

Jude: Defining the Problem

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[0:00] Last time we met, which was two weeks ago, the lesson was entitled, Identifying the Problem.

! Of course, we're talking about Jude writing about a problem that we have. And the problem! I had in mind was the reason that we need to contend for the faith, as outlined by Jude. And tonight I've chosen the title, Defining the Problem, connecting it back to our lesson two weeks ago. And we will delve deeper into the need to contend for the faith. That's the goal tonight.

Suffice it to say that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is in a fight. It is much more than a shoving match or a shouting match. This is a fight to the death.

We are locked in a battle for truth. We are arrayed against forces both visible and invisible. The fight for truth is part of a larger battle we refer to as spiritual warfare.

This fight has been going on for untold millennia. From God's perspective, this fight originated in the hallowed halls of heaven when an exalted angel named Lucifer declared that he was going to be more powerful than God himself.

[1:54] And for that great sin, and for that great sin, and nearly countless angels, we don't know the number, but these fallen angels that cast their lot with him were cast out of heaven, cast down to planet earth.

From the human perspective, this war began in the Garden of Eden when Lucifer, who by that time was called Satan, appeared to our original parents.

He appeared to our original parents. He appeared to our original parents. He appeared in the form of a serpent, and he planted a seed within their minds that God's word, which we happen to know is ultimate truth, could not be trusted.

That's what Satan was up to. And I would submit that all lies from the human perspective have flowed from that encounter.

Let me read to you the encounter between Satan as the serpent and Eve, the wife of Adam. And as I read this, be reminded that Adam stood by and did absolutely nothing to protect his wife.

[3:30] Scriptures tell us that he was with her, and he was silent. Genesis chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 through verse 5.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, exquisitely misstating scripture, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden?

But God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, you will surely, you will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and listen to this lie, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[4:51] Well, we know what happened, don't we? We know that our parents did partake of the forbidden fruit. Our parents chose disobedience, sin, and rebellion in the garden that day.

Their decision polluted the entire human race with a sin nature that impacts everything we do and everything we even think down to this very day.

It has infected every human down to and including the subconscious level. As a result of this encounter, every human being battles the world and the devil their whole lives.

But by far, the most intense battle is from within in what is called unredeemed flesh.

So we fight the world and we fight the devil, but the real battle is we fight our own flesh. Now, arguably, the greatest theologian in Britain, in my opinion, in the 17th century, was Dr. John Owen.

[6:16] His works are contained in 16 volumes, published by the Banner of Truth Trust. I discovered early on that I am not smart enough to understand Dr. Owen.

So I have to rely on abridgements of his many books, and I have them. He devoted three of his books to the problem of sin, and this is the problem of sin in the life of true believers. This is where the inward battle with the flesh originates. These books are entitled Indwelling Sin in Believers, The Mortification of Sin, and Temptation Resisted and Repulsed. In the first book, Dr. Owen shows that sin is a powerful inward law. The Bible calls it a law. A good word for a principle lodged in the heart whose whole nature wars against God. And Dr. Owen said that sin inside a believer is a powerful river flowing from the fall in the garden. [7:51] I've said before, there was a river that flowed from the fall in the garden that was polluted. Everything that flowed out of there is still polluted. It is only brought under control by regenerating grace.

However, sin's enmity remains in believers even after conversion and the long war against it is one in which all Christians must engage.

We are commanded to engage in this war. So where does sin originate? The Lord Jesus was very clear on this in Matthew chapter 15 starting in verse 17.

These are the words of Christ Himself. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. Now we're not talking about an organ there.

We're talking about what's inside us, our conscious self-insight. It proceeds from the heart and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

[9:17] These are what defile a person. This is the indwelling sin that we battle every day. Now the war on truth that Jude talks about is part of this overall attack.

And the attack, as I say, on truth has taken an unfathomable toll on the human race. Billions have perished over the centuries without the knowledge of the true God or a perverted knowledge of the true God.

Billions more have twisted and false views of him. But the most devastating attacks have come from within the church by those who claim to know God, love God, and believe in God.

Then why is it so difficult but essential to defend against error? And that's because it can be introduced into the church by anyone. Maybe the person next to you on Sunday morning.

Maybe the visitor that comes. It can come from the pulpit, from the pews. We have been commanded to guard the truth that God has delivered to us from the apostles.

[10:43] Quite frankly, we often don't do a very good job of that. Jude told us the problem and it is today the greatest danger facing the church.

Many will say, well, it's persecution. No, it's not persecution. It's false theology in the church. False prophets, false teachers. Jude 4, verse 4, not chapter 4, verse 4, certain persons have crept in unnoticed.

unnoticed. You sense the danger in that? Certain persons have crept in unnoticed. A few verses later, Jude went on to say, these men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts.

They feast with you. Do you sense the danger spoken of here? They crept in unnoticed. Looked like a good guy.

