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Reformed Witness Hour

(www.reformedwitnesshour.org)

Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KARI	Blaine, WA.....	550AM.....	8:00 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA.....	99.9FM.....	3:30 P.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA.....	88.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KGDN	Tri-Cities Walla Walla, OR.....	101.3FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN.....	1050AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KLTT	Denver, CO.....	670AM.....	1:30 P.M./Sunday
KPRO	Riverside, CA.....	1570AM.....	11:30 A.M./Sunday
KSPO	Spokane, WA.....	106.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTAC	Moses Lake, WA.....	93.9FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTBI	Wenatchee/Moses Lake, WA.....	810AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTRW	Spokane, WA.....	630AM.....	9:30 A.M./Sunday
KYAK	Yakima, WA.....	930AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
WFDL	Fond Du Lac, WI.....	1170AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	102.9FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	1570AM, 92.9FM ...	4:00 P.M./Sunday
	NYC-Long Island, NY.....	101.5FM, 94.9FM, 104.5FM, 96.5FM ...	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA.....	101.5FM.....	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WPGF	Carlisle, PA.....	91.3FM.....	8:00A.M./Sunday
UK			
GOSPEL	Northern Ireland.....	846AM.....	8:30A.M./Sunday
Canada			
CKNX	Wingham, ON.....	920 AM.....	7:00A.M./Sunday

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

November 1, 2015
No. 3800

The Defiance of Foolish Dreamers
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear radio friends,

Introduction

Jude is concerned—very concerned—about the members of the church. Evidently, that against which Peter had warned in his letters was now coming true. Ungodly men crept into the church and now were having a large impact on the members of the church. The faithful were being influenced by the lifestyle and teachings of these lascivious men. It is for that reason that Jude is strong in his denunciation of these men. In the last several verses he likened them to the worst of sinners. They were like the wicked Israelites whose bodies fell in the wilderness on account of their unbelief. They were like the fallen angels who had rebelled against God and were now reserved in chains under darkness. They were like Sodom and Gomorrah, cities that were defiant in their horrible sexual perversions against God. And the judgment and ultimate punishment that fell upon those sinners would fall also upon these ungodly men that were plaguing the church of Jude's day.

The same is true of those who in unbelief indulge in such

sins today even when they go under the guise of Christianity. These are reserved by God, ordained by Him, unto this condemnation. Their punishment is sealed. Jude brings this up, of course, so that those weak believers who might be apt to follow them in their sins might be sufficiently frightened by their end.

Now Jude proceeds to explain to the church just how horrible the sin was that these men were committing. He uses the final example of Sodom and Gomorrah mentioned in verse 7 and presses home his point in verses 8-10. These are the verses we consider in today's broadcast. They read: "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." These ungodly, lascivious men were defiant in

their disobedience against God and His Son, Jesus Christ. They blasphemed them, railing on the power and glory of Jesus Christ.

THE DEFIANCE OF FOOLISH DREAMERS

I. Their Open Defiance

In our last broadcast we were careful to point out that the prevailing sin of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah was their defiance against God. The apostle Paul, in Romans 1, condemns the sins that characterized these people. He writes in the last verse: that they, *knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such sins are worthy of death*, not only do them but take pleasure in others that do them. Such is defiance: when a person challenges the right and authority of God to command him. He challenges the power of God to destroy him for doing what he does. He believes that God is powerless to command and to punish. It is this sin, Jude writes, that characterized the ungodly men who are now in the church plaguing it with their sin.

Notice how our text begins: “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh.” In other words, Jude writes, “Just like Sodom and Gomorrah these ungodly men in the church defile the flesh.” Just as the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah defied

God by carrying on in their sinful behavior with no fear of God, so also these men defy God. This revealed itself in this, first of all: they despise dominion. What that phrase means is that these men refused obedience to the One who rules. In other words, they despised, they rejected, the rule of Christ in their lives. They denied the Lordship of God and of Christ. This goes back to what Jude writes at the end of verse 4, “denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They refused to acknowledge and bow before the rule of Jesus Christ. That was their act of defiance.

And in that connection Jude adds: they speak evil of dignities. The Greek word for dignities makes reference to glories. As such it refers to the glorious attributes both of God and Jesus Christ. They mock, scoff at, deride the attributes of God and Jesus Christ that make up Their glory. Again, in short, this means they not only ignore the rule of God and of Christ, but they mock Them in Their rule. They blaspheme the attributes of God.

Now this needs a bit of explanation in order that we might understand what the defiance of these men was. You see, it was not as though they were wandering about from house to house railing on God and on Jesus. These men were disputing with faithful church

preached the Word. They *spoke* it. Today too the preaching of the gospel is still heard. And in that preaching we hear over and over again the warning the Bible gives us against mockers who would pollute the church of Jesus Christ. The church through her preachers heralds the return of Jesus Christ in judgment, and warns that this will not come to pass without the coming of ungodly men who would choke out the flame of the gospel in our midst. We live in the last times. We live at the end of the last time. Christ comes swiftly. The closer He comes the more those who scorn the faithful will appear and attempt to silence the witness of the church. When they do, will you remember the words of the apostles? We must make use of the preaching of the gospel to commit to our hearts and souls the Word of God! How precious is the exposition of God’s Word! What a sure defense is ours when we make use of the Word of God.

III. A Beloved Church

God gives us this Word because He loves us so much!

There are those in the church whom God will destroy, but He will never allow His true church to be destroyed. He loves us! Jude points this out in one word that he uses in the beginning of verse 17. The word is “beloved.” This word simply means “loved ones.” We, saints of God, are God’s loved ones. We are His children and the sheep of His pasture. He knows our discouragements. He knows we can grow weary in our work. He knows that the church is always assailed. So He assures us that we are His loved ones and that He will preserve us as we remember His Word. How sweet the sound of that is—especially when we are down and almost ready to give up in our battles against error.

God loves His church. We are the apple of His eye, His cherished possession. And He will preserve us. He will give grace to those who are busy in His Word. They will remember.

And in this way we will be preserved. God grant us that assurance that we might be the more diligent in His Word.

warned the church to stand fast against those who would oppose the truth in doctrine and life.

Now, here is the important part: *remember* these words! Commit them to memory and never forget the words of the apostles. That admonition is all

important to the church of Jesus Christ today if she is going to remain faithful to Christ.

Do not be intimidated, do not be made to doubt, do not get lured away by these mockers. But remember the words of the apostles spoken to you.

To remember these words, fellow believers, takes a work of God's grace. This recalling or remembering is an act of faith and belongs therefore only to those who are indeed saved in the blood of Christ. Faith is knowledge. It is not a blind following after one's lusts or feelings as if these are the voice of the Holy Spirit. Faith is knowledge—a knowledge of everything that is taught us in the holy gospel as recorded for us in the Word of God. Faith has as its objective content everything written by the prophets and apostles in the Scriptures. Remembering these words is not merely an intellectual exercise, although it is highly important that we commit the Scriptures to memory.

But this is a spiritual exercise as well. It is the exercise of a Spirit-guided mind so that, as we read and memorize the Bible, that Word of God takes root in our hearts and becomes part and parcel of our lives. In order to defend ourselves from the

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The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit! How much time do you spend with your Bible? How often we say this from the pulpit! We are so adept at making up excuses for ourselves! “We try to do it as often as we can but you know how life gets in the way. I am busy with work. I am away at the time we have our family devotions. I want to do it more, but I do not have the time.” How are we going to remember what the apostles say if we do not read the Word of God? How are we going to be guided by the Spirit into a holy life if we are not found in the Bible? How are we going to defend ourselves against wicked men if we do not spend time with God's Word? A failure to read our Bible and to pray results in an unholy and ungodly life.

