? (See Exod 14–15 and Num 14:36–38 for help.) What kind of sin is Jude drawing attention to with this example? *Do you struggle with this sin?*
3. What does v. 6 refer to? (See Gen 6:1–3 for help.) What kind of sin is Jude drawing attention to with this example? *Do you struggle with this sin?*
4. What does v. 7 refer to? (See Gen 19 for help.) What kind of sin is Jude drawing attention to with this example? *Do you struggle with this sin?*
5. How does Jude summarize the sins of the false teachers? How does his summary relate to his three examples? *Do you struggle with these sins?*
6. *In what ways do you see false teachers today “defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones”?* *Do you notice the presence of these sins in your own life?*
7. *What is the only hope for sinners like you and me?* (See 1 Cor 6:9–11 for help.) *How can you receive Christ’s washing, justification, and sanctification?*
8. *Does a close look at sin increase your gratitude for Jesus?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today’s discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today’s discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Confess your sins to God. Ask for forgiveness. (He is merciful in Christ!)
- Ask the Father to deliver you from evil.
- Ask the Father to work purity, submission, and reverence in you by his grace.
- *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*

Some ideas: What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God’s help in your life? How do your friends need God’s help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

5. Unstable Lies Lead to Death (Jude 9–13)

Wednesday Bible Study // October 18, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. The Cry of a False Prophet: Right Is Wrong and Wrong is Right (vv. 9–10)
 - A. Michael does not blaspheme (v. 9).
 - B. The false teachers blaspheme because they do not understand (v. 10).
- II. The Cry of a True Prophet: Woe! (vv. 11–13)
 - A. The false prophets are like wicked OT characters.
 - 1. Cain (Gen 4)
 - 2. Balaam (Num 22–24)
 - 3. Korah (Num 16)
 - B. The false prophets are compared to...
 - 1. “Hidden reefs at your love feasts” (v. 12)
 - 2. “Shepherds feeding themselves” (v. 12)
 - 3. “Waterless clouds, swept along by winds” (v. 12)
 - 4. “Fruitless trees in late autumn” (v. 12)
 - 5. “Wild waves of the sea” (v. 13)
 - 6. “Wandering stars” (v. 13)
 - C. The false prophets’ fate: “the gloom of utter darkness” (v. 13)

Commentary

Jude has just explained the sinful actions of the false teachers (v. 8). He now characterizes their false, immoral teaching with further comparisons to OT characters and events. At the same time, he demonstrates what a true prophet should say: he should warn people of “woe” when they persist in sin and lead others astray.

First, Jude contrasts the false teachers, who are “unreasoning animals,” and the archangel Michael, who respects God’s authority. He uses a traditional yet extra-biblical story to illustrate this contrast. In the story, Satan and the archangel Michael¹ dispute about Moses’ body before God. Satan accuses Moses of sin, saying that he is unworthy of the Lord’s favor. But Michael rebukes Satan because Satan has no authority to judge Moses’ worthiness. Michael knows that salvation and judgment belong to the Lord alone, so he calls upon the Lord to rebuke Satan (v. 9) and vindicate Moses.² The important point is that Michael recognizes the Lord’s authority and

¹ See Dan 12:1; Rev 12:7.

² For a similar prophetic episode, see Zech 3:1–10.

submits to it, while Satan rejects God's authority by taking God's prerogative to judge into his own hands. The false teachers are like Satan, presuming that they are authorities unto themselves, and not respecting God's authority. This attitude appears in their blasphemy of "all that they do not understand." Jude is referring to the content of their teaching. They have fallen so far from the truth that they are compared to "unreasoning animals" who "understand instinctively," that is, not rationally.

The comparison of the false teachers to Satan and contrast to Michael leads to Jude's prophetic proclamation: "Woe to them!" Jude, in a sense, plays the part of Michael, calling upon the Lord to render judgment *according to his word*. Those who "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" are under condemnation (Jn 3:18). Jude therefore echoes the Lord's own condemnation, validated by his word.³

Like vv. 5–8, Jude compares the false teachers to OT characters and events. First, they "walked in the way of Cain." Jude is referring to Gen 4:1–16, in which Cain kills his brother Abel, jealous that the Lord accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. The false teachers follow in Cain's way because they are destroying their "brothers" (those within the Church, cf. Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11).

Second, the false teachers "abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error." Jude is referring to Num 22:22–35, in which Balaam refuses the Lord's correction three times so that his donkey has to rebuke him. The false teachers likewise refuse the Lord's correction. When their teaching is contradicted or the apostles chastise them, they continue in their error rather than repent. To make matters worse, the false teachers' stubbornness is motivated by "gain"—the financial and reputation benefits they receive through their false teaching.

Third, the false teachers "perished in Korah's rebellion." Jude is referring to Num 16:1–40, in which Korah and many others opposed Moses, accusing him of unduly exalting himself as leader of Israel. Moses says that the next day, "the Lord will show who is his" (Num 16:5). He will vindicate Moses and Aaron as Israel's leaders. This is just what the Lord does, while Korah and those who rebelled with him are swallowed up by the earth. The false teachers are like Korah and his company. They overthrow rightful authorities (the apostles through the word of God) and become authorities themselves.

After using three OT examples to illustrate the false teachers' conduct, Jude uses six metaphors to help us understand just how dangerous and unhelpful they are. First, he calls them "hidden reefs at your love feasts" (v. 12). Hidden reefs cause ships to run aground and wreck. So, the false teachers threaten to shipwreck the faith of some (1 Tim 1:19). They are especially dangerous because they are present at the "love feasts" of the churches, which is probably a reference to the churches' worship services.

