

Revelation 20-06-25b

We're ready now to resume our study in the later part of the New Testament, 2 Peter and moving on to Jude. I'm going to pick up the pace a little bit because there's a couple of things I want to cover relative to our current situation. Word of God is living and powerful and it ought to inform our analysis, our understanding, our thoughts and responses to the things going on around us.

And this will certainly help us. So, as we said, these speak evil in verse 12 of chapter 2 of 2 Peter, like natural animals running on animal instinct instead of reason and thought, understanding cause and reaction, understanding that correlation does not necessarily mean causation, speak evil of things they do not understand. They will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who counted pleasure to carouse in the daytime.

What are you supposed to be doing in the daytime? Work, work with your hands, earn your way, work quietly. They're carousing in the daytime as those they are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. And right now that we have innumerable instances of this that I'm not going to go into.

Just look around, read this verse, look at your TV or your phone and you'll know what I'm talking about. They have a heart trained in self-gratifying practices. Covetousness is self-gratification.

Idolatry is self-gratification. I put a coin in this particular slot and I get back what I want. Accursed children.

Notice again, if there's any doubt that these are the redeemed we're talking about, they deny the Lord who bought them. They are as far as you can get from being functioning, fruitful, faithful Christians, but they are Christians. Accursed children.

They're not accursed strangers. They're not goats instead of sheep. They are children who have brought a curse on themselves.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray. You can't forsake something if you didn't start out there, right? If you're going to forsake evil, it means you're in evil and you need to leave it. If you're forsaking the right way, you started out in it and you left.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray following the way of Balaam son of Baor. Balaam was conversing with God, was he not? An angel of God came and spoke with him through the donkey speaks to him. God speaks through donkey.

God speaks through his angel to Balaam. He's not an unbeliever. He knows God.

He has a relationship with him. He gets his prophecies. He blesses Israel for God as a servant of

God.

Balaam is a believer, but they have gone astray like Balaam did. Why did Balaam go astray and wind up selling his knowledge to Balak and the Moabites? Greed, self-interest, self-gratification made him important in the land in which he lived. He wasn't traveling around with the Israelites.

He was with Balak who loved the wages of unrighteousness. You can get ahead. You can have all sorts of benefits.

You cannot believe some of the things that go on in churches of God perpetrated by people who are children of God. There is fornication. There is adultery.

There is illicit gain. There is all kinds of profiteering in the church out of the freewill offerings of believers who think they're supporting the Lord's work. And instead, they are supporting the profligate ways of those in the church who have access to that money and to those resources.

Balaam was rebuked for his iniquity. A dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. Peter calls Balaam a prophet.

He's a prophet of God. But they are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness. It's the blackness of darkness.

Believers, accursed children, they speak great swelling words of emptiness, great swelling words, wonderful oratory. It's fun to listen to. It carries you to and fro on emotion and on affirmation and amen and praise choruses.

They allure through the lust of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who had actually escaped from those who live in error. They've left the fruitless ways of darkness and they've come to church and now they're being led right back into darkness by people who are children of darkness and for whom darkness is reserved in the eternal future. It's a horribly tragic fact.

They promise them freedom. But they themselves are slaves of corruption. Paul talks about this in Romans.

There's a liberty in which Christ has set us free. Why fall back into a yoke of slavery? There he's talking about slavery to the law. Here it's slavery to corruption.

We can be enslaved all different kinds of ways. You can be enslaved in ritual and legalism and rule-based righteousness. Israel, Paul says, not having the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own through their works.

I will not go until you bless me. Force my way into the kingdom, as Jesus just said in our Matthew passage. People seeking to take it by violence, by force, by energy.

They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves by whom a person is overcome, by whom also he is brought into bondage. It is easy for people to be enslaved, to be led, to be brought into bondage when they are weak, when they do not have that light that ought to be in their own soul. Remember Peter talking about this previously when he says in verse 19 of chapter 1, we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.

That's the morning star of the knowledge of Christ. That's the freedom that Christ died to give us. Do not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage, but that's exactly what happens.

By whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. If they can persuade, if they can argue, if they can intimidate, if they can browbeat, if they can shame, make you ashamed of who you are, where you come from, ashamed of your history, ashamed of your culture, ashamed of your forebears, ashamed of what were accomplishments in previous generations. Nothing is perfect, but we don't memorialize failures and we don't memorialize shortcomings.

