

Week of November 19 - 25

False Teachers and Their Destruction (2 Peter 2)

Peter says, "There were false prophets in those ancient days just as there will be false teachers among you now. They'll tell lies about God and turn others against Him, but they'll have a swift and terrible end. Many will follow their evil teaching.

"They will tell you anything to get your money. But God condemned them long ago and didn't spare angels who sinned but threw them into hell until judgment day. He didn't spare any of the people who lived before the flood except Noah and his family, but destroyed the world of ungodly men with the flood and later turned Sodom and Gomorrah into heaps of ashes, making them an example for all the ungodly in the future to fear.

"But the Lord rescued Lot because he was a good man, sick of the wickedness he saw everywhere around him. The Lord can rescue you and me from the temptations surrounding us and continue to punish the ungodly until the final judgment comes. He's hard on those who follow their lustful thoughts and those who are proud.

"That's the pay these teachers will have for their sin. They live in evil pleasures and are a disgrace and a stain, deceiving others by living in sin on one side while joining love feasts on the other. No woman can escape their evil stare. They lure unstable women and train themselves to be greedy but are doomed and cursed.

"They're doomed to the pits of darkness. They proudly boast about their sins and conquests and, using lust as their bait, lure back into sin those who have just escaped from sinful living.

"You aren't saved by being good," they say, "so you might as well be bad. Do what you like; be free."

"But those who offer this "freedom" from the law are themselves slaves to sin and destruction. A man is a slave to whatever controls him. When a person has escaped from the world's wicked ways by learning about Jesus Christ and then gets tangled up with sin and becomes its slave again, he is worse off than he was before. It would be better if he had never known about Christ than to learn of him and then turn his back on the commandments that were given him."

Satan sends false teachers to bring heresies and error as though they were the Truth. If you have trouble responding to Mormons or to Jehovah's Witnesses who show up at your door, take a sober look at your understanding of the Scriptures. Remember James Jones (913 committed suicide in Guyana), Marshall Applewhite (39 committed suicide waiting for Heaven's Gate), David Koresh (184 died in Waco following his Branch Davidian's sect), Benny Hinn?

They pervert the Truth to their advantage, exalting themselves, not Christ. They use a few texts to keep their hold, but their interest is in making money. They claim they can change people, so we should examine anyone who claims to have supernatural power to heal or perform miracles.

The Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3)

Peter says this is his second letter, and in both of them, he tried to remind them about what they already knew from the prophets and apostles who brought them the words of Jesus Christ.

"In the last days, there will be scoffers who will do every wrong they can think of and laugh at the Truth. They'll say, "So Jesus promised to come back, did he? So, where is he? He'll never come! As far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained the same as it was since the first day of creation."

"They forget that God destroyed the world with a flood long after He made the heavens. God has commanded the earth and heavens to be stored away for a great fire on judgment day, when all ungodly men will perish.

"Don't forget that a day or a thousand years from now is like tomorrow to the Lord. He isn't slow about His promised return, even though it seems so. He's waiting since He's not willing that any should perish, and He's giving time for sinners to repent. The day of the Lord is coming, as unexpectedly as a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the heavenly bodies will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be burned.

"Since everything is going to melt away, what holy lives we should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along. We're looking forward to God's promise of new heavens and a new earth, where there will be only goodness. While you are waiting for these things to happen and for Him to come, try to live without sinning and be at peace with everyone so He will be pleased with you when He returns.

"Remember why He's waiting. He's giving us time to get the Gospel out to others. Paul has talked about these same things in his letters. Some of his comments aren't easy to understand, and some people are deliberately stupid and always demand some unusual interpretation. They've twisted his letters around to mean something different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of the Scripture, and the result is a disaster for them.

"I'm warning you ahead of time, so you can watch, lest you yourselves become mixed up too. Grow in spiritual strength and become better acquainted with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him, be all glory and splendid honor, both now and forever. Good-bye.

Jude Overview

Jude's book is a General Epistle (Apostolic Letter) authored by Jude, the brother of James, both of whom are half-brothers of Jesus Christ. Jude wrote it circa 75 A.D. The purpose was to address false teachings and illustrate a contrast between the error of heresy and the Truth of Jesus Christ. These false teachers lived evil lives and denied that Jesus is God.

