

## Lesson #23 - 2nd John, 3rd John and Jude

Before starting this lesson, read 2<sup>nd</sup> John and 3<sup>rd</sup> John

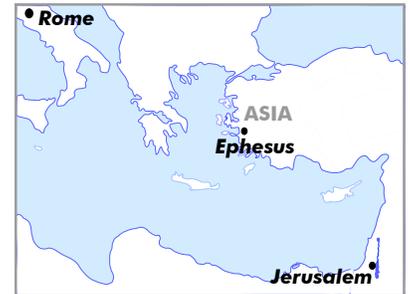
In the last lesson, we talked about the apostle John and studied his first letter. He had lived and worked in the province of Asia some 15 to 20 years.

In the early '70s, he became pastor of the church in Ephesus.

During the '80s, traveling teachers started visiting house churches that were scattered thruout the southern province of Asia.

They came with new ideas about Jesus, about sin and about daily living. Some said Jesus was not true humanity; others said He was not deity; His death had no meaning.

Over the years, Jewish believers continued to listen to these teachings and became confused until finally they were not sure what to believe about Jesus.



So in 90 AD, John wrote them to say,

*Let me tell you what I know for a fact about Jesus. After all, I lived and worked with Him for 3 years.*

### JOHN'S FIRST LETTER - SUMMARY

**THEME** - The faith they had in common - with him, with the traveling teachers and with other believers.

#### OUTLINE

##### Basics of their common faith

Agreement about Jesus

Agreement about sin

Agreement about how to treat other believers

#### RESULTS OF THE LETTER

Copies were sent to the house churches thruout the southern province of Asia.

Later that same year - 90 AD - John hears that 2 churches that received his letter have not put it into practice.

One church is still accepting traveling teachers that are not in agreement about Jesus.

The other church is rejecting traveling teachers that are in agreement about Jesus.

So John writes a follow-up letter to the two churches - our books of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John.

### JOHN'S SECOND LETTER

John begins this letter by calling himself an elder. He means he is older in age. By this time, he is around 80 years old. "Elder" was also another word for "pastor." John was pastor of the Ephesian church.

He says he is writing to *the elect lady or the lady chosen by God*. The Greek word for *lady* is *kuria*.

This word could be used as a title but few believe that is the meaning here. Because it was a common name in that day, many believe John is writing to a specific woman named Kyria. The reason is that the word for *you* in verses 4, 5, and 13 is singular, meaning John is talking to one person.

However, other Bible scholars believe he is writing a local *church*. In typical Jewish style, he is using the words *lady* and *children* as picture language. *Lady* means the church; her *children* mean church members. This would explain why the word for *you* in verses 6-12 is plural - John is talking to a group of people.

Thruout the Bible, when there are two explanations and both seem to fit, very often it means both are true.

In those days churches met in private homes. So this letter is addressed to the woman who has the church in her home. No pastor or elder is addressed, which means this group does not have a resident leader. Instead, they depend on any traveling teacher who offers to stay and teach for several weeks or months. When a teacher arrives, he goes to the home where the church meets. He gets permission to teach from the person of the house. Since the lady's husband is not mentioned, we can assume she is a widow. It is also logical to assume that her husband had been the pastor, but had died.

So for this particular group, John needs to write the lady - the one who first talks with the traveling teacher. But he also needs to write the members of the church who would make the final decision about the teacher.

Traveling teachers have been coming to the church in this home and have been telling them things about Jesus that are not true. Church members have allowed them to stay and continue teaching for an extended period of time. Evidently, the church members think accepting **anyone** as teacher is the way to show Christian love.

John, in his first letter, had used the word “love” 46 times. However, it was not the common word for “love” as we think of the word. He always used the word “agapao”, which was not commonly used in the Greek language. Evidently they did not understand John’s spiritual use of the word. So now in this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, he defines what the word “love”- agapao (or as expressed today, agape) means.