The things we memorialize from the past are the positive achievements, the good things, but people try to make us ashamed and tear those things down. By whom a person is overcome, silenced, and there's leadership right now that ought to be speaking up and it's not. It has been silenced, they've been overcome, and in some cases they are themselves slaves of corruption, brought into bondage.

If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is there any doubt at this point that we are talking about purportedly, allegedly Christians? They have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior. They have escaped, but they are again entangled in them and overcome, and the latter end is worse than the beginning. The beginning of the church age was fighting the bondage of legalism.

The end of the church age is fighting the bondage of corruption, of fallenness, self-interest, self-gratification, being led by those who themselves are slaves of corruption and are deceivers. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. Holy commandments are not delivered to unbelievers.

This entire message is about believers, Christians. You and I and our fellow believers are to read and be instructed by this piece of scripture. It has happened them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to his own vomit and a sow having washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The dog has vomited out the evil, has vomited out what is bad and is delivered from it and now he's returning to it. We have the way of salvation, the way of deliverance, but majorities and

majorities of believers are again entangled. I want to read you a few things that I, just by way of example, this is not even the tip of the iceberg.

This is a snapshot of about three square inches of the tip of the iceberg, just as a sample. There is an article I pulled up in Religion News from June 25th of 2020, which is today and it's entitled Religious Conservatives Have Lost LGBTQ Rights Battle. It is Time to Surrender.

And the thrust of the article is leaders in the Catholic church and evangelical Christian churches have fought tooth and nail against the expansion of LGBTQ rights, whether in the form of gay marriage, benefits for gay spouses, or non-discrimination in employment. Despite spending millions of dollars on media campaigns and legal fees, they have consistently lost at the U.S. Supreme Court, where these cases are inevitably decided. They have been losing in the court of public opinion, where Americans, especially young Americans, now strongly support LGBTQ rights.

Church leaders should have seen this coming and followed the advice of Jesus. What king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether, with 10,000 troops, he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with 20,000 troops? If not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. The Mormons have shown the way by secretly sitting down with state legislators and gay activists, working out a compromise that law in Utah in 2015.

And they basically said, okay, we will go as far as we can in accommodating this and legalizing this and accepting this. We reserve the right to disagree and to teach what we teach in our own church. But as far as public life, go right on ahead.

You can look that up yourself. That's one. You can find something in the Washington Post.

This happened back in March of 2015. The Utah legislature passes a landmark LGBT anti-discrimination bill backed by the Mormon church. The Mormons have been a bastion of morality far more so than most Protestant denominations in this country.

Their strong suit is morality. If you've ever known Mormons or served with Mormons in the military as I did, those are the guys I would hang out with when everybody else was drinking themselves into a stupor. I was with the Mormons having cranberry juice because those guys have morals and stick to them, but not in this case, in their own state.

This actually began, the erosion began back in the 1960s with a little something you may have heard of called Situation Ethics. This was introduced by an Anglican, an American Anglican theologian, Joseph F. Fletcher. He wrote a book that came out in 1966 called Situation Ethics, The New Morality.

In that book, he sketches out that there has to be a middle ground between moral absolutism, the

view that there are fixed universal moral principles that have binding authority in all circumstances. In other words, the Bible, fixed moral principles, universal binding authority on us and moral relativism, the view that there are no fixed moral principles at all. He said, well, let's compromise.

Let's find something in the middle and we'll call it Situation Ethics. And we'll just base everything on the Christian norm of brotherly love, but that'll be expressed in different ways in different situations. And it's pretty much to each his own.

You decide, who am I to judge a brother? And so if you're trying to be absolute, that means that you're not paying attention to the complexity and uniqueness of each situation. And you can result in callous and inhumane behavior in dealing with the problem. Have you ever heard God being accused of callous and inhumane behavior for things like the flood, the conquest of Canaan, the judgment of His own people? Why did He do that? Is God wrong in insisting that His righteousness is absolute, that His commandments are binding and authoritative on His people who have entered into covenant with Him and agreed to those things? Oh, no.

If it seems callous and inhumane, we've got to find a way to rationalize. We've got to find a way around it. That's your Situation Ethics.

It started in 1966. It's done nothing but go downhill from there. You know, the Barna Group does surveys and they're famously, they survey within the church.

Well, the Barna Group recently did a survey and it's about the morality of Gen Z, Generation Z. Remember, we had the Millennials and Gen X and all this. What teens believe so far. Now, this is pretty well hot off the press and it's introduced here by Barna.