³ Students may wonder why Satan's accusation is wrong while Michael's rebuke is right; or why the false teachers' doctrine is wrong while Jude's is right. The answer is simple: Satan and the false teachers refused to submit to God, who exercises his authority through his word. Likewise, Michael, Jude, and the apostles submitted to God *by* submitting to his word. They call upon God to judge according to his word; they do not judge according to their own power and authority.

Second, he calls the false teachers “shepherds feeding themselves” (v. 12). Shepherds are supposed to sacrifice their own welfare for the good of their sheep, leading their sheep to good grazing land. But the false teachers are shepherds who only look after their own welfare, and not that of the sheep. With this metaphor, Jude alludes to Ezek 34:1–10.

Third, he calls the false teachers “waterless clouds, swept along by winds” (v. 12). “Waterless clouds” appear to contain rain for the parched earth, but they in fact have no water to offer. Instead of giving the water that the land needs, they are “swept along by winds,” moving from one place to another unpredictably. The false teachers do not have the nourishment that thirsty people need. Moreover, they are “children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Their teaching is not only false, but it changes. It is not steady and reliable. It is the antithesis of “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3).

Fourth, he calls the false teachers “fruitless trees in late autumn” (v. 12). During the season in which trees should bear fruit for people’s enjoyment and nourishment, these trees bear nothing useful (cf. Lk 13:6–9). The false teachers likewise have nothing sweet and nourishing for the people. They are nothing but leaves and branches.

Fifth, he calls the false teachers “wild waves of the sea” (v. 13). This metaphor is like the references to “hidden reefs” and “waterless clouds” above. “Wild waves” drive ships every which way and lead to capsizing and death. They are also haphazard and unpredictable. The false teachers’ doctrine leads to shipwreck and offers nothing solid in which to place one’s hope.

Sixth and finally, he calls the false teachers “wandering stars” (v. 13). Such stars catch the eye and are impressive for a short while, but they burn out into darkness. The false teachers capture believers’ eyes and ears, but they do not remain long. Again, their teaching is unstable and results finally in “the gloom of utter darkness” (v. 13). Following them leads to hell, where there is perpetual decay and disorder, in contrast to heaven, “where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Mt 6:20).

The final metaphor brings into view the fate of the false teachers: they will be cast into “the gloom of utter darkness...forever” (v. 13, cf. 2 Pet 2:17). This darkness is nothing less than hell itself, as Jesus’ parables repeatedly make clear (e.g., Mt 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). The false teachers’ end, along with all who follow them, is opposite to those who receive and keep the apostles’ teaching, “the faith once for all delivered” (v. 3): it is condemnation and eternal torment.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism* 31

What do we believe by true faith? Everything taught to us in the gospel. The Apostles’ Creed expresses what we believe in these words: We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy

Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Jude Connection: The false teachers' doctrine is described in vivid detail in this passage through metaphor and example. One of its hallmark features is its instability, in contrast with the stability of the apostles' teaching. The Apostles' Creed arose from the earliest days of the Christian faith to express the core of what Christians believe. It has not changed in almost two thousand years. Our students should know this summary of the content of our stable, unchanging faith, which is the only way of salvation.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

Jude Connection: The Apostles' Creed is an extrabiblical summary of what Christians must believe. But these verses are a God-breathed statement of the very center of the Christian faith—the events of Christ's death and resurrection. These verses have been the Church's confession of faith for two millennia.

Discuss

Introduction

1. Do you remember what Jude has said so far in his letter?
2. What do you think Jude intends to do in these verses of his letter?
3. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. What does the story about Michael and Satan teach us about the false teachers?
2. What does Jude mean when he says the false teachers “walked in the way of Cain” (see Gen 4:1–16), “abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error” (see Num 22:22–35), and “perished in Korah’s rebellion” (see Num 16:1–40)?
3. What do these examples communicate about the false teachers’ character? *Do you struggle with their sins?*
4. Think about Jude’s long list of metaphors in vv. 12–13. What do they mean? What light do they shed on the influence of the false teachers on the churches?
5. *Do you see false teachers today who fit Jude’s description? How so?*
6. *How is the gospel different from Jude’s characterization of the false teachers’ doctrine?*
7. *How comfortable are you with Jude’s definitive judgment that Jesus and the apostles are right while the false teachers are wrong?*
8. Read Jn 13–14. *How does Jesus compare with the false teachers and their doctrine?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today’s discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today’s discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Pray for spiritual discernment to identify and avoid false teachers.
 - Ask Jesus to lead and teach you in the way of truth.
 - *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
- Some ideas:** What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God’s help in your life? How do your friends need God’s help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

6. Ungodliness Exposed (Jude 14–16)

Wednesday Bible Study // October 25, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. Enoch’s prophecy: God’s judgment of ungodly deeds and ungodly words (vv. 14–15)
- II. Further descriptions of the false teachers (v. 16)
 - A. “Grumblers”
 - B. “Malcontents”
 - C. “Following their own sinful desires”
 - D. “Load-mouthed boasters”
 - E. “Showing favoritism to gain advantage”

Commentary

Jude’s characterization of the false teachers continues in this section. We’ve seen him use OT illustrations, extra-biblical stories, and metaphors to describe the false teachers. In these verses, Jude uses an extra-biblical saying of Enoch’s to illuminate God’s perspective on the false teachers’ conduct and teaching.

As was the case in the story of Satan and Michael in v. 9, Jude is using an extra-biblical “prophecy” of Enoch to further describe the false teachers’ sins. We know from Scripture that Enoch was a righteous man. “Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him” (Gen 5:24). Enoch, along with Elijah (see 2 Kgs 2:11), are the only people to be bodily assumed into heaven without dying first. In other words, Enoch is highly significant in the biblical narrative.

