

“Jude: A Theological Commentary” 2025, Shelby Pritchard

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# Preface

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There were many reasons behind the compiling of this volume. First, I wanted a handy and convenient way of storing these lessons, as a full set, for the next time I teach through the book. Most importantly, however, is a desire to freely share the truths I have found with anyone willing to give their ear. Christ's truth is so important, but it does the wider body of Christ no good to keep it isolated to our own congregation.

The book of Jude also highlights very real and relevant dangers. It warns about ravenous, selfish, sexually-driven people within our churches, it details the ultimate fate of those that rebel against God, and challenges us with the need to reach others with a deep compassion. These are evergreen themes in any society, but perhaps especially so in our lax, spiritually ignorant, commercialized time that rewards charlatans and false teachers with prestige and riches, even within Christendom.

Yes, I'm well aware that others have put their pens to far more scholarly, and far more eloquent, books on Jude. Perhaps you would be better served gathering them. Yet, I do hope and pray that this contribution is worth consulting. Being freely offered, it is certainly worth the price!

I want the world to know more about Jesus. I want to be a part of equipping leaders, inspiring preachers, and enabling discussions that help spread biblical literacy. And more, I don't want money to be a factor between those teachers, and a solid theology. That's why this eBook is, and forever will be, free.

While claiming to be made with a heart for ministry, many Christian publishers lock their work behind high paywalls and often block churches from easily distributing the material to substitute teachers or even making an extra copy of the handout or chart for that unexpected visitor. Even ebook versions of various commentaries can easily reach \$70 or more, in some cases taking multiple volumes to cover a single book of the Bible, making them prohibitively expensive.

In short, in many ways, these publishers aren't ministries fully dedicated to spreading biblical literacy. They are companies trying to make a buck off their product. Their product also happens to be the teachings of Jesus.

Now, this isn't the place to declare my entire philosophy about the commercialization of Christianity. However, I cannot agree with how it's often handled. There are plenty of funding models that make it possible to pay your bills while also making your material widely, and easily, available and at no cost, or at least low cost. Plus, there's that whole, approaching stuff as a ministry and not a business thing. But that's a book for another time. Thankfully, some ministries model this by freely sharing sermons, lessons, and other materials online for others to freely use. I want to be a part of that movement. For more information about this growing return to freely sharing Christian resources, check out **[SellingJesus.org](http://SellingJesus.org)**.

My goal with this publication is to do nothing more, and nothing less, than the glorious command that Paul gave Timothy:

*“Preach the Word”*

# Introduction to Jude

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What exactly is this little book called Jude? Growing up, I knew little about the book. Yes, it was the brief one-page affair that sat before the book of Revelation. That much was clear. I do remember one sermon from my childhood pastor springboarding from the KJV's "making a difference" phrasing in V. 22 and using it for an annual theme to challenge the church members to "make a difference" in the lives of those around them through compassionate living.

The book was generally ignored otherwise. Which is a shame. Why is that a shame? Because this is a power-filled heart-felt letter that is as relevant and needed today as the moment Jude's pen first touched the paper. This contains answers and challenges that show just how timeless God's Word is and just how perpetually occurring some sins seem to be in the world.

So, let us begin, together, to take a look at this long-neglected book.

## Author/Date

Jude makes the claim to be a brother of James, and it is commonly agreed that this particular James was the leader of the Jerusalem church, James the brother of Jesus. That view is also supported by the works of Clement of Alexandria who lived c. 150–215 AD and wrote in support of this identification in his work "Comments on the Epistle

of Jude”<sup>1</sup> James isn’t Jude’s only famous connection, but we’ll return to that in a moment.

First, a quick note is needed regarding his name. The epistle is known in English by the name “Jude” while all other uses of that name are written as “Judas.” (It’s the Greek form of the Hebrew Judah) “The Greek version of the name Ioudas would normally be rendered in English as “Judas.” However, because of Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus, English translations almost never use “Judas” to translate the name of this letter’s author.”<sup>2</sup> In short, it’s a quirk of English translations to help make abundantly clear that this epistle wasn’t written by Judas Iscariot.

