

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude

Lesson 10: Warnings from History Against the Ungodly -- Jude 5-11

History has a voice, if we will listen to it. Jude knows that the best way to warn the present is sometimes to remember the past, so he opens an old book and lets three sobering examples speak. "I want to remind you," he says, "although you once fully knew it" (v. 5). His readers already knew these stories, but knowing is not the same as remembering, and remembering is not the same as heeding. So Jude rehearses the past not to teach them new facts but to wake them up.

His first example is the most arresting of all. "Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (v. 5). Stop and feel the weight of that. These were not pagans who never knew God. These were the redeemed, the very people who had been brought out of slavery by mighty acts of deliverance, who had walked through the parted sea on dry ground. They were saved. And afterward, because of unbelief and rebellion, they perished in the wilderness and never entered the promised land. Salvation out of Egypt did not guarantee arrival in Canaan.

Then come two more examples. The angels "who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling" are now kept in chains for judgment (v. 6). Even angels, beings of glory in the very presence of God, fell when they abandoned their place. And Sodom and Gomorrah, who "indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire," stand as a public example of judgment (v. 7). Three witnesses, a redeemed nation, exalted angels, and notorious cities, all testifying to one truth: privilege is not the same as security, and those who turn from God face His judgment.

Jude then turns to the false teachers of his own day, who, like Cain, Balaam, and Korah, follow the well-worn paths of rebellion, greed, and self-will (v. 11). The point of all this is not to frighten us into despair but to sober us into faithfulness. The God who is rich in mercy is also holy and just, and the same Scripture that assures us of His keeping power also warns us, plainly, that we must not presume. As you read these verses, let the voice of history do its work, not stealing your assurance, but deepening your reverence and your resolve to remain faithful to the end.

Group Discussion: Jude's first example is staggering: "Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (v. 5). These were people who had truly been saved out of slavery, yet who perished because of unbelief. What does this teach about the danger of falling away, and how does it speak to the popular idea that a person, once saved, can never finally be lost? How do we hold this warning together with the comfort of God's keeping power?

Personal Reflection: Jude says he is reminding his readers of things they “once fully knew” (v. 5), because even known truth must be remembered and heeded. What important truth about following Christ have you known for years but stopped letting shape your life? What would it look like to truly remember and act on it again, rather than just knowing it?

Read Jude 5–11

Study Questions

1. Jude deliberately recalls the past, reminding his readers of what they already knew (v. 5). Why is remembering God’s past acts, both His deliverances and His judgments, so important for living faithfully in the present, and how does forgetting the past lead God’s people into danger?
2. Jude stirs his readers to remember truth they had let grow cold (v. 5). What spiritual disciplines (Scripture, prayer, worship, fellowship) have you allowed to fade in your own life? Which one is the Lord prompting you to recover, and what is one concrete step toward it this week?
3. Jude’s first example is a people whom the Lord “saved” out of Egypt and “afterward destroyed” for unbelief (v. 5). What does this example teach about the relationship between God’s gracious salvation and the ongoing necessity of faith, and why is it significant that those who fell were people who had genuinely been redeemed?
4. The wilderness generation was saved out of Egypt but never entered the promised land because of unbelief (v. 5). Is there any area where you have settled for being delivered from your old life without pressing on toward all God has for you? Where might unbelief be keeping you from going forward with Him?
5. Jude points to angels who “did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling” and are now kept for judgment (v. 6). What does this example teach about the seriousness of rebelling against God’s order and abandoning the place He has given us, and what does it reveal about God’s justice?
6. The angels fell because they were not content with the place God gave them (v. 6). Where are you tempted toward discontent with the role, season, or limits God has assigned you? How might learning to embrace your God-given place protect you from the kind of restlessness that leads to ruin?
7. Jude cites Sodom and Gomorrah, which “indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,” as “an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (v. 7). What does this teach about God’s view of sexual sin and about the reality of judgment, and how do we speak this truth with both honesty and compassion?
8. Jude describes the false teachers as following “the way of Cain,” “Balaam’s error,” and “Korah’s rebellion” (v. 11), patterns of envy, greed, and rebellion against God’s authority. Which of these well-worn paths, envy, the love of gain, or resistance to God-given authority, most tempts you, and how is Christ calling you to turn from it?

9. Jude's examples make a sobering doctrinal point: those who were once among God's people, even the redeemed nation and the exalted angels, fell and faced judgment. Drawing on the whole of Scripture, why do we teach that a genuine believer can fall away and be lost, contrary to "once saved, always saved," and how does this truth coexist with real assurance and the keeping power of God?
10. Look back across these verses. Jude has called you to remember, warned you through three solemn examples, and exposed the ancient paths of rebellion. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Jude 5-11 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, Israel's example written as a warning, so let the one who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; Hebrews 3:12-19, take care lest there be an unbelieving heart that falls away, as in the wilderness; Hebrews 6:4-8, the danger of falling away after having shared in the truth; 2 Peter 2:4-10, God's judgment on angels, the flood, and Sodom; Galatians 5:4, falling from grace by seeking to be justified apart from Christ.