Nonetheless, there are no prophecies attributed to Enoch in Scripture. The “prophecy” that Jude cites is likely a traditional story similar to the stand-off between Michael and Satan over Moses’ body recounted in Jude 9. These two stories function as illustrations to help the churches understand the danger posed by the false teachers. As examples, they need not be historically true.¹

While Enoch’s prophecy is not found in Scripture, it also says nothing contrary to Scripture. In fact, it perfectly agrees with the overarching testimony of the Bible. The Lord will return to judge the living and the dead and to defeat his enemies, “the ungodly” (cf. Rom 2:16; 2 Thes 1:5–10). Particularly, God judges the *deeds* and *words* of the ungodly. As for their deeds, they are blind to their ungodliness, for the Lord must “convict” them of their evil ways (v. 15; cf.

¹ Of course, Jude uses biblical examples as instructive illustrations throughout his letter as well. He pulls both from empirical history (biblical examples) and tradition (extra-biblical examples) to illustrate the points he is making about the false teachers. The mixing of biblical and extra-biblical material may raise questions but should not cause any foundational concerns.

Jn 16:8). And as for their words, they speak “against” the Lord (v. 15). Again, their sinfulness must be shown to them because they refuse to recognize their teaching as sinful.

In effect, Jude is summing up his assessment of the false teachers in this section. In vv. 5–8, he exposed their works as evil. In vv. 9–13, he exposed their words as evil. In these verses, he brings their works and their words to the throne of judgment, showing that when they are weighed by the Lord, the false teachers will be condemned.

Jude uses variations of the word “ungodly” four times in a single sentence in vv. 14–15. In v. 16, he explains what it means to be “ungodly.” Ungodliness includes (but is not limited to) grumbling, rebellion (“malcontentedness”), following sinful desires, haughtiness and boasting, showing favoritism, and seeking one’s own advantage. Let’s unpack each of these qualities.

Grumbling. Grumbling was one of the characteristic sins of Israel in the wilderness following the exodus (e.g., Exod 16; cf. 1 Cor 10:9–10). Israel had witnessed numerous miracles and mighty works of God. They had experienced the power of God to free them from bondage. Despite seeing the glory of God’s might, they complained against him and Moses. They thought their circumstances were worse than their circumstances in Egypt, so they dishonored God their Savior and turned to other gods. Grumbling is directly opposed to gratitude, the proper response to God’s gracious salvation. In other words, grumbling tramples on and even denies the work that God has done to free a person.

Rebellion. Already in Jude’s letter, we’ve seen illustrations of rebellion against authority. Indeed, rebellion and authority are two of the most prominent themes of the letter. Rebellion means setting oneself over a rightful authority. As we’ve already seen, the false teachers rebel against God’s word and therefore against God himself. They have taken the highest authorities and subordinated them to their own imaginations. Rom 1:18–32 teaches us that the subordination of rightful authority to oneself leads to all kinds of sin. Rebellion is directly opposed to submission, the proper disposition of a human being before his Creator and his Creator’s word (Rom 9:20).

Sinful desires. The false teachers follow their own sinful desires. In their rebellion, they cast off the authorities that were placed over them. The same pattern has been recapitulated within themselves. No longer do their higher faculties (reason and will) lead their actions, but they have been mastered entirely by their desires and appetites, like animals. Being led by one’s desires, or following them without thinking, has negative consequences: “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (Jas 1:14–15). Following sinful desires is directly opposed to setting one’s mind “on the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5). The indwelling Holy Spirit, in fact, sows holy desires to replace our sinful desires, so that we may not only serve the Lord but take joy in doing so (Gal 5:22–24).

Boasting. The false teachers are haughty. Everything is about them; they cannot stop talking about themselves and their own exploits and affairs. They want everyone to know of their spirituality, their insight, their good works. Haughtiness and pride are in direct contrast to the

attitude of a disciple. The logic of the gospel of grace requires that we be humble. Consider Romans 3:21–27:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

Because our justification (our right standing before God) is a gift of God’s grace received by faith, not by works, our boasting is entirely excluded. We have no good works to boast of, because none of our good works qualify us before God. Only Jesus’ good works make us right before him. Paul expresses the same idea elsewhere:

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor 1:28–31)

Boasting in the presence of God takes the glory that is owed to God and gives it to the creature. Therefore, God saves his people in such a way that their boasting is taken away. God saves the humble—those who have nothing in themselves to boast about—so that if one boasts, one boasts only in the Lord. Every benefit of salvation (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption) comes to us in and through Christ Jesus, and we are “in him” “because of [God].” Once again, we see that all boasting in ourselves is excluded.

Boasting in ourselves is directly opposed to boasting in God and giving him all the glory. The false teachers boast in themselves, but godliness requires giving glory to the one to whom it is owed supremely—God himself.

Favoritism. The false teachers show favoritism. That is, they prefer certain people to others. Presumably, some are in the false teachers’ good graces—they receive preferential treatment; they are praised; they are in the “inner circle.” Others, however, are not. Partiality is condemned as a grave sin elsewhere in Scripture (Jas 2:9), and it is directly contrary to God’s character. “God shows no partiality” (Rom 2:11). Partiality is directly opposed to believers’ unity and equality in Christ. The opposite of partiality is illustrated in Paul’s extended comparison of the church to one body with members (1 Cor 12). In his reflections on the church’s conduct, Paul maintains that greater honor should be given to the parts that lack it, “that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:24–25).

