

**Contending for the Faith Against Apostasy (Jude 5-7)
Family Camp July 5th, 2012, AM Message**

Jude 3–7 (NASB95) ³ *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.* ⁴ *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* ⁵ *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.* ⁶ *And 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,* ⁷ *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.*

This Saturday, July 8th, also in Nevada City, starts another camp, with a different focus and message: ‘Camp Quest is designed for children from non-religious families: atheists, humanists, agnostics, freethinkers and others with a naturalistic world view... Camp Quest is...geared towards building a community for children from atheist, agnostic, humanist and other freethinking families ...an environment...supportive of critical thinking and skepticism’

Here’s from *Sacramento Bee* front page article I read awhile back:

‘...49 children from across the western United States arrived at the camp nestled in the hills outside Nevada City. It is one of five summer camps in the country for the children of atheists and other nonbelievers ... Here, it's all about celebrating their belief in not believing ... It makes them feel a part of a larger community...The children's ages range from 9 to 17. Most campers are from California; some traveled from as far as New Mexico ... the campers headed inside for a spaghetti dinner. One joked aloud that here, at least, they wouldn't have to say grace. Everyone who heard him laughed ... Rebekah Hinckley, 12, learned about the camp from her parents, who thought it was worth the drive from Oxnard and the \$450 cost ... "I don't really believe in God," said Hinckley. "But really, I'm just not sure." That's exactly the kind of thinking-for-yourself that is encouraged...’

That's not the kind of thinking Jude wants to encourage, atheistic or agnostic doubting. Those who have been misled or made to have doubts are in need of the mercy of God and His mercy through us:
²² *And have mercy on some, who are doubting ...*

But there's a difference with people he's talking about in v. 22 and v. 11, where he says "woe to them," (false teachers, v. 11, 4, 8-15). There is a difference between doubters (ex: Thomas) and deceivers or in other passages, those who deceive and those who *are being deceived*, and it is the ones who deceive and lead others astray who are guilty of greatest sin and deserving of greatest judgment. Those who've been deceived are responsible, but even more so deceivers who are professing *believers in and teachers of Scripture*, they get the harshest rebukes of the Lord and His Word. The concern of this letter by Jude is not primarily those in an atheistic or agnostic or naturalistic or humanistic camp, and my concern in bringing that up is not that I fear your heart will be drawn to their camp instead of ours. The fact that there is another camp like that is not a great danger – but there *is* a danger Jude is concerned inside our camp.

The greater danger for Christians is not obvious outside threats that are easily noticed, those our guard is up for. True believers don't dream of defecting to that enemy camp. The greater danger comes for Christians from inside the camp, where our guard is not always up, from people we would never dream are here to draw us away to their camp, from those who v. 4 says we didn't notice how they crept in (one translation says "secretly slipped in"). Acts 20:28:

*"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock ... savage wolves will come in **among you**, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and **from among your own selves** men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."*

This is a great concern of the NT writers, wolves among the flock, looking like sheep and acting like sheep, but their goal is to draw the sheep away after them. If Paul gave that warning to the church at Ephesus, who you could argue had the best doctrinal foundation of any church, Paul preached the whole counsel of God there for 3 years, Apollos who was "mighty in the Scriptures," preached there, Priscilla and Aquila, the dynamic husband-wife team helped Paul and even helped Apollos become a better preacher, Timothy was there as pastor (1-2nd Timothy), the Apostle John till his death?

If that message was urgent and relevant for that church, then this message is urgent and relevant for our churches today, even with the doctrinal commitments I know these brothers and churches are committed to, we need to always be on guard. There are person in our day as well, like v. 4, who distort the grace of God by their lips or by their life (or both), or who deny the only Master Jesus or His Lordship, or who deceive with other heresy that leads to apostasy.