But there is something more yet in this admonition Jude gives us. The apostles first of all

leaders, including Jude himself no doubt. They were arguing against other faithful members of the church as well. In these disputes those who were faithful to Jesus Christ and to God pointed out their error by pointing them to who God is and who Christ is. These men wished to contend that God was a God of love who did not judge them and frown on them in their chosen lifestyle. When they were pointed to the truth that God was also righteous and had established His commandments and in His justice would judge men according to the standard of His law, these men vehemently denied God. When pointed to the truth that God was holy and demanded that we be holy as He is holy, these men spoke evil of this glory of God's holiness. In this way these men were speaking evil of the glory of God and His attributes. And when it was clearly pointed out that they were denying the very reason Christ had come into this world, that is, to deliver us from the sins of our flesh and to make us holy, they would deny such a Christ too. In this way they were despising Christ's rule or dominion. They made mockery of the God and the Christ they were called to serve by denying the God and Christ of Scripture.

Jude describes this haughtiness, this defiance, in this way in verse 10: “But these speak evil of those things which they

know not.” Of course this was true of them. When God's people are saved in the blood of Christ, their hearts are changed by the Spirit of Christ in them. They come to know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. That knowledge gives them an understanding of Christ in all His rule and all the glorious attributes that characterize Him as God. That is a given. These ungodly men in the church were still lost in the darkness of unbelief. They were reserved by God in those chains of darkness. This means there was no true knowledge of who God is or who Christ is. This is why they spoke evil of those things that they know not. They did not know God. They did not know Christ. They did not know of their dignities, that is, their glorious attributes. They did not truly know what it meant that Christ ruled over them, exercised dominion over them. They did not know Him as their Lord and Master.

Because there was in them no true knowledge of God, no true faith, these men could readily mock and scorn God's people when they appealed to God's holiness, righteousness, and justice, or when the saints argued that Christ ruled in sovereign power over His people and demanded of them that they walk in holiness as well. Today too there are many who claim to be Christians but who know

nothing about God. They talk of God as a God of love who would not hold anything against anyone. God is not offended by what we do, but loves us unconditionally. Love overrides all. But there is no knowledge of how God's love stands in perfect harmony with God's holiness and justice. And we can go down the list of God's attributes. Many insist that God is not immutable. He changes His mind. God is never angry. God does not send the bad things of this life. There is a prevailing ignorance of who God is and therefore who Christ is too, and what Christ has truly accomplished for us in our sanctification.

Because they do not know God, because they are not truly converted, because Christ does not work in their hearts by His Spirit, they defile themselves with fornication, giving in to their sexual appetites and then saying, "Don't judge me! Jesus is my Savior! I am not ruled by laws! I am free to walk in the way I feel, and don't you dare judge me!" That is what Jude refers to when he says in verse 8 that they defile the flesh. He simply makes reference back to their lasciviousness.

But we ought not to over-

look the relationship between this and the phrases following.

While defiling themselves with the sin of fornication, they despise dominion and speak evil of dignities. Their sin of licentiousness—their lack of sexual restraint—led them to blaspheme God and the work of Christ.

Jude accurately describes this defiling of the flesh in the latter part of verse 10: "But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." Jude wants us to take a step back and truly examine what is true of those who walk in open fornication in all its forms. They are as brute beasts, that is to say, they are as irrational beasts, animals that do not have the faculty of reasoning. But animals do know what to do sexually in order to reproduce. God has created that knowledge in them naturally. These ungodly men had no true knowledge of God. But they did have a knowledge of what it takes to reproduce sexually. But in these things, God's Word here tells us, they corrupt themselves, they destroy themselves. By means of defiling their flesh they work for themselves condemnation before God for which they will be destroyed. Again, we cannot

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II. A Sure Defense

How could the faithful saints in the churches withstand such evil men? Jude gives them one sure defense. We read in verse 17, "Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." The child of God defends himself from those who seem so convincing by remembering. And what must be remembered are the words that were

spoken before by the apostles of Christ. That is to say, the saints must remember what the apostles preached and taught in the past. For example, Peter had warned that these mockers would come. Jude now points out that they had come just as Peter had written. But Peter was not the only one who had given warning. Paul did too in much of his preaching and writing. And obviously, all the apostles had done so when speaking to the early churches. The saints had heard the apostles of Christ. They knew that these apostles had spoken authoritatively and even infallibly. They were apostles, after all, those appointed by Jesus Christ Himself to preach and record the Word of God. Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church gave to His church the special

office of the apostles. The words that they spoke and recorded in Scripture are the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ in this world. What the Spirit says to the churches was spoken and recorded by the apostles.

Jude calls attention in particular to the words they spoke to the churches. Notice in verse 17: "Remember ye the words that were spoken by the apostles." Or again in verse 18: "How that

they told you there should be mockers." That is significant because it directs our attention to the blessed truth of the preaching of the gospel. Yes, the apostles recorded objectively in the Scriptures the Word of God. But these Scriptures were not yet available to the very early church. The letters of Paul and Peter and John had not yet been collected and compiled into what we have today in our Bibles. But the apostles had imparted the same truths to God's people then through the spoken Word. They preached the gospel. And in the gospel that they preached was included a strong warning to the church of those mockers that would arise in the church to plague her. Not only did the apostles preach that Christ was going to return in judgment at the end of time, but they also

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ye the words that were spoken by the apostles." Or again in verse 18: "How that

These men were separating themselves from the faithful in the church. They had not left the church. But they were dividing themselves from the faithful. I believe a better translation is: they were creating division in the church. They were guilty of creating schism and strife in the church. They were separating themselves and forming their own little click in the church itself. They should have been excommunicated from the church, but this was not happening. Jude therefore explains that these ungodly men were dividing the church and in so doing were destroying its blessed unity.

And then, too, Jude reminds the saints that these men were not led by the Spirit! Notice verse 19 once again: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." They did not have the Spirit as they claimed to have. They were devoid of the Spirit.

How can we know that? You see, when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, He cleanses us. He makes us holy. To be holy means that we are consecrated to God and God's service in our lives. It means that we are now

willing to deny ourselves and the lusts of the flesh. We are willing and ready to satisfy God rather than our base desires. We eschew sin and love the right! This is true because the Spirit works in us sanctification. By means of the Spirit we become committed to the Word of God of which the Spirit is the author.

This simply means that the Word of God is now inscribed in our hearts. And since that Word of God is in us, so also is the law of God. Obviously, we do not try to earn God's favor or merit anything in the sight of God by keeping His

law. Then we would be under the curse. But that law becomes part and parcel of our lives! We love God's commandments. They are the desire of our hearts! And when all of this is true of us, then we will walk in those commandments. We will enjoy keeping God's Word. That is the fruit of the work of the Spirit in us. And if this is not seen in us, the Spirit is not working in us! Plain and simple! These ungodly men were devoid of the Spirit and their fruits showed it. One cannot be saved in the blood of Christ and continue on in his sin unrepentantly as if he is not doing anything wrong in God's sight.

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overlook Jude's scathing condemnation of the sin these men who had crept into the church were committing. Jude loathed their sin because God loathes this kind of sin. Certainly, this comes as fair warning to our society. But also to the sinful flesh in us that is attracted to this sin so prevalent in society and in the church of today.