However, to return to the issue of authorship, some have taken issue with the conclusion that Jude is the half-brother of Jesus, and instead argue for Jude the Apostle.<sup>3</sup> He was the relation of a different James, both of whom were among the 12 apostles called by Jesus. (Luke 6:16, John 14:22) This Judas seems to have been called Thaddeus in some of the other Gospel accounts (Matt. 10:3, Mark 3:18) and the TR text tradition also adds the name Lebbaeus in Matt 10:3, giving the man quite a number of names! This particular Jude being the author of the epistle tends to be an older view fueled by the KJV’s rendering of that verse as “And Judas the brother of James...”

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<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alexandria. “Fragments of Clemens Alexandrinus.” *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria* (Entire). Ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Trans. William Wilson. Vol. 2. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885. 573. Print. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

<sup>2</sup> Barry, John D. et al. *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 2020.

Modern translations, along with Tyndale's pioneer work in English, translated the construction as indicating Judas was the son of James. Grammatically, the construction is identical to the earlier statement indicating the other James is "of Alphaeus" but is notably not similar to the statement in V. 14 indicating the relationship between Andrew and Peter, since that phrase contains "ἀδελφὸν." (brother) Now, not every relationship is made clear in Luke 6, since the well known brother pair, James and John, go without a relational note here, even if other places include it. (Mark 3:17, for example) In the end, this Judas/Thaddeus seems to be the son of James, not his brother, removing him from the potential pool of authors for the book of Jude since the epistle explicitly uses ἀδελφός, (Jude 1) leaving no ambiguity in the relationship. (Unless, of course, Jude had both a father and a brother named James.)

Generally, however, the traditional view, that the author is the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus Christ, siding with the early historical accounts, is to be vastly preferred and is the view taken by this commentary. This, then, rules out Thaddeus being both the disciple and brother, as Jesus' brothers didn't follow him during his earthly ministry, very unlike the 12. (Mark 3:31-35 showcase them very much being outside his ministry and certainly misunderstanding who he was.) Hence, conflating the two, as some have,<sup>4</sup> is not a wise idea. "...this identification of Thomas as a brother of the Lord is known at an early date only in the east Syrian area, appearing elsewhere only in much later works under the influence of the Acts of Thomas."<sup>5</sup> In other words, there is little to no historical reason to even suggest such a merging of these two people who, in the Bible, are quite obviously

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<sup>4</sup> Henry, Matthew. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible. Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Bauckham, Richard. Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020. Page 33

distinct, even if some authors have continued the misunderstanding from time to time thanks, in part, to some Gnostic Writings.

While the author of Jude could have been clearer about his identity, this comes from a heart of humility. Sadly, while many modern pastors and celebrities within evangelicalism wouldn't hesitate to pull strings and use this connection, Jude refuses. His example of humility and lowliness go far in living out the meek submission to serving Christ that his letter demands.

Dating the book of Jude is an incredibly hard task. If one assumes the writer is Jude the Apostle, the book must have been written before his martyrdom in AD 65 in what is today Beirut, Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> It also, obviously, must have been written sometime after Jesus' ascension, giving the churches time to form and false teachers time to infiltrate them. However, we've already shown how that individual couldn't be the author.

Going with the more traditional and likely view that it was penned by Jesus' half brother James only adds to the ambiguity. Besides some historical remarks about his grandchildren<sup>7</sup> very little is known about his later life. He was apparently accompanied on his evangelistic efforts by his believing wife, (I Cor 9:5) According to one legend, his great-grandson Judah was the last Jewish bishop of Rome, showing the enduring legacy and faithfulness of his family.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints. Compiled by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, 1275. First Edition Published 1470. Englished by William Caxton, First Edition 1483, Edited by F.S. Ellis, Temple Classics, 1900 (Reprinted 1922, 1931.)