We need to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and this is why. And what examples does Jude give us? They're all from the first book of the Bible, the book of Moses and esp. Genesis is what Jude talks about as he urges the church of his day to earnestly contend for the faith. Genesis is also where battles in our day also must be fought in a sea of spineless evangeli-fish:

- 'Maybe the flood wasn't a worldwide flood, some scholars say, Gen 6-8 is just a local flood; whatever floats your boat'
- 'Well, some people think God created everything in just 6 days, but some people who also teach the Bible say it was over billions of years, and others say God used evolution, so we don't really want to take a real stand on Genesis 1'
- BioLogos, a group making inroads with some evangelical leaders and colleges and seminaries, aggressively teaches evolution is compatible with inspired Scripture. Several BioLogos writers (one of whom my dad debated in Hong Kong awhile back) teach that Adam and Eve weren't real historical figures, but that Adam is just a kind of metaphor (which causes all kinds of theological problems in the NT).
- BioLogos has crept into conservative Christian homeschool conventions, and when Ken Ham sought to contend against their error, in the spirit of v. 3 as I discern it, Ken and AiG were expelled from the Christian homeschool convention, and not BioLogos, because they said Ken was "divisive." I wasn't there and don't know all the ins-and-outs or politics of what transpired, but I do know that contending earnestly for the faith, like v. 3 calls us to, is often unpopular in our postmodern tolerant world, including with some Christians

Some very well-respected schools and seminaries and scholars are not so sure issues related to creation and early Genesis are worth contending for today, like v. 3, of anything that is not a salvation or gospel issue. But Jude tells us it's not just about salvation, which he would prefer to just talk about, he says at the start of v. 3 that he wanted to write about just the gospel and Jesus and salvation.

But Jude felt compelled with urgency and fervency to tell us to earnestly contend for the faith of and in God's Word that has been delivered to us, and he especially has in mind the first book of their Bible, the book of Moses, and especially the book we call Genesis:

5Now 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 [you can read that story in the end of Genesis and start of Exodus] ... subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 6And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, [either referring to fall of before Genesis 3 or maybe Genesis 6] He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7just as Sodom and Gomorrah [Gen 18]

... 11Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain [Gen 4], and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. [also both stories from the book of Moses] ... 14It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied [that's Genesis 5]

As an aside, v. 14 shows the genealogies in Genesis don't contain gaps and are exactly accurate. Jude gives us 3 examples out of the book of Moses in v. 5-7, first from the end of Genesis and Exodus, and the second two from Genesis. These are warnings to those in the fellowship of God's people, that despite the blessings and favor of God they have enjoyed on some level in the past, if they aren't contending earnestly for the faith, if they tolerate false teaching in areas where Scripture is clear to the contrary, or if they walk on the slippery slope of "did God *really* say?" (Gen 3:1), or if they allow themselves be led astray by one among them, if they follow the way of apostasy (turning away from the faith) judgment comes:

1. The sin of Israelites (v. 5)
2. The sin of Angels (v. 6)
3. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7)

1. The Sin of Israelites

⁵ *I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all...*

Jude is the Jewish brother of James, both sons of Joseph and Mary, and therefore half-brothers of Jesus, so it's likely that he's writing to a mostly Jewish audience like his brother James begins his book "*To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad ...*" Jude assumes in v. 5 his readers know, or once knew, (ESV/NKJV) this history.

“... that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.”

If you have the ESV, it says “**Jesus**, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”

The earliest and strongest ancient textual support suggests ‘Jesus’ was the original reading of Jude’s letter, but later copyists changed it to ‘Lord’ (or in some copies, it says ‘God’). You can understand why: the end of Genesis and start of Exodus doesn’t use the name ‘Jesus’ (only God or Lord). So some copying Jude’s letter thought their copy must be wrong with ‘Jesus,’ so they fixed to Lord/God. Scholars may debate the original textually, but theologically Jesus did save His people out of the land of Egypt. Where do I get that?