Didn't offend anybody. He was quiet. He was warm when we greeted him. He looked okay. But he crept in unnoticed.

[12:00] And they are like a hidden reef that can destroy even the largest ships. They can destroy the ships. I always remember the story of the battle fleet going toward the coast.

some say the coast of America, some of Ireland, I don't know. They picked up a small ship on the radar and said, you need to turn.

The ship said, you turn. This went back and forth and the guy said, I'm a battle fleet. I'm an aircraft carrier. I've got five destroyers. I've got tankers.

I've got a submarine. You turn. He said, I'm the lighthouse. You turn. And he did. He did. The destruction of churches is amazing to track.

I've seen many in my lifetime. You can look at a lot of denominations and there was a pattern. They took control of boards on the national level, took control of committees, gained control of entire denominations, of seminaries and what they taught.

[13:14] They refer to themselves as Christians but possess neither salvation nor the Holy Spirit. There's a tremendous fight going on right now in Tulsa. I won't mention any names, but at Boston Avenue Methodist Church.

It's amazing. And don't take my word for it. Get online and read the pastor's commentaries and his support of homosexuality and transgenderism and lesbianism and why the church should be at the forefront and supporting all that.

And even the Methodists who are somewhat more liberal than we are said we're going to bounce them out of here. And he said we're just going to quit. We're going to go on our own. I mean it's amazing to read.

I actually went online and read some of his commentary. It's amazing. The statement that they have crept in unnoticed is quite instructive. In the original language it carries with it the idea that they were able to sneak in without being detected.

It means to sneak in secretly with evil intent. In our vernacular this is a sneak attack.

[14:23] It's a sneak attack. It is one thing for an enemy of Christianity to rail against our faith from the outside. But these evil people that have crept in do it from the safety of the church role.

They're from the inside. And note also that Jude refers to them as certain persons. Certain persons. And that's a rather vague description.

We don't know who they are specifically. We just know that they operate within the church. And the Bible calls them apostates.

Now we looked at apostate and apostates briefly last time we met. We're going to do that a little bit deeper tonight. And let me remind you that I think last time I used a South American guy in the jungle.

Let me use a pygmy in Africa. Now I don't know why I do that. But when I was little, I don't know if some of you people are my age, we used to pray for the pygmies in Africa. Did you ever do that? For some reason in my church, I was at First Christian doing it.

[15:33] They wanted us to pray for the pygmies. I never met a pygmy. But we prayed for them. But if you've got a guy that has never heard the gospel, he's not an apostate.

He's an unbeliever and we need to go tell him about Jesus, but he's not an apostate. Apostates are those who've heard, considered, maybe embraced at some level, then walked away, rejected, and says, no, there's something better out there.

That's an apostate. That's an apostate. The theologian Thomas Manton, and I've got his volumes, and he's not an easy read, but Thomas Manton said, apostates inside the church are like a worm inside a body.

They are bent on destroying the very body that houses them. Isn't that amazing? That's what it does. It's killing itself by killing the body.

They are bent and destroying. Jesus viewed them as wolves in sheep's clothing. Think about that. If you're a bunch of sheep out there, oh, here comes another sheep.

[16:48] He looks a little different, but he's got to be a sheep. Look at him. What was a wolf in sheep's clothing? Such wolves dress like sheep and talk like sheep and act like sheep?

And they're so real looking that sheep are not alarmed at their presence and carry that over into human sheep in the church. They are so dangerous that Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John warned us about them in their writings.

Or in Jesus speaking. So does Jude. Jude. They come in many forms. They have many names. But they are all bent on destroying the Lord's work.

Their views are variously called Gnosticism, Nicolaitanism, modernism, cultism, liberalism, and antinomianism.

And there are, of course, other names as well. So the first thing we must be on guard against is the apostate because they do their initial work through infiltration.

[18:06] They infiltrate. The Lord himself knows them and has already marked them out for condemnation. He's put a mark on them that only he could see.

Their end has already been predicted. In fact, the scriptures say this in the fourth chapter, For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, these who were long before marked out for this condemnation.

Ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Now, from the opening days of redemptive history, God has promised to judge

apostates.

There is no doubt they will be judged with the greatest of severity. He has touched the apple of his eye, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the Greek construction here indicates their destruction was ordained ages ago.

Jude refers to this destruction later in his letter with these words in Jude 14 and 15. It was also about these men that Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied saying, Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

[19:57] There's a lot of ungodlies in there. all the way back to nearly the beginning of mankind in the Old Testament, prophets predicted the destruction of apostates.

This is also in keeping with what the apostle Peter had to say and I told you that 2 Peter, this is chapter 2 verse 3 to 6, but that is a companion volume to Jude.

