

Jude 1:5-7

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/jude/jude-1/jude-15-7/>

Jude appeals to examples from the Old Testament as proof to what he is urging his readers to do. God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, but He did not allow the unbelieving Israelites to receive the reward of the Promise Land. Likewise, He has punished demons by chaining them in darkness. Further, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their sinfulness. These are each examples that God judges sin and faithlessness.

As Paul did in Romans, Jude now embarks on exhorting his recipients to recognize that sin has consequences. There are those in their midst claiming that God's free gift of grace that saves us from our sins and makes us righteous in God's sight through Jesus Christ means that we can now sin with impunity. Jude calls those teaching this "ungodly persons" (Jude 1:4).

To counter this false teaching Jude appeals to the example of God's people Israel. God's election of Israel was by His grace (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Nothing Israel did or can do will cause God to reject them as His people (Romans 11:26-29): *Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe* (v 5).

Even though Israel was and is God's people, when they disobeyed they suffered adverse consequences due to their disobedience. Jude desires that his disciples know the truth, and not mistake God's grace for a license to sin without consequence. God granted to Israel the Promised Land through a promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18). But the inheritance of the land went only to those who walked in obedience to His command to enter and take the land (Hebrews 3:7-11).

The first generation who came out of Egypt refused to believe God and act upon His word. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness and died without possessing their inheritance (Numbers 14:28-29). The phrase God *destroyed those who did not believe* refers to the first generation of those who came out of Egypt dying in the wilderness without getting to possess their inheritance, the Promised Land.

God still cared for His people while they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. He miraculously provided for them by giving them manna, and causing their clothes not to wear out (Deuteronomy 8:3-4). So it does not seem that their lives were prematurely *destroyed*. Rather it was that the mission and destiny to which they were called was taken away. They did not possess the inheritance to which they were called. Therefore, a great purpose for their life was missed, and Jude phrases this as them having been *destroyed* in order to emphasize the terrible destruction of sin.

The Apostle Paul says something similar in his letter to the believers in Corinth:

“If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

(1 Corinthians 3:15)

In this passage Paul tells the believers in Corinth that each believer’s deeds will be judged by God by fire, and rewards given for our stewardship. Those who do not walk in faith will still be saved from being separated from God, “yet so as through fire.”

Paul then speaks of each believer’s body as a “temple” saying,

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

In this passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the same basic language as Jude, saying that any believer who loses their inheritance is being destroyed. This is not because they perish; they are “saved though as through fire.” It is because they do not possess the full abundance of God’s promises, having squandered their inheritance, like Esau (Hebrews 12:16).

Jude *desires to remind* his audience of these *things* they should already *know* relating to these Old Testament scriptures. At the time Jude wrote this letter it is likely that the Old Testament scriptures were the primary scriptures being relied upon by the church. That Jude expects his readers to already *know* these things could indicate either that these believers are already well-taught Gentiles, or that they are Jewish believers who were brought up knowing the scripture.

However, Jude seems to go past just knowledge of scripture, saying *you know all things once for all*. The Greek word translated *all things* appears in this passage from Mark as “everything”:

“But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”

(Mark 13:23)

In this Mark passage, context shows that “everything” refers to “everything relevant to understand the topic at hand.” This is likely the intent of Jude as well. He is saying “You all know enough about this that I don’t need to teach you, but only to remind.”

The topic they already know enough about is that although all our sins are forgiven, having been nailed to the cross with Jesus (Colossians 2:14), willful sin still leads to adverse consequences. Sin leads to death (Romans 6:23). Sin leads to slavery to our appetites and destruction from our flesh (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Sin leads to a bad judgment before God for deeds done while living, and a loss of rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore Jude only needs *remind* them of things they already know.

They would certainly know of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt. The phrase *the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt* serves as an analogy for each believer’s deliverance from slavery to sin. Each human is lost in sin, and needs deliverance. God delivers from the

penalty of sin all who are willing to look upon Jesus on the cross, hoping to be delivered from the poisonous venom of sin (John 3:14-15). This is done by God, and only needs to be received.

But those who came out of Egypt who *did not believe* God's promise to deliver the land into their hands lost their inheritance. They were still God's people, but lost their reward.

Jude then pivots to another illustration to demonstrate that rebellion against God has consequences. He shifts from speaking of the consequence of sin upon humans, and speaks of the cause-effect of sin relating to angels. Jude recounts the rebellion of *angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day* (v 6).

This illustrates that God's creation has embedded within it a moral cause-effect that extends to all of creation, including spiritual beings, such as the angels. The *great day* of God's *judgement* could refer to the end times, when many of the spiritual beings locked in an abyss are released for a time, prior to being thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 9:1-5; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41).