<sup>7</sup> Church History Book 3.32, Eusebius *HE* 3:19:1–3:20:7

<sup>8</sup> The [Panarion](#) of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1-46). By Epiphanius, Epiphanius of Salamis, translated by Frank Williams, 1987. [ISBN 90-04-07926-2](#) p xi

Because of the close relationship of this letter with II Peter, it is probable that they were written close together. If Jude was written first, and II Peter written as an expansion on it, then both letters must have been written before Peter's martyrdom in the 60's. A more precise date is impossible to determine.

## Purpose

Jude's purpose is fairly simple. He is wanting this congregation to stand up to evil, stand firm in the faith, root out the evildoers that are in their midst, and trust God to preserve them and keep them even until the end. He also extensively warns about the judgment and ultimate fate of the ungodly, contrasting that with the preservation and care that God brings to his people.

Jude's letter was prompted by reports of "certain people" who "crept into" the church. Jude 4 "wormed their way into" (NLT) pictures this undermining and deceitful attitude well.

However, Jude also reminds his people that this isn't a novel occurrence. All throughout history God's people have dealt with deceivers in their ranks. From Israel in the wilderness, to even rebellious angels within the heavenly host, the response of God is always the same. Not only will their own sin bring self-inflicted destruction on themselves and those around them, but God will also bring his own condemnation on them. Their division and sin lead only to desolation not to the dominion they seek.

Finally, the epistle ends reminding the church to draw into unity with the faith and with God's promise to preserve them. This leads into the powerful doxology that closes the epistle.

Unity with God and his truth are continually contrasted with the destruction and division of wicked rebellion. Jude uses vivid examples

and striking stories to make his point. While these were well known in his first century Jewish context, many of these references appear cryptic and strange to us today, leading to the unfamiliarity we have with the book as a whole.

We'll be exploring some of those unfamiliar elements in a moment. Jude challenges us to find hope in Christ, not to despair when viewing the wickedness around us. If that sounds hard, that's because it is, much like unraveling some of Jude's more curious elements.

## Curious Elements

When one actually begins to read the book, several unique things stand out.

First, large portions of Jude are remarkably similar to passages in II Peter. "There are only three verses in the beginning and seven verses at the end of Jude which do not have extensive parallels in 2 Peter (Jude 1–3, 19–25), though verbal agreement is rare."<sup>9</sup>

While some critics have naturally taken this fact and twisted it to bring doubt upon the legitimacy of both books, it's still a unique phenomenon outside of the synoptic Gospels. There remains, of course, the evergreen debate about which book came first. For various reasons, which will be addressed later, the debate rages on. However, much like the synoptics, the exact timeline of writing, and who copied who, is far less important than the actual final products.

As to the order, "The reading of Second Peter could have caused this change. Peter placed the advent of the false teachers into the future (2 Peter 2:1), whereas Jude saw them as already present (4). Jude's

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<sup>9</sup> Green, Michael. *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 18. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Print. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

reference to the apostolic warning about mockers (17–18) seems to refer to the counsel of Peter (2 Peter 3:2–4) and Paul (Acts 20:28–30; 2 Tim. 3:1–9).<sup>10</sup> However, as a counterpoint, Peter uses the present-tense in reference to the false teachers in 2:10, 12, and 20, so we would be unwise to put too much weight on that point alone. Other textual clues would suggest the opposite conclusion: if 2 Peter came first and obscured his own quotation of Enoch, it's unlikely that Jude borrowed from 2 Peter, noticed that he refused to directly reference 1 Enoch, and then restored them!

Much like the issue of the synoptics, the precise answer continues to elude us. Many modern scholars give Jude priority, meaning he wrote his letter first, with Peter later making use of it and expanding upon it.

Second, perhaps more uniquely, Jude references numerous stories and happenings that occur in, or are heavily elaborated in, extra-biblical books. He refers to a hostile engagement between Michael and Satan, quotes the book of Enoch, and references the fate of the angelic beings seen briefly in Genesis 6. More startling, in fact, is that the only two direct quotes that Jude uses are found in extra-biblical material! For all his many, many allusions and references, his only efforts at direct quotation are from documents that are not canonical!