You can find this on the Barna.com research website. This is an introduction to the results of this survey. We live in an increasingly post-truth political climate.

Does that ring a bell? We're in a post-truth political climate. Post-truth. Truth doesn't have traction anymore.

Even before fake news and alternative facts, few Americans were in agreement about, well, almost anything. Over time, consensus on key moral principles has waned. I say again, over time, consensus on key moral principles has waned and the younger generations are now inheriting this new moral landscape.

In addition to growing religious apathy and a singular focus on success, another prominent trait of Gen Z is a more relativistic worldview. Remember in Situation Ethics, he was trying to strike a balance between moral absolutism and complete moral relativism. Well, it keeps sliding downhill toward relativism.

Though still in a formative stage of life, the leading edge of Gen Z, along with Millennials, appear

to hold notably different views about morality than other generations. In a major study in partnership with Impact 360 Institute, Barna's Gen Z report examines beliefs about morality among the next, next generation. Looking at some basic principles, there's a curious generational shift in the moral compass of Americans.

One quarter of Gen Z strongly agrees, strongly agrees that what is morally right and wrong changes over time based on society. There's a generational divide on this point. Twice as many Gen Z than boomers believe this.

Only 12% of the baby boom generation thinks that right and wrong changes over time based on changing society. But one quarter believes, not just believes, but believes strongly. There's another significant percentage that generally agrees.

Well, I could go on. You can look this survey up and be shocked by it yourself. Over 20% believe that what is morally right or wrong depends on what an individual believes.

What you believe determines what's right and wrong. Elders are a shrinking proportion of the overall population, but fully three out of five among the eldest generation strongly agree that lying is immoral. That's, you know, about two thirds of the oldest people in our population strongly agree lying is immoral, while only a third of Gen Z believes lying is wrong.

On hotly debated issues, is abortion wrong? Less than 30% think it's, or about 30% think it's wrong. Somewhere in the 30 to 38% range, the younger generations. Should marriage be a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman? Less than 40% of your three youngest generations think that that's important.

Just slightly over a third. Two out of three basically don't think that's too important. Sex before marriage is morally wrong.

About 20% of your three youngest generations would agree with that. In other words, 80% think sex before marriage is fine. Is homosexual behavior morally wrong? Again, down around 20%.

Eight out of 10 think there's nothing wrong with that. And this should not surprise you if you circulate at all in our current society. Skipping down a little bit to Gen Z, right beliefs are the ones that don't hurt anybody.

And most of us have personal experience with this. The determining factor on what is right and what wrong is, well, does it hurt anyone? And of course, hurt is up to anybody's definition. What do you mean by hurt? Are you hurting a child if you bring them up in a drug infested home, but you don't beat them? Does it hurt them if you teach them alternative history and shade and twist and recolor the past? Does it hurt them or not to observe a revolving door of sexual partners for their mother and or their father? Hurt generally means, you know, I don't think you were hurt.

Is it okay or not to challenge another person's beliefs? Well, among engaged Christians, now this is, the categories here are no faith, some other faith, unchurched Christian. I'm a Christian, but I don't go to church. I'm a Christian and I do go to church.

The strongest Christian category is engaged Christian. I not only go to church, but I do church activities beyond when services meet. I'm an active Christian.

I claim this. This is what I am. 30% of engaged Christians, a third of engaged Christians, you're supposedly best and brightest Christians think it's not okay to challenge another person's beliefs.

If that's what you want to believe, fine. If your beliefs offend someone or hurt their feelings, it's probably wrong. 65% of engaged Christians think that if your beliefs hurt someone or hurt their feelings, they're probably wrong.

So it's not what the Bible says is right and wrong. It's whether or not somebody is offended or gets their feelings hurt. And if what I believe hurts their feelings, two thirds of engaged Christians in this survey said, well, then I'm probably wrong.

My beliefs shouldn't cause anybody any disturbance in their mind. I shouldn't have a witness that is a part of the Holy Spirit's testimony about sin, righteousness, and judgment. And that because I believe the Bible, I believe those things are true.

Well, that's just one survey. Another survey that was done, the best way to find yourself is by looking within yourself. 91% of all US adults believe the best way to find yourself is looking within yourself.

91% of practicing Christians, 76% said that 76% of practicing Christians say the best way to find yourself is looking within yourself. On the question, people should not criticize someone else's life choices. 76% of practicing Christians said that's right.