Remember how the Lord revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush before delivering Israel from Egypt? Moses said ‘what name of God should I tell Pharaoh has sent me?’ The answer? “I Am.” Remember how Jesus revealed Himself to the people of Israel in John 8:58? “...before Abraham was born, I Am.” And it says they picked up stones to stone Jesus. Why? They knew He was saying “that God who existed before Israel existed and the same God who revealed Himself to Moses as ‘I Am,’ that was Me in that bush! I Am Yahweh, the LORD who called Abraham and Israel and saved Israel out of Egypt.” Jesus was claiming He was and is that LORD!

In the Exodus, Jesus wasn’t just pictured or prefigured in the blood of the lamb and the wrath of God passing over those covered by it. Jesus *was* pictured and prefigured in Israel Passover, but He was also present with Israel as well before and after. Jesus wasn’t doing nothing for the first 4,000 years of human history while the Father and Spirit did their best and then finally had to send Jesus down. Jesus has been involved with His people since Genesis 1, as the Creator (John 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1), walking in the garden with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 (John 1:18 says no man has seen God the Father at any time, the Son has revealed Him). I think He’s in pre-incarnate form in Genesis 18 who Abraham prays to about Sodom and Gomorrah before its judgment (v. 7). And the end of v. 3 says after delivering Israel from Egypt, some of Israel were still unbelievers, and were destroyed by this same Lord Jesus.

Turn to 1 Cor 10. Jesus said in Lk 24, there were things concerning Him in all the Scriptures of the OT, starting in the book of Moses.

1 Cor 10:1 *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea [speaking of God saving them through the Red Sea in Exodus 14, and it says at the end of v. 4, look at it, the rock that was following them in the wilderness was Christ. In some sense Christ Himself was sustaining the Israelites, not just physical drink or water from the rock – Jesus, the greater “Rock of ages” saved/sustained Israel]*

⁵ *Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.* ⁶ *Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.* ⁷ *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.”* ⁸ *Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.* ⁹ *Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.* ¹⁰ *Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* ¹¹ *Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.* ¹² *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.* ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

So what Jude 5 describes in just a few words, Paul also explains as Christ saving or delivering His people Israel from Egypt, but those who did not find their sufficiency and satisfaction in Christ alone, instead turning to ingratitude, insatiable cravings for other things, idolatry, or even immorality – the One who should have been their rock of safety or refuge became the rock who destroyed apostates.

What is an apostate? Someone identifying with God’s people but turns away from the faith, proving he never truly knew God in a saving relationship way. Jesus will tell them “*I never knew you.*” It is not the agnostic or atheist (the fool who says “there is no God”), it is the Judas who turns away, never to turn back (contrast Peter). It is those who saw the undeniable miracles in the days of Moses, or in the days of the prophets, or in the days of Jesus, but were still unbelievers. It’s a warning for us (v. 11-12) and an encouragement for true believers in v. 13, that God is faithful and does not leave us in a trial or temptation beyond His sufficiency and grace to endure.

Now turn to 1 John 2 before we go back to Jude. Is an apostate one who once was truly saved, and then later lost his salvation?

1 John 2:19 *They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.*

I think that's the best way to understand apostasy in Jude (you can turn to Jude again). The first apostasy warning that Jude gives is:

1. The Sin of Israelites (Jude v. 5)

2. The Sin of Angels (v. 6)

⁶ *And 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 ...*

Here Jude takes it up a notch, from man to angel, earth to heaven, and the point seems to be, if great and mighty angels who fell into sin are not exempt from God's judgment, how much more so are men who transgress *their* boundaries, men who *aren't so great and aren't so mighty* who have fallen into similar error and apostasy.

Who are these angels who left their proper dwelling and are being chained or bound or imprisoned till judgment? In Rev. 12, Satan defected from heaven and led a 3rd of the angels with him to earth in his apostasy and mass rebellion and they became fallen angels. But many fallen angels or demons since they rebelled with Satan, are not chained or bound or imprisoned awaiting final judgment in a place or pit of darkness (called in other places "the abyss"). The demons we read about in the gospels and book of Acts are actively moving all around, possessing and oppressing sinful men. But here we read of other sinful angels who left their sphere or domain and God is incarcerating or imprisoning these in a place of darkness, a holding cell, it seems, where they must stay and await judgment?