Needless to say, for often being neglected, Jude has an incredible amount of depth to it that certainly draws one in. The potential for chasing obscure references and seeking clarification on the many enigmatic elements provides plenty to study and learn once you set your mind to it. This can drive away those less inclined to intense mental engagement, but for Christians eager to learn more about the Scriptures they are called to obey, this is a delightful challenge with several unexpected treasures to be found.

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<sup>10</sup> Gromacki, R. G. (1974). *New Testament survey* (p. 386). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

## Contemporary Relevance

The letter of Jude is of particular relevance in today's world for a variety of reasons. First, appealing to the quick, instant-gratification culture, Jude is short and to the point. Second, Jude warns against sexual deviancy, pride, and rebellion against God's design, all elements permeating Western culture in the present moment. Finally, in an era that is fascinated with so-called "lost gospels" and the darker side of the supernatural realm, Jude provides ample satisfaction through his citation of extra biblical literature like Enoch and his brief reference to the mysterious watchers/Sons of God mentioned from time to time in the Bible, but also more fully described in extra biblical works.

Jude, however, wasn't written to simply be a curiously fun letter to mull over and investigate. It was inspired to challenge readers and set them on the path of obeying God and using his discernment. It was written to a church that had lost its morality and exchanged its God-given holiness for the hedonistic indulgences of the world around it. A church that very much resembles many churches today.

Often, the lament is voiced that "good churches are so hard to find!" and "why does every church seem so terrible?" Sadly, it's true. This life sees the dominating influence of sinners and evil ones, both inside and outside our churches, leading many to abandon truth and embrace error. They have forgotten the message of Jude, and it is with them in mind that he wrote. His is a call to that beautiful and wonderful church that we all long for, yet find so rare.

What can true Christians do about this? Many a book has been written longing for us to return to those idealistic early church model, where, so they say, our mutual love and simple but passionate faith will rid ourselves of many of the problems today's churches face. While there are aspects of truth to that, and many practices of the early church

would be helpful to us today, we must also remember that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Churches then were full of problems. Jude's epistle alone makes that clear, but the writings of Paul, John, and the other NT writers should establish that beyond any shadow of a doubt. Returning to an early church model, while promising much, and perhaps fixing some issues, brings problems of its own.

We long for perfect churches, healthy places of grace and truth and love. To a degree, that is achievable now, but even these places established by the apostles quickly departed from truth and devolved into division. Jude understands that, and he understands the steps needed for restoring them, steps that we too must be aware of. We lament the problem, yet here, by his grace, God has given us the steps to fix that problem!

As much as we desire a perfect church community, that longing is not something that will ever be completely fulfilled this side of glory. We long for Eden, yet live in this awkward twilight zone, waiting for perfection to come, yet also tasked to seek it daily in a very imperfect world. That is why Jude wrote. To stir the longings for Eden once more and call us to expend every effort to glimpse it even now. Though our world is broken beyond anything but direct divine repair, as we live this life and "contend for the faith" we see previews of God's renovation appear in our lives and those around us, previews that are only possible when we do hard things for him. Previews that are possible, even if we don't see how at this time. Though we will never reach the best here in this life, we can always strive for the better and better.

We long for Eden's perfection, but rather than give up in the face of this temporary evil confronting us, we can keep our eyes locked on God's ultimate victory and seek to be vessels of God's renewal even now. We can see the evil and wrong around us, and maybe even in our

churches, and we can challenge it in the power and grace of God. Jude inspires us, not to continually retreat and run away from any church that isn't quite picture perfect, but instead, to rise up as faithful people of God and wage war against compromise, assured that Christ himself will bring his judgment, vindicate his people, and purify his church.

That is the call of Jude, to join in that fight for the faith that was delivered to us many years ago. God desires his church to be ever reforming, ever purifying, ever renewing through his power and people. Through this epistle, you and I are given the tools to keep ourselves in the love of God as we seek to reform those congregations that we find ourselves in.