*And this is love - this is what agape is - that we walk according to His commandments. 1:6*

The command to **love** God means to **obey what God says**.

The command to **love** our neighbor - to **love** our enemy means **to do what is right based on God’s standards**.

John reminds the lady of the house and the church members, *agape love is obeying what God says*.

Allowing teachers to give false teaching in the church is certainly **not** obeying God.

### MESSAGE OF THE FALSE TEACHERS

So that everyone understands what part of the teaching is wrong, John gives the details.

*Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus **Christ** in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 1:7*

Some teachers are denying the true **humanity** of Jesus - that He had a real body.

Others are denying His **deity** - that He was Christ - the Jewish promised Messiah.

This denial means they are *against* Christ - or to use the Greek word in that day - they are antichrists.

The word *antichrist* is only found in the Bible in the books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> John. In the 5 times he uses it, he is always talking about those who deny either the deity or the humanity of Jesus. (The Bible never uses the term “antichrist” for a future world leader. It is church scholars that started using it in that way about 200 years ago.)

### WARNING ABOUT THE FALSE TEACHERS

These Jewish believers had originally been under John’s ministry. They had come to faith and then spiritually grown under his teaching. But then they moved away and are now in a house church somewhere else in the province. John warns them,

*Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what you or we have worked for, but may win a full reward. 1:8*

If they keep listening to false teaching, it will change their values and they could start doing things out of wrong motives or with wrong attitudes. This would cause them to lose their spiritual growth and spiritual rewards.

*Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; whoever abides or continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 1:9*

John says anyone rejects the truth of Scripture and goes beyond what it says, to make up their own ideas about Jesus, is not part of God’s family. Those who want to enjoy a relationship with God the Father, have to agree with Him about His Son.

### REJECT THE FALSE TEACHERS

Based on the Greek, John tells them in verse 10,

*Since teachers are coming to you and not bringing this teaching - the complete deity and humanity of Jesus - stop taking them into your house. Stop giving them a greeting.*

When traveling teachers come, both the lady and church members are to find out what they believe and teach about Jesus. If the teachers deny the deity of Jesus, or the humanity of Jesus, the lady and or church members should not invite them to teach at the next meeting. They should not even give them the believer’s greeting, *may God’s grace be with you and your teaching*.

John continues, *for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. 1:11*

False teaching about Jesus comes from Satan. This means that anyone who encourages these teachers by giving them God’s blessing becomes a partner in the work of Satan.

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, John is giving further instruction to Jewish believers about a faith in common with traveling teachers.

They need to: remember the truth about Jesus

know what the teachers believe

exclude false teachers from the church Verses 1-6, 7-9 and 10-13

For us today: John's command to *not take a teacher into the house* means we should not let people teach in our homes or churches if they do not believe correctly about Jesus. *To not greet them* has nothing to do with saying *hello*, or *good morning*. It means we should not agree with their teaching, not endorse them nor give them money.

Second John is addressed to Jewish believers who thought they should accept and listen to any teacher.

John says they must learn whom to **exclude** as spiritual teachers in their local church.

## JOHN'S THIRD LETTER

Once again, John deals with a faith in common. He is writing to a church member named Gaius, who is in a different church and a different town than the lady in the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter.

Gaius needs to know whom to **include** as spiritual teachers in his local church.

### OUTLINE

Gaius, a church member 1-8

Diotrephes, the church pastor 9-10

Demetrius, the one bringing the letter 11-13

## ABOUT GAIUS

*I have no greater joy than to hear that **my own** children are walking in the truth.* 1:4

The grammar that John uses with the word *my* means he is talking about his spiritual children. Gaius had become a believer thru the ministry of John. He has continued to grow and is now mature in his faith.

What Gaius had done over the last few months. Beginning with verse 5.

*Dear friend, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.* 1:5-8

Teachers from John's church had come to the town of Gaius. He did not know them. But when he found they believed correctly about Jesus, he invited them to stay in his home. These teachers have now returned to Ephesus and told John about their experience.

