

12,22,22 Jude 10-25, The Final Battle

We recently completed a six-part study of false teachers when we finalized our study of 2 Peter. Last week we saw that much of what Jude wrote is a duplication of what Peter wrote, and his major theme is also on false teachers. So, I'm going to approach this study in Jude in a way that involves more *personal application* than in simply re-clarifying what we saw in our study of Peter's letters.

But first, here are some Peter/Jude comparisons;

(2 Pet. 2:1) " But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them."

(Jude 4) "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."

(2 Pet. 2:4) "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment."

(Jude 6) "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home; these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day."

(2 Pet. 2:6) "If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly."

(Jude 7) "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."

(2 Pet. 2:13) "They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you."

(Jude 12) "These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm--shepherds who feed only themselves."

That was just a sampling – they also both talk about Balaam; they both call these apostates "springs without water" or "clouds without rain"; they both talk about "scoffers".

If Peter and Jude had both submitted their letters to a college professor as one of their assignments, they would probably have been accused of plagiarizing each other. That's what I meant by 'duplication'.

So, rather than 'duplicate' what I've already taught about these things, I'm going to contrast the characteristics of these false teachers with the characteristics of spiritual men and women of God; and I think the best way to do that, would be to simply say that it's the difference between the self-life and the Christ-life; because no matter what outward expression it takes on, it's ultimately going to be a contrast between pride and selfishness versus humility and sacrifice.

Jude 12 says that these false shepherds "feed only themselves"; but our Lord told Peter to shepherd His sheep by feeding *them*, not just himself. Sometimes it's hard to tell what's in the heart of a 'shepherd', but over time, it should become more obvious who and what is most important to him.

Now, here's what I mean by saying that we're going to look at all of this in a 'personal application' way. What I'm hoping to do is give some very practical information on how God helps us avoid becoming prideful and self-centered and instead ensures that our focus will be on others over ourselves.

The way I've decided to do this is to quote briefly from several authors in various writings of theirs - what *they* had to say about how the Lord takes young, self-centered believers and molds them into mature, other-centered disciples of Christ.

Let's start with a definition of the self-life by Sparks;

"I have said that we cannot calculate the whole range of this self-principle, in its myriad forms of self-expression and self-occupation and self-attention and self-pity and self-consciousness and self-satisfaction. Even in our Christian life, in our devotion to the Lord, we are so happy that other people see how devoted we are, and how humble we are! And it is the self, the wretched self coming up all the time. For a mature son of God is oblivious of himself, has lost consciousness of himself. If other people point out something good about them, they had not realized it, they were not aware of it. They are surprised that anyone could say anything good about them; they are not conscious of that. And on the other side, should people be critical and point out failings, well, they only say, 'Yes, I know: I have gone before the Lord about that. I am not deceiving myself.'"

When I initially read that, it brought to mind a brief quote by someone else (I don't remember who) that tied this into the difference between the faith of a young believer and the faith of a more mature believer. Here is my best paraphrase of what I remember;

“Because of the vital characteristic of self-*mistrust* in the mature believer, the biggest difference between the faith of a new child of God and the faith of Abraham is not that the vessel has become perfect and no longer has fears or doubts, but that there is a lessening of the demand for an explanation of circumstances from the One being trusted.”

“. . . there is a lessening of the demand for an explanation of circumstances from the One being trusted.”

This whole idea of self-mistrust is essential to ever coming to a place of genuine faith in Christ and to the humility needed to turn away from ourselves for the sake of others.

So, this is where the work of the Lord comes in – these next few quotes will be showing us how God moves us from where we are to where we need to be. This first illustration is from David Wilkerson and it's a very personal, painful story of how he made the transition we're talking about;

“When Adam sinned, he tried to hide from God. When Jonah refused to preach to Nineveh, his fear drove him into the ocean, trying to flee the presence of the Lord. After Peter denied Christ, he left and wept bitterly. Adam, Jonah, and Peter ran away from God, not because they lost their love for him but rather because they feared that the Lord was too angry to have mercy on them.

