

Jude: Living in the Truth

Part Two

Jude 5-19¹

When Shelly and I got engaged, it was over Christmas vacation after we had graduated from college. She had gone to New York to be a nanny for Joan Lunden, from Good Morning America, and I had gone to the Los Angeles area to be a youth pastor. We were literally living on opposite sides of the country. During Christmas, she got some time off to go home to Denver, so I took some time off and flew out, surprised her, and proposed, and she said yes! Two days later I flew back to LA, and the day after that she flew back to New York. We made plans for me to visit her in New York in February, and I planned to bring out the ring for her.

I didn't know anything about diamonds or jewelry, but I knew I couldn't afford to go to Zales or Kay Jewelers (and Jarrod's didn't exist). A friend of mine suggested I go to the Jewelry District in downtown Los Angeles, where I could buy directly from the dealers and skip the retail prices. But if I didn't know what I was doing, I'd get fleeced!

So I began doing my homework and studied what to look for in a diamond. There are four C's - cut, color, clarity, and carat. You need to find the best of each of those. I learned what to look for - blemishes, inclusions like feathers or clouds, dark spots, poor cuts - there's all kinds of things. Then I learned the best settings for the stone. Armed with all my information, I went into this huge building that was full of booths of diamond vendors. I found one that had the best selection and seemed the least pushy, and began looking at diamonds. I looked closely at each stone, and finally picked out the diamond, and then I picked out the setting and ring it would go in, and talked him down to a price I could afford. Then the stone and ring needed to go to the back of the building, where a craftsman would place the stone in the setting. He offered to just send them to the back *for* me, but I knew that between the front and the back they could switch my stone for a cheaper one, so I had the dealer take the diamond and the ring, and put them in an envelope in front of me and seal it. I then signed my name across the seal, and it was sent to the craftsman at the back of the store. I went back and waited. He received my envelope, and he opened it in front of me, and began placing the stone in the setting.

¹ Resources used for this series:

- The Letters of John and Jude (The Daily Study Bible Series), William Barclay
- 1 & 2 Peter, Jude: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition, Daniel G. Powers
- Hebrews through Revelation: Beacon Bible Commentary, Ralph Earle, Ed.
- More Hard Sayings of the New Testament, Peter H. Davids
- James, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude: The Communicator's Commentary, Paul A. Cedar
- 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition, David A. Case and David W. Holdren

When that was done, I took it back to the dealer to pay him – in cash. I also made him put *this* on the receipt, in writing, and sign it: that if I took it to three certified appraisers, if any of the appraisals came back less than what I paid, he would refund me the difference. I then took it to two appraisers who both appraised it for at least \$1,000 more than I paid for it. I didn't bother going to a third. Once all that was done, I took it with me to New York that February and gave it to Shelly, and here we are, happily ever after.

Why am I telling you that story? Because it actually applies to the passage we are looking at today from the New Testament letter of Jude in our sermon series, "Living the Truth; studying the words of Jude."

It's a small book of the Bible; it only has one chapter, made up of 25 verses. Part of the reason we are doing this is because Jude is very closely related in content to Peter's letters – especially 2nd Peter, which you will see today. But more than that, this little letter is jam-packed with some wonderful and powerful words for us today on how to live a truly genuine Christian life – telling us what a true Christian is.

I encourage you to open your Bible or Bible app to Jude, verses 5-19 – that's the passage we are going to be looking at. It's a long passage, so I'm not going to take the time to read – I trust you to do that. But I do intend to walk us through it, to clarify some of what is being said, and to show how it can apply to our Christian lives and situation today.

I mentioned that there are similarities between Jude and 2nd Peter – this section is where you really see that. In fact, if 2nd Peter was written in the mid-60's AD, then Jude was written no later than AD 70. There's no question that one of them borrowed the teaching from the other; probably Jude borrowed from Peter.

Most likely Jude's audience was facing the same issues of false teaching that Peter addressed, so Jude is re-emphasizing or re-using or re-cycling Peter's teaching by rewinding, repeating, and reminding. Except Jude is much more harsh about it; so buckle up and listen up.