John is writing to thank Gaius and telling him that in the future, there is one more thing he should do.

*You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.*

The next time he should give the teachers food or money so they will have enough to eat until they get to their next place of ministry. There are 2 reasons why he should do this.

So that on the road, the teachers will not have to beg for money or food from unbelievers.

So that Gaius can share in the ministry of these godly teachers.

Notice the contrast about helping teachers.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> John, believers were **not** to help **false** teachers so they would *not* be partners with them.

Now in 3<sup>rd</sup> John, Gaius **is** to help **true** teachers so he *can* be a partner with them.

We have said the books of 1, 2, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John are written to Jewish believers. But there is no specific verse where it says that. However, in verse 7 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> letter, John says 2 things that show his readers are Jewish.

1. *They have gone out for the sake of **The Name**.*

**Jews** often referred to God by the Hebrew name *HaShem* - The Name. In New Testament days, Jewish believers started using that title for Jesus. John is saying his teachers are in ministry to honor Jesus and tell others about Him.

2. John says, *accepting nothing from the Gentiles*. If he were writing Gentile believers, John would have had to say, *accepting nothing from the Gentile unbelievers* to distinguish the 2 kinds of Gentiles.

**ABOUT DIOTREPHESES** - the pastor of the local church

*I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense about us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. 1:9-10*

In arrogance this pastor has decided no outsider can teach in *his* church. When teachers from John’s church had come to this town and asked to teach, Diotrephes refused. He said no one else should accept them either. Anyone who did would be expelled from the church.

Gaius had ignored the threat and invited the teachers to stay in his home. As a result, he has been kicked out of the church. This is another reason for this letter. John tells Gaius he is aware of the situation and is going to deal with it. In fact, he already tried to settle it privately by writing Diotrephes. But the pastor refused to listen. Instead, he is talking *publicly* against John, trying to destroy his reputation. So John says there is a possibility he will personally come and handle the matter *publicly* .

**ABOUT DEMETRIUS** – the one bringing the letter vs. 12

He also is a teacher from John’s church. Everyone knows he believes the truth about Jesus. Gaius can invite him to stay in his house and also ask him to teach.

John’s 3 letters deal with the common faith believers have with John, with the traveling teachers and with other believers.

The first letter is to *all* the house churches. John tells them the basics of a common faith.

There must be agreement about Jesus- that He is true humanity, true deity and Savior.

They must also have agreement about sin and how to treat other believers.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, he tells one church they should *exclude* spiritual teachers who are **not** in agreement about Jesus.

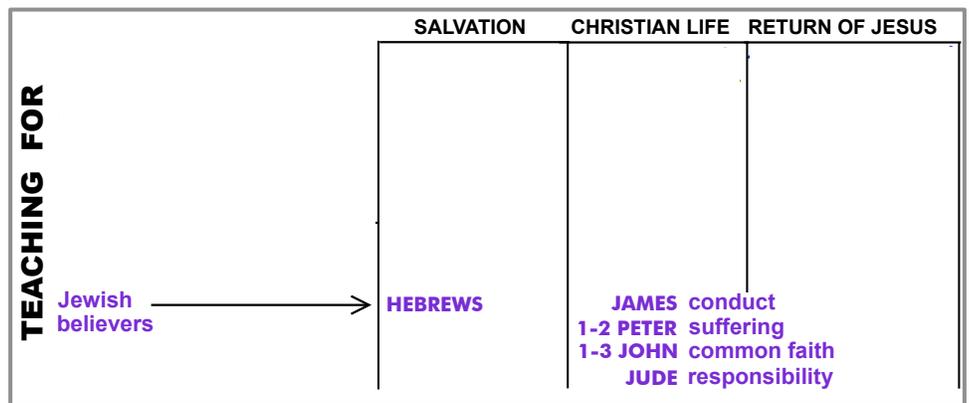
In the 3<sup>rd</sup> letter he tells another church they should *include* spiritual teachers who **are** in agreement about Jesus .