II. Their Utter Foolishness

In their disputations against the saints these ungodly men went to an extreme. There is a point when debating the truth of a matter a person can go beyond the limits of proper debate. Perhaps that person becomes angry and is filled with hatred toward the one with whom he carries on a disputation. Then he begins to make accusations that are not true but with which he rails on another. This can be true of those who have the truth on their side as well as those who do not. The example Jude uses in verse 9 of our text addresses the way that these ungodly men handled themselves in their dispute with the church. They brought railing accusations against the saints,

the church, and really against God Himself and Christ the Lord of the church.

The saints were called by God to contend for the faith. This they were doing. They disputed with the heretics in the church. But during the course of their dispute their accusers began to rail upon them. They

did not use sound reasoning, but they accused the faithful falsely. Instead of using arguments to defend their point they went on the offensive and began to accuse the faithful of wrongdoing. The railing accusation that was brought against the church was this: the church was guilty of unloving condemnation of others. The church was judgmental and harsh. The laws of Moses were abolished by Christ. Now these hard-nosed people do not let others live in their liberty.

Jude brings to light the utter foolishness of this type of argument by bringing up the example of Michael in his disputation with the devil. The devil is the great deceiver. His name means liar. The devil uses every device available to argue against the truth. The disputation the devil had with Michael the archangel was over the body

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of Moses. Now, this example Jude raises needs some explanation because it is not recorded anywhere in Scripture other than here. That does not make what Jude writes here spurious or questionable. Jude simply draws from something that was common knowledge among the Jews. Satan disputed—not with God, of course. Who could argue with God? But Satan argued with Michael, one of the chief angels among the rank and file of good angels who defend the cause of God’s people. We read the account of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34. God led Moses, a perfectly healthy man at the age of 120, onto Mt. Nebo and there *took* the earthly life of Moses. The death of Moses is indeed unique. God took Moses’ life and then buried him in a valley of Moab. Yet, no man knows where God buried Moses. Neither may we think of this burial by God as God carrying the body of Moses to a grave and then burying him. God is not a man. *There was no human burial.* Not only was Moses’ death unique, therefore, but also his burial. Something took place with the body of Moses that would cause the devil to contend with Michael over that body. The only explanation to this is that Moses’ body was not given to see the corruption of the grave. Through the special death and burial of Moses, God must have prepared the body

of Moses to be received up into heaven—just as God had done with Enoch in translating him and Elijah who, body and soul, was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire.

This would be the reason for the disputation the devil had with Michael. The devil argued that God had no right to keep Moses’ body from the corruption of the grave or to be taken into heaven. He had no right because the ground of a person’s resurrection is that of the death and resurrection of the Savior. Christ earns for God’s people the resurrection and the life. Without the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our bodies cannot be raised. Well, in the Old Testament Christ had not yet come and accomplished that work in His resurrection. So the dispute. Satan accused God of unrighteousness. Of course, we know better. God sees us righteous in Christ from eternity. He chose us eternally in Christ. He viewed the Old Testament saints in the blood of the coming Messiah. But Satan disputed that. If Satan indeed could thwart God’s eternal plan and Christ would not accomplish salvation, then Moses’ body had no right to be in heaven already.

And his argumentation from that point of view, though fallacious, nevertheless held some weight. For that reason Michael refused to bring railing

they desire to do. A life of holiness and discipline is not a part of the picture. There is no denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. Our society is filled with self-centered, self-seeking, selfish people who are into self-gratification. This results in ungodly lusts. Desires to fulfill—not what God wants—but what will make us feel good about ourselves.

These men, we are told, are mockers. We have already referred to the content of their mocking. The church preaches the return of Jesus Christ and with it the final judgment. These men mock the church for teaching this. They view those saints as odd, strange, who with uplifted eyes look for that coming of Jesus Christ. The mockery of ungodly men who have crept into the church even goes beyond this. Such men denounce those saints who would lead holy lives in the midst of a world gone wild in its sins! They attempt to find fault with that church that remains faithful. “You are not culturally relevant anymore,” they accuse. “Your worship lacks feeling! Your doctrines are so old, antiquated! You oppose the good of society when you oppose abortion and same-sex marriage.” And so the criticism goes on. Today there are countless leaders of churches guilty of hawking the gospel in order to get rich. Obey God and get rich, says the pros-

perity religion. And those who would maintain holiness in all of these areas and a host more areas in life are not just ignored. They are openly criticized and ridiculed by the wicked world, yes, but also by many in the church world. These mockers have made their way into the church.

They had made their way into the church of Jude’s day too. But then they did so on a smaller scale. These men, though loud and influential, nevertheless had not taken over the church as we see in so many churches today. But they were of influence. Of course! They were vocal and sure of themselves. New believers especially, but even seasoned believers, can be quite intimidated by them and influenced by them. I mean, these men sounded so sure of themselves. They put forth their arguments! We are no longer under law! Christ has set us free from the law! We do what we feel is right by means of the guidance of the Spirit! The Spirit in us alone tells what we may or may not do. The result in the church is that many were following after them in their ungodly ways. A little leaven leavens the whole lump!

Jude reminds the saints that these men “separate themselves.” I suppose that this translation of the Greek here can be properly understood.

consider today in verses 17-19 of Jude's epistle. Let me read those verses. "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." Today we are called to remember and believe that warning given us by the prophets and apostles concerning the second coming of Christ.

REMEMBERING THE SPOKEN WORD

I. Divisive Mockers

How easy it is to become discouraged as believers in this world. We stand against such overwhelming odds, it seems. The faithful church that remains true to God's Word is so small in comparison to the false church that today embraces the ways of these ungodly men of Jude's day. Faithful churches are often ignored, labeled, and despised. The cause of Jesus Christ seems to languish in our society. And that can be so discouraging for believers. This is why Jude speaks words of encouragement to us in the last verses of his letter. In the

last days, Jude explains, there will be mockers—those who spurn the cause of the Christ of the Scriptures and will ridicule, make fun of, deride those who would maintain the truth of Scripture. So...how is this an encouragement to God's saints? Because these things must take place in order that Christ might come. Jesus Himself teaches His church this in Matthew 24. Those who attack the cause of Christ are themselves a sign that Christ comes in judgment. Well, these evil men who have crept into the church are just such men. They walk after their ungodly lusts.

They have no fear of God's retribution. They only seek to fulfill their own desires. Whatever makes them feel good.

This is also the idea behind the word "sensual" used in verse 19. It refers to the base desires of our flesh—the animal desires, the desires of sin-guided senses.

This describes the very day and age in which we live. The wicked of this world do what makes them happy. Even much of Christianity is based on a feel-good mentality. People seek a God and a Christ that make them feel good about themselves while allowing them to do what

accusation against Satan but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!" God will deal with you as He sees fit. God may not be questioned. He will indeed rebuke you. But these ungodly men in Jude's day were fools. They had no fear of God before their eyes. In their foolishness and error they did bring railing accusation against the faithful in order to make themselves appear to be right. One receives the impression that they took the attitude that the louder they talked, the more right they would appear in people's eyes.

III. Their Wicked Dream

But these men were dreamers! They thought that what they were standing for was true, though it was not true, just as when we are dreaming we think something is reality when it is not. These men foolishly argued for something that was as false as false could be. It was not reality. They were dreamers. They believed that defiling the flesh was perfectly fine though it stood blatantly against God's law. This is why we say their dreams were wicked dreams. What they thought was right was contrary to the law of God.

And their railing accusations against those who were faithful were empty threats.

