

Remain Faithful

'Over Sunday dinner, a family discussed the sermon of the morning, "The Second Coming of Christ". The teenager said that he still had a lot of questions about the Lord's return. The father tried his best to answer him, but after a while he concluded by saying, "We do not have all the answers we might like, but we do have all we need to know. The best preparation is simply to live each day as if it were your last". "I tried that once", the teenager replied, "and you grounded me for a month!"

Sounds like that teenager misinterpreted what living each day as if it were your last actually means. Seems certain that he'd been listening to the world, and not God. Indeed, the world, captive under the devilish influence of satan, has a counterfeit of just about everything God does and says. These counterfeits often look just like Godly things on the surface, but underneath the shiny veneer, they're the complete opposite of the wondrously good things of God. They are all and entirely evil, ghastly, dark, and devoid of life. They all lead inevitably to death. Eternal death. Thanks to the 2007 movie of the same name, we are all too familiar with the concept of a "bucket list". While much of what the world can offer us in the way of diversions, distractions and experiences, pleasant or otherwise, are not sin in and of

themselves, our attitudes and motivations toward them determine whether the things of this world lead us into sin and sin into death. Or whether we can treat them all with a light touch, never allowing them to captivate us and divert our attention from the things of God. Sure, we live in this world, and it's without doubt the simplest and easiest way to live by going along with whatever the world is peddling at any given moment. But easy is not how we're supposed, purposed, and destined to live in this world. Our calling as believers is the highest. Our calling is to be with God in Heaven for all eternity. And that requires that we who have totally and completely put our faith in the loving Savior Jesus Christ, remain faithful, as if every day were the last day of our life.

We read today the entirety of the Book of Jude, rather the Letter of Jude. It's the fifth shortest book of the Bible, but it is jam packed with powerful truths and vital teachings, several of which are found nowhere else in the Holy Bible. I hope as you read along with it this morning that you were struck by how up-to-date it sounds. Why it seems like it could practically have been written yesterday! Jude, or in Hebrew "Judah", was written by Jude, brother of Jacob, which was rendered for hundreds of years misleadingly as James. James, that is, Jacob had become the leader, the bishop of the true "mother" church of all Christendom, the Church of Jerusalem. Jacob, James, was one of Lord Jesus' half brothers, making Jude another of the Lord's half brothers. There were two more, Simon and Joseph, and at least two or

more sisters. They were born to Joseph and Mary in the natural way after Lord Jesus was born. Roman Catholicism's erroneous doctrine that Mary is a perpetual virgin, and conceived without sin, the so-called Immaculate Conception, which was only established as Catholic doctrine in 1854(!), causes Catholicism to twist itself into knots to reconcile the fact that Lord Jesus had these other brothers and sisters. To make sense of their self-created contradiction, they claim that these other brothers and sisters of Christ were not born of Mary but from a previous marriage of Joseph! Lest there be any doubt, this is pure bunk, a mangling of God's Word in order to make it say what people want it to, and no better than the gyrations modern apostates go through to claim that homosexuality, transgenderism, and all manner of contemporary sexual immorality is not sin, and instead, God approved. These are all lies and deceptions from the father of lies, the devil, and believing them can result in an eternal residence in hell.

These modern-day fake scholars are fittingly described, indeed prophesied, by our Lord Jesus, and other prophets, and not least here by Jude. He describes them in verse 4: "They have perverted the message of God's grace into a license to commit immorality and turn against our only absolute Master, our Lord Jesus Christ". Far too many preachers and leaders today so accentuate God's grace to forgive us in Christ, without balancing that with warning that regardless whether sin is forgiven or not, sin always results in consequences. So the current hookup cul-

ture of our younger generations, is absolutely sinful, and results in serious consequences. Even if they cease the sin, repenting of it, God forgives them because of Christ's sacrificial blood, granting them eternal life in Heaven, but the consequences that play out in the remainder of their earthly lives remain. The seductive idea that we can sin all we want, as long as we repent before we die, sort of like that teenager's thinking at the beginning, is dead wrong, and deadly! Sin is deadly, and must not be tolerated, toyed with, played with, after we become saved, and have given our lives to Christ. Why would we want to offend Him Who suffered and died on the cross? Why would we want to add to the suffocating heaviness of the load of sin He carried on that tree? Do such people actually love Him at all? Are they really saved?

Jude spends the next several verses warning us against such false teachers, fake scholars, fraudulent prophets, giving us examples from history. In verse 6 he brings up the very ancient, prehistoric case of the rebel angels, called "Watchers" in the Book of Enoch. Jude says here that they "went outside their rightful domain of authority and abandoned their appointed realms. God bound them in everlasting chains and is keeping them in the dark abyss of the netherworld until the judgement of the Great Day". Genesis 6 speaks of them mating with human women who then birthed the angel-human hybrids called nephilim. The nephilim were giants and ruled over many tribes of human beings, becoming in the process, the demigods and mythological deities and

false gods that we know from many ancient religions of the world.

Jude actually quotes from the Book of Enoch in verses 14-15. Enoch is one of only two human beings never to have experienced physical death, the other being Elijah, being translated directly by God into Heaven. Enoch prophesies: “Look! Here comes the Lord ADONAI in His myriads of holy ones. He comes to execute judgement against them all and to convict each one of them for their ungodly deeds and for all the terrible words that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”. We see here yet again that sin is no laughing matter. It requires judgement to fall upon it, because God is a just God, and justice demands punishment for wrongdoing. The lesson being emphasized to us is that God’s grace is not cheap. Modern American Christians too often treat sinful behavior all too flippantly. “Oh, God will forgive.” But the proper response, as Jude declares and as our Lord Himself declares in Mark 13:33, 35 and 36: “you must be waiting and praying”, “I say to you, keep awake and alert”, “be awake at all times!”. No sloughing off allowed. Because it will just assuredly be when people have let their guard down against sinful behavior that “the Master of the house will return”, “that season will come”.

Folks, we’re in that season right now. The End Times are upon us. We’re just waiting for the last 1,290 and 1,335 days in the prophecies given to Daniel to commence. We can see, even portrayed in the godless, mass media, that the world is lining up to oppose Israel. Just last week, the International Criminal Court

in the Hague in the Netherlands, astonishingly, if not unexpectedly, issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. If that supposedly unbiased arbiter of justice for the whole world, arrogantly asserting that it knows what justice is and can dispense it such that the whole rest of the world must obey it, can issue such a blatantly biased, antisemitic judgement, then, folks, the whole world is in a whole lot of trouble! It looks like the prophesied grouping of nations is even now assembling for the Battle of Armageddon against Israel. We Christians and Jews must pray for peace. It may not yet be the time of the Tribulation, because a peace treaty that will give Israel permission to rebuild a temple on the Temple Mount, and establish peace between all the parties in the Middle East has not yet been promulgated. But it also looks like that could be in the offing in not too many more years, does it not?

Sure, we're relieved that former President Donald Trump has been reelected. But his reinstatement is part of God's plan. Just as it's also part of God's plan that each and every one of us also are alive at this very moment. We can not assume that things here in America will proceed swimmingly from now on. If anything, our duty to pray has only increased now that the administration will change in Washington, D.C. Though we may not feel God's presence in a special, supernatural way in our lives, we are to "remain faithful". For it is when we don't specifically feel God working that our faith is proven to be just that: real faith!!

