

Teaching Series: Saved for Eternity

Title: Session 11 – The Post-Salvation Unbelief

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Chapter 2: Objections against Eternal Salvation

Jude 1:3–7 (The Post-Salvation Unbelief)

Jude 1:1–7 (NKJV)

- ¹ *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are **called, sanctified** by God the Father, and **preserved** in Jesus Christ:*
- ² *Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*
- ³ *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you **to contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints.*
- ⁴ *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- ⁵ *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, **having saved the people** out of the land of Egypt, **afterward destroyed those who did not believe.***
- ⁶ *And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;*
- ⁷ *as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, **suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.***

When we read this passage, some of us sincere believers might get the impression at first glance that Jude was warning and “threatening” authentic believers that if they didn’t keep the faith by behaving morally until the end of their lives and if they let themselves be influenced by those ungodly people infiltrated among them, they would lose their salvation and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude even provides two examples that imply this kind of thinking. The first example is about those people in Israel who were saved by the Lord out of Egypt at one time and then were destroyed due to their unbelief. The second example describes the angels who were once holy angels but then rebelled against God’s authority by deserting the realm God had established for them to abide in. They ended up in everlasting chains under darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment. These are thought to be the sons of God from Genesis 6:1–4 who came down to earth and married the daughters of men, giving birth to giants. Let’s see if this interpretation of Jude 1:1–7 is valid.

We Christians often have a significant disadvantage in interpreting accurately difficult passages because we have to rely only on what is written and even translated from other languages like Greek and Hebrew. Plus, the audience the Bible addressed belonged to cultures with certain customs, assumptions, and issues, many of which are foreign to us today. The fact that we were not present there to hear the tone and the attitude with which some things were said, as well as the cultural context and what was going on that required certain things to be said, should make us even more diligent and careful in our interpretation. When it comes to assurance of salvation, the epistle of Jude falls into this category of passages that require revelation from the Holy Spirit and increased attention to detail.

Jude says in Verse 3 that while he wanted to share with them things about the common salvation and about the blessings of salvation, he felt compelled to encourage them, to exhort and inspire them to contend for faith. Jude's purpose was to encourage these believers and give them hope, not discourage them with threats and fear. As a general principle of interpretation, any Holy Spirit-inspired Word of Scripture will never bring fear to the heart of the believer, but faith, hope, and comfort. Romans 10:17 says hearing of the Word of God produces faith, and 1 Corinthians 14:3 tells us any word of prophecy, which is like the Word of God and inspired by the Holy Spirit, brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to men. If the reading of this passage from Jude left us with more fear than faith and hope, if it created fear of losing our salvation, something must not be entirely right with our interpretation. This is one clue that Jude might not have referred here to the possibility of genuine believers losing their eternal salvation.

Coming back to Verse 3, let's notice that Jude doesn't encourage believers to keep the faith or to watch in it in the sense of holy living, or even of the good fight of faith. Instead, he uses a different expression: to contend earnestly for the faith. Which faith? The one that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Here we have a hint that Jude doesn't refer to holy living or trust in God, but specifically, to the body of faith, the accurate doctrines of it and of grace that were initially spoken to them by the apostles. Jude wants to encourage believers to contend for their Gospel beliefs and convictions and guard them from ungodly people and any other possible heresies, but not "contend" with themselves to not lose their faith. Why did Jude need to encourage them in this area? Because certain ungodly people crept into the church unnoticed, and they were changing the grace into licentiousness. They were denying Jesus Christ as God. From Jude's description, these people were unbelievers who consciously joined the church, trying to convince believers through arguments that maybe Jesus was not the only way to salvation, that perhaps they should be more tolerant with all people since God loves them, and that physical lusts are normal and cannot be denied.

The book of Jude seems a very appropriate book for the times we live in as well, and it's probably not by coincidence that it is located at the end of the Bible before Revelation. If we read it carefully, we cannot but notice that it describes in detail what is happening right now in the world with the LGBTQ propaganda, with science and technological development rising above God and trying to exclude Him altogether, and with an increasing number of influential people advocating that Jesus is not the only way of salvation and that salvation can be found in any religion of the world. For example, I don't know if you

have ever heard of it, but there is a book called *The Secret* which talks about getting whatever you want in life through the Law of Attraction and places all religions in the same category. This book calls God one immense energy field, one supreme mind, one consciousness, or one creative source of which all people are part, and every religion has its own name for it. Oprah Winfrey, a very influential person in the United States of America, who is supposedly a Christian, said publicly she didn't think Jesus Christ was the only way to salvation. She even presented seemingly solid arguments for the hearts and minds that are not anchored in the Word of God. Moreover, most of the movies done by Hollywood or Netflix lately promote the LGBTQ agenda in one way or another, in the name of love and tolerance. Not only that, but many of the movies intentionally put Christians in a bad light in contrast with science, as if these are very narrow, short-sighted, and always denying science. And this is not true. Influential people, and even church pastors, are beginning to promote the idea that adultery, homosexuality, and same-sex marriage are approved by God and not condemned by the Bible.

