

Salvation and Judgment

Jude 5-7

As we return to our study of Jude after my absence for many weeks, let me repeat a point that I've made in several of these previous sermons. Something has changed. The peaceful and relaxed atmosphere of Jude's original thoughts in writing this letter have changed. No longer is it, "I was very diligent [or eager] to write to you concerning our common salvation," from verse 3. Instead, we have an urgent necessity, "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."

Gone is the peaceful security of Christian fellowship within "a common faith" or "a common salvation." Gone is the peacefulness of a faith that is shared together among God's people. Now the battle is evident and obvious. Now there is an urgency to contend for that faith, there is the need to fight for it in order to preserve it. Because "certain people have crept in unnoticed," verse 4. And those people are undermining the whole of the gospel, for as Jude puts it, they "who turn [or pervert] the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The issue is stated clearly. These "certain people" deny that Jesus is Lord! They deny, by their actions, that Jesus is the master of their lives. They deny that God calls his people to self-control, to godliness and holiness. In essence, they teach, or at least encourage and allow, those who profess their faith and trust in Christ to continue in sin that grace might abound! They pervert the gospel of grace, such that the call to holiness and godliness is diminished or destroyed. They pervert the gospel of grace, such that grace becomes a license to sin, and that is the meaning of the word "sensuality" in verse 4. They permit the free exercise of

ungodliness, by their example and their instruction.

And they ignore the warnings given by God, the warning of God's judgment. For example, the warning of,

1 Cor. 6:9 "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, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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."

Surely, there is the true gospel of grace so clearly proclaimed. There is the promise of gospel of grace, which is not only the promise of the forgiveness of our sins but also the promise of being cleansed of those sins. The gospel of grace includes the promise of washing! So this is that declaration of grace to those who have sinned, no matter how grievous and horrible the sin might have been, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

So beloved, I preach that gospel to you. I proclaim to you the grace of God. You who trust and believe in Jesus, you who confess your sin and repent, no matter what that sin might be, "you are washed!"

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

You were washed! For those of you who become painfully aware of your sin, no promise of the Bible can bring more encouragement. You were washed. You were sanctified, made holy unto God, in Christ. You were justified. So your sins are

forgiven and the righteousness of Jesus is now credited to your account!

That's the gospel of God's grace, by which you are saved. But here is the point of Jude's urgent letter. That gospel of grace doesn't cancel either the call to godliness and holiness of life, nor does that gospel of grace invalidate the threat of God's judgment to those who remain dead in their sins. And so the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of judgment go hand in hand. They are opposite sides of the same coin. The God of salvation is the God of judgment. The God of judgment is the God of salvation. One God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

So the proper understanding of God is not of a God of judgment in the Old Testament compared to a God of salvation in the New Testament. It is not the God of wrath and judgment at Mt. Sinai and the God of mercy and salvation at Calvary. It is not God the Father as the God of judgment and Jesus the Son as the God of salvation. Nor is it that you can look to Jesus as Savior and deny Jesus as Lord, seeking to trust in him for your salvation while refusing to submit to his authority as Lord.

And it is certainly not that the God of grace gives you a license to sin, for those who teach that are those "who turn the grace of our God into lewdness" Ultimately, as Jude teaches us, they will be condemned! They will be judged. And that is the warning we find in our text this afternoon. With the promise of salvation comes the warning of judgment. We have three examples to consider in that context, Old Testament Israel as a whole, the angels, and then the specific cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let's start with the Exodus.

I. SALVATION AND JUDGMENT IN OT ISRAEL.

v.5

We start with salvation, and the Exodus. And notice how clearly and directly the work of God revealed in the New Testament is able to describe that same work of God in the Old Testament. Verse 5, Jesus is identified. Jesus "saved the people out of the land of Egypt."

The NKJV tells us that "the Lord" saved a people out of Egypt. It is the Greek word for Lord, the word for master. The ESV translates verse 5 with the personal name of Jesus because of the direct and immediate connection with the end of verse 4, where "our only Master and Lord" is so personally identified as "Jesus Christ."