## THE BOOK OF JUDE

Before starting this part of the lesson, read the one chapter of Jude

Thus far in the series of teaching for **Jewish believers**, we have seen that **HEBREWS** deals with **SALVATION**.

The next books deal with the **CHRISTIAN LIFE** of Jewish believers. **JAMES** speaks of their *conduct*; **PETER** - their *suffering*; **JOHN** - their *common faith*. **JUDE** now deals with their *responsibility*



**AUTHOR**

Jude is a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James. 1:1 In the New Testament, there are 4 men who are called James. The one mentioned here is the one who wrote the book of James.

He introduced *himself* as the servant of Jesus Christ. He was pastor of the Jerusalem church and a blood relative of Jesus. This means that Jude, James’ brother, is also a blood relative of Jesus. But notice his humility. He says nothing about the family relationship - only that he is a servant. And he does not just say he is a servant of Jesus. By saying a servant of Jesus **Christ**, he is saying, I may be a blood relative, but we are not equal. Jesus is unique because He is also deity and our promised Messiah.

## READERS

It is clear from verse 1 that Jude is writing believers.

It is also clear that these are **Jewish** believers because of his writing style.

There is repetition, picture language and putting things in groups of 3.

His content is also Jewish. He uses Old Testament stories that were not well known.

He also refers to Jewish literature that Gentiles would never have heard of.

To be more specific, Jude quotes from 2 books which were part of Jewish religious literature. They were not written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit - in other words, they were never part of Scripture. Jewish religious literature was part of their *cultural* history. Some parts of these books were true and other parts were only Jewish legends.

Jude refers to parts that were true to give examples his Jewish readers could relate to.

He refers to an event mentioned in the Jewish book, the *Assumption of Moses*. He says that Satan had an argument with Michael, the archangel about the body of Moses.

Jude also quotes a prediction from the *Book of Enoch*. Enoch said that when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom, He will come with His saints and will judge all the ungodly people. Jude says this will include the false teachers in his day.

Jude is not validating the books themselves. He is only using facts within the books that were true as examples that his readers would easily understand.

## WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN

There are many *different* ideas about this letter of Jude both when it was written and where it was sent. However, I have found only one explanation that fits all the pieces together.

It starts with the fact that 19 out of the 25 verses are the same as 2 Peter chapter 2. There is just one difference.

**2 PETER** says false teachers and scoffers **will** come. 2 Pt. 2:1; 3:3.

**JUDE** says false teachers **did** come. And scoffers **are** currently in the church, creating divisions.

It is reasonable to think it would take some 10 years from the time it is said false teachers **will** come to the time they **have** arrived, become leaders and have completely changed a large group of house churches.

Second Peter was written in 68 AD.

So I suggest that Jude is written c. 78 AD.

It is also reasonable to assume it is the believers who got *Peter's* letter, that are now getting this one from Jude. He repeats a lot of the letter to remind them what Peter had told them some 10 years earlier.

Putting this together means the letter of Jude is sent to Jewish believers in northern Asia Minor. This included the northern provinces of Cappadocia, Bithynia, Pontus, Asia and Galatia. It is where Peter had spent some 20 years in ministry. Ideally we should have looked at this book right after 2 Peter. But we are taking the books in Biblical order, so John's letters came first in 90 AD. Now as we come to Jude, we have to back up about 12 years to c. 78 AD.



To get the setting, let me summarize what Jude is telling these Jewish believers.

*Ten years ago, Peter warned you that false teaching and false teachers would show up in your churches. But you ignored his warning. Now, look at the teachers you have and the condition of your churches. You need to remember the basics of the Gospel message. You also need to get rid of the false teachers and support each other.*

Jude had been carefully preparing to write about the salvation he and they had in common. But then the Holy Spirit gave him an urgency to write about protecting and defending the gospel message. The reason is in verse 4.