## Outline of Jude

- I. God's people are encouraged to contend earnestly for the faith because certain among them have denied God and abused the grace. (1-4)**
  - a. Christians should never forget what God has done and will do for believers. (1-2)
  - b. God calls his people to contend for the faith that was passed down to them. (3)
  - c. This defense is needed because God's people have been infiltrated by those who deny God and abuse his grace. (4)
- II. God's people should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they think they are the exception. (5-16)**
  - a. There are no exceptions to God's judgment, even among those that appear to be his followers. (5-7)
  - b. Often, those rebels have little respect for serious matters. (8-10)

- c. Like those that have rebelled before, these would be judged, and their efforts will come to nothing. (11-13)
- d. Jesus himself will ensure their ungodliness is punished, making that a sure promise. (14-16)

**III. Keeping their focus on the love of God, as they had been told, Christians can discerningly draw others back to him and avoid falling into the same evil. (17-23)**

- a. The Christians were to remember the forewarning of the apostles. (17-19)
- b. Rather than become like the prophesied ungodly, Christians were to keep themselves in the love of God. (20-21)
- c. That love would drive them to have compassion on the fallen, yet be balanced with fear to avoid falling into sin themselves. (22-23)

**IV. Great praise and honor are due to the God who preserves his people! (24-25)**

- a. Though Christians may be concerned, having read of the many judgments, they may rest assured knowing God can and will preserve their faultlessness to the end. (24-25a)
- b. For this saving grace, and his great wisdom, Christians should exalt him both now and forever. (25b)

# Pericope #1: Jude 1-4

Certain Sneaky Charlatans Seek to Sink Standards!

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## Context

The believers Jude wrote to were, it seems, completely unaware of both the danger and the presence of those among them that were grossly abusing the grace of God to such a point that it was a total denial of Jesus's authority. This letter was written to urgently warn the believers to wake up to the danger, remember the goodness of God to them (and his work of sanctification) that they would fight well for the truth and submit to it to the very end.

## Purpose of Pericope #1

Christians must awaken to the ungodly ones lurking among them and stand up for the truth of God's gospel, the authority of God's lordship, and the holiness of God's grace.

## Preview of Pericope #2

We should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they dream they are the exception.

## Passage Outline

- I. God's people are encouraged to contend earnestly for the faith because certain among them have denied God and abused the grace. (1-4)
  - A. Christians should never forget what God has done and will do for believers. (1-2)
  - B. God calls his people to contend for the faith that was

passed down to them. (3)

C. This defense is needed because God's people have been infiltrated by those who deny God and abuse his grace. (4)

## Commentary

### **Christians should never forget what God has done and will do for believers. (1-2)**

As was discussed in the introduction, the author of this epistle appears to be Jude, (ιουδᾶς) the son of Joseph, the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Like his brother James, in his own epistle, he refused to note his physical relationship to Jesus, but instead dubbed himself a “slave of Jesus Christ.” (LSB)

He maximized his relationship to Jesus within the Kingdom of God. Rather than amplify his honor with his physical relation to Jesus, he minimized his very self by making his identity all about following Jesus, his rightful master. That title of slave/servant (Gk: δούλος) reveals far more than just the humility and submission of Jude.

As the next few verses reveal, “certain men” came “denying the only Lord God.” Their behavior made a mockery of God's sovereignty and total authority. Jude's extended condemnation of those who rebelled against God in the third pericope (Vs. 5-16) make it clear that rebellion against God was not something new and not something that would go unpunished. Jude is leading by example. Even from the beginning, Jude, a man with lofty credentials and regal connections, picked a title that shunned all of that to wholly submit to God's lordship. These themes of submission vs rebellion, of God's blessings vs his judgment, of godliness vs ungodliness, are the heartbeat of this epistle.

Right after declaring his own submission to Jesus, Jude reminds his readers about the great blessings God has given them. Not only is God king, he is a generous king! While the word slave brings to mind very negative connotations, (hence why many English translations avoid it) there is nothing oppressive or evil in joining in the service of this master!

