

Contend for the Faith

God's Attitude towards False Teachers

Jude 5-7

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God's Attitude towards False Teachers

Scripture

The brief but important letter of Jude deals with the subject of false teaching, which is the greatest danger to the Church of Jesus Christ today.

As we study Jude 5-7 today, I want you to notice God's attitude towards false teachers. Let's read Jude 5-7:

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 5-7)

Introduction

Throughout recorded history the Church has always had to deal with false teaching and apostasy. Every generation has had to contend for the faith. And our generation is no different.

A. *The Characteristics of False Teaching*

But what are the characteristics of false teaching? The Scriptures teach us that false teaching is essentially a series of denials.

1. False Teaching Is a Denial of Divine Power

Second Timothy 3:4-5 says that people will be “treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure ra-

ther than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. . . .”

2. False Teaching Is a Denial of Christ

Second Peter 2:1 says that false prophets will even be “denying the Master who bought them. . . .”

3. False Teaching Is a Denial of Christ’s Return

Second Peter 3:3-4 says that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.’”

4. False Teaching Is a Denial of the Faith

First Timothy 4:1 says that “in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”

5. False Teaching Is a Denial of Sound Teaching

Second Timothy 4:3-4 says that “the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

6. False Teaching Is a Denial of Sanctification

Second Timothy 3:1-2 says that “in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy. . . .”

7. False Teaching Is a Denial of Christian Liberty

First Timothy 4:3 teaches that Christian liberty will be turned into legalism. False teachers will “forbid marriage

and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. . . .”

8. False Teaching Is a Denial of Morals

Jude 18-19 says that “in the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”

9. False Teaching Is a Denial of Biblical Authority

Second Timothy 3:8 says that false teachers “also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.”

Remarkably, these denials come from those who profess to be Christian teachers. And there are already many so-called Christian churches that exhibit these denials in their teaching.

B. The Cautions against False Teaching

Jude’s entire letter is a warning against false teaching. Jude wanted to write a letter “about our common salvation” (v. 3a). However, word reached him about false teaching that was already creeping in to the church—and that within one generation after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, Jude “found it necessary to write appealing to [believers] to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3b).

After stating the purpose for his letter (v.3), Jude gave a description of false teachers in verse 4.

Lesson

Now, in verses 5-7, Jude described God’s attitude towards false teachers. He used three illustrations to show God’s judgment on false teachers.

I. God Judges Unbelieving Individuals (5)

First, God judges unbelieving individuals.

Jude said in verse 5, **“Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”**

Jude’s illustration of God’s judgment on the Israelites was something that was very familiar to the Christians to whom he wrote. Perhaps you remember the story too.

God’s people were in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. At the end of that time God raised up Moses. He delivered the people of God out of the land of Egypt through a series of miraculous plagues. The Israelites left Egypt and God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to the Promised Land. Eventually, they came to the Red Sea and the Israelites realized that Pharaoh’s army was pursuing them. They felt trapped. The Red Sea was before them, and the Egyptians were behind them. But God miraculously parted the Red Sea before them so that they were able to pass through on dry ground. And after the Israelites had safely crossed over, God let the Red Sea return to its normal levels, thereby drowning the entire Egyptian army. A short while later God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. God ensured that the Israelites had food and water on their trip.

But, in spite of seeing first-hand many miracles, signs and wonders, the Israelites turned their backs on God. They became apostates. And God destroyed them.

A. *The Reason for the Retribution*

Now, what was the reason for the retribution? Why did God destroy those who did not believe?

The account of the terrible destruction is recorded in Numbers 13-14. God had miraculously delivered the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. The Israelites had seen first-hand God’s mighty

power. He had guided them safely to the edge of the Promised Land. Twelve spies were sent to spy out the land before the final invasion. Ten spies, however, “brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, ‘The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height’” (Numbers 13:32).

But two spies, Joshua and Caleb, said, “Let’s go at once and take the land, because God is on our side!”

Unfortunately, the people took the side of the ten spies and believed the bad report. The people did not believe that God was powerful and able to deliver them—in spite of all that they had witnessed about God’s miraculous power. Numbers 14:26-38 summarizes the rebellion of the Israelites and the judgment of God:

²⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷ “How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹ But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³² But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ ³⁵ I, the Lord, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.”

³⁶ And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by

bringing up a bad report about the land—³⁷ the men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the Lord.³⁸ Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive.

God's judgment on these unbelieving individuals is a vivid reminder of what happens to those who have heard and seen God's mighty power, and still fail to believe in him.

B. The Reason for the Reminder

But, what was the reason for the reminder? Jude said, **“Now I want to remind you. . . .”**

The reason for the reminder is that we—like the people of old—are so apt to forget. We constantly need to be reminded of what the Word of God teaches us.