The *angels* who are *kept in eternal bonds* are also referred to by the Apostle Peter:

“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.”
(2 Peter 2:4)

The Greek word translated “hell” in this passage is “tartaroo” and is the only occurrence in scripture. “Tartaroo” refers to the compartment of Hades in Greek mythology where the wicked were kept. It appears the application was sufficiently accurate to make the point, that there is a domain in which evil angels were committed because they violated the moral boundaries set by God. The point is that God's moral laws are real. Just as there is a certain physical effect from ignoring gravity (a physical law) and stepping off a ledge, there is a moral effect from breaking God's moral laws. And this applies not only to the physical world, but also to the spiritual.

The episode referred to here could relate to the events described in Genesis 6:2-4, where “sons of God” took human wives for themselves and bore offspring that were the “men of renown.” It could be that the fallen angels disobeyed God and crossed over to come and relate to human women, and due to that violation were barred from further interaction, being placed in a spiritual dungeon.

Jude then returns to the earthly realm and relates another illustration from Genesis: *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.* (v 7).

Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them were destroyed with fire from heaven because of their wickedness (Genesis 19:24-25). The specific evils cited by Jude include *gross immorality* and going after *strange flesh*. This could refer to the episode in Genesis 19 where a

gang of men from Sodom insisted on sexually abusing Lot's visitor (Genesis 19:1-11). This demonstrates that they were bent on exploitation of others and enslaved to their own appetites. Jude's point is that such behavior has consequences and will be judged.

The phrase *undergoing the punishment of eternal fire* is interesting in that the Greek word translated *punishment* is "dike" which can also be translated "just" or "judgment." "Dike" is a root of the Greek word "dikaiosyne" which is usually translated "righteousness." The idea here seems to be that the illustration of the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah stands as a timeless illustration that God's righteousness is like fire, and will consume all that is unrighteous.

God's judgment consumes His adversaries (Hebrews 10:27) which is not surprising, given that our God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). And although God's judgment does not and will never consume His own people, His judgement fire does refine them. As the Apostle Paul states regarding the judgment of believers:

"...each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."
(1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

Jude refers to *eternal fire*, and uses the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah as an *example*. The Greek word translated *eternal* in the phrase *eternal fire* is "aonios" which refers to the span of an age. For example, "aonios" is translated "for long" in the phrase "for long ages past" in Romans 16:25. The idea appears to be that the judgment fire that God rained upon Sodom is the same judgment as will apply to any person in this age who participates in willful sin; it is consistent across the span of the age.

This completely counters the idea that God's grace (in forgiving believers of all sins in His sight) is a cause to turn to "licentiousness" (Jude 1:4). Although God's grace does cover all our sins, and places us into God's family as His forever child, there are still consequences to our actions, and sin brings forth death, loss, and slavery. The reward (wages) of sin leads to death (separation from God's good design, Romans 6:23). Sin has consequence, and that consequence brings judgment fire. The fire will not consume believers, but it can cause the loss of rewards both now as well as in eternity (1 Corinthians 3:15).

God delivered Lot from the fire, but only because he listened and left Sodom as instructed (Genesis 19:15-17). If Lot had not escaped, he would have been consumed as well. In the same manner, believers can escape the world by living apart from the world and its lusts. In doing so, believers can avoid the negative consequences of sin. We are exhorted to choose not to love the world or the things in the world (1 John 2:15-16). This is because to the extent we follow the world's ways, we will reap the world's corruption as a consequence. As Paul asserts to those he brought to faith and disciplined in Galatia:

“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”
(Galatians 6:8)

In this verse from Galatians, “eternal life” is a reward or consequence of walking in the Spirit. The consequence (or fruit) of listening to and following our own flesh is corruption. In Galatians, the corruption of the flesh is detailed as a list of destructive and exploitative behaviors that bring destruction upon ourselves as well as the communities in which we gather (Galatians 5:19-21).

Jude’s overarching point is this: God’s grace in forgiving our sins and washing them away from His sight does not mean there are no longer consequences for sins. There is no consequence that sin will ever tarnish our relationship with God as our Father, because we are in Christ; if God denied any believer He would be denying Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

But although our relationship as a child of God is secure because of Christ’s work on the cross, our fellowship with God and with others can be damaged, and we can suffer the negative consequences from walking in sin if we choose to do so. Jude desires that this false teaching of licentiousness be confronted and defeated. He desires his disciples to have life and benefit, and avoid the corruption and loss that comes from walking in sin.

To learn more about the Gift of Eternal Life, see: [“What is Eternal Life? How to Gain the Gift of Eternal Life.”](#)

To learn more about the rewards a believer may win or lose, see: [“Eternal Life: Receiving the Gift vs. Inheriting the Prize.”](#)

Biblical Text

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