***The Apostate Example of Israel - Jude 5

JD05-02***

**Gnosticism**

We continue with the book of Jude, the book on apostasy. We have come to Jude 5. Jude is writing to a group of people who have been confronted with a certain insouciant apostasy. It was apostasy in the form of Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a view of life that was dualistic. It believed that there was a great source of evil in the world, and there was a great source of good. Gnosticism taught that there was a good and holy God in heaven, but that this God produced an emanation, or an ion which was an angelic like being. Then this ion created another one, and they created a series of themselves, one after another. The farther they got away from this holy God down the line, the more evil gradually came in and began permeating the structure of the being of these ions until they came to one who created the world. This was the gnostics' way of explaining the fact that there is evil in the world. It was evil because an ion, who was part good and part evil, created this world. It wasn't because God, who is holy, created it.

The problem for the Gnostics was, "How do we deal with this evil that is in the world?" There were two answers to that. One was that we will deal with it through asceticism; that is, we will restrict ourselves from everything material because what is material is evil. So they strictly did not touch; they did not taste; and, they had no relationships of any kind that would normally be expected on a human level. They restricted themselves in a very ascetical way from anything that they considered evil.

However, they was another group of gnostics, and these seem to be the people to whom Jude was writing. They decided they were surrounded by evil. There was no way for them to escape it. Consequently, the way to deal with it was to let go and to indulge yourself in every respect with this evil that existed here in the universe that this ion had created. The idea was that gradually you would be able to climb the various steps of the ladder from the evil ion through the progression of less evil ions until you arrived back at God.

**Lasciviousness**

This was strictly a philosophy, and it was a subtle philosophy. If you had sat in the congregations of the early church of Jude's day, these false teachers that we have read about who have crept in secretly into the local congregation would get up and speak on these things in a very intelligent way. They would make a very reasonable case. You would sit there and we would probably say, "Now, that makes sense," and you would give it some consideration. People in Jude's day were being tempted into this kind of apostasy. Jude said that the idea that we can remove evil by indulging in it led to lasciviousness. These people said that Christians are free because they have been justified by grace. Christian freedom to them meant lasciviousness.

The word lasciviousness comes from the Greek word "aselgeia," which comes from the name of a little town in Asia Minor. This town was noted for its homosexuality and its sodomy. The word connotes the most depraved perverted kind of sexual activity, and that's what these people were actually teaching. In the surroundings of the early church, they were teaching steps of immorality of the most perverted kind in order to arrive back up the ladder to a holy God. Now this is apostasy in its most horrifying expression, and this is what Jude was writing about.

**Biblical Examples of Apostasy**

He started, you remember, to write about salvation, and then God the Holy Spirit changed the subject, and he had to instead give an exhortation concerning people going negative to the Word of God. There is a pattern by which people turn against the Word of God, and then move into apostasy, and then move into their own destruction. We have three examples in Jude 5-7 of apostasy in various realms. These are all historical examples that Jude is going to review. We're going to look now at the first one which is an example of Israel and the apostasy in the Exodus generation.

Departure from divine viewpoint, which is what apostasy is, is of course nothing new. That's exactly what Cain did and we've had it ever since. It is rather startling to realize that even in Jude's day, right there, in the imminent time of the era of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that this kind of perverted thinking had already began to seep into the local church. It began to take over the thinking of the believers. So Jude had to say, "Wait a minute. I am going to have to sound off." You will notice that Jude does not say. "Let's have a dialog about these ideas. Let's talk these things over." Instead, Jude said, "I'm going to call to your remembrance certain doctrinal facts illustrated by certain historical incidents in the Old Testament."