In fact, the benefits of that service are the theme of Jude's opening lines. First, we are called, invited, and welcomed in! (Gk: κλητοις) It is universally rendered "called" in the NT, and with two exceptions (Paul's call to be an apostle in Romans 1:1 and I Corinthians 1:1) always refers to the general call of God for salvation. Our God is an inviting God! He wants us, desires us, and has issued his invitation to us!

Second, we find the first major textual variant of the book. The critical text has "beloved/loved" (ηγαπημενοις) while the TR has "sanctified." (ηγιασμενοις) Either specific word choice is unique in Jude's epistle. "Sanctified" links well with V. 24's claim that God presents us faultless, while God's "love" for us is the motivation behind his keeping us and calling us and God's love gets directly mentioned in the very next verse.

The Critical Text's "Loved" follows, among others, P72. "It is possibly the oldest substantial manuscript of the book of Jude, being usually assigned a production-date in the late 200's or early 300's."<sup>11</sup> This reading also finds support in Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, other manuscripts, Augustine, Origen, as well as ancient Latin, Syriac, Gothic, and Armenian translations.<sup>12</sup> One early writer from the 400's

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<sup>11</sup>Jr, James Snapp. "Hand-to-Hand Combat: P72 versus Minuscule 6." *The Text of the Gospels*, 16 Sept. 2016, [www.thetextofthegospels.com/2016/09/hand-to-hand-combat-p72-versus.html](http://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2016/09/hand-to-hand-combat-p72-versus.html).

<sup>12</sup>Metzger, Bruce Manning, United Bible Societies. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)*. London; New York: United Bible

was clearly using this text when he remarked “Jude includes a reference to love here because he has noticed that there is a lack of it among his people.”<sup>13</sup> However, the Textus Receptus “sanctified” finds support, like many of the differences to come in Jude, in the later majority text tradition and boasts the support of several uncials.<sup>14</sup>

The order in Greek runs loved/sanctified, then kept, then called. This creates a perfect chiasm with V. 2 “mercy, peace, love.” We are loved and sanctified by his mercy, kept by him brings us deep peace, and his mercy reached out and called us.

Finally, we are kept. We see this concept show up over and over in the book. Christians are kept for Jesus. (V. 1) Angels didn’t keep their own domain and are now kept in bonds (V. 6) and these blasphemous persons have gloomy darkness kept for them. (V. 13) However, in a glorious return to gazing Heavenward, we are challenged to “keep ourselves in the love of God” (V. 21) While a different Greek word lies behind it, V. 24 rounds out that obvious theme circling back to God’s power to guard his own and completes the loop begun in V. 1 by reminding us of God’s keeping us.

Following the past blessings in God, Jude then continues to wish future blessings upon them. These tie into the blessings already mentioned, acting almost as a mirror of them. It was by his mercy that he called us, peace comes through his preservation, and it was his love that has poured down upon us. They also echo the structure of the epistle itself, as God’s mercy is seen in his blessings here and in “the faith” being delivered to these Christians. His peace preserves true servants as rebels and sinners are judged, and it’s his love flowing

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Societies, 1994. Print.

<sup>13</sup> Bray, Gerald. James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude. Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture I.V.P. United States of America, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Wasserman, Tommy. The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission. Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006.

through them that could enable them to “Keep themselves in the love of God” and “have compassion” as detailed near the end. What an appropriate blessing then, that Jude wishes for those qualities to be multiplied!

Why does Jude mention all these things? For one, it was common practice within the inspired epistles to begin with reminding readers of God’s great blessings. More, Jude is highlighting over and over the goodness, love, and care of God. He is calling people to remember the power of God and his goodness towards them. Why? Because some in their midst are bucking his authority and abusing his mercy! Jude is setting up, at the beginning, a correct view of who God is and what his actions mean before showing just how far these wicked infiltrators have fallen.

It is not shocking when servants rebel against an unjust master. Cruelty breeds discontent and discontent brings rebellion. However, serving a good master, a good boss, is not only a light burden, but it's also shocking when those under him express their discontent. Why? Because he is good!