When we are bombarded left and right with such ungodly philosophies, especially from people who crept into the church, on one hand, we can begin to be discouraged as Christians and feel hopeless and overwhelmed. On the other hand, we might become silent, either because of fear that we might come across as too rigid, old-fashioned, or exclusive or because we want to avoid the ridicule and persecution. This is the kind of situation Jude has in mind. He attempts to encourage believers by telling them these ungodly people will have their share of punishment for what they are doing in the same way some of the people of Israel were punished for their unbelief after they were saved from Egypt, the same way the angels that left their realm were put in everlasting chains, and the same way the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished by fire for their sexual immorality. In each of these cases, the emphasis is on the punishment for specific sins, and we should not try to assign a meaning to every part of the illustration. In the case of the unbelieving people of Israel who were destroyed, if we consider the promised land to symbolize the new earth and the new heaven, which is the final stage of believers' salvation, then it looks like believers can at one point be genuinely saved the same way all the people of Israel were saved from Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, then lose their salvation on the way, before they die and get to heaven. However, the promised land of Canaan cannot symbolize the new heaven and the new earth because there will no longer be giants of sinful behaviors, sickness, and poverty to fight with, and it will no longer be a fight of faith. The promised land of Canaan is a typology of the supernatural life of Christ manifested in believers here on earth through the Holy Spirit, where believers live in holiness, health, prosperity, peace, joy, and righteousness. God destroyed physically the unbelieving people of Israel, but He never sent them back to Egypt, which would mean a loss of salvation. Many believers die physically before they get to fully live in the promised land of Christ here on earth, maybe because they put their faith in the Word only for the afterlife and don't believe in the whole Gospel of grace for the life here too.

Moreover, in the case of Israel's people, those who didn't believe in God and died in the desert didn't have faith in the promised land even before they crossed the Red Sea. Their unbelief was only revealed in the desert, but it was in their hearts from the beginning. Eventually, that whole generation,

except two people, died in the wilderness because of unbelief. Then in the example of rebelled angels, those beings were immortal spirits that, once fallen, could not be redeemed any more. Adam would have been in the same category after the fall if he didn't have a physical body that could die or if he had eaten from the tree of life after he sinned. The fall of those angels cannot be likened to the loss of salvation in believers. Furthermore, Jesus Christ didn't die for the sins of angels. All the examples Jude provides are from the Old Testament, where salvation through the blood of Jesus was not even available. His primary focus is to clarify that sins are still considered sins, even though we are under grace, and it affects us negatively, not that we can lose our salvation because of them.

Jude doesn't tell believers: "Be careful not to sin too much because otherwise, you will be punished by losing your salvation." Instead, he tells them: "Don't be discouraged, because these people will have their share of punishment if they don't repent both here on earth and after death." Jude encourages those believers to speak up and get involved in defending the integrity of the Gospel by condemning the sinful behaviors and the ungodly ideas of those people. Moreover, Jude helps the Christians recognize such people with evil intentions by describing their characteristics very clearly: they defile the flesh with sexual immorality, reject authority, and blaspheme majestic beings (Verse 8); they are hidden reefs at their love feasts, they care only for themselves, they are waterless clouds carried away by winds, and trees without fruits (Verses 12–13); they are grumblers, discontented, walking according to their lusts, and flatter people to get an advantage (Verse 16); they cause divisions, are worldly, and don't have the Spirit (Verse 19). Up to Verse 20, Jude explains everything those evil people do, but, from Verse 21 onward, he says: "But you, beloved, do what you have to do, don't mind them, remember what the apostles told you that in the last times there will be mockers who would walk according to their ungodly lusts (Verse 17), build yourselves on your most holy faith (Verse 20), and have compassion on those that doubt (Verse 22)."

There is one last indication that this passage is not about the believers' loss of salvation. Jude describes believers as being called, loved by God the Father, and KEPT or PRESERVED for Jesus Christ (Verse 1), beloved (Verse 3), and as those that God CAN PROTECT FROM STUMBLING and make stand blameless before His glory with exceeding joy (Verse 24). So, Jude doesn't think these people will ever lose their salvation, only that they might be discouraged, have certain temporary doubts, or lose the boldness to proclaim Christ.