Now before we jump in, let me just point out a couple of comments about Jude's first verse in this section – take a look at verse five in your Bible. Jude says, "I want to remind you of something you already know very well." Remember earlier in verse 3 he talked about the faith delivered once and for all. That's what he's referring to, and that's really all that us preachers do. Preachers don't preach *new* information – if they do, you'd better be suspicious! Preachers only preach what the Bible already states. Most of the time, we are reminding people of what people are often forgetting. Most of the time we are just confronting people with what people already know. We might apply it to new circumstances, but the truth doesn't change. That's why God's Word can speak to us during a pandemic and quarantine as well as it can speak to us in times of health and wealth. The *same* truth applies to a Christian in the US today as it applies to a Christian in China whose church has been burned down as it applies to a Christian in Iran who is being tortured for professing Christ as it applies to a Christian in Europe who's being ridiculed for believing in God.

You've heard *this* message before – in fact, you heard this as recently as last month when we studied it in 2nd Peter. So don't be bored or think I'm just recycling old sermons; rejoice

that you have opportunity to be reminded of the truth you should already know! That's what Jude was doing here.

Now, he's warning people of some false Christians and dangerous teaching, and warning us not to be like them; we ought to take heed, too.

First, he...

1. Rewinds

It's like Jude is taking Peter's message in 2nd Peter and rewinding so they can hear it again. Not only that, he rewinds the minds of the readers so that he can remind them of stories they already know – Jude gives three examples of God's punishment on disobedience from the Old Testament. These punishments – and the reason for them – haven't changed. Even though Jesus died and rose from the dead and we've trusted him for our new life, that doesn't mean we won't face punishment if we disregard the truth or disobey him. The truth, as well as the consequences of disobedience, haven't changed. In other words, if we are not actively living out our faith, knowing it, obeying it, and sharing it with others, then we'd better pay attention to the warnings of these Old Testament examples. Let me explain them quickly:

First, he rewinds for us the story of the Exodus. It's an amazing story of God's deliverance and salvation. It was the greatest miracle of the Old Testament and it foreshadowed in every way what Christ did for us once and for all.

But despite the fact that the Israelites were a part of this amazing miracle, they *still* disobeyed and turned their backs on God. And God destroyed those who didn't maintain their faith. They'd been saved, and yet ended up being destroyed.

The second rewind is a story about angels who turned their back on God. I mentioned this before when we talked about this in 2nd Peter, but Jude is referring to Jewish tradition and some important spiritual books, but that were not Scripture. In this passage he refers to the "Book of Enoch" and to a book called "The Assumption of Moses." Don't think it's a bad thing that he's quoting something that isn't Scripture – he's referring to something that his readers were familiar with in order to make the point. Without going into details, Jude's point is this: that if even the angels, who are secure in the presence of God, can turn their backs and forfeit their positions of authority, then we'd better make sure we remain close to Christ.

Finally, Jude rewinds the Old Testament story of Sodom and Gomorrah – a story that for the Jews was a prime example of how horrible the consequences are for sexual sins – sins that Jude says were obvious in the behavior of the false Christians among them. If Sodom and Gomorrah were not spared, then neither will these Christians, and neither will *we* – if we give in to the selfish and lustful ambitions of sexual depravity and license.

Jude reminds them and us that we *must* live by our faith and tell others about this faith.

"We are called to live by faith...Active faith is the primary part of our salvation at any level of spiritual development. We must be serious about teaching others to embrace the faith

that was once delivered and to trust that it is still good and fresh.”² If you are a believer in Jesus, you “must continue to live in faith and obedience. The angels who refused to keep their positions of honor in heaven are now being kept for punishment and judgment by God.”³ The same thing is true for you and me: Christians should not assume they will be kept by Christ for an eternal reward when they refuse to keep his commands.⁴

The next thing that Jude does is...

2. Repeat

He’s repeating what Peter said, and you can see it here in verses 8-13. Jude calls these false Christians “dreamers.” That’s a reference from Deuteronomy 13:1-5, which told the Israelites how to deal with false prophets and “dreamers” – meaning people who just made up empty stories and tried to pass it off as God’s Word.

