



SERMON QUESTIONS

Jude 5-16 | June 4, 2017

GATHERING

1. Can you think of a part of the Bible that has always puzzled you?
2. Are there parts of the Bible that you have meant to read but never have?
3. If you were to begin reading the Bible regularly, where would you start?

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

All of us who read the Bible eventually encounter something we can't understand. In fact, sometimes we realize that portions of the Bible we thought we understood reveal something new when we study them closely. And yet, God almost always manages to speak to us through his word if we let him. In the book of Jude there are many things that are hard to understand. The passage we are looking at this week is filled strange references. At the same time, we can grasp Jude's central message. This ability to identify what we know and don't (yet) know is a passage while following the central message is important to lifelong Bible reading.

Jude wants his audience to know that some in the church are not genuine Christ-followers. And he is at pains to explain what a dangerous situation this is. He gives three ancient examples in 5-7 another in verse 9, three more in verse 11, and a series of denunciations in verse 12-13. What makes this difficult is that not all of the ancient examples are from the Bible. Some are from apocryphal books – non-canonical books about Bible characters. Books like "The Assumption of Moses" and "The Book of Enoch" were very influential in Jude's day, but they were filled with myths and traditional stories. So, does Jude simply refer to them as we would a well-known movie, or does he believe them to be true? And if he thinks they are true, does that mean they are true because they are in the Bible? Or can God use Jude to communicate eternal truth despite his historical setting? These questions are all part of studying scripture.

Read Jude 3--10

1. What are the three ancient example in verse 5-7? What is his overall point?
2. The first example, of the Israelites leaving Egypt and the last, of Sodom and Gomorrah, are well known. They are examples of lack of trust and grumblings and sexual sin and violence. But in verse 6 Jude talks about angels who have abandoned their proper dwelling and are kept in chains for judgment. He is probably referring to the strange episode in Genesis 6 and to a group called the "Nephilim" (called Giants in the KJV). Read Genesis 6:1-8. What overall point is the author making? How do you think the example of Genesis 6 fits into the theme of Jude 5-7?

3. In Jude 8 the author makes three statements about the false Christians. What are they? What do you understand and what don't you understand in this verse?
4. The phrase "heap abuse on celestial beings" is obscure. In verse 9 Jude illustrates this with a story from the apocryphal book "The Assumption of Moses" and since we do not have this book with us any longer his illustration does not make anything clearer. Still in verse 10 Jude sums it up. What point is he trying to make?
5. In verse 11 Jude once again speaks in threes, giving three more example from the Old Testament. Cain is in Genesis 4, Balaam in Numbers 22-25 and Korah in Numbers 16. How much do you know about these accounts off the top of your head? In Jude's day these three would be seen as "classic sinners." Cain was envious and unbelieving, Balaam greedy and Korah rebellious. What does this tell us about the people infiltrating the church in Jude's day?
6. In verses 12-13 Jude further accuses the false Christians using scenes from nature. What is trying to say in each of these comparisons? What does the reference to shepherds tell us about the positions of these false Christians?

APPLICATIONS

Jude has packed this short letter with many allusions (there is another in verse 14 from the Book of Enoch). This can be very confusing. But stepping back from the details, remember that they are all meant to support his command in verse 3, and his great concern in verse 4.

1. What does he say in verse 3 and 4?
 2. Looking at the whole passage, what are the main characteristics of the false Christians?
 3. What would those characteristics look like in a church leader today? Should we still be concerned about Jude's warning?
 4. Remember, Jude is most concerned with godless people who pretend to be Christians in the church. Why is this so dangerous? How is this worse than general godlessness in the broader culture?
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