Self-service. Finally, the false teachers are partial *for the sake of personal gain*. They not only fail to maintain the unity and equality of Christ's people, but they do so that they can be enriched by congregants who have advantage, wealth, or privilege. The conduct of the false teachers is directly opposed to Jesus' instructions to the apostles as leaders of the church:

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:42–45)

The Christian should live not for himself, but always in service to others. Doing good to others, even at one's own expense, should be the focus and purpose of the Christian's life.

"Ungodliness" is antithetical to the life of a Christian. Christians pursue godliness (e.g., 2 Pet 1:3) because God himself has made his home with them (Jn 14:23). The Holy Spirit *indwells*, or lives in, believers, causing us to grow in godliness (1 Cor 6:11). As a result, godliness—the opposite of the qualities mentioned above—should be our pursuit (1 Tim 6:11–12).

Believers can pursue godliness, and have every hope of becoming godly, because they have been united to the Son of God, who is God by nature. He is the perfect embodiment of godliness. His conduct sets an example for us to follow. But far more than this, he is active *in us* to produce godliness after his image (Jn 15:1–11; Gal 2:20). Our successful pursuit of godliness is possible only by the grace of Jesus Christ, who is God himself, and makes his own into his own godly image.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism 32b*

What does sanctification mean? Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in us.

Jude Connection: Every human being is by nature ungodly—the favorite word to describe the false teachers from Enoch's prophecy. We all fall short of God's glory; we all sin and thereby fail to resemble our heavenly Father. But in Christ, we leave ungodliness behind and become godly by the work of the Spirit in us. This process is called *sanctification*.

Memory Verse: **2 Peter 1:3–4**

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

Jude Connection: It is through God's abundant grace that we can live a life of "godliness." In these two verses alone, there are numerous references to God's grace which ought to comfort and encourage us.

Discuss

Introduction

1. Do you remember what Jude has said so far in his letter?
2. What do you think Jude intends to do in these verses of his letter?
3. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. Who was Enoch? Why was he important? (See Gen 5:24 for help.)
2. For what will the ungodly be judged, according to Enoch's prophecy? Has Jude commented on the false teachers' *words* and *works* before?
3. Read 2 Thes 1:5–10. What does God's judgment look like? What is its result?
4. What do you think it means to be "ungodly"?
5. What do you think is the opposite of "ungodliness"?
6. Jude gives five examples of the false teachers' ungodliness in v. 16. What are they?
7. What does it mean to grumble? (See Exod 16 and 1 Cor 10:9–10 for help.) *Do you struggle with this sin? How so? What virtue is the opposite of grumbling?*
8. What does it mean to be "malcontent" or rebellious? (How does Jude talk about rebellion throughout his letter?) *Do you struggle with this sin? How so? What virtue is the opposite of rebellion?*
9. What does it mean to follow one's own sinful desires? (See Jas 1:14–15 for help.) *Do you struggle with this sin? How so? What virtue is the opposite of sinful desire?*
10. What does it mean to be a "loud-mouthed boaster"? (For the opposite of boasting, see 1 Cor 1:28–31.) *Do you struggle with this sin? How so? What virtue is the opposite of boasting?*
11. What does it mean to "show favoritism to gain advantage"? (See Jas 2:9 for help.) *Do you struggle with this sin? How so? What virtue is the opposite of partiality and selfishness?*
12. Outside of Christ, we are all ungodly. Are we liable to God's judgment? How do we escape God's wrath? (See 1 Thes 1:9–10 for help.) *Do you trust in Jesus?*
13. What is our hope for becoming godly? (See 1 Jn 3:1–2; Gal 5:16–25 for help.) *Do you want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus? How can you begin to do so?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today's discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today's discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Ask for the Lord's mercy for your ungodliness.
- Ask the Lord to help you live a godly life in Christ Jesus by the Spirit.
- Ask the Father to give you the virtues you discussed (the opposite of the false teachers' vices – gratitude, submission, holy desire, humility, impartiality, and selflessness).
- *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
Some ideas: What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God's help in your life? How do your friends need God's help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

7. Keep Yourselves (Jude 17–23)

Wednesday Bible Study // November 8, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. Don't Be Surprised by the False Teachers (vv. 17–19).
 - A. They were predicted by the apostles (vv. 17–18).
 - B. They are devoid of the Spirit (v. 19).
- II. Unlike the False Teachers, Be Spirit-Filled People (vv. 20–23).
 - A. Build yourselves up in the faith (v. 20).
 - B. Pray in the Holy Spirit (v. 20).
 - C. Keep yourselves in the love of God (v. 21).
 - D. Wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ (v. 21).
 - E. Have mercy on those who doubt (v. 22).
 - F. Hate the garment stained by the flesh (v. 23).

Commentary

The foregoing context has impressed upon us the wickedness of the false teachers. It has also underlined just how dangerous they are to the Church. At this point, one might be tempted to fear and despair. What will become of the Church? What will become of my soul?

Jude reassures us that these false teachers do not take God by surprise. As we saw in v. 4, these false teachers have come in under the watchful eye of God's sovereign power. They were predicted years before they ever appeared, both by Jesus and by his apostles. The same God who foresaw and permitted their wickedness can do away with it once for all at the end of the age. Remembering God's foreknowledge, permission, and warning of these events helps the Church to remain steadfast under trial. The very same principle is commended elsewhere in the Bible.