Matthew 5:8 (The Pure in Heart)

Matthew 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ *Blessed are **the pure in heart**, for they shall see God.*

Some Christians interpret this passage in the following way: "If you, as a believer, ever want to see God and go to heaven, you need first to be pure in heart and continue to keep your heart clean of sin and lusts until the day you die." They also say, "If you don't keep your heart clean, you can lose your salvation at any moment." This sounds more like a threat to believers than an encouragement or a blessing.

However, when Jesus was preaching here, He had not died on the cross yet. There was no discussion about salvation through His blood, so this passage was not addressed to believers but to people without Christ in their hearts. People who believe in Jesus and His resurrection already have a pure heart forever. After Jesus died on the cross, the apostle Paul told the Corinthians believers the following:

1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NKJV)

- ⁹ *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,*
- ¹⁰ *nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God.*
- ¹¹ *And such were some of you. **But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

Notice in Verse 11 that Paul says in the past tense that believers were washed and were sanctified of all those sinful things. The only place where they could have been washed and cleansed that way was in their hearts, meaning in their spirits. It is a one-time deal, and it's something done to Christians by Jesus at the time of regeneration. It is not believers washing themselves continuously, but Jesus cleansing them by the Spirit of God once and for all. Titus 3:4–5 says the same thing:

Titus 3:4–5 (NKJV)

- ⁴ *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,*
- ⁵ *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy **He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.***

Jesus Christ saved us from sin through the washing of regeneration of the heart. The heart of believers has been completely recreated, that is why 2 Corinthians 5:17 says whoever believes in Christ is a new creation. Moreover, in Acts 15:9, when the apostle Peter tries to explain the Cornelius incident to the other apostles and elders, he says this:

Acts 15:9 (NKJV)

- ⁹ *and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.***

When Cornelius and his house believed in Jesus and were baptized with the Holy Spirit, their hearts were purified instantly by faith. So, indeed those pure in heart are the blessed ones, and they will see God because, first, they did not become holy by their efforts, and, second, they cannot ever lose that righteousness due to sinful deeds they might still do. Their purity of heart is stable, assured, because it's in Christ.

Matthew 5:20 (The Righteousness of the Pharisees)

Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ *For I say to you, that unless your righteousness **exceeds** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, **you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven.***

Some people take this verse and affirm the following: “If you, as a believer in Christ, will not get to a point where you live more holy than the scribes and Pharisees, then you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You will not be saved anymore.” What was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? They were fasting three times a week, paying their tithes regularly, praying often, and doing all kinds of good works externally, according to the requirements of the Law of Moses. In other words, their righteousness was a righteousness of good works, more specifically, of the works of the Law. And Jesus comes along saying that if a person’s righteousness doesn’t exceed the one of the works of the Law, by no means will she enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Does Jesus mean here that a believer must do exceedingly more good works than the Pharisees to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Definitely not! Jesus was referring to another type of righteousness that was to come through His death and was superior to the one given by the Law—that is, God’s gift of righteousness received by faith in Jesus Christ:

Romans 3:20–22 (NKJV)

²⁰ *Therefore by the deeds of the Law **no flesh will be justified** in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.*
²¹ *But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*
²² *even the righteousness of God, **through faith** in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.*

Finally, let’s take a moment to see how Paul describes the righteousness of the Pharisees:

Romans 10:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ *Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.*
² *For I bear them witness that **they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.***
³ *For they being ignorant of **God’s righteousness**, and seeking to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*
⁴ *For **Christ is the end of the Law** for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. He is the righteousness of God that exceeds the one of the scribes and Pharisees and which a person must receive by faith to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. A believer has become, once and for all, the righteousness of God in Christ at the time of salvation:

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

Matthew 7:13–14 (The Narrow Gate)

Matthew 7:13–14 (LEB)

¹³ *“Enter through the narrow gate, because broad is the gate and spacious is the road that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it,*
¹⁴ *because **narrow is the gate and constricted is the road** that leads to life, and there are few who find it!*

Surely, you have heard Christians preaching and advocating based on this passage that the narrow gate and the constricted way have to do with your obedience and your holy and godly living. They say things like: “If you live a holy and righteous life, you can be sure you are on the tight path, and at the end, you will enter eternal life through the narrow gate—that is, life after physical death. However, if you don’t live in continuous obedience, you are on the broad way that leads to eternal destruction, which means you will lose your salvation.”

