

OB Elbert - Our Common Salvation

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I love the hymn that we just sang. The Lord put a spark a seed in my heart. When I was about 16 years old, I grew up in a small town in Kentucky, and it was rare that you came in contact with anyone who was Jewish. But I had a classmate whose mother was just such a wonderful person. Just I was in awe of her.

And she wanted to start a children's theater group, and she reached out to me to be a participant in that. 16 years old riding with her, and I said, you know, driving along, Mrs. Levy, what is it like to be Jewish? And she says, I'll share this with you.

We have a thought that in the last days there will come a peaceable kingdom on earth, and some call it the golden age of prophecy.

Now, I had no Bible student background, but in reflecting on that, a seed was planted in my heart.

And the first time I came in contact with the Bible student movement, it was an evening of shared fellowship with brother David and sister Carol Duran, who had been called upon by my good high school friend, sister, now Sister Sarah Easton, to come and help another friend of ours avoid the control of the Watchtower Society.

I was very uncomfortable that the Bible was being discussed. No one was going to reel me in. Brother Larry, I wasn't going to bite that bait. But they were talking and I picked up, I don't know, it's a magazine or a. One of those table books, you know, with all the nice pictures that are mindless to just look at.

And, well, this is fun. But I was listening to exactly what they were saying, and they were talking about the golden age of prophecy, and they were talking about the ransom for all and the resurrection of the dead, and even though I tried not to react and I was successful, then I went to my job the next day and started witnessing to everybody about it, and they wondered, what did he consume last night? And I think what I consumed at that point was a measure of God's spirit for the first time.

And I was enthralled, and I remain enthralled to this day. The hope that we share, the hope of a our common salvation. On almost every Bible student convention program, there's a welcome extended to those who believe in the ransom for all.

And if Jesus died for all, then should not all have an opportunity to enjoy the blessings of that. I recently purchased a book by an author who's probably a little bit controversial. You may not want to buy the book, but the book is pretty good. It's called Heaven and Hell, and it's a history of the Afterlife. It's a history of the development of Christian thought in the afterlife.

And Today, you know, 2,000 years from the point of our Lord's ministry, we look back and it's almost a cultural or embedded in the culture that we have Christian people who think either you go to heaven or you go otherwise. But the book demonstrates that this was not the thought of the Christian church until at least the second or third century.

Up to that point, we held fast to the common salvation found in Jesus Christ.

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I want to read from Jude. As a matter of fact, I want to talk about Jude until 6, 6, 10, 5, 10. 6, 10, 6, 10. So if you'll open your Bible to Jude, we're going to try to cover that entire book in the next. In the remaining time.

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James. To those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. May mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you beloved. Although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation.

Ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only master and Lord Jesus Christ. Who were these people? What was going on? Jude wanted to write about our common salvation, but he had to interrupt that mission, and instead he's writing to the brethren to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

He's talking about our common salvation. Who were these people? These. Well, we know that the early church was a novelty in ancient times. This Christian faith, this is something new and wonderful, and it.

It really looks like it's a rising star. So we want to latch onto this and take it for a ride, see where it takes us.

But these people were also Gnostics, and the Gnostics had some very unusual beliefs. They did not believe that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, but that he was an apparition designed to represent what a perfect human being would be like.

They also felt that the grace of God that came upon the church could be utilized best and magnified and multiplied the most. If the saints would commit acts of gross immorality and perversion, perhaps this is what was behind the Apostle Paul's admonition in Romans 6 when he said, what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? That was the whole point that they were making, and he says, don't do it.

Do not pervert the grace of God, and as far as this apparition, this representation of what a perfect man should be, we read in First John, chapter 4:3, you know, we notice that Jude, Peter, Paul and John, all in their epistles, were rebuking and refuting the evil influence of the Gnostics, and so John says, beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world by this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not from God. This is the spirit of Antichrist which you heard was coming and now already is in the world.

These two things Jude is refuting and fighting against in the book of Jude, and he would remind us of our common salvation. Well, it's been debated a bit as to what the common salvation is. It strikes me that our common salvation is the most common denominator, and that's the very statement that you have on all your convention programs. We believe in the ransom for all.

As a matter of fact, that word common, from the Greek *koinos*, literally means shared by all, and how inclusive the ransom concept is. Jesus died for everyone, and everyone will receive the benefits of his sacrifice continuing on in Jude, verse 5. Now, I want to remind you, although you

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once fully knew it, that Joshua, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe, and the angels, who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he is kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing the punishment of age lasting fire.

Yet in like manner, these people, the Gnostics, also relying on their dreams, their fantasies, they defile the flesh, they reject authority, and they blaspheme the glorious one, and then he calls to mind an interaction between the angel, Archangel Michael and the devil. He says, when Michael the Archangel, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, the Lord rebuke you. The Lord rebuke you. He did not take judgment in his own hands and pronounce sentence upon him.