**Situation Ethics**

Now in our day, we have the identical thing taking place in this country. Today we have the same viewpoint of lasciviousness being promoted among people and by religious leaders that was the condition of Jude's day. It's called the new morality. This is the concept that God does not have absolute standards of what is right and wrong, but that God simply has flexible standards that apply according to the situation. So we are confronted with the concept that certain things are right at a certain time, and they're wrong at another time. This is presented by religious leaders under the guise that it is the fulfillment of the true divine concept of love. It says that the law of God is fulfilled through the situation ethics of the new morality. That's exactly what they were doing in Jude's day. If you wanted to get to the holy God, then you had to get yourself involved into what is lascivious--perversions of moral matters. Then you would gradually rise toward God.

**The Exodus Example of Israel**

This is absolutely unbelievable. You say, "How can this be? How do these things come about?" Well, when we go back and take a look at this Exodus generation, I think you will have some clues as to what are the factors in our being that begin to get distorted that lead a person into apostasy. Remember that when you get enough people within a nation, enough of the citizens who have gone apostate, that that nation will go down the tube. This has happened again and again in history. Nations have come to a certain level of apostasy and more perversion, and then there was no return. They went over the line, and it was only a matter of time before they passed off the scene of history.

That's why in the United States today, this is a matter of serious concern for any thinking person. You don't have to look very far at the literature; at the entertainment; at the movies; at the advertisements; and, at the whole thrust of our society to see that the lascivious quality is what is being stressed and dignified and accommodated to and accepted increasingly, so that people are becoming jaded to things that they ought to be shocked by and react against. Heresy and unbelief among Christians is a type of apostasy, and that's represented by the Exodus Jews.

Jude 5 says, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that did not believe." What a person knows of the Word of God is subject to loss by his conscious mind. We have a way of things slipping off into our subconscious. Jude here says, "I will," and he uses the Greek word "boulomi." This is a word that means no emotion. This is a word that indicates he has thought this thing through. His mind has considered the hazards and the dangers that are involved. He says, "I am compelled, on the basis of what I have thought through here, to remind you of these things that are connected with the apostasy of our day." The present tense indicates a continual desire of his thinking.

He says, "To put you in remembrance." The Greek word is "hupominnesko." This word is in the aorist which means a once and for all reminding that he wants to speak to them so that they will not forget this fact again. He is actively doing it. He is going to refresh their thinking. So he says, "I will (because I have thought this through and I realize there is a grave danger) put you in remembrance (to call to your attention in a very definitive climactic way) what you once knew." He is saying, "I'm not going to tell you about something you never heard of before. I'm going to tell you about something that you once knew, but it is necessary now to remind you because the conscious mind has a way of forgetting the things that we should remember."

That's why it's important to read the Word daily. That's why it's important to attend unto instruction regularly. Sometimes people will bring up problems. You'll give them some doctrinal information, and they'll say, "Oh I know that." What they're saying to you is, "I knew that once, but until you said it, I had forgotten. Now you have reminded me, and I do know that. Now I do know that that is the answer to what I'm asking." This is something that they once knew but from which they had fallen away. And what was that? Jude 5: "That the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt." This is the deliverance of the Exodus Jews.

**Numbers 13**

In Numbers 13, we have the record of this historical event. Number 13:26, just to refresh our thinking, is the event that Jude is referring to here. Every one of these verses here (Jude 5, 6, 7) are going to refer to something that happened in the Old Testament. Jude is making a point on the basis of some historical event. This one is here in Numbers 13:26-30: "And they went and came to Moses and to Aaron and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land."

This is speaking of the spies who were sent into the land. They are now at the port of entry of Kadeshbarnea, and they have come to this Promised Land. They are now a year out of Egypt, traveling from Egypt through the wilderness toward this port of entry. They are now ready to enter the land. They have sent spies out to reconnoiter and to bring back information concerning the situation that they may expect to find. The spies are reporting--these 12 men.

Numbers 13:27: "And they told him, and said, 'We came unto the land to which they sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people are strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. And moreover, we saw the children of Anak there (the giants). The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negev; and the Hittites and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and, the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the coast of Jordan." Now this is what we would call the majority report. Ten men who came back and said, "It is what God said--a good land--but fantastically fortified and indwelt by very frightful fearful warriors.'" Their conclusion was, "We'll never be able to take this land."