Wouldn't it be great if we were able to remember everything we read? Wouldn't it be great if we all had photographic memories? Unfortunately, we don't have photographic memories and we don't remember everything we read. That is why we need to remind ourselves regularly of the truths that are contained in God's Word.

Years ago I attended a Men's Weekend Retreat. There were about 100 men from about a dozen churches at the retreat. The speaker was well-known in the denomination. I remember being a little surprised to hear him say just after he was introduced, “Gentlemen, if you have been a Christian for more than a few years, none of what I am going to say this weekend will be new to you. All I am going to do this weekend is remind you of the glorious truths of the gospel.” And that is what he did. Because he knew that we constantly need to be reminded of the truth.

II. God Judges Rebellious Angels (6)

Second, God judges rebellious angels.

Jude said in verse 6, **“And the angels who did not stay**

within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”

Jude did not specifically identify the angels. Therefore, it is likely that his readers were already familiar with the details of the angels' rebellion.

Kistemaker and Hendriksen note that God did not spare even the mighty creatures whom he had given powerful positions, principalities, and authorities (cf. Ephesians 1:21; 3:10). God also gave them tasks that included serving him as messengers (cf. Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:7). However, when these angels rebelled against him, he punished them.

Jude noted that **“the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority.”** In the parallel passage Peter merely states that the angels sinned (2 Peter 2:4). We know little about the **position of authority** held by the angels (cf. Daniel 10:12-21). Scripture does not reveal how these angels lost their status. But it is likely that they refused to obey God's command because they wanted to be like him (cf. Genesis 3:5; Luke 4:6).

Jude noted that the angels **“left their proper dwelling.”** They resided in heavenly splendor, but when they rebelled against God, they **left their proper dwelling**. The result is that God **“has kept [the rebellious angels] in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”** This does not mean that all the rebellious angels are locked up in a certain place. If this were the case, the earth would not be plagued by demons. The picture Jude conveys is that the rebellious angels are living in spiritual darkness and are chained to their sentence of divine judgment from which they can never escape.

I understand that people can and do rebel against God. After all, we are sinful by nature and by practice. But, it is inconceivable to me that angels, who dwelt in the presence of God, would rebel against their Creator. Yet, they apparently sided with Lucifer and rebelled against the God of glory who created them.

III. God Judges Sinful Communities (7)

And third, God judges sinful communities.

Jude said in verse 7, **“just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”**

Jude reminded his readers about **Sodom and Gomorrah**. These two communities **indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire**. In other words, they were given over to sexual perversion of all kinds, including homosexuality.

Genesis 18-19 gives us the sordid details of these two sinful communities. Let me read Genesis 19:1-11 so that you can see in graphic detail why God judged **Sodom and Gomorrah**:

¹ The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth ² and said, “My lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the town square.” ³ But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” ⁶ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸ Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” ⁹ But they said, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them

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and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

The sinful communities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** were severely punished for rebelling against God's created order. God destroyed them with sulfur and fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24). This destruction was given to **serve as an example** of the future **punishment of eternal fire** that awaits sinful communities.

Conclusion

Jude gave these three illustrations to show God's judgment on false teachers and apostates.

What is that leads people to abandon the truth and embrace false teaching? The New Testament gives several reasons why people abandon the truth of God's Word.

A. *Persecution*

Some people abandon the truth because of persecution. They are not willing to pay the price. They want "fire insurance," but they don't want to pay the premiums. They want to go to heaven, but they don't want to live for Christ here on earth.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:9-12, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."

Why will the love of many grow cold? Persecution.

B. *False Teachers*

False teachers cause people to abandon the truth. One of Sa-

tan's strategies is to use false teaching to lead people astray. The passage just mentioned in Matthew 24 says, "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" (Matthew 24:11).

C. Temptation

Temptation causes some people to abandon the truth. They get to the place where they receive the gospel intellectually, but then Satan tempts them and draws them away by their lusts (Ephesians 2:2-3).

D. Worldliness

Worldliness causes some people to abandon the truth. The apostle Paul said that Demas was "in love with this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). He therefore abandoned Paul and the truth.

E. Religion

Religion causes people to abandon the truth. Some people have just enough religion to keep themselves from embracing the truth. Hebrews 6:4-5 says that such people "have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come." They have tasted but they have not eaten. Their involvement in Christianity is superficial. It is just enough to make them satisfied, but they are not truly converted to Christ.

These are just some reasons that cause people to abandon the truth. Jude gave several vivid illustrations of God's attitude towards false teachers and those who abandon the truth.

May God help us to know the truth, love the truth, and stand for the truth. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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PRAAYER:

Our Father, once again we thank you for your Word. Jude has given us some sobering illustrations of how you judged false teaching and false believers.

Help each one of us here today to know the truth, love the truth, and stand for the truth.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

To you who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.