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. (Jas 5:7–11)

James encourages the Church to remain in Christ despite their suffering. To do so, he reminds them of examples of faithful sufferers from the Church's history, including the prophets

and Job. All these examples teach us of the Lord's compassion and mercy. They stir us up to hope in the Lord as they did. Likewise, Jude exhorts us to remember the apostles' predictions. These memories strengthen us for our daily battles against discouragement, uncertainty, and suffering at the hands of false teachers.

Next, Jude gives us one more helpful characterization of false teachers. They are those "who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (v. 19). They do not work for the unity of the Church, but instead cause division and faction within it. They are also "worldly" and "devoid of the Spirit." These are some of the most instructive characteristics of false teachers. Underneath their immorality, lies, and evil intentions, they are spiritually dead. The Bible often uses the concept of "the world" to refer to the kingdom of darkness, Satan, and sin. To be clear, "the world" in this sense does not refer to things as they were created, "for everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim 4:4). Rather, it refers to the dominion of Satan and sin. This appears clearly from the opposition James draws between God and the world: "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas 4:4).

Taking these things into consideration, to be "worldly" means that at the very foundation of one's being is an evil principle, aligned with Satan against God. This is almost the same as saying that one is "devoid of the Spirit." Only the Holy Spirit can take "worldly" people and recreate them in Christ so that their evil principle is replaced by one that is inclined to God and his ways. The false teachers are "worldly," they do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. They do not belong to Christ (cf. Rom 8:9). The Church, on the other hand, is "godly" (as we saw in the previous text); they do have the Spirit dwelling in them. They do belong to Christ. This decisive fact sets the context for the next section, in which Jude gives the Church instructions about how she is to conduct herself. Because believers are "beloved" possessors of the Holy Spirit, they are commanded *and enabled* to do six things.

1. *Build yourselves up in the faith* (v. 20). The Christian life is subject to entropy (decay) because it is lived in "the world" (see above)—subject to sin, temptation, deception, Satan's assaults, and the influence of false teachers. Therefore, Jude exhorts the churches to actively build themselves up in the faith. They do this primarily through the ministry of the word among themselves; by encouraging one another with and instructing one another from the word of God in regular conversation, formal discipleship, and especially in the Lord's Day gathering. The concept of the Church building itself up is found most explicitly in Eph 4:11–16, where the instrumental cause of edification is "speaking the truth in love" (v. 15):

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the

whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

2. *Pray in the Holy Spirit* (v. 20). In addition to building itself up by speaking the truth in love, the Church is exhorted to pray in the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the word and prayer are the two fundamental ways that God causes Christians to mature in Christ. Prayer outside of the Spirit avails nothing. It does not bring one into contact with God himself. But “through [Christ] we both have access *in one Spirit* to the Father” (Eph 2:18; emphasis mine). Because of Christ’s all-sufficient work to save us and give us the Spirit, we can come to the Father with confidence, and we can commune with him because our drawing near is done “in one Spirit.” In other words, as we pray God himself comes to us to bring us into his presence. These prayers procure what the one praying seeks—because of Christ we encounter God in our prayers through the Holy Spirit. What greater refuge is there against false teachers and all that assails the Church than God himself?

3. *Keep yourselves in the love of God* (v. 21). “Keep” is the primary imperative of this sentence. It is *by* building one another up in the faith and praying in the Spirit that we keep ourselves in the love of God. But what is “the love of God”? Glancing at a few commentaries on this verse reveals that “the love of God” is a notoriously ambiguous phrase.

Jude’s meaning could be, essentially, “Continue loving God.” “The love of God” in this case refers to our love for God. Such a command is straightforward and understandable. It would be odd for Jude to say anything different to a group of Christians assaulted by the threats and dangers of false teachers. “Don’t go after them,” Jude says to us, “continue loving God instead.” Such a reading is pregnant with application for us, who often find our love for God wanting.

But Jude could also mean something like, “Stay within God’s good graces;” or, “Make sure you avoid doing something that could jeopardize God’s love for you.” Such a reading should provoke many questions. Can I ever really be “outside” of God’s love? Can I possess God’s love at one moment only to lose it later? I thought nothing “in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39). Furthermore, Jude has already called the Church “kept,” and that “for [or, by] Jesus Christ” (v. 2). And he will repeat himself: Christ “is able to keep [the Church] from stumbling” (v. 24). So, do we keep ourselves, or does Jesus keep us? And if the answer is simply “yes,” how do we account for this paradox?

Thomas Manton, following the Augustinian-Thomist tradition of theological reflection on the relationship of God’s grace and human responsibility, helps us to understand this paradox:

In perseverance there is a concurrence of our care and diligence [with God’s keeping of us]: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12–13). The main work is God’s: “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion” (Phil 1:6); and the same Jesus that is the “author” is also “finisher” (Heb 12:2). The deeper [implanting] of the habit [of perseverance], the defense of it, the growth and perfection of it, the ability to act, is all from God: “The God of all grace...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Pet 5:10). But yet there is a concurrence of our care and endeavors. A child in the womb is nourished by the mother, lives by the life of the mother, feeds by

the food of the mother; but a child born lives a more distinct and separate life of its own, though it still be under the mother's care and provision. So it is with us after grace is received. We have a power to act and do what is necessary for the preservation of the spiritual life. Well, then, let us not neglect the means [of preservation]. You must not lie upon the bed of ease, and think that God must do all. He does all indeed, *but in us and by us*. Idle wishes will do us no good as long as our hands refuse to labor.¹

Whichever interpretation of “the love of God” we take, we cannot overlook the clear imperative: *keep yourselves* in the love of God. Whether this command refers to keeping our own hearts warm with love for God, or keeping ourselves within the circle of God's love, which is Jesus himself, we must exert effort. We must kindle the fire of love for God in our own hearts. We also must continue trusting in Jesus, even when we doubt or are tempted to deny him, because apart from him we have no share in God's saving love. We need this command to keep ourselves in the love of God because we are constantly assailed by temptation, sufferings, negligence, and rebellion. The Church in Jude's day needed to keep itself; otherwise, the false teachers would lead it astray. The same is true of the Church in our day, and of us individually.