Then he uses a story about Michael arguing with Satan about the body of Moses. There’s *a lot* going on in that reference that we just don’t have time to cover, but it is fascinating. Satan thought he had a claim to Moses’ body and planned to desecrate it, but Michael had been dispatched by God to retrieve Moses’ body. He knew Satan was lying. Yet even Michael didn’t disrespect Satan; he simply said, “The Lord rebuke you.” If you want more info on that story, send me a DM or email.

But the point that Jude is making in these verses is that these false Christians are ignorant, immoral people filled with pride and lust, and were slanderers who disrespect God and spiritual authorities and even disrespected pastors and church leaders. And that’s a trap we can fall into as well. Let this be a warning for you!

The problem was, these people had slipped in, participating in their communion services and potlucks, and nobody seemed to mind. But Jude said they were like “hidden rocks,” like rocks below the surface of the water that you don’t see until they are shipwrecked. You might like these people, and they might seem appealing and charismatic, but your faith will be destroyed by them.

It’s so important, it’s worth hearing it again, even though you already know it! So Jude rewinds, he repeats, and he calls us to...

3. Remember

In verses 14-19, Jude reminds his readers of what has already been written about and said: that (1) prophecy of the Old Testament, (2) the traditions, all the way through to (3) the teachings of the Apostles have all already declared what happens to these false Christians, and what will happen to us, if we don’t take our Christian life seriously and obey what we’ve been told and learned. What Jude is referring to is what we now call the Bible – the Old and New Testaments. Everything is all written there; we **MUST** know what it says and

² David A. Case and David W. Holdren, 366.

³ Powers, 275

⁴ *ibid*

live it out, my friends. These false Christians were in it for their own interests – just like Cain. They were in it for the money they could get out of it – just like Balaam. And instead of trusting God, they did things their own way – just like Korah. All of those are Old Testament examples of people who forfeited their relationship with God.

Jude describes people who don't obey, including the fact that they grumble and complain to anyone who will listen, especially grumbling and complaining against those in spiritual authority.

Now, it makes sense that these false Christians were *condemned* for being arrogant and thinking that they were smarter and had more spiritual insight than anyone else. It made sense that they were condemned for committing freely and openly all kinds of sexual sins. It made sense that they were condemned for making up a gospel that said people would get rich if they gave them all their money. It made sense that they were condemned for teaching things that were 180 degrees different than Scripture. But *now* Jude says that they are even condemned for grumbling and complaining and bad-mouthing their leaders! But then, that's exactly what the Israelites did who, even though they had been saved from slavery, were destroyed in the desert because of grumbling and complaining, which showed they were selfish and didn't trust that God was going to take care of them. So even though they had been saved, they didn't make it into the Promised Land. I'm going to quote Jesus here: For him who has ears to hear – let him listen!

Remember my story about Shelly's ring? *Here's where that applies:* I had to do my homework and study and know what to look for – flaws that would normally be hidden in the diamond to the untrained eye. If I hadn't prepared, I would've spent a lot of money on something that proved to be of little value. *That's* what Jude is saying: Christian! Do the work! Obey Jesus. Be very, very familiar with God's Word! Know what to look for, so you don't buy into something that ends up having no value at all in the end. It's just like the Apostle Paul said:

"I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.
Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified."
(1 Corinthians 9:27, nlt)

If you don't keep yourself close to Jesus and obey him, the investment you've made in your life will end up without much value because of wrong thinking and bad Christianity.

Let me apply this to our current situation. We are now in our fifth month of quarantine and not being able to worship together. If you are like me, you really don't like it – you don't like not being able to see everyone, you don't like not being able to visit friends and family in the hospital, you don't like that your dear friends and your friends' family members have died from this virus. If you're like me, you don't like wearing a mask and not being able to see people's faces! None of this is fun, that's for sure. But – it's not about me; it's about trying to protect those around me. Listen: don't fall into the same trap as these people that Jude describes. Don't start thinking just about yourself, don't start grumbling and complaining. And don't give in to sins that you'd normally avoid.

Make sure you stay close to Jesus, spending time in prayer and making sure you are regularly reading God's Word, to keep you and the people around you safe. It keeps you

close to Jesus, and it keeps you from causing problems for other people, too! In fact, you will help introduce others to Jesus.

Pray