And we are so reminded of the Scripture, the Lord said, vengeance is mine.

And that's a very important and precious concept. Me and Sister Janet and others that we shared in fellowship. I would not want to suffer the wrath of Ob Albert for something that was improperly done because he would either not correct me enough or he would correct me too harshly, and I believe that the punishments of the Lord in effecting the common salvation will be perfect. Have you ever had the experience when perhaps you were wrong about something and the Lord gives you one of those aha moments and you say, lord, that was so gentle.

And yet the way you presented it to me pierced to the depth of my heart? And I got the lesson. You know, it's like David and Nathan, and Nathan goes in to tell David about. There was this man, he was a poor man, but he had one U lambs, a really terrific lamb would have won the 4H contest.

And a rich man liked that lamb, and he. He stole the lamb and he ate it, and David in his indignation, said, this man should die.

You're the man, right?

I love it when I have you're the man. Lessons from the Lord because it just illustrates his wisdom so profoundly, and it teaches me and moves me and really makes me sense his love and the perfection of his divine judgments.

But going back to these people, these Gnostics, who are saying the way to greater grace is through greater immorality and that Jesus really didn't die for everyone. He was an ephemeral spirit that was a mere representation. Of course, if that was true, the ransom doesn't work, does it? Foreign.

These people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively, and I don't think that when it says they are destroyed that it means eternal destruction. I think we'll see a clue later in subsequent verses. It's not their eternal destruction, but they're destroying themselves and they don't even get it. They don't have that sensibility of God that comes from an understanding of God's principles.

And that of course comes from an understanding of the Word of God, and that of course comes from obedience to the Word of God. But woe to them. They've walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's era error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

What was Cain's sin?

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He hated his brother. I'm always shocked. Here we are, you know, Adam and Eve, recently out of the garden, we think, have these sons, Cain and Abel, and Cain just hates his brother so much that he murders him.

And he didn't seem to have much remorse about it either. Not that I can find in the scripture. But he deserved to die. I mean, he was killing all those lambs and things. It was just a terrible thing he did.

You know, I was taking care of my nice carrots and onions and things.

And Cain asked a very important question, and I think that question still echoes down through the ages to the present time, and I think it's a question that is so important right now in this world, and if only everyone could understand this question and the right answer to it, and the answer is very simple, I think the world would be just so much a better place, and the question that he asked, Am I my brother's keeper?

Oh, yes, you are. Yes you are, and yes, we are. We are our brother's keeper. In the Fellowship in Christ and the Bible Student movement.

We are our brother's keeper. For our neighbors, our co workers, our friends, our families. We are our brother's keeper, and if people lived by that principle, what peace there would be in this world? But our hearts are hardened.

I love the observation Paul made in writing to Titus in Titus 3:3. Paul notes this. At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Hatred rules in this world. Why do you hate those people? Well, they're not my religion. They don't see things the way I do. I hate those people.

Why? Well, they don't come from my ethnic or national background. Hatred is so unreasonable.

Thank God that our eyes have been opened to the answer to that question. Am I my brother's keeper? Yes. Oh yes. So that was Cain.

Now we move to Balaam. What was his problem? Well, Peter tells us in Second Peter, chapter two, speaking of those who have left the straight way in verse 15 and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezier, who loved the wages of wickedness.

So Balaam loved the wages of wickedness. He was hired, he was paid to bring curses upon the people of Israel, and in part, he was successful, and so, for the love of money, for the love of gain, he forsook his responsibility to God's people, and the third?

Korah, and we all know the lesson of Korah, right? His rebellion against authority.

Moses thinks way too much of himself. I'm going to fix him. Moses, I want to have a talk with you. You take way too much upon Yourself. Well, Moses didn't.

Moses was somewhat reluctant to take on those responsibilities. He said, I'm a man of imperfect speech. Okay, well, that's fine. I've got a solution. Aaron, your brother will be your spokesman.

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Any other problems? So Korah tells Moses, you have taken too much upon yourself. We want to share in the action. We want to share in the authority and the power that we can exercise. We want to share in the notoriety.

And they did achieve notoriety, didn't they? The earth opened up and swallowed them whole. I haven't forgotten that.

So these three things, we must love our brethren. We must not let the love of money tempt us. We must not rebel against proper authority. More is spoken of these people. They are called the hidden reefs.

At love feasts, they're called shepherds who feed themselves. They're clouds that have no water. There are fruitless trees in late autumn, and we all know it's in late autumn that we expect to be able to go up to that apple tree and maybe just pluck off that low hanging fruit and it's ready to go and so delicious. Well, these are those who, even in late autumn, when we should expect to find spiritual fruitage, there's nothing there because they are carnal.