Shouldn't criticize someone else's life choices to be fulfilled in life. You should pursue the things you desire most. 72% of practicing Christians agreed to be fulfilled in life.

You should pursue the things you desire. What did we just read in second Peter? Self-gratification is the God. Here's a statement.

See if you agree with this. The highest goal of life is to enjoy it as much as possible. It's the highest goal in life.

67% of practicing Christians agreed. Here's a statement. People can believe whatever they want as long as those beliefs don't affect society.

Two-thirds of practicing Christians agree. Nearly two-thirds, 61%. Any kind of sexual expression between two consenting adults is acceptable.

40% of practicing Christians agreed. The Bible provides us with moral truths which are the same for all people in all situations without exception. You get about half agreement on that.

What's 29 plus 27? 56% of practicing Christians agreed with that. It's morality is on the decline. If you haven't already gotten the point, I'm only going to read you one more of these.

And this is also from the Barna group and it's called The End of Absolutes, America's New Moral Code. And actually that's the one I just read you. So we're done with that.

Great. So I want to get back to the Bible. It was once a wonderful radio program by that name.

So Peter wrote these things and you remember that he talks about the fact in his epistle that there were prophets and apostles who communicated these things. And to summarize what I think and what Dan Wallace thinks, in the 60s, AD 66, 67, along in there, Paul the apostle was executed. Peter the apostle was executed.

Peter had very recently written 2 Peter. And so when you come to the younger brother of the Lord Jesus and the younger brother of James, Jude, remember James is actually Jacob, Jacob in Greek, why they changed it to James beats me. But the brothers of the Lord Jesus are Jacob known as James and Jude.

Well, so turn over to Jude now. Jude is going to summarize this. It's a short book.

We can cover it real quickly here. And you will see that Jude is reminding people of what they heard from Peter. Look at verse 5. I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed those who were faithless.

He delivered them, i.e. they represent the saved, came out under the blood of the Passover lamb, passed through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea. But God afterward had to judge them for faithlessness. Angels who did not keep their proper domain.

This is verse 6 of Jude left their own abode. He has reserved an everlasting change under darkness for the judgment of the great day. They were servants of God.

These are not rebels with Satan. They were tasked with supervising the human race. Genesis chapter 6, verse 3. My spirits, I believe it said originally, will not judge men always.

Be another 120 years. Give no time to build the ark. Sodom and Gomorrah and cities around them in a similar manner to these gave themselves over to sexual immorality when after strange flesh are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Unbelievers suffer eternal fire. Likewise, these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of authorities. Michael the archangel arguing with the devil didn't bring a reviling accusation but said, the Lord rebuke you.

I'm not going to shame you. I'm not going to call you out. I'm not going to insult you.

I'm not going to get into a battle of, what would you call it, *ad anglem* instead of *ad hominem*. He said, the Lord rebuke you. In other words, the rebuke that you need is going to come to you from God.

Vengeance is the Lord's. He's going to repay. But these speak evil of whatever they do not know and whatever they know naturally like brute beasts in these things, they corrupt themselves.

Woe to them. They have gone in the way of Cain, a believer to whom God directly spoke and made a covenant and protected his life with a mark. Cain, a believer who was bringing an offering to God, but it was of his own design with his own effort and God condemned and judged human effort, simulated righteousness with Cain, who is a believer.

But they've gone the way of Cain. They have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit. I like this life better.

It gratifies me. I enjoy it. And they've perished in the rebellion of Korah.

You look up the rebellion of Korah. That was anti-authority. Why should Moses and Aaron be in charge? Are we not all equal? Are we not all priests? Don't we all matter equally? Shouldn't we decide whatever we want? And who are these guys to be overseers for us? Now, look, it says these are spots in your love feasts, cross out spots.

They are reefs. Long story short, and Dan Wallace makes a real excellent argument about this. Daniel B. Wallace, look up Daniel B. Wallace and Jude if you want to read his full argument on this.

But he believes, and I think he's probably right, that this was written to a group in a coastal city in Asia Minor, probably Ephesus. Jude was probably written to the Ephesians. And there are three nautical analogies here.

And the first one is reefs, hidden reefs, underwater reefs, not spots. Reefs, R-E-E-F-S, like a coral reef or an underwater rock. If you've ever been in a boat and hit a stump or a rock that you couldn't see, it knocks a hole in the hull and you start to sink.