Let's assume that this understanding of the text is accurate, you agree with it, and believe that it takes into account Christ's sacrifice for sins. Then, imagine for a moment that Jesus Christ never came on the earth, never died on the cross for humanity's sins and you encounter this passage in the Bible. Question: “Without Christ in the picture, would your interpretation of the text change in any way?” Most probably not. If it wouldn't change, then how did Jesus contribute to your entrance into life through His costly suffering and death? What is the significance of His death in this whole business of salvation? None, according to the most common perspective on this passage. This should be a sufficient signal for us that there is a problem with this understanding. What are the narrow gates and the constricted ways? What are the broad gates and the spacious ways?

Jesus says in Matthew 5:20, “For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Jesus uses the Law and its application in the Sermon on the Mount to convince the Jews of their inability to obtain the righteousness necessary to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus accomplishes this by amplifying the Law of Moses from a mere set of outward rules and requirements (the letter of the Law) to the inner motivations of the heart (the spirit of the Law). According to Him, these people were to have a greater righteousness than the holiest people known by them —that is, “the scribes and the Pharisees.” Thus, Jesus brings them to the point of seeking righteousness outside of themselves. In this context, Jesus then talks about the narrow gate vs. the broad and about the constricted way vs. the spacious one in terms of salvation. He was preparing them for the only righteousness that God will accept as the basis for entering His Kingdom, that is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus alone (Romans 3:21–4:25).

The word “constricted” (gr. *tethlimmene*) in Matthew 7:14 means “confined, narrow.” It has nothing to do with a difficult lifestyle, as some teach. The point is that you go through a gate and immediately arrive at the destination. In those days, you had the gate of a city that didn’t have a path on the other side of it. The path went underneath the gate but didn’t go beyond this entrance point, so, the moment you went through the gate, you were in the city. There was not a long path on the other side of the entrance leading to the city.

The word “enter” (gr. *eiserchomai*) in 7:13 means “to go into.” Matthew never uses this word in this kind of situation in terms of going toward something. It is always used to show that you are going directly into something. This is confirmed by the use of the Greek preposition *eis* at the beginning of the word *eiserchomai*, which is “into” in the accusative. If you were going to use a preposition in the Greek text to talk about going toward something, you would most likely use the word *pros*, “toward.” But the use of *eis* (“into”) with *eiserchomai* (“to go into”) indicates you are going through a gate that immediately brings you “into” your destination. Jesus is not talking about entering onto a difficult path that will lead to a destination.

The “narrow gate” refers to the same thing Jesus said in John 10:9 and 14:6:

John 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

John 14:6 (NKJV)

⁶ *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

The narrow gate is named that way because there is no other way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven except through faith alone in Christ alone. The entrance point is narrow because it alludes to faith in Jesus and no one or anything else. The way is “confined” or “restricted” in that there is no other one that leads to the Father except Christ. In contrast, the “wide gate” has many people entering through it because it is an extended entrance that immediately leads to eternal destruction. The “wide gate” represents all the other options through which people say eternal life can be entered. But Jesus is inviting His unsaved listeners to seek the “narrow gate,” which in fact is Himself. There is only one way to salvation, which makes it “narrow,” and this way is Jesus and Him alone.

In Matthew 18:3, Jesus responds to His disciples’ question about “being great” in the Kingdom by saying, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” For people to enter it, they must be “converted” or turned away from the cynicism and lack of trust that characterizes most adults and become like children who possess childlike faith. Little children must depend on others to do what they cannot do for themselves. Doing the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21) meaning to receive Kingdom entrance is choosing to place childlike faith in Jesus Christ that He

will do for you what you could never accomplish on your own. And that is the most challenging thing to do for a legalistic mind.

In the context of the passage, Jesus is talking about “false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). These false prophets stand in front of the wide gate that leads to destruction, while true prophets are standing in front of the “narrow gate” that leads to life. These preach the only way that leads to blessing and is “narrow” (John 10:9, 14:6). Only faith in Christ alone leads to eternal life (John 3:16, 6:40, 47, 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:4–6). Those who teach others a “faith plus something else” type of salvation are standing in front of the “wide gate” that leads into death both here and in eternity. Jesus says, “there are many who go in by it.” But those who teach a faith-alone Gospel are standing in front of the “narrow gate,” which is too narrow to carry your works baggage through it. Jesus says, “there are few who find it.”

Just because a Bible teacher or theologian has a large following does not mean they are teaching the right message. There are many false religions today that have millions of followers, but that does not mean they have found the “narrow gate” that leads to life. It is as if Jesus is saying, “Be careful about those who have a large following. They may be standing in front of the wide gate that leads into destruction.”

On the other hand, if a Bible teacher or evangelist has a small following, that does not mean they are not standing in front of the wide gate that leads to evil. If their message emphasizes that the only condition for salvation is faith in Christ, then they are standing in front of the narrow gate leading to life.