Jude is actually somewhat of a commentary on 2 Peter. Peter says this, in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

Their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment and did not spare the ancient world but preserve Noah a preacher of righteousness with seven others when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to the destruction by reducing them to ashes having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter the final judgment of the apostate is certain and it is unalterable it has been determined beforehand so how does God picture these apostates in Jude he says this about them he says they're ungodly persons they are people who turn the grace of

God into licentiousness and deny our only master and Lord Jesus Christ the leading trait of an apostate or false teacher in any day was their ungodly character they claim to belong to God they claim to speak for God but scripture repeatedly tells us they are far from him Jude tells us in light of God's description we can conclude that their character conduct and creed are always corrupt so what are the specific characteristics of apostates this is important because as members of the Lord's church we must and are commanded to be able to identify the apostates in our midst and not fall under their sway well first their character their ungodly persons that's the character oh you see that guy yeah he's an ungodly person that's what it's saying it is impossible for an ungodly person such as a false teacher to worship properly we had a sermon on worship a few weeks ago he can't worship properly such a person does not have a high view of God does not hold God in reverence the early church fathers wrote about such men describing them as those who play at religion while having no fear of God or love for him they pretend to be spiritual leaders but they are an enemy sent within our borders to wreak havoc on the church they claim to know

[24:01] God they claim to speak for God but their sinful character their ungodly character undermines them second the Lord talks about their conduct who turned the grace of our God into licentiousness beloved mark this thought down somewhere in your mental file false spirituality!

spirituality cannot restrain the flesh and these guys come in with a false spirituality they just do and I'll tell you I that I really learned that when Jimmy Swaggart fell remember that that's been a long time ago now!

Jimmy Swaggart was trying to hold himself up by the flesh and it was a disaster you can't do it apostates I'm not even saying he's an apostate but apostates have no ammunition with which to deal with fleshly fallen desires false teachers consistently indulge the flesh in manners that are sinful one need only look to the fallen high profile television preachers over the years who have succumbed to sin and they're legion I mean there's all kinds of them yet we have seen this repeated over and over among high profile ministers they're in it for what they can get out of it be it huge mansions fast cars faster jets or really fast women that seems to be where they're at and we must never forget the admonition of

Paul in Galatians are you so foolish and he tells the Galatians having begun by the spirit are you now going to be perfected by the flesh that was one of the sins of the Galatians that had to be corrected you cannot begin in the spirit and have any hope of finishing in the flesh it doesn't work like that the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the lure of sin are far too strong we live in unredeemed flesh and will battle sin our entire lives on this planet our only hope is to begin in the

spirit and to finish in the same way that's our great hope and then what about their creed well their creed is this they deny our only master and lord Jesus Christ they deny Christ apostate false teachers believe they answer to no one they are like the words of the English poet William Ernest Henley probably a guy you are very familiar with who wrote this in 1875 I know you'll be familiar with this I am the master of my fate I am the captain of my soul I actually had to memorize that one time and I had to repeat it and after I repeated I forgot it you will never find an apostate preacher or teacher preaching about the sovereignty of God or the lordship of Christ they won't do it this passage says they will not submit to him as master hand lord master denotes sovereign ruler sovereign ruler I had a good friend of mine a Christian friend of mine from another denomination and we were talking and he said you know there's times I almost believe [28:04] God is totally sovereign over everything to which I said if you find one molecule over which God is not sovereign build an altar to it and bow down and worship that molecule because it's more powerful than God but you're not going to find one he's sovereign over everything he's sovereign over everything so sovereignty denotes master or master denotes sovereignty he's a sovereign God lord means he's king and he's the owner he owns everything I remember when Dallas Theological was in the early days running out of money and they got together and prayed and they said lord you own the cattle of a thousand hills sell some of them and give us the money and he did it's a neat story

I'll tell you sometime false teachers never give to Christ the honor that is due him ever they deny his rightful position in the Godhead Christ is both God and Messiah but the apostate teachers will not acknowledge this this is confirmation that they are counterfeit teachers and preachers seeded into the church by the enemy Paul had this to say about them in Titus 1:16 they profess to know God but by their deeds they deny him being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed now there's a final point this evening that I want to make I believe we're a strong church doctrinally I really believe that doesn't mean we know all truth no one does but the truth we have we guard we want to know that truth we want to live that truth and sometimes in a very poor way but nevertheless striving in that regard we accumulate for ourselves preachers and teachers that hold to strong doctrine and well we should but these facts mean also that we may in fact be at greatest risk

Satan has little to do with the churches that are already in his clutches what motive does he have he's already got them he wants those who oppose him he wants those that preach the unadulterated word of God so we must be strong and we must be vigilant as we live at our lives in the 21st century and this very week I was just thinking how spiritually dark it's getting in this world and it is a time to be strong we must leave this church someday in the hands of our spiritual children and our spiritual grandchildren as one that is strong and able to contend for the truth and we must be confident in the words of Christ that though evil forces will assail the church and that was a promise he gave us such forces will not prevail they're going to attack but they're going to fail they're not going to succeed

Jesus is still in the business of building his church will to go to to to!
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