So Jesus saved a people out of the land of Egypt. That's a fascinating description, isn't it? Jesus was at work, as the second person of the Trinity, throughout the Old Testament. Consider,

1 Cor. 10:1 "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

Isn't that fascinating! When the people of Israel drank from the rock, they were drinking Jesus! And didn't Jesus teach the same thing to the woman at the well in Samaria?

John 4:10 "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever

drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 7:37 “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”

That gospel is the same as the gospel proclaimed throughout the Old Testament, as the prophet Isaiah would proclaim,

Is. 55:1 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!”

And all the way to the end of the Bible,

Rev. 21:6 “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. to the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

That’s the gospel, isn’t it? So according to Jude, Jesus saved a people out of the land of Egypt.”

I was always taught to be very careful when identifying events in the life of the Old Testament as types of Christ, because you can get carried away with all sorts of fanciful and figurative comparisons. In other words, not everything in the Old Testament is symbolic and figurative as a type of Jesus. But many things are. And perhaps chief among them is the Exodus. That event is clearly defined by the words of the preface to the ten commandments,

Ex. 20:2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

That is the very definition of our salvation, embodied in the life of the people of God in the Old Testament.

A. The exodus from Egypt was an act of God’s salvation.

The point here in Jude begins with that assumption, and then moves on to provide the warning.

B. Unbelief brings God’s eternal judgment.

“Jesus...saved a people out of the land of Egypt,” but verse 5 continues, “afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” So the covenant promise of redemption included a warning against unbelief! And so it must today. The recipients of God’s covenant promises cannot presume upon God’s favor nor take it for granted. The promise is real and true, the promise of the gospel, for you and for your children. But the exhortation to repent and believe is genuine, and the warning against unbelief is also genuine. God saved the people of Israel, but destroyed those who did not believe!

In fact, the whole generation died, didn’t they? The writers of Hebrews tells us this,

Heb. 3:12 “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”

That is the basis of Paul’s rather thorough argument in Romans 11, speaking of the unbelief of so many Jews in Israel.

Speaking to Gentiles in that context, he writes in Romans 11,

Rom. 11:20 “They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.”

Thus we must always listen to this warning, and recognize the severity of the threat of God's judgment to those who do not believe. Please don't let that threat be a stumbling block to you who have a sensitive conscience, because the warning is to those whose hearts are hard! The warning is not to those who struggle with sin and grieve that sin in the godly sorrow of repentance. Rather, the warning is to those who make excuse for their sin, those who believe they have a license and permit to continue in their sin that grace might increase, those who justify their sin by perverting the promise of the grace of God in the gospel.

That's the first example: the people of God in the nation of Israel. Then the second example, the angels.

v.6

There is so little information in the Bible regarding the angels. Indeed, Jude gives us perhaps more insight of any other book, and it is almost as if he assumes we know more than we do. So here is a good opportunity to practice a very important principle in biblical interpretation, “don't go beyond what is written.”

When it comes to angels, it is tempting to read between the lines, to extrapolate beyond the data that is given, and to make unwarranted deductions, assumptions and conclusions. It is tempting to say more than what these words actually say, and I will strive to avoid that trap. But, on the other hand, let's try to go just as far as the Bible allows us to go!

Jude's point is the same as with Israel and the exodus. Now his warning is given in terms of,

II. SALVATION AND JUDGMENT AMONG THE ANGELS.

So what do we know? First,

A. Angels were created in glory.

It is a proper deduction to conclude that angels are creatures. They are not gods, they are not divine, they are not eternal in their origin. They are created beings. The clearest definition of the angels is given in Hebrews 1, where the contrast is made between the angels as creatures and the eternal son of God. The chapter ends with this definition,

Heb. 1:14 “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”

So they are creatures, and therefore they were created good. Sinless. Perfect. And what we read in Jude 6 is that some angels “did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode...” So what does that mean?

Surely, it must mean that the proper dwelling of the angels was in the presence of God, enjoying the glory of that honor, and living in perfect holiness and righteousness. So although some of the angels fell, all the angels didn't. Unlike man, where one representative head sinned on behalf of us all, the angels as created remained individual, and some fell while some did not.

Some retained their position of glory, and they continue to this day to “serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” The un-fallen angels remain God’s ministering spirits. We read in the gospels that they even ministered to Jesus in his flesh.