Thankfully what's not completely clear in Jude chapter 1 becomes more clear in Jude chapter 2. In Jude chapter 2 all the questions we have about this become clear ... are you all with me? Just checking if you're awake. There is no Jude chapter 2 to help us out with this, so turn back to 1 Peter 3, which may shed a little more light on this place of darkness or prison of darkness where some of these spirit beings are being kept in some sort of lockdown until judgment day.

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;¹⁹ in which also He went and **made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,**²⁰ **who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark ...***

So v. 19 speaks of “spirits in prison” who were disobedient in the days of Noah before the flood, Gen 6. But these imprisoned spirits are not all fallen angels who left heaven some time before Genesis 3, when the serpent came to earth to deceive Adam and Eve. But it seems some of these spiritual beings disobeyed in Noah’s day, and have been “spirits now in prison” since the timeframe of Genesis 6. When Jesus rose from the dead, He paid a visit to these imprisoned spirits to proclaim His victory over them (see also Colossians 2:15)

Now look at 1 Peter 5, where it’s clear that not all sinful spiritual beings or fallen angels are imprisoned, since their fall or Genesis 6. **5:8** *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

The devil is described by Peter as not being chained up and locked in a dark pit (like Rev. 20, in the future millennium), he’s prowling around freely on earth like a roaring lion, seeking to devour prey. But one day he will be cast into the abyss, imprisoned and chained after Jesus returns, and it may be some demons are already there. When Jesus was on earth, some demons begged Him not to send them to the abyss, apparently knowing of other demons that were cast into that darkness? Not all demons are bound there, some are? Turn to 2 Peter 2 which seems to also relate to what Jude v. 6 says. The context is false teachers, heresy, apostasy, and denying the Master in 2 Peter 2:1 (similar to Jude v. 4). Look at 2 Peter 2:4:

For if [or since] God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;⁶ and if [or since] He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;⁷ and if [or since] He rescued righteous Lot ... [skip to v. 9] then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment...

The context is very much the same as Jude. Peter says of apostasy

²¹ *For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.*

And just like Jude, Peter follows the sin of some fallen angels with the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sin (v. 4-6). And just like he did in 1 Peter 3, the sin of these angels is connected to Noah's day (2 Peter 2:4-5). In v. 4 Peter speaks of angels who had sinned who God cast into hell's "pits of darkness" -- similar expression to the bottomless pit in Rev. 20:1-3 where Satan will be cast during the millennial reign of King Jesus, bound, chained, and awaiting His final judgment eternally in the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10.

So when and why were *some* fallen angels cast there already and being kept or reserved for the final judgment and final lake of fire? We know Satan and many of his fallen angels are not there but are alive and well and active on planet earth (gospels, Acts, epistles). As you read v. 4-5 together, it's one sentence connected in context by "and" -- seeming to tie the angel's sin with the time of Noah and the sin of man that brought about the flood (Genesis 6). *MSB* note:

'These angels, according to Jude 6, "did not keep their proper domain," i.e., they entered men who promiscuously cohabited with women. Apparently this is a reference to the fallen angels of Gen. 6 (sons of God): 1) before the flood (v. 5; Gen. 6:1-3) who left their normal state and lusted after women, and 2) before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6; Gen. 19)'

So let's turn back to Genesis 6 and this is an area where scholars may disagree, and I don't want to be too detailed or dogmatic here. But it seems the sin of some fallen angels and fallen men reaches a climax and then God sends judges those fallen angels by removing these angels from the earth to a prison or pit of darkness, and God removes the sinful men of Noah's day by a flood of His judgment.