The accuser of the brethren waits like a vulture for you to fail in some way. At that point, he uses every lie in hell to convince you that God is too holy, or you are too sinful to ever come back. He makes you afraid you are not perfect enough or that you will never rise above your failure. If Moses, Jacob or David had resigned himself to failure, we might have never heard of these men. Yet Moses went back to the land he had fled and rose up to become one of God's greatest heroes. Jacob faced his sins, was reunited with the brother he had cheated and reached new heights of victory. David ran into the house of God, found forgiveness and peace, and returned to his finest hour. Jonah retraced his steps, did what he had refused to do at first

and brought a whole city to repentance. Peter rose out of the ashes of denial to lead the church to Pentecost.

In 1958, I sat in my car weeping. I had been unceremoniously dumped from a courtroom after I believed that I was led by God to witness to seven teenage murderers. My attempt to obey God and to help those young hoodlums looked as though it were ending in horrible failure.

I shudder to think of how much blessing I would have missed if I had given up in that dark hour. 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe' (1 Corinthians 1:20-21, NKJV). How glad I am today that God taught me to face my failure and go on to his next step for me. When we fail, God is desiring for us to return to him."

And Watchmen Nee adds this;

"Let us understand that God has no need for our defeats and failures—only we do. For while we experience smooth sailing, being often victorious and full of joy, we may regard ourselves as being fairly good and having possession of something other people do not have. Though we may not dare to boast openly of anything, nevertheless, when we make some progress in spiritual life or have some success in spiritual work, we cannot help but conceive the thought that now we are truly holy and powerful and doing quite well. In such a state as this, it is easy to become careless and to lose the attitude of depending on God. Accordingly, the Lord permits us to fall from glory to dust. We learn we are no different from the world's worst sinners. With the result that we dare not be self-reliant anymore, but will in all things cast ourselves upon God with fear and trembling."

So, you can see the extremes God must go to with each of us to replace self-trust with self-*mistrust*. We might agree that pride is the primary DNA of Satan and all of his false teachers, and that humility and meekness is our only salvation from pride, but agreeing intellectually is a long way from knowing this reality in a deep and personal way. That can only happen with God's help taking us through the things we need to experience so we can truly see our potential for self-deception; not just agree that it's possible.

As we look at Jude's and Peter's descriptions of these deceivers, our natural tendency is to believe that not only could we easily spot such people, but that we would never be like that. Then one day we catch ourselves thinking that (as Nee put it) we are "holy, powerful and doing quite well".

And even though morbid introspection will never help us, submitting to God's means of getting us to where we need to be, without the demand of explanations from Him on why all these things are happening to us, is essential.

We all want to have value; that is totally natural. And throughout the Bible "having value" to the Lord and to His kingdom and purpose are both illustrated historically and offered to us personally. We want to be used by the Lord; we want to be what Paul calls "vessels fit for the Master's use".

Surprisingly, I have a couple of quotes about that. Sometimes people ask me why I quote so much. There are actually two reasons. First, I read a lot and when I come across something I think would help us, I hang on to it. Second, I'm so humble that I fully realize that those I quote not only *know* these things better than me, but they also *say* them better than I could.

So, the first is from Sparks, again, and the second is Wilkerson;

"It is not a pleasant note, I know, but in all faithfulness, it must be said. This is the Lord's word to you: that if you have *not* gone through an experience of real brokenness under the hand of God, all that the Lord means in you and through you will still be suspended. If the Cross means one thing, it does mean that the Cross is the way to the glory and to heavenly fullness. The Cross means an inward breaking. Let me be very precise, because I know of different kinds of brokenness. I know the brokenness of disappointments, of disappointed hopes and expectations, but the kind of brokenness I am talking about is the brokenness of the self-hood, the strength of Self that holds its position and holds its ground and that will not let go. This self-strength, whether it be intellectual and mental or whether it be emotional or whether it be in the will, that strength of the natural life has got to be broken as truly as the sinew of Jacob's thigh had to be touched and withered. Something like that has to happen in us that we carry through the rest of our days. God has done something in the realm of our self-life and we are broken men and women so far as self-sufficiency, self-assertiveness, self-confidence and every other form of Self is concerned. It must be this way."

We can learn a great deal through our study of the Bible, but there is a difference between what we learn in academic study and what James calls “the *engrafted* word which delivers your soul”. It’s the circumstances and experiences of life that we wish the Lord would spare us from that He uses to take what we know and transform us into what we become; the word in our minds becoming the *engrafted* word that makes us vessels fit for His use, because what we’ve learned academically has now become who we are.