But there was one other way these men were dreamers. They

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believed that they were not going to meet with condemnation or punishment for what they did. Jude says that in those things

in which they commit such folly they destroy themselves! They witness against themselves and their destruction is sure. No one who speaks out against the God and the Christ of the Scriptures will escape destruction.

Again, we find in this a word of encouragement to the saints. These men may in their disputing despise Christ's dominion; they may speak evil against a holy and just God. Their arguments might bring accusations against God's faithful. They may attempt to dispute with us in order that they might continue in their sin. But we need not be intimidated by them. They seal their own destruction in this way. And God will indeed preserve His church—but that in the way of contending for the faith.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

November 8, 2015
No. 3801

Spots in the Church's Love
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

Jude warns the church of his day that certain men had crept into the confines of the church—ungodly men—men who were not believers. They had revealed their unbelief by living a life of lasciviousness, that is, a life of lust and wantonness. These men were bold in their sins, defiant against God and the church. These men defied the officebearers in the church and continued on in their lust and sexual sins as, to use the words of Jude in verse 10, brute beasts corrupting themselves. In our last broadcast we took special note of their defiance. They despised dominion, that is, they despised those who had the rule in the church. They spoke evil of dignities, that is, they spoke out against God Himself and God's glory, His attributes. Jude tells God's saints that these ungodly men in their defiance were as Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities God destroyed.

In verses 11-13 Jude pronounces woe upon these men in their sin. We read, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily

after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." These wicked men had entered into the folds of the church and even now were destroying the fellowship and unity of the saints. Where the church is a place of love and charity, they had made it a place of contention by their murmuring and complaining. To prove this, Jude points out that these men were spots in the church's feasts of charity.

**SPOTS IN THE
CHURCH'S LOVE**

I. The Meaning

The instruction of the few verses we consider today swirls around the phrase "feasts of

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

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Remembering the Spoken Word
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

In the verses we have been considering up to this point in our study of Jude we find that he hammers on ungodly men who had crept into the church unawares. His whole epistle is leveled against these men, warning the faithful against their errors, and without fear castigating these unfaithful members of the church. Jude categorizes these men among those unbelievers who of old perished in their unbelief and ungodliness. Then, in conclusion, Jude warns of the judgment of Christ on these men when Christ returns.

But Christ had not returned. Where was this return of Christ? Where was this supposed judgment of which the apostles had forewarned? These ungodly men who had no fear of God were even now scoffing, that is, denouncing the doctrines of the apostles and those who maintained that Christ was indeed coming in judgment. And, as we all so well know, their criticism was intimidating. The faithful in the church cowered beneath the accusations of these wicked

men in the church. Is it true? Is Christ coming again in judgment? Are these men wrong? How easy it was for the saints to begin doubting.

And if it was easy for them to doubt then, how much more so for us to doubt today! Have things changed? Christ has not come. The final judgment has been delayed for over 2,000 years now. There still are those in the church of today—in fact, their number has increased a thousandfold—who deny that Christ comes swiftly to judge ungodly men. It is loudly proclaimed today that God will not judge anyone to condemnation. He is a loving God. Why would Christ come to cast men into hell? Is there even a hell? Perhaps our hell is only what we create on earth? Remember! Remember! Do not forget what the prophets of old warned of, even from Enoch. Do not forget what the apostles of Jesus Christ have spoken! And do not be deceived by scoffers. Christ comes in judgment! Just because Christ's sentence against evil men is not executed speedily does not mean He will not come to execute that sentence. That is what we

longer is angry with us because Christ has reconciled us to God. God continues to love us for Christ's sake.

In the second place, Christ builds the church as the Lord and King of the church. He sits in the heavens and reigns over His people and His church. He guards her, He gathers her, He calls her, He guides her, and He establishes her. Our enemies cannot prevail against us because our faithful Jehovah has appointed Christ as our Head. And He is the captain of our salvation. For all of this we have great reason in this day to give God thanks!

III. The Praise

So, we read verse 1, "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." We cannot overlook the various phrases used here in this verse. It is good to sing praises. It is pleasant to sing praises. Praise is comely, or perhaps better, praise is appropriate. Singing praises to God in thanksgiving for all He has given us is good. It is honorable. It is holy and sanctified. Singing praises to God is one of the chief ways of showing thankfulness. Besides, singing praises is pleasant. It is beautiful. It is pleasing to God. His purpose in all things is the glory of His own name. Sing-

ing is God's appointed way to bring glory to His name through you and me. When God hears us sing His praises, it pleases Him. It does not matter if we are on tune or not! God loves singing. And singing praises is also appropriate. This means that singing is the will of God for us. He desires that we sing. Singing is an act of worship. It is an act that is perhaps more pleasing to God than any other ceremony that churches enjoy adding to their services.

But we ought to remember well that singing is indeed a way that we give thanks. *That* we may not forget. Singing is not for our pleasure only. Certainly, it is not for our entertainment, as so many others want to make it. Singing is something that God's people do together as a way of giving thanks to God for all His benefits. We thank God by singing about the bounties of the field that He has again provided us. And we thank God for building His church throughout all the ages! So here is the injunction: Praise ye the Lord! Praise Jehovah! Who? You! Me! Praise Jehovah! Sing! Give thanks! You and I who are God's redeemed may not forget to do this. And when we give thanks, do not forget whom we are thanking! Forget not all of God's benefits! And give Him praise today! He has built His church! Praise the Lord!

charity." We read of this at the beginning of verse 12, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear." We are interested in what these feasts of charity were in the church. The term "charity" is not unfamiliar to us. It comes from the Greek word for love. That is its basic meaning: love. The feasts of which our text speaks were love feasts. They were called agape feasts. We will return to that in a moment. But we must recognize that these feasts flowed out of a genuine love that God works in the hearts of those whom He saves. When God calls His people out of the darkness of sin and unto salvation in Jesus Christ, He performs a wonderful work of His grace in their hearts. Those who were at one time characterized by hatred against God and the neighbor have become new creatures in Christ. The principle of a new life has replaced that of the old life of hatred, hostility, bitterness, and envy.

You see, God is love. He is not just a God of love, but God *is* love. Within His divine Being there is an intimate life of love and fellowship that God carries on within Himself. He is

a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is between these three Persons within the Being of God a perfect life of love that binds them together into one. The love that God has in Himself is unknown to the wicked, unbelieving world. It is an unchanging love rooted in the holiness of these Persons. They are drawn to one another in that holiness, and in knowledge they seek one another. That love within God He has chosen to reveal to the creature outside of Himself, namely, to man. For that reason God, in the highest act of love, came down to us in the Person of the Son. The Son of God was born into our human flesh and dwelt among us. Christ was sent here with a purpose, of course. He was sent here for the specific purpose of laying down His life on the cross in order to save those

whom God had given to Him from eternity—God's elect. Christ Himself declared in John 17:2 that He had received power from God to give eternal life to as many as God had given to Him.

The death of Christ was necessary, of course, because all men as they fell into sin in Adam lost their love. They became

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engulfed in hatred—hatred toward God and the neighbor. That is the very nature of sin—it is hatred and pride. But God sent His Son into the world, and Christ took upon Himself the sins and the hatred of His people and bore God’s punishment for those sins. Furthermore, Christ both through His death and His resurrection destroyed the power and dominion sin had over us. By destroying this power of sin, God has shed abroad His love in our hearts. That love of God now found in us is a result of the work of sanctification in our hearts. God has cleansed us from sin and has made us holy. In that holiness we are able to love. God’s love does not tolerate sin. It does not overlook sin. It does not ignore sin. Love is the bond of perfectness, the bond of holiness. Because we are holy we love God who is holy and Jesus Christ who is holy, and we love God’s saints who are holy in the blood of Christ!