Genesis 6:1 *Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.*

"Sons of God" (like in v. 2) in the OT always elsewhere means angels and never elsewhere refers to humans (contrasted with *men*)

The immediate context of v. 1 uses “men” to refer to mankind, so when v. 2 says “daughters of *men*,” the idea is “daughters of mankind.” Some think “daughters of men” is daughters of the line of ungodly Cain vs. godly Seth’s sons (but Cain is not in context). The contrast is not godly sons and daughters of Cain, but mankind and “sons of God” (which, again, in the OT always means *angels*).

There are other views of Genesis 6:2 but they require the text to read differently, that “the daughters of some men” were married to “the sons of some other men” (rather than “sons of God” or angels)

The ancient Jews understood v. 2 to mean angels, even the LXX in 250 B.C. translated it “angels of God.” The Dead Sea Scrolls, and Targums, and extrabiblical Jewish writings before and after Jesus, Josephus, Philo, the early church, all understood v. 2 to be angels.

Christ’s statement thousands of years later about angels *in heaven* not marrying doesn’t rule this out and isn’t relevant to Gen 6:2, *on earth*, an apparently one-time act of rebellion by fallen angels not in heaven. The MSB suggests in order to procreate or produce offspring, they indwelt or possessed human male bodies. If you have more questions on that, you can talk to Pastor Rick or Verne afterwards. They assigned this controversial passage to me, so I’ll let my kind brothers share in the controversial questions. If you’re still not satisfied after talking with them, then study Jude chapter 2.

But for today, let’s wrap up in Jude chapter 1 for our last point:

1. The Sin of Israelites (v. 5)
2. The Sin of Angels (v. 6)
- 3. The Sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7)**

⁷ *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.*

One writer says: ‘Wesley warned, “Let, therefore, none presume on past mercies, as if they were out of danger.” In his dream John Bunyan saw that even from the gates of heaven there was a way to hell. Jude warns these men that, great as their privileges have been, they must still have a care lest disaster come upon them. It is a warning which each of us would do well to heed.’ (Barclay)

If some of the Israelites after all the miracles turned away, beware!

If some of the angels in heaven, with their privileged access to God, if they turned away in apostasy, never to turn back, beware!
 If Judas, with His privileges and access to the 12 disciples, and all that He saw up close and personal with the Lord Jesus Christ, if he turned away from Jesus hard-hearted to self-destruction, beware!
 If God judged them, He will do the same to those who do the same

And as our nation turns away from God, and is becoming more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah, as v. 7 says, “*in gross immorality ... after strange flesh*” (ESV “pursued unnatural desire”), judgment came on them, it says “as an example”—will America ever heed it? Immorality and homosexuality brought judgment on them, and the fire from heaven symbolized the finality of future judgment for all who turn away from what they know of God (Rom. 1:20) and God eventually gives them over to sin’s progression, bringing His wrath

Homosexuality was not Sodom’s only sin, but in Rom 1, it’s a sign of the progression of sin and judgment in God’s giving them over. The NKJV uses the word sodomy elsewhere for the sin of Sodom, homosexual acts once outlawed in every state of America in 1962 as a felony. As recent as 1986 the U.S. Supreme Court defended anti-sodomy laws by state govts, and it was only 9 years ago that the Supreme Court reversed the laws outlawing same-sex sodomy in Texas and 14 other states that classified it as a crime. But since then and before, what was once subject to criminalization has been the subject of celebration in parades, the very sin that God calls an abomination that brought condemnation on Sodom and Gomorrah.

And what began as a celebration in a small minority community has moved to media *normalization* of homosexuality, and now it’s become about the *legalization* of homosexual marriage and legality of state courts or governments to usurp the votes of the people on this issue. Beyond *legalization* of same-sex weddings, the agenda of the gay rights movement is pushing for everyone’s *affirmation* of homosexuality, and some will never be satisfied until biblical *declarations* of the sinfulness of homosexuality will result in our criminalization and incarceration. So what once was a crime just 9 years ago in some states, sodomy, some hope to make it a crime to speak against it or given an explanation of what the Scriptures say.