4. *Wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ* (v. 21). Waiting is, in Jude's mind, an activity. Along with prayer and building each other up, it is an activity by which we keep ourselves in the love of God. In one sense, Jesus redeemed us to wait for his second coming: “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to *wait* for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes 1:9–10; emphasis mine). Christians have already received mercy in Jesus—without his mercy, they wouldn't be Christians at all. But the mercy that Jude has in view is the mercy shown to us on the day of God's wrath, when the Lamb himself shelters us from his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness and brings us into eternal glory. The hope of such mercy, which we can confidently expect in Christ, influences how we live today, chiefly by keeping us in the love of God.

5. *Have mercy on those who doubt* (v. 22). As those who will receive mercy, we are commanded to have mercy on those who doubt, specifically by urging them to return to the truth and thereby “snatching them out of the fire.” As those who hope in the mercy of Christ, we should have mercy on those who are straying from Christ. We have responsibilities to one another, to help each other stay within the sphere of God's love.

6. *Hate the garment stained by the flesh* (v. 23). Finally, we are commanded to hate “even the garment stained by the flesh.” Jude here hints at the kind of life Christians ought to live—lives of purity, holiness, and integrity. Hating the garment stained by the flesh means abhorring anything that could draw one away from the Spirit and toward the flesh; that is, away from the things of God and toward the affections and pursuits of the world. This is especially important to remember in the act of having mercy on those who doubt by pulling them out of the fire. Christian love compels us to associate with those who are straying from Christ, even if they are

¹ Thomas Manton, “An Exposition, with Notes, Upon the Epistle of Jude,” in *The Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 2020), 341. (If you are confused by the language of “concurrency,” search “Ligonier divine concurrence” for a succinct and helpful explanation.) The emphasis in the second-to-last sentence is my own.

involving themselves in sinful behaviors. Jude exhorts the churches to hate such sinful behaviors and not become involved in them, even as they mercifully reach out to those who are straying.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism 37*

How does the Holy Spirit help us? The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, comforts us, guides us, gives us spiritual gifts and the desire to obey God; and he enables us to pray and to understand God's Word.

Jude Connection: We will be helped to live in the Spirit if we know who the Spirit is and what he does. This catechism question offers a succinct explanation of the Spirit's work in all those who belong to Christ.

Memory Verse: Galatians 6:8

“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Jude Connection: In today's passage, Jude is calling the churches to the life of the Spirit. Paul does the same in Galatians 6:8. The image of “sowing to the Spirit” may help students imagine what life in the Spirit really looks like.

Discuss

Introduction

1. Do you remember what Jude has said so far in his letter?
2. What do you think Jude intends to do in these verses of his letter?
3. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. What predictions did the apostles make concerning false teachers? (See 2 Pet 2 for help.)
2. Why might it be helpful to the churches to remember the apostles' predictions? *How does remembering and trusting the word of God help you in your walk with Christ?*
3. How does Jude describe the false teachers in this section? (Look at v. 19 in particular.)
4. What instructions does Jude give to the churches for how they ought to respond to the false teachers?
5. What is the main command that Jude gives? (Look at the beginning of v. 21.) What does it mean to “keep yourself in the love of God”? *How do you do so?*
6. What does it mean to “build yourselves up in your most holy faith”? (See Eph 4:11–16 for help.) *How do you build up yourself and others in Christ? Why is this important?*
7. What does it mean to “pray in the Holy Spirit”? (See Eph 2:18 for help.) *How do you pray in the Spirit? What can you do to grow in your prayer life? Why is it important to pray amid suffering?*
8. What does it mean to “wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life”? (See 1 Thes 1:9–10 for help.) *How do you actively wait for the coming of Christ? How would doing so change your life, your thoughts, or your attitudes? How does the hope of mercy undergird all of Jude's other commands in this section?*
9. According to Jude, what does it mean to “have mercy on those who doubt”? *Do you have opportunities to show mercy in this way? Why is it important to “save others”?*
10. What does it mean to “hate even the garment stained by the flesh”? *Do you have this attitude toward sin and temptation? How can you cultivate this attitude, and how might that change your conduct?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today's discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today's discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Ask God for encouragement and mercy to remain steadfast in suffering, especially suffering brought on by false teachers.
- Ask the Lord to give you the Spirit in greater measure (Lk 11:1–13) so that you can live in the Spirit and bring forth the Spirit's fruits.
- *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
Some ideas: What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God's help in your life? How do your friends need God's help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

8. The Eternal God Keeps Us Blameless (Jude 24–25)

Wednesday Bible Study // November 15, 2023

Summary

Outline

- I. God Deserves Glory Because of His Work (vv. 24–25a)
 - A. He is able to keep us from stumbling.
 - B. He is able to present us blameless before the presence of his glory.
 - C. He is able to give us great joy.
 - D. He is our Savior through Jesus Christ.
- II. God Deserves Glory Because of His Person (v. 25b)
 - A. He is glorious and majestic.
 - B. He has dominion and authority over all things.
 - C. He has always, does, and will always possess all these things we ascribe to him.