The result of this spiritual reality is that the church is the place where God’s love is found. This is where God’s people dwell together in sweet accord. And they love each other. No, not perfectly, sad to say. There is still sin in us, and that sin at times gets in the way of a perfect love for each other. After all, love exists between two holy people, and we are not perfect, are we? That is why there can be disputes between believers

too. But in the church there is also confession and forgiveness. And as a result, *believers* in the church live in love with each other. Notice, the emphasis on the word *believers*. The ungodly men of whom Jude speaks had also crept into the church unawares. They were not believers, and they therefore had become spots in the life of love that ought to exist in the church.

Believers show their love for each other by using their gifts on behalf of the church. In other words, love reveals itself in this: God’s saints lend of their lives to the church and to other saints. There is a communion, a fellowship, that exists among them that flows out of a desire to share of their time, talents, and money for the church—for their fellow saints. There is a love-life that exists in the church—a willingness, not to take, but to give. Not seeing how much they can get but how much they can give of themselves to others. And it was this love in the church—this charity that resulted in what was called love-feasts or agape feasts in the early church.

That is the reference here in our text. You see, in the very early church, prior to the worship service in which the Lord’s Supper was held, there was a meal shared by everyone. Reference to this is found in Acts 2, the last few verses, and

their broken hearts and binding up their wounded souls. That He did when He brought again Israel from captivity.

But again, this teaches us about the church of today too. God’s people are the

outcasts of this present world. The wicked of this world certainly do not love us. In fact, more and more the false church turns in disdain toward those who will remain faithful. And that disdain and reproach of the world hurts the child of God. It grieves his heart and soul.

But there is more that causes the hearts of the faithful to be broken and wounded. There is sin in us. We must fight against sin every day of our lives. That battle alone is grievous and causes much pain and heartache. It leaves us humbled and broken. When we look at Jerusalem we know it cannot be built because of our own sin! We come before God today acknowledging our own sinfulness. We, saints of God, would break down the walls of Jerusalem—because of our own sin! We are apt to stray, and certainly in our dealing with one another we are not always so kind and gentle. We in our sin are not always so apt to build

up our fellow members in the church. We can become angry and resentful and bitter.

*God builds up Jerusalem
not only by gathering
the outcasts but also
by healing their broken hearts
and binding up
their wounded souls.*

But Jehovah remains faithful to His church. He does so by sending us His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And it

is through Christ alone that God builds Jerusalem. He is *the way* that God builds up His church. It was only for the sake of the coming Messiah that God caused His people to return once again to Canaan. Christ was of the seed of Abraham and David. He had to be born in the promised land. God brought His people back for Christ’s sake. And it was for His sake too that God saved His people and therefore in His great love brought them back once again and restored Zion.

Christ is He who builds His church. He does that today. Christ is the ground and foundation of the church. The church rests on Christ. He binds our wounds and gently heals the brokenhearted ones. Christ does this through the work He has performed for us on the cross. By means of His work Christ earns for us the forgiveness of sins. His blood becomes an atonement that covers over the sin of God’s people. God no

We can do that especially in light of the times in which we live. The church today stands as a little hut in a garden of cucumbers! It is a besieged city! The enemies of the true church grow fierce and strong. The truth has eroded slowly but surely in those churches that at one time were faithful. But God has chosen unto Himself churches that are yet faithful unto His Word. He has preserved them from their enemies. If God had not been on our side we surely would have been swallowed up alive! But Jehovah builds up Jerusalem! Praise ye the Lord!

II. The Way

But the psalmist also lauds *how* God builds up Jerusalem. We read this in the last part of verse 2 and in verse 3 of Psalm 147: “he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” There are two ways God builds Jerusalem: 1) He gathers the outcasts; 2) He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. Again, historically this was so true at the time of the return from captivity. God gathered the outcasts. The children of Israel had been taken captive

and scattered throughout all of the Babylonian Empire. There were small communities of Jews scattered here and there. And these communities were despised too. The children of Israel were outcasts. They had been cast out of their own land, the land of inheritance, and had now become the offscouring of society. We learn, however, that God had gathered them out of this empire and now by means of Cyrus’ decree had called them back again. They had now converged on Jerusalem once again. God had gathered that which was scattered and virtually lost and reestablished them again.

Secondly, these captives had been broken in heart. Their bodies were not broken and wounded. Their hearts were! They were captives! The cause of God and of the coming Messiah seemed lost! They hung their harps on the willows and wept! No more songs of joy, but songs of sorrow and grief. Zion was gone. Jerusalem was destroyed! Their inheritance had been given to others! The church was lost! The hearts and souls of God people were broken and bruised and wounded. They hurt! Well, God builds up Jerusalem not only by gathering the outcasts but also by healing

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be large in number.
But He does promise her
that He will build
His church.*

I Corinthians 11. There was a very specific purpose to the meals. It was an opportunity for those who had much food to share with those who had very little. It was an opportunity for God’s saints to share what they had in common. The meals were modest and frugal because food was not only eaten but also given to the poor to take home with them. These agape feasts therefore were an expression of the love and benevolence of God’s people toward one another—an expression of the communion of saints. These feasts slowly disappeared, probably because of the abuse of them that Paul speaks of in the last verses of I Corinthians 11.

That being said, God’s assessment of these ungodly men who were walking in their sin was that they were *spots* in these feasts of love or charity. Notice once again, verse 12, “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.” These men had no fear of God before their eyes. They did not love God, much less the saints. As a result, these men were coming to these feasts of charity with the purpose of feeding themselves. They saw these feasts as reasons to indulge themselves in the food there. It was not their intent to come and provide food for the poor but to take from others in order to satisfy their own lusts.

For that reason, Jude says, they are spots in these feasts.

We all know what a spot is. When we come to the table and eat, we are careful not to spill our food on our shirts or blouses because the food will leave a spot on them. And that spot always sticks out. It is a blemish on our shirt. Everyone can see it and it mars the beauty of our shirt. Well, these men were such spots in the love that was supposed to characterize the saints. They were a blemish. They marred the communion of the saints and the love revealed in the act of sharing at these feasts.

Jude uses three examples from nature to describe the sins of these men. First of all, they are as clouds without water, carried about by winds. They are as dark clouds that blow in on the winds of a storm. The expectation is that they will drop rain upon the earth replenishing the soil. Instead these clouds have nothing to drop. But they quickly blow over the earth without watering it. These men had nothing to offer the church in the way of their time, talents, and money. And they did not because they were devoid of God’s love. They did not truly love the saints. They were empty clouds.

Secondly, they were trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. They were as fruit

trees that in the autumn of the year should be filled with fruit but whose fruit has withered so that they are without fruit. But worse, these trees are dead from the inside, having been plucked out by the roots. They bore no fruit because they were dead on the inside as well as the outside—twice dead. So also these ungodly men in the church who were not believers. They were dead on the inside. The Spirit had not worked salvation in their hearts. They had no love to offer because there was no true love within them. As a result, they were not interested in sharing their gifts with others.

Certainly, we must see what the Word of God is teaching us here: believers are connected to Jesus Christ. They are one plant with Him. He is the root and the trunk of the tree that bears life to us the branches. The life of Christ produces in us the love that is in us and that we reveal to others. If there is no willingness of labor on behalf of the church, no willingness to share with the saints our time and gifts, then the life of Christ is not in us. These men were devoid, empty of God's great love.