The intolerance of those who push for such tolerance is ironic, but even more ironic are professing Christians affirming gay marriage (ex: ‘Christian singer,’ PCUSA presbytery defying highest court).

Denominations or associations marrying/ordaining homosexuals are vivid illustrations of religious apostasy that Jude warns about. And the focus on this is only going to increase approaching 2012 elections, and the pressure on true Christians will only increase.

Anyone not giving affirmation to gay marriage is already vilified except our President who up until a few months ago said he didn't support it, yet has been "evolving" (was "against" it, now is for it). But we have a higher authority than what the most powerful man in the world finally admits to on national TV on this issue, or what our Supreme Court eventually decides on this, the high King of the universe calls homosexuality sin. What the world calls LBGT, God calls S-I-N. And because of sin, all sin, not just this sin, there is an everlasting fire of judgment coming, that is pictured in the fiery judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, v. 7

But I don't want to end on that note, I want to end with what Peter says in applying the same events as Jude 5-7 as we read earlier: the Lord knows how to rescue His people, just like He did Lot. And it is important to know that those God saved in the days of Israel in the wilderness in v. 5 were not better than others, and those God saved after the fall of angels and men in the days of Noah weren't better than the others in v. 6, and those God rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah in v. 7 weren't better, it was only by God's grace.

God did destroy many in the wilderness in v. 5, but He also gave grace to them when Moses prayed for mercy, and God extended mercy to those dying of snake bites if they would look in faith to the serpent on the stake, which Jesus applied to Himself in Jn 3. God did destroy the world in a flood after the sin of v. 6 but He also extended grace to Noah and the ark had room for more. God did not offer grace to angels who sinned in v. 6 – do you realize that? – there is no redemption or salvation offered to angels after they sinned, and God would be just to treat all of us humans the same way, but He doesn't give all what's fair, He offers us grace!

Before God rained down judgment in v. 7, He sent His messengers of grace who rescued Lot and his daughters, not by their merits but by God's mercy alone. We need to remember God's grace as we look back to this story, but we also need to remember Lot's wife, who looked back and turned back as a warning spiritually to us. And we need to remember God intends to use us as messengers of grace to rescue the perishing and to care for the dying in our day.

²³ *save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*

We need to have mercy on those who need to be saved, just as we did. Our sins may have seemed more respectable to us (ex: Jerry Bridges book *Respectable Sins*) but it's not just the wretchedness of Sodom and Gomorrah that is an abomination to God, it's the righteousness of religious people like us (Isa 64:6) that is offensive to God. When Proverbs 6 lists seven things that are an abomination to God, the sins include stirring up dissension and pride (also 16:5)

But here's where the good news of the gospel comes in, not just for people enslaved to sexual or homosexual sin but also self-righteous and prideful people like us whose greatest religious efforts are like filthy rags in God's sight: Jesus in the gospel takes away those rags and gives us robes of His righteousness, and takes away the bonds of sin and gives freedom in Christ. Even to those who feel they're born a certain way, or oriented to a particular sin, and can't change – from a human level it is true we are born in sin and can't change on our own – but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe and the power for transformation after we believe.

Paul told the Corinthians: *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers ... nor homosexual offenders¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

We all deserved to be destroyed like the Israelites in the wilderness in v. 5, but Jesus gave mercy to us! All of us deserve to be bound in eternal darkness in v. 6, but Jesus had mercy on us! Everyone of us deserve the judgment God brought on Sodom and Gomorrah but the Lord has mercy on all who say "Lord be merciful me, the sinner." If you've never truly done that in your heart, may you cry out to him today in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God and you can be justified and sanctified today. If you have been washed and transformed, praise God for His mercy, and show that mercy to others ensnared and enslaved by sin as you once were and still would be but for the grace of God. *Let's pray.*