So finally, this is from Wilkerson, who focuses on the *outcome* of brokenness – what we have all prayed and sometimes even begged God to work into and through us of *His* life. We’re big on positive outcomes, we’re just not as big on the processes that make those outcomes happen.

And in what Wilkerson wrote, he also shows us the contrast with the false teachers of Peter and Jude who were totally *unbroken*;

“Paul describes us as earthen vessels, troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down. Even though they never gave into despair, those men being used by God were constantly groaning under the burden of their bodies, waiting anxiously to be clothed with new ones.

God mocks man’s power. He laughs at our egotistical efforts at being good. He never uses the high and mighty. Instead, he uses the weak things of this world to confound the wise. ‘For you see your calling, brethren. . . God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence’ (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Wow! Does that ever describe me. Weak, foolish and a despised thing. A thing not very noble, smart or mighty. What insanity to think God could use such creatures! Yet that is his perfect plan and the greatest mystery on earth.

God has determined to accomplish his goal here on earth through men with many weaknesses. Abraham had weaknesses: He lied, and he almost turned his wife into an adulteress, but Abraham ‘...believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness’ (Romans 4:3). God calls us in our weaknesses, even when he knows we’ll do it wrong. He puts his priceless treasure in these earthen vessels of ours because he delights in doing the impossible with nothing.”

So, as we've seen in many of our studies, don't let the accuser of the brethren convince you that your weakness and failure disqualify you for being used by the Lord. Your realization of your inadequacy may be the very thing that *most* qualifies you for His grace. Because as James wrote in Jas. 4:6, "God resists the proud, but give grace to the humble".

And that will move us seamlessly back into Jude's discussion of the pride and selfishness of the false teachers. We'll move through several verses in Jude and highlight some of the areas that don't directly overlap what Peter wrote or that show something Jude added to Peter's writings.

Both Peter and Jude talk about clouds without water, but Jude also calls them trees without fruit and then adds this in vs. 12;

"They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots."

This may tie into our Lord's words in Lk. 8:6-9 where He talks about the barren fig tree, but the phrase "twice dead" seems to indicate something more in Jude's mind. Of the several speculative interpretations I came across, this idea seemed most consistent with other things both Peter and Jude wrote;

"Jude may be suggesting that, spiritually and morally dead as their sterility shows them now to be, they are already marked down for 'the second death' when the day of judgment comes."

Personally, I think the idea of "uprooted" at the end of the verse confirms the idea that there is no hope for these trees – leaving their roots in tack would imply hoping for something better next season; but not with these.

We've already seen in Peter what is being referred to in Jude 13 by calling them "wandering stars". We saw in Peter that the fallen angels which wandered from, or left, their assigned abode and cohabited with human women were condemned. Here's 2 Pet. 2:4;

". . . God did not spare the angels who sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment."

What Jude does is show that these false teachers he's describing resemble the character and share the destiny of the angels in Gen. 6. Here's the wording in Jude 13;

“(they are) . . . raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”

A lexicon by Thayer gives us the meaning of the Greek description;

“They are impelled by their restless passions. They unblushingly exhibit in word and deed their base and abandoned spirit.”

It has always amazed me that even though the scriptures are crystal clear on the actual nature of these false teachers, we never seem to look at them that way when we come across one.

I know this will expose my longevity, but if any of you remember reading Frank Peretti’s books, like “This Present Darkness” or “Piercing the Darkness” he does an incredible job of describing the actual, evil appearance of demons hiding inside the clothing of respectability being presented through their human counterparts.

When you look at Bill Johnson or Joel Osteen, I doubt what you think of is men who “are impelled by their restless passions (who) unblushingly exhibit in word and deed their base and abandoned spirit.”

One of the reasons so many believers are taken in by those the Bible would classify as purely demonic is because of our tendency to view with our natural rather than spiritual eyes. When we do that, we can’t see through Satan’s emissaries who come to us disguised as angels of light.