Commentary

Jude has spent his letter warning the churches of the danger of false teachers. He has also given them important responsibilities, as we saw in the last passage. After all this, the Church may be fearful of false teachers and may feel the burden of their responsibilities. So, Jude aims to fill them with comfort and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. He ascribes praise to God for his preserving, sanctifying work and his sovereign person. We'll divide this final passage into two sections: God's work (what does God do?) and God's person (who is this God?).

According to Jude, God does four things that are relevant to the discussion:

1. *He keeps the Church from stumbling.* The Christian life is often likened to a “walk” (e.g., Eph 4:1) and even sometimes a run, or a “race” (Heb 12:1). In each of these contexts, stumbling is possible, so that one no longer makes forward movement or is even unable to finish one's course. Jude uses this analogy to reassure the Church that even while they work hard to keep themselves in the love of God and resist the influence of the false teachers, they can have confidence that God keeps them from stumbling by his grace. This underlying promise helps disciples continue following Christ steadfastly and courageously. They know that God will not let them be carried away by false teachers, even when their circumstances seem otherwise, because he keeps all those who come to him (Jn 6:37, 17:9–11).

Jude here echoes his earlier declaration that the Church is “kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1). The theme of God's preservation of the Church, then, is important to the thread of Jude's argument. God's steadfast love for his people and his refusal to let them go astray from Christ is comforting beyond measure. These suffering churches need to hear of such love.

2. *He presents the Church blameless before the presence of his glory.* God not only keeps the Church, but he does so for the purpose of presenting us “blameless before the presence of his glory” (v. 24). It would make sense for Jude to say that we are barely kept from stumbling on account of our sin and our suffering. But Jude does not say that we make it by the skin of our teeth; rather, God preserves us *blameless*. How can this be? It is only by the grace of Jesus Christ, who washes his bride to beautify her. “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25–27). Jesus “nourishes and cherishes” the Church (Eph 5:29). He died for her, paying the full penalty for her sins and providing her with his own spotless righteousness. He poured out his Spirit on her so that she could be progressively cleansed and made more holy. On the last day, he will have kept his own and will present them to himself in radiant splendor, perfected and washed in his own blood.

3. *He gives the Church great joy.* Notice that God not only preserves the Church from stumbling and not only keeps her blameless but even ensures that she receives these benefits with great joy! Joy is often not associated with spiritual things. In fact, many believe that speaking of Jesus requires a dour, solemn expression. Reverence is certainly good, and we should never disregard the holiness of our savior. And yet the great salvation he has worked for us and given to us should compel us to rejoice. We receive the Spirit in Christ, and that same Spirit produces the fruit of joy in us (Gal 5:22). Christians should rejoice from the heart in view of what Christ has done for them.

4. *He saves the Church through Jesus Christ.* Finally, God is our Savior in and by Jesus Christ, the God-man. Only one who was true God and true man could save sinful human beings. He had to satisfy God’s justice as a man, and bring us to God as God.

Next, we observe who God is. It is fitting that Jude should end in this way. He has focused on the uncertainties, worries, and tribulations of the Church for the entirety of the letter. But he chooses to leave them with a vision of the grandeur of their God, who transcends all the uncertainties of this life. We too should cultivate this heavenly orientation. We become transfixed with earthly things, but the direction of our lives in Christ and the direction of the biblical witness is toward heaven, where God is, whom we will gaze upon face to face forever. This, too, is the substance of the Christian life: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:1–4). Who is this God whom Jude turns his hearers’ attention to last?

1. *He is glorious and majestic.* Jude ascribes to God “glory” and “majesty.” None of the ascriptions in this final verse add anything to God; they are merely recognitions of what is true about his nature. God is by nature glorious: he is resplendent, his perfections shine like a blinding light (1 Tim 6:16), he deserves the praise of the entire universe because his glory is unparalleled in its magnitude by any created thing (Ps 148). God is also majestic: there is a

beautiful quality to his glory, one that draws and allures righteous observers (Ps 27:4) and yet terrifies the wicked (Jn 3:19–20). This description of God should impress upon us that he is categorically different from creatures. He possesses an intrinsic beauty and brightness and splendor that creatures cannot and do not possess.

2. *He has authority and dominion over all things.* These ascriptions are significant given Jude’s repeated insistence that the false teachers have rebelled against authority. For Jude’s part, he recognizes the authority and dominion that God possesses; he does not place himself above God in terms of authority. God possesses authority and dominion in a twofold manner. First, he possesses these by virtue of creation. All things are his because he made them; he rules over them because without his sustaining them in being, they would cease to exist. Second, he possesses authority and dominion by virtue of redemption. Jesus Christ was “made... a little lower than the heavenly beings” in his incarnation and was subsequently “given... dominion over the works of [God’s] hands” in his resurrection (Ps 8:5–6; cf. Eph 1:20–23). It is as if God has come into possession of the universe *twice*. If there was any doubt that he has authority and dominion over all things, including and especially his Church, these observations should confirm the truth.

3. *He has always, does, and will always possess all these attributes.* Finally, God is not fickle. It is not as if he can have possession of these attributes for a time only to lose them. He is eternally the same. “There is no variation or shadow due to change” in God (Jas 1:17). Therefore, the Church can rest in God’s eternal glory and majesty and his everlasting rule over all things. No number of false teachers can jeopardize God’s glory and sovereignty. Here, then, is an anchor for the hope of the Church. The God who never changes has set his love on them, is keeping them, and will reign eternally, finally defeating evil and rebellion by his Son.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism 2*

What is God? God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will.

Jude Connection: Jude leaves his suffering audience with the only thing that will sustain them through suffering: a grand vision of God. Knowing God in terms of his attributes and his nature may sound dry and abstract, but it is of utmost practical relevance.