Caleb and Joshua formed a minority report. Numbers 13:30: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, 'Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.' But the men that went up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.'" It goes on to say that they brought an evil report. Numbers 27:33 says, "We were like grasshoppers in their sight."

Now here is the situation that Jude is recalling. Jude 5: "The Lord, having saved the people," and the word saved here has a twofold meaning. It means saved spiritually relative to salvation, but it also means a group deliverance, and that's what it means here. The word is better translated as "delivered:" "The Lord having delivered the people out of the land of Egypt." It recalls the Exodus, and it is not stressing the fact that God is able to deliver out of a situation such as they found themselves in slavery. It is not stressing the Passover lamb or its blood. It is not stressing the miracle of the Red Sea. It is not stressing the typology represented by the tabernacle or the priesthood of the sacrifices. What Jude is recalling is God's deliverance against helpless odds to take this slaved people and break the back of the mighty Pharaoh and the mighty Egyptian empire, and to be able to bring these people out across the desert, and now they're poised on a land that God has, centuries before, promised to them as an eternal heritage.

Jude recalls Israel's experience in order to illustrate what happens when the people fall away (apostatize) from doctrine. The active voice in the word saved (delivered) here indicates that God was the subject who is performing this. These who were delivered were indeed believers, and we want to remember that that's what we're talking about. They were believers, yet they as a group (as a nation) were delivered.

It says that God took the Israelites that He delivered, and what did he do with them? It says that He destroyed them, and it also says that they did not believe. There's a relationship here in the Greek grammar that gives us some very interesting understanding of what he is saying. It says, "Having delivered," and that's an aorist participle. That means that it comes in the sentence before the main verb, and the main verb is "destroyed." So before God destroyed this people, He first did this: He delivered them. It so happens that "They did not believe" is also an aorist participle, and therefore it too comes ahead of "destroyed." God delivered these people out of slavery. Secondly, they were negative toward the doctrinal instruction that they were receiving from Moses and their priests, preparatory to entering the land. And then they brought destruction. It's important to see that order.

God did His job and brought them out of their slavery. God provided them with information that they needed through their teachers. Then they made a decision. Their decision was to reject what they'd been taught. The expression of that negative attitude did not show up until they came to the port of entry. At the point when they were now ready to enter the land, that's when this quality here of "not believing" was revealed as being in their souls. Up to then, they sat; they listened; they didn't have much to say perhaps; but, they did murmur. The Bible tells us that. They were the murmuring group. But up to that point, there was no crucial factor and no decision to be made. But once they came to Kadesh, then their unbelief became evident.

Jude's point was that God will destroy the very ones that He has saved--the very ones that He has delivered. These believers, whom He has delivered, He will destroy when they go negative to the Word of God. This is because they are rejecting divine viewpoint, and when you reject God's point of view, you've got nothing left but man's point of view. Man's point of view said, "We'll never be able to conquer that land." God's point of view, as was indicated by Caleb and Joshua (who were receptive to the Word) was, "We can go in and conquer it." Why? Because Caleb and Joshua recognized that while the giants were fierce soldiers and an enemy to contend with and to be concerned about, yet they realized who made those giants. That was the God who was on their side. So, to Caleb and Joshua, there could be no problem no matter how fierce the giants were. The people were guilty of the sin of unbelief, and that leads to apostasy.

**Destruction**

This word "destroyed" refers to the divine discipline that was put upon them, and that means destruction of the physical body. But here again is a significant word. The word for "destroyed" in the Greek is a word that connotes a progressive developing destruction. So what this word connotes is that something went wrong in their souls. Something went wrong internally, particularly in their minds. That's where they went negative to the Word. And when this thing happened in their minds, their souls began to experience a destruction. Over a period of 40 years, this destruction then moved from the soul into the body, and one-by-one they dropped dead across that desert.