In vs’s 14-15 Jude brings Enoch into the discussion;

“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’”

You may already know this, but there is a “book of Enoch”, it just didn’t make it into the canon of scripture. But this prophecy of his did get in - through Jude.

We know from other passages that when the Lord comes, the Church (made up of ‘ten thousands of His saints’) will be coming with Him. Just two examples;

(1 Cor. 6:2) “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”

(Rev. 17:14) “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

Since Jude is very insistent that the focus of God’s judgement is on the “ungodly”, we should probably make sure we know what “ungodly” means. Heibert defines this word like this;

“These apostates' utter disregard for God and His holy law, their gross irreverence and inveterate impiety being manifest by their sacrilegious words and works. Their impious deeds are the product of their distorted view of God. They are devoid of any restraining reverence toward God.”

“Richard Wolf adds that ‘ungodly deeds may be performed by persons who have a *form* of godliness’ (2Ti 3:5). Every action that proceeds from an unrepentant heart is an ungodly deed.’ And Williams writes ‘Satan in Eden and Judas in Gethsemane clothed ungodly deeds in soft words.’”

So, ungodliness can include what we think of as evil and immoral; but it can also refer to those with a “form of godliness” devoid of the Holy Spirit – in other words, those who are religious. This comes out again in vs. 19; “These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”

Vs. 16 is an overlap with several of Peter’s comments; “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they speak great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”

And in vs’s 17-19 Jude moves into his application phase. Considering all he (and Peter for that matter) have communicated to us, how then should we live? As Peter put it in 2 Pet. 3:11, “What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness?”

We definitely want to spend some time here because as fascinating as Peter’s and Jude’s description of false teachers is, our response is also extremely important. Here’s our passage;

“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”

Jude begins with a reminder of what we saw in Peter – that mockers or scoffers related to the imminent coming of the Lord would fill our churches, divide the people and seek to turn their hearts away from what the Lord told us to do in Lk. 21:28;

“When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The mockers will try to pull us away from heaven down to earth and will draw believers into earthly causes and religious activities.

Several of the commentaries I read said that Jude is telling us to battle apostasy. They use phrases like, “we must heed Jude’s strategy for combat”. What many of them do is tie Jude’s denunciation of the scoffers into Jude 3 & 4;

“I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed.”

I don’t know how comfortable you would be going face-to-face with those in the Church who either deny the soon coming of Christ or who are ambivalent and undecided and are communicating that indecision to believers causing them to question what the Lord wants us to take a stand on and defend; but both Peter and Jude have encouraged us to do exactly that.

Here's one commentator’s exhortation about this;

“In light of the truth about the snakes in the pond, this is not a suggestion but a necessity, and thus it is a command (aorist imperative). Do this now! Don't delay! It is urgent! You must remember! What are they (and we) to remember? The words spoken beforehand by Jesus' apostles. And beloved, isn't this the problem from the very beginning? When Satan asked Eve ‘Indeed, has God said...?’ (Ge 3:1ff), her poor memory of what God had said (Ge 2:16-17) led her into disobedience. Without the internalized Word which is Truth (Jn 17:17), the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17) is dull and we are vulnerable to Satan's lies!”

From there, in Jude 20-21, Jude moves into a discussion of the things we can do personally to help keep ourselves on the right path.

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

So, Jude begins this by telling us (as one author put it) to;

“Have an awareness of apostasy as foretold by the apostles (Jude 1:17-19), to foster our own spiritual maturity for security amid apostasy (Jude 1:20-21), and to act savingly toward those who have been contaminated by the apostates.”

This is what ‘building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit’ means. As we’ve all instinctively known from the time we were new Christians, our only survival in a world of deception is consistent, faithful, study and prayer.

It’s very simple, but it’s also a difficult discipline to maintain. Our dependence on the Lord’s guidance is obviously vital because we have to study and listen to the right authors or pastors. As long as our hearts are open to knowing the truth, the Lord will provide everything we need.

We’ve already seen how abiding in Christ, as the Lord instructed us in John 15, is the way we “keep ourselves in the love of God” and since both Jude and 1st & 2nd Peter are prophetic letters, Jude also ties everything he’s taught us into our need to be awake and watchful for the coming of Christ;

“. . . looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

I’m sure most of you know Soren Kierkegaard. This is only one sentence, but it perfectly sums up what we need to keep in mind as we press forward in a world filled with deception;

“There are two ways to be deceived; one is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”

Jude then reminds us that all our study, prayer and whatever spiritual disciplines we develop over our lifetimes are not meant only for us and our advance. We are here for others, and we can’t give them what we don’t have.