Memory Verse: **Jude 24–25**

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Discuss

Introduction

1. Do you remember what Jude has said so far in his letter?
2. What do you think Jude intends to do in these final verses?
3. What words, concepts, images, or metaphors stand out to you? Which confuse you?

Into the Text

1. Who is Jude talking about in these final verses? Who is “him” in v. 24?
2. What does God do for the Church, according to Jude?
3. What does it mean that God “keeps us from stumbling”? (See Phil 1:6 for help.) *How do you think God keeps us from stumbling? How should we respond to the fact that God keeps us? Why might this encourage a community suffering from false teaching?*
4. What does it mean that God “presents us blameless before the presence of his glory”? (See Eph 5:25–27 for help.) *Is it surprising to you that God can present us blameless? How should we respond to this fact?*
5. What does it mean that God gives us “great joy”? *Do you associate “great joy” with God and his work to save you? Why should God’s love and kindness toward us produce great joy in us? Do you have great joy in God?*
6. What does it mean that God is “glorious” and “majestic”? (See Ps 148 for help.) *Does God deserve the praise of the universe? Does he receive every praise of your heart?*
7. What does it mean that God has all “dominion and authority”? (See Eph 1:20–23 for help.) *Knowing that all dominion and authority belong to God, in what ways do you live as if God does not have dominion and authority? How would your life change if you were to submit to God’s universal dominion?*
8. What does it mean that God is the same “before all time and now and forever”? (See Jas 1:17 for help.) *How does God’s unchangeability encourage the suffering Church? Why should it encourage you? (See Malachi 3:6 for help.)*
9. *Could your life be more centered on the praise and glory of God? How so? What hardships in your life make it hard to be set on the praise of God, and how does God offer grace in the midst of those hardships?*

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today’s discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today’s discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?

Pray

- Praise God for his glory and majesty!
- Thank God for his lavish grace through Jesus Christ to keep you and present you blameless with great joy.
- *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
Some ideas: What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God's help in your life? How do your friends need God's help? Which non-believers are you praying for?

9. God's Majesty and Christ's Grace Meet Our Needs (Jude 1–25)

Wednesday Bible Study // November 29, 2023

Summary

The Main Idea of the Book of Jude

The Church has received a glorious salvation, but false teachers want to lead believers away from Christ. Christians must be vigilant to remain in Christ, even while Christ keeps and protects his people during such threats.

Major Themes in the Book of Jude

1. **The Glories of Salvation.** From his original purpose (v. 3) to the way that he narrates salvation, Jude presents a picture of salvation that should fill us with joy, wonder, gratitude, and a sense of freedom.
2. **False Teachers.** Jude writes to help churches remain faithful despite the influence of false teachers. False teachers had infiltrated these churches and led people away from Christ, and Jude spends most of his time describing the evil character and teaching of these people.
3. **Divine Grace and Human Responsibility.** One of the most puzzling parts of the letter to many is Jude's insistence that God keeps his own (vv. 1, 24) and that we must keep ourselves (v. 21). How do God's keeping of us and our keeping of ourselves go together? The simplest way to understand the relationship of divine grace and human responsibility is by pondering Phil 2:12–13: "Therefore, my beloved...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." We have a responsibility to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Following Jesus involves effort to resist temptation, grow in holiness, and do good works. But the source of and motivation for our striving is the work of God in us. What is the nature of this work? It is "both to *will* and to *work* for his good pleasure." That is, both the inclination to do good and the acting of that good will is the fruit of God's grace.
4. **The Authority of Jesus Christ Through His Word.** Finally, authority is a massive theme throughout Jude's letter. Jesus is called "Master" (v. 4), and to God is ascribed "dominion and authority" (v. 25). The false teachers are consistently characterized as those who reject authority. True authority is vested in God. He is the source of all authority (Rom 13:1). We, as his creatures by virtue of our creation and his children by virtue of our redemption, should be subject to him (1 Pet 5:6). On this side of the cross and resurrection, God's authority is concentrated in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph

1:20–23). Jesus rules over all, and in the Church he rules especially by his word (the Scriptures) and Spirit.

Memorize

Catechism Question: *New City Catechism* 30

What is faith in Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ is acknowledging the truth of everything that God has revealed in his Word, trusting in him, and also receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Jude Connection: Jude was written to believers, but many of your students are not believers yet. Take some time in this final small group meeting to instruct your students on what it means to trust in Christ.

Memory Verse: Jude 24–25

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Discuss

Introduction

1. How do you feel you've grown in Christ this semester?
2. What themes, verses, or teachings in Jude were most helpful to you?
3. How has this portion of God's word helped you to trust in Christ and love him more?

Into the Text

1. How does Jude use *theology* (teaching about God) to inform the churches' lives and comfort them in their suffering? *Have you seen through Jude how theology is practical?*
2. Revisit verses or passages that you did not get to discuss this semester.
3. Review the high points of Jude's letter for your group.
4. Review the ways in which you found Jude's letter instructive and encouraging for your life circumstances.

Takeaways

1. Were you challenged or convicted by today's discussion? If so, how?
2. Were you encouraged or helped by today's discussion? If so, how?
3. What phrase, theme, insight, or encouragement will you take from this passage of Jude and think over in the coming days?
4. How do you hope to grow in your walk with Christ next semester?

Pray

- Ask God to bless the reading and study of his word even as the semester draws to a close.
 - Ask God to complete the work of grace he's begun this semester through his word.
 - *Share personal prayer requests with one another.*
- Some ideas:** What sins are you fighting? How do you want to grow in Christ? How else do you need God's help in your life? How do your friends need God's help? Which non-believers are you praying for?