These are reefs in your love feasts. Now, why would it be a reef? Because the water looks calm. You're coasting along, you're speaking and you're talking.

They hear you say something and it hits social media and suddenly your life is turned upside down and you are piled on, you're gang assaulted and destroyed. In this day, in this time, I can point to situations where parents are turning in, being turned in by their children to social media for excoriation and public humiliation and canceling, banishment. Children are doing this to their parents as we speak.

Social media is a quick, easy form of assassination and people are doing it right and left. Character assassination. They feast with you without fear, serving themselves.

They are clouds without water carried about by winds, late autumn trees without fruit. In late autumn, no fruit. Twice dead.

Notice twice dead. They were dead once and brought to life through salvation in Christ and now they have died because they're fruitless. They were brought to life to bear fruit.

They're fruitless. Twice dead, pulled up by the roots, raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Wandering stars, these were the planets in the ancient world and they didn't hold to a fixed path.

They're supposed to follow a path and they do not. They're expected to be fixed, something you can look to for navigation and they're not. That's what believers are supposed to be, shining as lights in a dark generation, but they are variable.

Their morality shifts with the times. They go along to get along. They adopt the latest trend, the latest hashtag and so on.

Enoch prophesied about these. The Lord is coming with 10,000 of his holy ones to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way and of the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. The Bible has been pushed out everywhere.

People who stood up for the Bible, people who lived their lives in the light of the Bible have been pushed out of the public discourse. They are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own desires. They mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

So what should we do? And I'm running a little bit long, but I want to turn the corner here, looking at this and you see it happening as never before. Every other hockey stick graph you want to look at, population, pollution, debt, all of the hockey stick graphs, there is a hockey stick graph of moral corruption and Christian defection in our day. Where is Christian testimony? Where is Christian witness? Where is the Christian voice? It's gone.

It's largely going along and submitting and agreeing with grumblers, complainers walking according to their own lusts. But you beloved, verse 17, this is our concluding point. You beloved, what should you do? What did Peter say at the beginning? Heed the light of the prophetic word until the day star rises in your heart.

What does Jude say after Peter's day? Remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice Jude seems to be writing at a time when the apostles have passed on after Paul, after Peter. He's got second Peter in front of him.

And he says, look, remember what Peter said? It still goes. Remember what was said at the beginning? It still pertains. And believe me, it pertains to us today.

They told you there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts, sensual persons who caused divisions, not having the spirit, not walking in the spirit. You beloved, what should you do? How should you act? Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God. All you see around us and especially in large cities and in these recent swelling movements is hate, hate for the past, hate for self, hate for others.

It's a movement founded on, motivated by, encouraged by the gasoline on the fire of discontent is hate. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with a view toward it says unto that's EIS in Greek ace with a view toward keep your eyes on eternal life. On some have compassion.

You've got to have some discernment here. Make a distinction. Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

And then that great doxology now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. In the face of all of this, remember it's a Hovi Lister used to joke before they sang a gospel song that had this theme. He said, this is the favorite song in the laundry because it's press on brother.

There's joy ahead and there's joy ahead. Don't get dragged down by the current swamp, the miasma of depressing destruction and hatred. Press on brother.

There's joy ahead. He can present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. God, our savior who alone is wise to him, glory and majesty, dominion and power now and forever.

That's our encouragement. We belong to him. We're safely in his hands.

We have an opportunity to grow that light within us to learn from the light of God's word. And that light began to rise like the day star in our hearts and shine forth. Be steady, be faithful, be unmoved from the hope of the good news.

That's our opportunity in these strange times. I told you before John Lennon wrote a song and he said, strange days, indeed most confusing. And to a lot of people, they are, but they shouldn't be to us.

The Bible told us they are coming. These are the signs of the end times for the church. And these things are in the church and of the church and from the church.

A lot of church people are agreeing with moral relativism with diminishing biblical authority with

just, why can't we just all be happy? Why can't we all just not believe anything or say anything that might hurt someone's feelings? It's a sign of the end. And it is unprecedented in history, the way it prevails today, not just in the United States, but all around the world. Well, we'll have more to see about this additional testimony about the signs of the end of the church age next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the encouragement from your word, the ongoing presence and power of your Holy Spirit in our souls and in our midst as a church, as families, as a group. We pray that as we reflect on these things, the light will shine and the day star will dawn in our hearts and continue to shine brightly to help us to place our steps rightly, to walk in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.