(Jude vs’s 22-23) “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

That's worded a little awkwardly, so let me share some other translations that capture what Jude wants us to know;

(AMP) "And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy but with fear, loathing even the clothing spotted and polluted by their shameless immoral freedom."

Ironically, the New Living Translation (which a lot of people don't like) actually does the best job of communicating what's in the original in a way that makes sense to 21st century readers;

"And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives."

So, we have to have sufficient discernment and relationships with others to be able to identify at least these three types of individuals;

- 1) Those who believe, but whose faith is wavering under pressure
- 2) Those who have gone prodigal and are experiencing discipline, but are still reachable
- 3) Those trapped in immorality who will respond better to mercy than confrontation; but we have to be careful not to be drawn in with them – so we approach with caution realizing our own weakness. Gal. 6:1 is the way Paul put this: "Brethren, if someone is caught in sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted."

Jude wants us to move into the lives of other people with the intent of strengthening their faith, restoring them, or rescuing them.

We have to be able to recognize the difference between truth and error. We can't "contend earnestly for the faith (the full realm of Christian doctrine) which was once for all delivered to the saints" if we aren't able to make application of that doctrine to the practical dangers of deception.

So, Jude isn't just warning us, he's also giving us a plan of attack to be able to overcome the works and schemes of the devil in the Church.

Wilkerson once wrote an article that shows the importance of us having faith if we hope to strengthen the faith those who are wavering. Since faith is the most

important defense we have against the fiery darts of the enemy, I wanted to share what he wrote as we wrap up tonight;

“I am convinced people lose hope because they’ve first lost faith. They have heard many sermons and read many books, but they see examples all around of shipwrecked faith. Christians who once espoused the gospel are now giving up their trust in God. Where do people turn for hope? The Spirit once said to me, ‘You have to anchor your faith. Set your heart to trust God in everything, at all times.’ To set our faith means to ‘stabilize, set down roots, lay a foundation.’ Scripture says it is within our power to do this. God is telling us, in essence, ‘When the world looks at my people in these days of trembling and anxiety, they have to be able to see faith. While everything is shaking, faith is what must remain solid and stable. So, anchor your faith. Christian, take a fixed position and never give up that position. I’m convinced that the world doesn’t need more sermons on faith. They need to see an illustration, the life of a man or woman who’s living out their faith before the world. They need to see servants of God go through the same calamities they’re facing and not be shaken. David described this when he spoke of ‘those who trust in you (the Lord) in the presence of the sons of men’ (Psalm 31:19). He was talking about believers whose trust in Christ is a beam of hope to those in darkness. When you determine to set your faith on Christ, you are going to be severely tested. Once, when I was in the process of laying my burdens on the Lord and setting an enduring faith, I received a phone call with news that shook me. For a moment, a flood of fear swept over me. Then the Holy Spirit gently whispered, ‘Don’t give up your faith. I’ve got everything under control. Just stand steadfast.’ I will never forget the peace that flooded through me at that moment.”

In vs’s 24-25 Jude closes his epistle with encouragement for us and praise to our Lord;

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

It is impossible for those who abide in Christ, who continue to study, pray and walk in open, honest transparency with the Lord, to not be presented faultless before the presence of His glory.

As Wilkerson implied in what he wrote, holding on to us, keeping us from stumbling, is God's responsibility, not ours. Our responsibility is to trust Him to do so.

The last verse is a doxology – which is a very personal expression of praise to God based on those characteristics of God most precious and awe-inspiring in the one who is praising Him.

In Jude's case – "glory, majesty, dominion and power".

David McCasland's comments on this were excellent;

"Every follower of Christ can share Jude's confidence that God's faithfulness will carry us through this period of spiritual conflict on earth."

And then McCasland closes with the lyrics of one of Frances Crosby's hymns entitled, 'All the Way my Savior Leads Me.'

"When my spirit, clothed immortal,
Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song through endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way."