The Character and Doom of False Teachers (Jude 1-25)

The shortness of Jude's letter shows the urgency of his belief that false teachers needed to be condemned and removed from the church. Jude was not going to waste time dancing around the issue. He saw church people and practices that should be condemned. Jude made it clear what he thought of it all, everything from Cain killing his brother Abel to the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

He wanted to expose the false teachers who had infiltrated the church and encourage Christians to stand firm in the faith and fight for the Truth. He recognized that false teachers often peddled their goods unnoticed, so he strengthened the believers by describing how terrible rebels were. Jude thought it was important for believers to take a stand against those working against Jesus

Christ. Believers were to do this by remembering the teaching of the apostles, building each other up in the faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and keeping themselves in the love of God.

1 John Overview

The author never identified himself, but Christians since the beginning of the church believe John, the apostle wrote it. He doesn't say to whom the letter was written. The author says he's part of a group of eyewitnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus, noting that "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also." Pinpointing the date it was written is also difficult.

John recognized that love comes from God, and he encouraged the believers to love one another. His first letter teaches that while it is essential to recognize the lines between Truth and error, it must always be done in a spirit of love.

The Test of Righteousness (1 John 1:1-2:17)

John begins by introducing Christ. "Christ was alive when the world began, yet I've seen Him with my own eyes and listened to him speak. I've touched Him with my own hands. He is God's message of life. God has shown Him to us, and we guarantee that we have seen Him; I am speaking of Christ, who is eternal Life. He was with the Father and then was shown to us.

"God gave us this message to pass on to you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness. If we say we are His friends but go on living in spiritual darkness and sin, we're lying. If we live in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from every sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the Truth. But if we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. If we claim we have not sinned, we are lying and calling God a liar, for He says we have sinned.

"I'm telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, Christ pleads for you before the Father. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins and brought us into fellowship with God, and He is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world's.

How can we know we belong to Him? By looking within ourselves. Are we trying to do what He wants us to do?

"Someone can say, "I'm a Christian on my way to heaven. I belong to Christ." But if he doesn't do what Christ tells him to do, he's a liar. Anyone who says he's a Christian should live as Christ did. This isn't a new rule for you to obey but an old one you've always had. Yet it's still new and works for you just as it did for Christ. As we obey this commandment, to love one another, the darkness in our lives disappears, and the new light of life in Christ shines in. Anyone who says he is walking in the light of Christ but dislikes his fellow man is still in darkness. But whoever loves his fellow man is "walking in the light" and can see his way without stumbling around in darkness and sin.

"I'm writing to you because your sins have been forgiven in the name of Jesus, our Savior. I'm saying these things to older men because you know Christ. And you young men, I'm talking to you because you've won your battle with Satan. And I'm writing to you younger boys and girls because you, too, have learned to know God our Father.

“So I say to you fathers who know God, and to you, young men who are strong with God's Word in your hearts, and have won your struggle against Satan, ‘Stop loving this evil world and all it offers, for when you love these things you show you don’t love God, since all these worldly things, these evil desires, the sex craze, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance are not from God. They’re from this evil world itself. This world is fading away, and these evil things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever.

The Test of Belief (1 John 2:17-29)

John says this world's last hour has come. You’ve heard about the Antichrist who’s coming. Many such persons have already appeared. This makes us all the more confident the end of the world is near. These people used to be members of our churches, but they never belonged with us, or else they would have stayed. But you’re not like that. The Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you know the Truth.

“Who is the greatest liar? The one who says Jesus is not Christ. Such a person is against Christ, for he does not believe in God the Father and His Son. A person who doesn't believe in Christ can't have God the Father either. But he who has Christ, God's Son, has God the Father also.

“Keep on believing what you’ve been taught from the beginning. If you do, you’ll be in close fellowship with both God the Father and His Son. He has promised us eternal life.

“These remarks about the Antichrist are pointed at those who would love to blindfold you and lead you astray. But you’ve received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is right. He teaches you all things, and He is the Truth, and no liar; and just as He has said, you must live in Christ, never to depart from Him.

“Stay in fellowship with the Lord, so when He comes, you will be sure all is well and won’t have to be ashamed. Since we know God is always good and does only right, we may rightly assume that all those who do right are His children.