Our Lord Jesus helped us to identify those who would be truly his, and it's a simple test, should be pretty obvious. By their fruits you shall know them. Matthew 7. Read verses 16:20 when you have time.

He speaks of these in Jude as being twice dead, but I don't believe that that is the same thing as the second death. I read from Luke 13, verses 6 through 9. Jesus told this parable, a man had planted a fig tree in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none, and he said to the vine dresser, look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down.

Why should it use up the ground? But the vine dresser answered him, sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good. But if not, you can cut it down.

Well, that could apply to the nation of Israel for three and a half years. Jesus. Or for three years Jesus was seeking the fruit that should have been there and it wasn't, and after three and a half years it was due to be cut down. But I think we can apply this in the personal spiritual life of each Christian.

We don't give up on people too quickly, and this is another lesson that the Lord is Teaching me Human life is so precious Human life is so precious.

I recently had a student, I teach at a college in our area, and she was an excellent student, and her family was so proud of her because at the age of 40, she was the first one in their family who had graduated high school and graduated from college.

And before the students can leave my program, they have to pass a National Board examination twice, and she passed the first attempt, but she still had to take the second. But she didn't show up for class, and I thought that was quite odd, and so I texted her, hope all is well, Looking forward to seeing you tomorrow, and when I got home, my phone rang and it was one of her fellow students.

And as soon as they started to talk to me, I knew something was terribly wrong because of the tension in their voice.

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And they explained to me that she had a neighbor who lived below her, and he was a man who had had some terrible issues with anger management, and he bought a gun and he shot her, and she did not survive.

And in reflecting on that with my students, I said, if we could take all the money out of all the banks, if we could take all the gold in the world, all the diamonds, everything that people considered to be valuable, all of that in a gigantic pile, we could not buy her back.

Life is precious. It's a miracle, and I'm not quick to give up on people.

In verses 14 and 15, we read Enoch, also the seventh from Adam prophesied of thee, saying, behold, the Lord comes 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 murmurers, complainers walking after their own lusts, and their mouths speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration, that is, they flatter others to gain an advantage.

The Lord cometh with myriads or tens of thousands of his saints.

I think it's a general thought in the Bible student movement that that's Jesus coming with the 144,000 to bless the families of the earth, and one of the blessings that they offer is to find these Gnostics or Gnostic minded people, or people who hate other people for no just cause, or people that have money as their chief God, or people who want power and authority over others.

And they convince these ungodly ones that their deeds are ungodly. They take away the blindness, and I believe that the power of God will work so mightily in the earth that the eyes of the vast majority of them will be opened and they will be delivered into eternal life.

Foreign 1619 speak of the grumbling malcontents in the last time spoken of by the apostles. Paul spoke of the Last times in second Timothy 3, 1, 10 now we know that in the book of Hebrews the apostle notes that in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son, and so the last days does not necessarily mean the very end of the gospel age.

I think that in a certain real sense we are in the last days, and if we read the context of second Timothy chapter three, that is read chapter two, we see that Paul is telling Timothy, you've got problems and I know that you've got well or ill behaved brethren who need to be brought into control, and it is these that he's speaking of when he says but understand this Timothy, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless. Wow, that's quite a list.

And I'm not even done. Heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Having the appearance of godliness but denying its power. Avoid such people. It's good vice, good advice.

Avoid such people.

What are the three major flaws of these people? Verse 19 tells us, Number one, there are three major flaws. Number one, they cause divisions.

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Number two, they are worldly minded. What does that mean? I think in Revelation we read about that those who are trying to get the victory over God's people. The Nike in the Greek reading church history, this was one of the biggest problems, if not the biggest problem in the Christian church is people striving for ascendancy, to be in control and have others under their wing and obeying them, striving for masteries.

And number three, they are devoid of the Spirit. But you dear brethren, in the end looking forward to our common salvation, looking forward to the privilege of living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. Looking forward to those wondrous moments. Can you imagine the emotional impact it's going to have every time we assist in bringing someone out of the grave and reunite them with their families and dry every tear.

Yeah, but we must remain steadfast. We must remain steadfast because God in verses 24 and 25 is said that he is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.

In closing 2 Scriptures first Peter 4:7 Peter reminded the brethren way back then and he reminds us still today that the end of all things is at hand. Therefore be self controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers that you might communicate with the Father, that you might connect mightily, and lastly, Ecclesiastes 12 verses 13 and 14 the wise man who saw the vanity of so many things finally comes to the conclusion. He says the end of the matter. All has been heard.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Thank God.