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Finally, they were raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. Just as the waves of the sea bring in upon the shoreline all their foam, dead fish, and debris, so also these men not only had nothing to offer to the church, but they also brought into the church their sinful shame. They shamed the church with their behavior. They defamed the name of the church with the garbage, the foam, they brought in with their lasciviousness.

II. The Reason

The reason this was true of these men is given us in verse 11: "they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." These men, Jude says, had gone in the way of Cain. Now, I realize that the first thought that comes to mind is that Cain was the first murderer. He slew his brother Abel because

Cain was wicked. But this cannot be the idea of our text here. These lascivious men were not murderers. They were guilty of unbridled lust, but they were not guilty of murder. When we think of Cain, however, it must

to give Him thanks for that too. Jerusalem is being built! Small? Oh yes! But the church is being built. We as believers have been given a place to worship. We have grown spiritually again this past year. And when God calls in the harvest at the end of time we will be numbered together with a throng so large it cannot be numbered!

But the main reason we praise God today is because of this truth: *Jehovah* doth build up Jerusalem! The Lord God builds up His church! We are not held in the hands of man. We are not built up by men. It is God who gives the increase—always! If we were to look only upon the feeble efforts of man to build the church, we would be doomed to disappointment. We would not be able to praise God much today. Men falter and fail. Even the strongest man is at his best weak and frail. God uses men, no doubt, but God does not depend on man to build up His church. If He did, as we said, His cause would fail! It would fail because of our enemies who are far too strong for us to resist! Just as they were when the captives returned from captivity.

But notice who our God is. He is Jehovah. This name re-

minds us of God's faithfulness to the covenant He has established with His people. God is the unchangeable God of His covenant. He is our God, and the elect of His church are His people. He loves us from eternity and is unchangeable in that love. This God has sworn to us in His love that He will never abandon us. He will never forget His church. He will build her. That is His promise to His church. God does not promise His church that she will be large in number. But He does promise her that He will build His church. And God is always true to that promise!

Before God caused His people to return from captivity, it looked as if God's cause and kingdom was destroyed. But God brought His captives back again and reestablished His church in Canaan. How many times in the course of history did it not seem as if the church would die? We look at the true church at the time of the Reformation. Not many left who were faithful to the cause of Christ, it seemed. But God continued to gather and preserve His church and His people, did He not? God is faithful to His covenant and its promises to you and me! And it is for that reason we give Him wholehearted thanksgiving in this day!

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expresses a beautiful truth for the church of today too. “The LORD, Jehovah, doth build up Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is a type or a picture of the church. The church of all ages is referred to in Scripture as Jerusalem. And the truth expressed here in these few words of Psalm 147 is this: the church is always being built. How true this is! Since the very beginning of this world God has been building the church of Christ. Christ’s church has been gathered from the beginning of time and will be until the end of time. In fact, the world exists for the very purpose of the calling and gathering together of the church of Christ. It is God’s purpose to bring glory to His name by means of the salvation of a church, elect in Jesus Christ. For that reason the church has always existed and has always been in the process of building. But often times in the process of this building of the church, it dwindled in numbers. This was evident already at the time of the Flood. The true church of Christ that existed in the world at that time was only eight souls. That is all—only eight people! When Elijah was prophet in Israel God had preserved unto Himself out of the hundreds of thousands in Israel only 7,000 who were faithful to Him. When these few captives returned from Babylon, the church consisted of only 50,000 people—so very few, especially compared to the

millions of people in the world who lived in unbelief. But God always has His church. He preserves and gathers and builds that church throughout the ages.

And He does that today too. We have much to be thankful for—much to praise God for as the members of the church today. You know, friends, it is so easy for us to become discouraged in this way. The true church always seems so small. It is easy for us to take the attitude of Elijah—“I and I only am left who is faithful to the cause of Christ.” Christ asks the question too: Will there be faith left in the earth when I return?

Pagan religions have millions of members. The cults today have millions of members. The Christian false church today is also mammoth in size. The true church of Christ has always been small! This can be discouraging to those who seek to remain faithful to the cause of Jesus Christ in this world. At one time the church strove to be true and distinctive in its doctrine and holy in the life of her members. We do not see much of that anymore today. It can be so discouraging! But we must be reminded today of God’s enduring faithfulness to His church. He has always and will always preserve, *and build*, His church. In this time of the year that we give God thanks for our provision let us remember

be in the sense of Hebrews 11:4, where we are taught that Cain did not offer a sacrifice that was pleasing to God as did Abel. Abel offered a sacrifice by faith. He offered a lamb because he saw his need for blood to be shed to cover his sins. Cain, on the other hand, came before God and laid before Him the fruit of his fields, with the thought in mind that he could by his works merit God’s favor. That is the same sin that characterized these men in Jude’s day. They came before God in outward, formal worship, but they did not worship God from the heart. They did not see their need for the cross of Jesus Christ. They thought they were good enough in themselves to make it to heaven. This is why they had no love to offer to their fellow saints. Their worship of God was in vain. Members of the church that were as devoid of faith as they were of love.

These men, we are also told, ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. Balak the king of Moab, we learn in Numbers 22-24, sent for Balaam, a false prophet of God, in order that he might curse the nation of Israel for him. The king of Moab knew that he could not win in battle against Israel because God was on Israel’s side. So Balak offered great riches to Balaam if Balaam would come from his home in the east to curse the nation of Israel. Out of greed, therefore, Balaam trav-

eled from afar. But as much as Balaam wanted to curse Israel, God only put in his mouth words that blessed Israel.

The point is, Balaam was a prophet of God who for money and for gain was willing to curse the nation whom God had chosen as his own. These men in the church of Jude’s day, we are told, ran greedily after the error of Balaam. They had joined the church because they thought it would help them in their gain. No wonder they gorged themselves at the agape feasts of the church. But more, these men joined the church for personal gain because they felt that it would earn them prestige in society. Again, a warning to us too, is it not? We do not join ourselves to the church for personal reasons, simply to find friends or a spouse or because we think it is a nice social club. We join it because we are convinced that we must throw in our lot with fellow believers in this world.

Finally, we learn that these men perish in the gainsaying of Korah. The word gainsaying means simply rebellion or opposition. Three men in the wilderness, named Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, of which Korah was the chief, rebelled against Moses and Aaron. God had appointed Moses as ruler of Israel and Aaron as high priest. Korah rebelled against

this authority. For this rebellion God destroyed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and all those who followed them in their rebellion or opposition to Moses. And what a horrible death they met! The earth opened and swallowed them up, and their families, and they fell down into the earth alive and perished. Now these men in the early church of Jude's day were doing the same thing. They were despising dominion. They were rebelling against the rule of Jesus Christ in the church by means of appointed officebearers. They were contending with the pastor and elders of the church. They thought themselves to be equals to the pastor and elders. So, they fought in the church, creating division, and leading many away after their evil ways. They lifted themselves up in pride claiming to be leaders in the church just as well as the elders were. These sins and more made these men spots in the worship and love of the church of Jesus Christ.

III. The Woe

This is why Jude now pronounces woe upon them, that is, God's curse upon these evil men. That is what the term "woe" means. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounces His woe on the Pharisees for their legalism. Now Jude does the same on these men for their antinomianism,

their despising of God's law. Because of their sin God's curse now rests upon them. Woe unto them! These may seem like harsh words, especially given the climate of modern Christianity today that accepts any kind of promiscuity and rebellion against authority.