There is another Greek word, "apothnesko." "Apothnesko" is a word that simply connotes a violent death--just a violent destruction of the body. If all that God the Holy Spirit meant to say to Jude was that God took these people and He just killed them, then this would have been a better word to use. God could have done this, all at once. He could have just dropped the whole group dead at once. However, instead it uses this word that indicates a progressive expanding developing death because it started in the soul.

**The Soul**

As you will remember, the parts of our soul--the mind, the will, and the emotions of our soul--have an expression. What gradually takes place in the soul when we go negative to the word of God is that the expression of our soul begins to be calloused. These calluses develop on the one side toward man and they develop on the other side toward God. Gradually, Ephesians 4:17 tells us how we take these things in through a vacuum condition or a low pressure condition (an emptiness is the idea), and there arises a vanity in the mind, and into this we suck in all kinds of human viewpoint, false doctrine, and so on. This includes wrong standards and wrong ideals. Gradually there develops a callousness and an indifference toward God. When it goes so far that the soul can no longer function and it can no longer respond, then the sin unto death is executed.

This is what was happening to these Jews in the wilderness. They were gradually and repeatedly saying, "No" to God, and all the areas of his soul were becoming less and less sensitive to God. Finally, by the end of that 40-year period, everybody 20-years-old and up, except for Joshua and Caleb had dropped dead out in the desert. That's what it means when Jude says, "God, who delivered the people out of Egypt, afterward destroyed them, through their souls and then through their bodies, because they did not believe."

He doesn't give the details about this incident because it's something that's well-known. The readers only need to be reminded of it. They remember this from their past experience. Ironically, God granted these people the very thing that they asked for when they were crying out against the minority report. They had such strong feelings against Joshua and Caleb that they actually wanted to pick up rocks and to stone them to death on the spot because of their report, "Yes, we can go in." Why did they want to stone Joshua and Caleb? Because in their minds, Joshua and Caleb were willing to believe God.

So, in Numbers 14:28, we read the request, "Say unto them, 'As truly as I live,' said the Lord,' As you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness--all who were numbered of you according to your whole number from twenty-years-old and upward who have murmured against me.'" This was the very thing that they previously had whined about, "Oh, that we could die out here in this wilderness." So God has given to them the very thing that they called for.

These Israelites, coming under the discipline of God, did not lose their salvation. Because they did not confess, they experienced the sin unto death. Over that period of forty years, they, who were identified as apostates at Kadeshbarnea, gradually one-by-one came to death.

What was their problem? Why did these people have to come to such a disastrous end? It was sad to think that here they had spent years in slavery, and then God magnificently took them out of Egypt, only to spend a period of years just waiting to die. They could have gone right into the land a year later, and enjoyed all that God had promised. Why should this have happened?

**Faith Rest**

Well, because they could not believe God, and so rest by faith in Him. This is the old faith rest technique. Israel had a solemn promise from God that this land was theirs (Genesis 15:18-21, Numbers 13:2). These were the same people, mind you, who believed God about the death angel, and so they slew the lamb and they put out the blood. None of these people would have been here had they not done that. Those who did not believe that, had already died in Egypt. It was these same people who believed about this and were trusting in God to bring them victory and to bring them out of the land. It was these same people who would look upon the essence of God.

**The Essence of God**

Remember what God is like. He is sovereign. He is righteousness. He is justice. He is love. He is eternal life. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He is immutable. He is veracity. This is what our God is. They knew this. So they trusted Him for bringing them out of the land, and then when they come here to entering the land itself, they go negative. It's one thing to be saved. It's another thing to believe God in what He says in his Word. Many a Christian who has found salvation in Jesus Christ, which is the hardest thing that God had to do for us, wrecks and ruins himself when it comes to believing the fact that God's Word is going to bear its impact in whatever it says it's going to do.

So learning the Word of God and responding to it is the only way we become, as John 8:31 says, "His disciples indeed." Unbelief is what kept these people from enjoying what God had prepared for them. Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom swore He they should not enter into His rest, but to them that do not believe?" So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. The two greatest failures of the Christian today are ignorance of Bible doctrine and then going negative toward the Word that he has learned. That destroys his ability to rest by faith in God.