*For certain people have crept in unnoticed...*

One paraphrase has put it... *certain individuals have wormed their way into your church.*

People joined the local church and appeared to believe like everyone else. They became involved in leadership. But as soon as they had opportunity to teach, they introduced false teaching with the purpose of turning people from God.

## OUTLINE

Why they should protect the Gospel message 1:1-16

How they should protect the Gospel message 1:17-25

### WHY THEY SHOULD PROTECT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE - False teachers have taken over their churches 1:1-16

#### FALSE TEACHERS - Predicted

*...Who long ago were written about for this judgment... 1:4a*

Jude is saying that from the days of Enoch, thru all the Old Testament and the New, it was written that those who deliberately turn people from God would face God's judgment. Jude goes on to say, *They are ungodly people*, meaning they are not believers and never were.

#### FALSE TEACHERS – Their teaching

*...Who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord. 1:4b*

These false teachers are saying, *God's grace gives us freedom to make our own decisions about sexual issues. We are not under law anymore. God's grace wants us to be happy, so we can decide for ourselves what is right. Jesus is not the promised Messiah - Christ and He is not deity - Lord. Therefore Jesus does not have the authority to tell us what to do – He is not our Sovereign or Master.*

#### FALSE TEACHERS – God's judgment...

...For their unrestrained immorality. 1:5-7

As evidence, he gives 3 examples from the Old Testament of those who were judged for immorality.

...For their envy, greed and pride, 1:11

He uses three examples from the Old Testament. God judged **Cain** for killing his brother Abel out of envy.

God judged **Balaam**, a prophet, for his greed of power and money.

God judged **Korah** for his pride that caused his rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

#### FALSE TEACHERS – Their character 1:12-16

They are like clouds without water and trees without fruit. 1:12

In time of drought and famine when people see clouds and fruit trees, they think their needs will be met - they will have water and food. But when the clouds are without water and there is no fruit on the trees, people are left disillusioned, thirsty and hungry.

So on a spiritual level, when people are seeking God, these false teachers are leaving them spiritually thirsty, spiritually hungry and disillusioned.

*These are grumblers and malcontents following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. 1:16*

These false teachers are clever and convincing, but totally false and self-centered.

### HOW THEY SHOULD PROTECT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

#### HAVE DISCERNMENT ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

*But you must remember, dear friends, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. 1:17*

The scoffers that Peter predicted, even at that moment, are dividing their churches. They need to find out the beliefs of anyone who teaches in their house churches.

## HAVE DISCERNMENT IN THEIR OWN LIVES

*But you, dear friends, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 1:20-21*

Before they can protect the gospel message in the church, they must first protect it in their own life. Jude commands them,

*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*

The word *love* is *agape*. So the phrase means *keep on doing what God says*. They do it...

...by building up their knowledge of God's Word

...by asking the Holy Spirit to help them understand it

...by anxiously awaiting the return of Jesus

## HAVE DISCERNMENT OF BELIEVERS AROUND THEM

When believing church members have doubts, they should patiently give instructions and explanations. When believers get involved with immorality and then want to correct the situation, they should be there to help them. But they also need to set clear boundaries of right and wrong.

## DEPEND ON GOD'S POWER

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, 1:24*

If they depend on God's power, He can keep them from falling into wrong belief or wrong behavior. In the future, because of Jesus' payment, He is able to present them to the Father without fault and with great joy.

2 John, 3 John and Jude all deal with false teachers and the importance of protecting the gospel message. The more time passes, the more relevant these books are becoming.

More and more leaders and teachers are writing books and teaching in our churches, universities and seminaries who are influencing the younger generation – our future spiritual leaders. They believe it is a time for changing the gospel message, changing our thinking and changing our actions.