But such is the judgment of God's Word upon those who ignore God, who ignore the work of Jesus Christ in salvation, and who ignore God's commandments. They are as wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, Jude states at the end of verse 13. These men are as wandering or shooting stars—stars that streak brightly across the night sky only to disappear forever in the blackness of the night. These men are dying stars to whom is reserved the blackness of the darkness of everlasting condemnation.

Oh, fellow believers, may what has been said of these men not be true of us! God preserve us in His love shed abroad in our hearts. May that love reveal itself in our attitude and in our dealings with one another. May we use our gifts in the service of the church and God's kingdom. And may God bless us richly in this way. May we as stars burn brightly in this world of darkness. May we be reserved by God unto eternal life!

written by someone who lived after the return of Israel from the land of captivity. In other words, it was written to be sung by the captives who were allowed to return to Jerusalem

after the Babylonian captivity. Some say it might have been composed by Ezra or Nehemiah and that it might have been sung after the temple or the walls of Jerusalem were completed. Whatever the case, it was written later in history than the psalms written by David or his singers. We wish to consider this psalm within its historical context as we bring thanks to God today.

JEHOVAH BUILDS HIS CHURCH

I. The Fact

It was a day of sadness and a day of rejoicing. God had stirred up the heart of Cyrus, king of the Persian Empire, to send the Jewish captives back to Canaan. According to Cyrus' own words, God had charged him to send them back in order to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. After 70 years in the land of captivity the children of Israel returned. This was a day of rejoicing. But it was a day of sadness because only a little over 50,000 people desired

to return. 50,000 people out of the millions of Israelites that at one time had lived in Canaan seemed so small, so few. It was a remnant of what had at one time

made up the kingdom of Israel and Judah. But they returned and now the temple had been built and the walls of Jerusalem had also been restored. Again, the temple and the walls of Jerusalem were but a shadow of the former glory of Solomon's temple and the mighty walls that had at one time surrounded Jerusalem. But there they stood—rebuilt. The work had been accomplished. In the meantime, God had preserved these few people in the land too. God had seen to it that the earth brought forth its fullness in order that they might be fed. God had provided them with shelter enough to keep them safe. Also of significance is the fact that God had protected these few, virtually defenseless people from their enemies who attempted to keep them from building the walls of Jerusalem. God had been good to them! There was much reason to give thanks, much reason to give God praise.

This is the immediate occasion for the writing of this psalm. But we must understand that it

*God is always
and in every way
building His church.
And for that too we must
give Him thanks.*

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

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*Jehovah Builds His Church
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

The day of Thanksgiving for those of us who are citizens of the United States is right around the corner. It is a time for thanks—not thanks to men, but thanks to God for the bounties of the field He has provided for us. As believers we realize there are indeed so many things for which to give God thanks. He has given us our health and homes. He has given us plenty in the way of this world's possessions. He has given us food and drink in abundance. We are clothed and sheltered. He has brought in the harvest once again. We have more than our hearts could ask for. We are spoiled.

The psalmist calls our attention to all of this too. We read of God, in Psalm 147:8, 9, "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." Or again, in verse 14, "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat." For this sovereign

control of God over our creation we give Him thanks in this day.

He has providentially given to us so much. But in Psalm 147 the psalmist gives God thanks for the benefits of the field *in connection with the gathering in of His church*. The psalmist sings of these benefits as blessings God bestows on His people Israel. The first reason for thanks that the psalmist speaks of in Psalm 147 is found in verses 1-3: "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." We wish to concentrate on these three verses today in connection with Thanksgiving Day. After all, this is the first thing we must praise God for: Jehovah builds up Jerusalem! He builds His church! He did that in the days of the psalmist and He does that today too. God is always and in every way building His church. And for that too we must give Him thanks.

This psalm was probably

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*November 15, 2015
No. 3802*

*God's Judgment on Ungodly Sinners
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

The subject of verses 14-16 of Jude's epistle is that of the final judgment. But not from the viewpoint of a general discussion of this truth. Jude is specific: Christ is coming to judge these ungodly men who troubled the church of Jesus Christ. Let us read those verses: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murderers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." In these three verses Jude directs our attention to that day of Christ's return from heaven when He will execute His just judgment upon ungodly men.

Jude is finished characterizing these wicked men in the

church. It may seem as if he takes this up again in verse 16 of our text, but we will find that Jude has a different reason in mind with this verse. Jude is finished describing their defiance against God, Christ, and the church. He is finished comparing these men with other men and angels who also walked in their sin of rebellion. Now Jude reminds the church about what will happen to these men when Jesus Christ comes again to judge all men. Jude does this to remind those weak members of the church of the end of wicked men. Christ comes! He comes swiftly! And He will execute judgment! It is true that such judgment is delayed. But it comes. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." It may be that Christ's sentence or judgment on evil men is not executed immediately. For that reason the heart of men will continue on in their evil deeds. But here is the truth: Christ comes and He *will* execute judgment. And no man who walks

in ungodly deeds will escape punishment!

That, then, is the subject of today's broadcast. With these verses Jude brings to a conclusion his condemnation of these ungodly men. The rest of the verses of this epistle are spent warning and encouraging the saints to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. In them Jude instructs the members of the church to keep themselves in love and build themselves on their faith. So, today we conclude Jude's condemnation of ungodly men by considering the end of their lives.

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON UNGODLY SINNERS

I. The Final Judgment

That the subject we consider is the final judgment is evident from the prophecy of Enoch that Jude quotes. In verse 14 and at the beginning of 15 we read, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all." This is a description of the final judgment. Notice how the word of God here ties together the second coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgment. Christ

comes again one more time to bring this world to its end. With the destruction of this present world, all men will be brought to stand before the great white throne, where Christ will sit in judgment. At that time every soul that ever lived from the beginning of time to the end will

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come before Jesus Christ and He will judge them. He will pronounce His judgment upon His elect, whom He will send

into that realm of eternal bliss and joy to dwell with God forever. And He will also pronounce His judgment upon the reprobate, whom He will cast into the eternal realm of suffering, where there is alienation from God and a burning under His eternal wrath. This judgment is delayed until the time of Christ's second coming. Although God has already judged the righteous and the wicked at the cross, this final judgment is set aside by God to take place when time ends. And no man, woman, child, or angel will escape that judgment. Verse 15 tells us that the Lord will execute judgment *upon all*. Furthermore, we are told that *the Lord* will execute this judgment.

Now, it is true that Enoch so early on in the history of this

speeches that they ungodly spoke against Christ. They profaned the name of Christ in their deeds but also by the way they spoke of Him. They defied His rule because they did not fear Christ any more than they feared God. And this revealed itself in the words they spoke to others in the church as well. They murmured and complained against the elders of the church or those who would walk godly. Their mouths spoke great swelling words. They boasted of themselves especially to those whom they showed respect of persons. They revealed no spirit of sorrow over their sin, but when their sin was pointed out to them they became belligerent. They defended themselves in their sin rather than confessing it before God and others. They revealed in their sin. And if there were those who reprimanded them, they spoke swelling words of pride in their sins. Because God's sentence against their evil work was not executed speedily they set their hearts to walk in their evil deeds. Well, Jude says, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all that are ungodly! They will not escape!

III. An Inescapable Judgment

The church of Jesus Christ is here warned. Do not follow in their ways of sin. Do not

seek to fulfill your own lusts. Because these men are condemned—even if now they with swelling words deny their own condemnation. They already are judged worthy of eternal punishment in hell. By these strong words of warning Jude hopes to discourage those in the church who are tempted to follow after such foolish men and women. No one will escape Christ's judgment—no one that is ungodly will be worthy of a place in heaven!