**1 Corinthians 10**

In 1 Corinthians 10, we have a detailed analysis of what the problem was on the inside of these people that explained their conduct on the outside. This is a warning of apostasy among believers. It is a warning to Christians. In 1 Corinthians 10:1, Paul says, "Moreover brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." Christians are aware, and should not be unaware, of Israel's experience. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that these things were written for our learning and for our understanding. It is this section that clarifies what Jude is talking about in Jude 5.

**Five Positive Things**

There were five things that were true of all of these Israelites who died in the wilderness under the hand of God. Notice in 1 Corinthians 10:1 that they were all under the cloud that protected them and led them in the escape from Egypt. Also, in 1 Corinthians 10:1, they all passed safely through the Red Sea. 1 Corinthians 10:2 says, "They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They were all identified with Moses, God's leader, as the one who was directing them. Fourthly, they all ate the same spiritual food--the manna from heaven. 1 Corinthians 10:3: "And did all eat the same spiritual food." Then 1 Corinthians 10:4 says, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." So they all drank from that water from that rock which represented the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is a group of people who have five great things in common. They came out by a miraculous escape under the cloud out of Egypt. They passed safely through the Red Sea which opened up to let them through and then closed in on the Egyptian army. They were all identified with God's leader so they had God's man and God's direct communication and direction. They all shared the miraculous provision of the manna food from heaven. They all drank of the miraculous provision of the water which again showed them that God was right there functioning with them. Yet, they who shared this opportunity did not all please God. 1 Corinthians 10:5 says, "But with many of them, God was not well-pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

**Five Negative Things**

Notice five things that they also shared, but which expressed their unbelief. 1 Corinthians 10:6: "Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." They had a strong desire for evil things. Now, mind you, these people are being taught the Word of God. They've been out in this wilderness, moving for a year. In their minds, there is a pattern which was being set up because they are holding back and they're questioning what their teachers are telling them out of the Word. Because they are exercising a certain resistance, there develops in their mind a taste for evil things. They have an internal lust after evil things. Before anything outwardly is expressed, it always has to begin with things that we want in our minds. The patterns of our mind will determine the patterns of our actions. These people began to want things that were sinful. They began to dwell on sinful things. They began to mentally create images and pictures for themselves relative to possessing these sinful things. And, in time, this is exactly what they did.

1 Corinthians 10:7: "Neither be idolaters as were some of them; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'" These people were idolaters. They worshiped false gods, the greatest of which was, of course, the golden calf. You remember the incident. Moses was up on the mountain. He's getting the law on the tables of stone. While he's up there, the people come to Aaron, and they say to Aaron that they've been thinking about having a party. They began thinking, and they began expressing the evil desires that were in their thoughts. The evil desires they had were of a perverted immoral nature--the lasciviousness that comes from negative response to the Word of God.

So they talked to Aaron and asked him, "Do you remember that golden calf that we had back in Egypt?" The golden calf was one of the symbols of the phallic cults. It was one of the symbols of the sex worship. When they asked Aaron to make them a golden calf, what they were asking him was to make them a symbol around which they could rally for sexual perversion and immorality. At first, Aaron refused because he knew what Moses would think about this. Finally, because he was a weakling, he yielded to the people; he took their gold; and, he made them their phallic idol object. That's what it means that they were idolaters. When it says, "They rose up to play," this is a euphemism for a wild sexual orgy unrestrained expression among the people in the camp. 1 Corinthians 10:8 says that they practiced sexual immorality: "Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day 23,000." It was thinking negatively toward the Word of God that led them to turn to this apostasy.

1 Corinthians 10:9 says that they tested God: "Neither let us put Christ to the test as some of them also tested Him, and were destroyed by serpents. 1 Corinthians 10:10 gives the fifth thing that they had in common in a negative way: "Neither murmur as some of them also murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer." They were a complaining lot. As you know, they constantly complained and aggravated Moses as they came through the wilderness.