The angels are part of God’s creation; they are spiritual creatures, which is to say, they do not have a body or physical existence. And they are moral creatures, living with God in the glory of his own immediate presence. That much we know. But we also know something else, something very dreadful. Sometime after the first six days of God’s creation, sometime after that declaration that everything was very good, some of the angels fell. “They left their proper abode.” According to 2 Peter 2:4, “they sinned.” And therefore, for the urgency of Jude’s passionate letter, the angels demonstrate for us the warning of God’s judgment.

B. Fallen angels are reserved for God’s eternal judgment.

And they are an example for those “certain people,” those “ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The warning is plain, painfully plain.
v.6

Similarly,

2 Peter 2:4 “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment...”

Further,

2 Peter 2:9 “...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the

lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.”

There is much to learn in all of that about God’s judgment, beginning with the inescapable certainty of it. The fallen angels are “kept in eternal chains.” Peter’s words are so similar, God “cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”

They are chained, and kept in chains. Eternal chains, for they await an eternal judgment.

Satan is identified personally in Scripture, rather certainly to be understood as the leader of these fallen angels. And thus the fallen angels must be the same in identity as the demons of Satan, the followers of Satan, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. And the reality of Satan’s circumstances, along with his followers, is this idea of eternal chains. He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, to be sure! And he is given permission by God to afflict even the saints, according to God’s own restraints.

But he is still bound! He is still chained.

The image is something like the illustration of a county jail, where an accused defendant might wait for a trial. He might also be released pending trial, though he is still bound for that trial. The judgment will come, and the obligation and constraint of that trial is sure and unchangeably certain. But the final judgment isn’t yet pronounced. Unlike the state penitentiary, to which a man is sentenced only upon the judgment of his guilt. A prison is where

convicts go, not merely defendants. And the fallen angels are described in that context, as being now “kept in eternal chains,” even “under gloomy darkness.” And the final expectation of judgment is absolutely certain. They are kept “until the judgment of that great day.”

Again, the clarity of,
2 Peter 2:9 “...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.”

Jude’s warning to us all is that the day of judgment will, indeed, come! That’s the warning to those who would pervert the grace of the gospel and make that grace a license and excuse to continue in sin! That’s the warning to those who would indulge their flesh without restraint, fulfilling the desires of their flesh without regard to God’s word or God’s law. The warning is that those who live in that way will be subject to the same judgment which the fallen angels await.

And the same judgment that is exemplified by the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. That’s the third example that Jude uses.

III. SALVATION AND JUDGMENT IN SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

We have with these cities a clear and unmistakable example.

A. The example of ungodliness.

The ungodliness was in their sexual immorality. Actually, the word means gross immorality, excessive immorality. Intensive and obsessively flagrant immorality. They were completely given over to it.

And even further, especially in the perversions of human

sexuality which Jude describes as those who have “gone after strange flesh.” The ESV puts it, “unnatural desire.” No doubt, the reference is to the unnatural and perverse practices of homosexuality so often identified with those two cities.

v.7

According to Romans 1, those things become evidence of God given over to the sinful to their sin.

Rom. 1:26 “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.”

Rom. 1:28 “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

Such was the example of those whom Jude addresses, with the grave warning that,

B. God’s eternal judgment shall be pronounced upon the ungodly.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example for us, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” There is nothing here to sugar coat this warning. Nothing to downplay it or to mitigate the consequences of it. The ungodly people who pervert the grace of the gospel must come to terms with the horror of this expectation of judgment. Those who “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” will undergo “a punishment of eternal fire.”

Jesus puts it this way,

Mat. 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Peter puts it this way,

2 Peter 3:7 “But by the same word the heavens and earth that

now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

There is an application in all of that for us. A warning, to be sure, that you don’t pervert the gospel of grace yourself, using it as an excuse to indulge your own sin. And, more positively, for the true believer, this warning is the encouragement to be holy! To put away sin.

So as you look forward to that day of judgment, with all the terror it promises for the wicked, recognize also the promise of the gospel. With believing faith in that gospel, turn from all your sin, with faith and trust in Jesus. As Peter puts it, writing to God’s people with reference to the future judgment of the wicked,

2 Peter 3:14 “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.”