Brian McLaren developed what has been called, the *Emerging Church*. In his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, he says, *Teaching God's Word based on original languages* (expositional teaching), *defending the faith, saying there is a right and wrong and Jesus is the only way, is **harmful** in today's church.*

*A Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren review in Emergent Church - Theopedia, 7 pages

Another leader, Dan Kimball has said,

*Those who believe the Bible are abnormal... We as Christians must be accepted by non-Christians. This means we must change the way we live.* author of: *The Emerging Church ('04) They Like Jesus, But Not the Church ('06)*

In other words, he is saying we must become like the world so the world will accept us.

Brennan Manning has written, "...human nature is fallen but redeemed, flawed but in essence good." Signature, p. 125, He is teaching that people are basically good. But if this were true, we would not need Jesus as Savior.

Books and novels, that are categorized as Christian, continue to be written that support the changes or add even more new ideas. They teach,

- There are no absolutes. Truth is whatever you think it is - what you want it to be.
- You can experience God on deeper levels by repeating certain words and breathing in a certain way.
- Everyone will be in heaven - there is no eternal separation from God. (This is known as *universalism*.)
- They say, The death of Jesus was not payment for sin - it was only an example of God's love.
- The goal of believers is to change the world and create God's kingdom on earth.
- God has no future plans for the Jewish people and their nation. The Church has replaced the Jews.

The message of Jude is just as relevant now as it was in the first century. We need to protect the Gospel message...

...**By having discernment about our spiritual teachers**

Know what they are teaching about Jesus, about sin and our need for the payment of Jesus.

Encourage and pray for our pastors that they will be faithful to God's Word.

Stop listening to those who are giving false teaching.

...**By having discernment in our own lives**

Believe correctly, knowing what we believe and why.  
Live correctly by obeying what God shows us.

...**By having discernment of other believers**

When they have doubts we should give them reasonable and logical answers.  
If they have gotten away from God and want to start obeying, we need to encourage and guide them,  
being understanding but never implying that disobedience is okay.

...**By depending on God's power and building up our knowledge of God's Word**

When we see others turning away from God's Word, our first reaction is to want to change them. But we can only change ourselves. Our first responsibility is to make sure we keep learning and listening to the Holy Spirit, and obeying what He shows us to do.

As a result, Jesus is able to keep **us** from falling into wrong belief or wrong behavior.

If we do fall, but then admit our wrong and ask forgiveness, we will be forgiven.

We can also be sure that in the future, Jesus will present us to God the Father without fault and with joy greater than we have ever known.

What a promise!

As conditions around us get worse, we will get discouraged and feel overwhelmed. So Jude gives us the bigger picture.

*Glory, majesty, power and authority belong to God our Savior. This has been revealed to us thru Jesus Christ our Lord. God the Father had these qualities before time began; He has them now and He will have them forever.*  
(literally – for all ages) 1:25

**In other words, God is God and He is in control. In this we can rest.**

## **EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE**

### **EXPLANATION OF ADDITIONAL VERSES**

#### **Verse 13**

*They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame, wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

Wild or raging waves are destructive – this is the effect these teachers are having in the church - destructive.

**The book of Enoch** referred to the fallen angels which abandoned their proper dwelling, (Jude 1:6) as stars which transgressed and are kept forever in prison. The word “star”, when used symbolically, usually refers to an angel.

**Peter** said God cast these angels into Tartarus, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment. 2 Pet. 2:4

**Jude** says the false teachers are like the fallen angels, destined for eternal separation from God (darkest blackness).

#### **Verses 20-22**

*Be merciful to those who doubt.*

Rather than criticizing or ridiculing church members who have doubts, Jude's readers should patiently give instructions and explanations. But this is only possible if they have spiritually developed. Jude explains this happens as they grow in their knowledge of God's Word, as they pray being guided by the Holy Spirit and as they obey what God shows them to do.

#### **Verse 23**

*Snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

This is Jewish picture language for immorality.

In the days of Jude, many believers had gotten involved with immorality. Some now wanted to get out of it. Jewish believers who help them need to be careful. Two illustrations are used to show the danger. It is like rescuing someone from a fire. It is like dealing with an infection that could affect them. They need to have mercy but also caution.