**The Conclusion**

Well, the conclusion is to warn these positive volition Christians against these expressions of unbelief. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, "All these things happened unto them for examples. They are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages come." Now, they thought that they stood. They thought that they had shared these tremendous things together in their release from slavery in Egypt. They felt that they stood. They felt they knew their way around. They felt that they had a certain moral strength. Then they discovered that there was a certain resistance; carelessness; indifference; or, confessed sin, and the result was that callouses began to build up upon the decision making mechanisms of the soul. The result was that they then began sharing these five expressions of negative volition that ended upon them in the sentence of death.

Here is the conclusion: The only way you know you stand is when your mind is oriented to doctrine. Then indeed you may expect to stand. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against God." This is not my good feelings; not my warm appreciation for Jesus Christ; not my love for the Lord; and, not any of my emotions, but "Thy Word" is what keeps me standing.

Now, it is possible for Christian brethren to fall into apostasy. It's possible for Christians to fall into the patterns of apostasy. Paul doesn't say that these brethren actually became apostates. It doesn't use the word "apostasy" in the Greek. It uses the Greek word for "fall." They simply fell into it. In 2 Peter 3:17, they fell from the Word of God.

So Jude 5 illustrates that saved people can be guilty of unbelief, and they can be disciplined by God. These people have five elements in common, and there have five sins in common--born of their unbelief. A Christian who has a common security of salvation can be threatened with this same unbelief. Believers who are under discipline will lose rewards even though they cannot lose their salvation. They lost their souls, and when their souls became callused and destroyed, it eventuated in the destruction of the body. So they faced this ultimate death. A negative response in unbelief brings about the condition that the people of the Exodus generation had.

So the Bible is full of people like this. You think about Ananias and Sapphira who did the same thing. They held with mental reservations the truth. They rejected and resisted. God permits only such testing, the Bible says, "as we can bear," and as we can cope with.

**Confession**

However, there is a way to avoid the discipline of God. 1 Corinthians 11:31 says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that he should not be condemned with the world." You and I are constantly faced with this problem of playing the role of the apostate, and of being rejectors of the Word of God. And when it happens, the way back is confession--that naming of sin according to 1 John 1:9. If we confess, it is removed.

It is not your business to go about trying to confess for other people. It is not your business to go about trying to get other people straightened out. God says that He is the God of vengeance who deals with every individual believer priest. In eternity past, God made a plan. It's called His eternal decrees. In that plan, he has taken into account everything that each of us is ever to face and ever to contend with. In that plan, God has already taken into account what His people will do. Just as he did with the Exodus generation, so He does with each one of us.

It is a serious thing to be a resister of the Word of God. It is a serious thing to resist it by just ignoring what we know is the mind of God. However, there is the protective covering of the confession of sin. If this is rejected, then God will deal with us individually in discipline of one kind or another, but it is not up to you and me to be running around one-on-one to be disciplining somebody else. The learning of God's Word brings purification of the soul. It's comparable to the laver of water in the Old Testament where the priest ministered this washing of the accumulation of dirt that we pick up as we go through the world. The Bible today shows us where we need the spiritual cleansing. It provides the means with the confession of sin.

Jude says that there are three historical examples of apostasy. "I want to put you in remembrance, though you know this well, that God delivered His people out of Egypt, and then because of their unbelief, after He delivered them, He also destroyed them in the wilderness." The pattern of apostasy in the life of a believer will not go undealt with by our God. That's why it is important to keep the records clean. God will listen, and He will wait. When confession is made, He will deal with us accordingly. However, restoration is inevitable. Beware of the role of an apostate. The United States is filled with people who are in that category. Many of them are there because they are ignorant of the Word. They can't even be negative toward it because they don't know it. However, the nation is rapidly moving on a destructive course because that is the inevitable end of apostasy. There is no other result.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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