Notice one more thing: Christ will execute judgment upon all *to convince* the ungodly of their ungodly deeds. No one will stand in the Day of Judgment before Christ and justify himself before Him. No one will be able to plead his cause and try to show to Christ that though ungodly he still deserves a place in heaven. The wicked man may deny Christ's judgment in this life, but when the judgment comes he will be convinced that his place in hell is just. Seeing such a judgment awaits the ungodly, let us keep ourselves in the love of God. Let us build ourselves up on our faith. And let us look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

When one adores, honors, and loves God, then this godliness reveals itself in devout living. A person will walk in God's ways. He will not seek to fulfill his own lusts and desires, but the Word of God will live in him and he will be characterized by godly living. This means he will walk in devotion to God. Not devotion to himself, not devotion to mankind, not devotion to society, first of all, but devotion to *God!* God is first in his individual life; God is first in his family life; God is first in his life in this world. Everything will be done to please God. That too is godliness.

This godliness is what reveals itself to others. It is not loud and

boastful. It is not sanctimonious and fake. It does not seek to draw attention to itself. But it is a quiet devotion to God and His Word—a simple walking in God's ways to fulfill His will. It is fleeing the desires of our flesh and clinging to the desires of that new man of Christ—a redeemed heart. That is godliness. That is what will characterize the child of God in the Day of Judgment. Christ will see these works of godliness. They will not merit us a place in heaven, but they will indeed be evidence of that fear and love we have for God. A fear that Christ Himself has worked in our hearts. Our

place in heaven will be a work of God's grace alone. But the believer will be there!

Now, what will God see in those ungodly men who crept into the church unawares? Jude tells us that these ungodly men stand in judgment for their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed. *Ungodliness, that is, no godliness!* They will be judged for their defiance against God. And this will be revealed in their ungodly or impious deeds. What deeds? They are listed for us in verse 16: they walked after their own lusts. They also had men's persons

in admiration because of advantage. They walked in their own desires. They may have been members of the church but they fulfilled their own sinful pleasures. They were given to alcohol, they walked in fornication and adultery, they were covetous, and they were filthy and irresponsible. They were respecters of persons. They favored those who were rich in order that they might exalt themselves. They ignored and even scorned those who were of low degree in the church because they could gain no advantage being their friends.

Furthermore, these ungodly sinners were guilty of the hard

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world did not know exactly that this Lord of which he spoke was Jesus Christ. But his reference here to "the Lord" is not to God, who is also spoken of as Lord in the Bible. It is a direct prophecy that refers to Christ. The Lord in Enoch's mind was, no doubt, the great Messiah who was to come to execute judgment.

Christ will be that Judge. The ungodly men in the early church denied the Lordship of Christ. But, it is exactly because Christ is Lord that He is indeed worthy to be the Judge of all creatures in heaven and on earth. This is a part of Christ's rule. It is a part of His exaltation: He sits at God's right hand and will return to judge all men. This right and authority belongs to Christ because Christ has earned that right by means of His exaltation. Because Christ walked the way of the cross in perfect obedience to God, because He suffered eternal wrath against our sin and paid the price for our sin, God has highly exalted Him. Christ earned the right to execute judgment.

We learn further, in our text, that Christ will come with ten thousands of His saints. Now, although this translation gives us a simple explanation of who comes with Christ, it is not as easy as it seems. The literal translation is not "ten thousands of his saints" but "holy myriads."

This terminology does not

refer only or specifically to holy men. The word "myriads" means "an immense number or amount." So the reference here is not to a specific number but simply to an immense number of holy ones. These holy ones refer to God's saints, but it also to the angels. Both will indeed be present in the coming of Christ and in the judgment. More than likely, the prophecy of our text refers to both. God's holy ones—both those who are cleansed and made holy in the blood of Christ, as well as the holy angels—make up the myriads, the immense number of creatures that will accompany Christ when He comes to execute judgment.

Such is the final judgment.

And that this judgment will indeed take place is testified throughout all of Scripture. Notice what Solomon states in Ecclesiastes 12:14: "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Psalm 96:13 likewise speaks of this judgment, "For Jehovah cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." The Old Testament saints knew that the judgment was coming. The New Testament is even clearer. Paul preached in Acts 17:31, "Because God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge

the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." This truth is clearly stated II Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And these are but a few examples that verify to you and me that all men will stand in judgment. To all those who doubt, let it be known, the final judgment is real! It will take place. It has not come yet. It is delayed. But do not think that God who sees and knows all things, even when we hide ourselves in our rooms or in the darkness of nighttime, will not hold us in judgment! Christ comes and we will be judged!

And this becomes even the more sure when we consider that these words of our text here are words that the man Enoch prophesied! What man Enoch? The Enoch that was born in the line of the covenant prior to the Flood—the Enoch that walked with God. Because this Enoch preached of the coming judgment of the Flood, men sought his life. But they could not find him because God had translated him, that is, had taken him directly into heaven without seeing death. Even then ungodly men who

walked ungodly lives heard the judgment of God upon them in their sin. Even then wicked men sought to kill this saint because he preached judgment. We are told that Enoch was the seventh from Adam. This holds no special significance other than to identify him and to show that it took only seven generations before the world was becoming ripe for judgment already. Throughout the ages the church has been plagued by men from within who walk in unbelief and follow after their lusts. All these stand under the righteous judgment of God and, in that Day of Judgment, will receive their just reward. Enoch therefore prophesied of these ungodly men that would again appear in the church of Jude's day and their judgment.

II. The Standard of Judgment

But Jude also teaches us through this prophecy of Enoch what the standard of the final judgment will be. What I mean here by standard is the objective criterion according to which God is going to judge us. All men will be judged according to the measure of godliness. That is the standard summarized in one word: godliness. We say this because of the testimony of verse 15: "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all

their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Christ will ex-

ecute judgment unto condemnation upon these men because of their ungodliness. Notice how often Jude uses that term here in this verse: four different times. These men will be condemned to punishment in the Judgment Day because they were ungodly rather than godly. The word "godliness" describes for us the inner disposition of a man's heart. It does not draw our attention to outward works. We know *they* can be hypocritical. This term describes what a man must be on the inside, in his soul, in the inner recesses of his spiritual center, his heart. He must be godly within. A synonym of that word is pious. Christ as Lord will judge us according to our piety. Such piety or godliness is a deep reverence toward God. It is when a person out of a profound adoration toward God holds him in the highest esteem and honor. This adoration flows out of a true knowledge of who He is: the transcendent, sovereign, holy God who stands so high above all creatures, nevertheless, loves us in His grace and mercy toward us.

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This godliness, this adoration, this reverence toward God is the result of a work of God's grace in the heart of the sinner. There is no fear of God

before the eyes of the unbeliever. He defies God and His power. Unbelieving man thinks he is able to withstand God or that God is simply a benevolent force that fulfills all man's desires. But the believer has been transformed by the wonder work of salvation. Christ has through His powerful work on the cross destroyed the hold sin has over us. Christ has sent forth His Spirit to dwell in us, and that Spirit opens our eyes to who God is and what God has done for us. The result of that work of the Spirit is godliness—a piety that flows out of faith, a true knowledge of and confidence in God. In the Day of Judgment Christ sees in us that work of God's grace that results in a heart filled with a humble adoration of God. He will then graciously give us a place in heavenly glory. But when Christ beholds ungodliness in the life of the unbeliever, a defiance toward God and a refusal to walk in God's ways, that man will be cast into everlasting suffering and torment.

And that brings us to the second aspect of godliness.