### **God calls his people to contend for the faith that was passed down to them. (3)**

This church, as many have over the years, would need that knowledge of God and his character to face the difficulties ahead of them. As Jude himself said, this difficulty was so pressing that he changed the very nature of his letter to address it. Much like walking out of the house to go on vacation only to see a flat tire on the van, Jude’s blissful plans of writing of God’s salvation gave way to the more urgent need facing the church. Jude was “very eager” to write about salvation, but the need of the hour forced him into a different direction.

Jude begins by calling them “beloved” (ESV) or “dear friends” (CSB). this term, “ἀγαπητός” will show up again in Vs. 17 and 20. This phrase

isn't some generic term for all people, nor is it a blanket passing over sin. Why? Jude quickly draws the battle lines.

First, he writes about “our common salvation” then sharply contrasts this group with the ungodly men marked for condemnation in V. 4. He's making clear, in no uncertain terms, that these adversaries are not part of the Christian community in any spiritual or meaningful sense, even if they have been wrongly elevated as teachers and have their names in the membership list. Those alone are not enough, since membership into both Christ's church and Christian salvation come through repentance and faith, something these false teachers have obviously neglected.

What is this salvation?

“This salvation consists of freedom (Jude 5), the gift of the Spirit (v. 20), and the ability to live a pure life—all of which are offered freely because of Jesus' death and resurrection (v. 24; compare John 3:16–17).<sup>15</sup>”

Much like spies, these ungodly ones are infiltrating the camp of their enemy while pretending to be a part and are secretly and deliberately plotting the downfall of the Christian church.

Neyrey provides a helpful comparison of the two groups:<sup>16</sup>

Faith delivered once for all	vs	scoffers of tradition
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<sup>15</sup> Barry, John D. et al. *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016. Print.

<sup>16</sup> Neyrey, Jerome H. *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 37C. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. Anchor Yale Bible.

contend for faith	vs	turn away from faith
servant of Jesus	vs	those who crept in
saints	vs	sinners
God-fearing	vs	godless
confess the Lord	vs	deny the Lord
Favor of God	vs	debauchery

So, does Jude call for some sweet and spineless submission to these fools? Does he call for adjusting our services and doctrines to accommodate these unregenerate trouble-makers? Does he demand that we just “love” these people with an infinite tolerance for their evil? Does he find it arrogant and prideful for true Christians to dare to stand up and defend Biblical truth? Nothing of the sort. Or in the wording of the KJV, “God forbid!” Instead, he calls them to action.

“Contend,” as many are eager to point out, is a word that brings to mind images of wrestling, striving, struggling for something. “To contend translates a word that also means “to fight,” “to defend,” “to strive urgently,” “to struggle for,” “to uphold.” The verb is found only here in the New Testament and comes originally from the athletic arena.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea is to not give up, give in, or give out. Not to whimper and roll over at the first sign of resistance, but to throw ourselves headlong into this conflict. It’s playing for keeps. “Contending for the faith is not just

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<sup>17</sup> Arichea, Daniel C., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Letter from Jude and the Second Letter from Peter*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

a vigorous defense of the Christian faith but an advancement of the gospel as well<sup>18</sup>”

So, what are we keeping? This set of beliefs, this faith, this gospel, that had been handed to them from “the saints.” This isn’t using “faith” in a generic way that just denotes belief in something, but rather, “the faith.” That is, the definitive collection of Christian beliefs and practices passed down from God through his witnesses!

It was a precious gift, an heirloom, not to be dropped or lightly cast aside. It was delivered to saints, who it seems, then delivered it to the readers of this letter. The terms “saints,” while including the Apostles who had themselves passed on information, (Vs. 17-18) doubtless also included all the teachers and pastors that helped teach that congregation. Again, at each step, Jude is showing them the difference between this line of saints who faithfully held to the faith, and these soon to be introduced sinners who are seeking to undermine it.

This “once for all” phrasing hints of that initial period when the doctrines and teachings of the church were first elaborated on. Some scholars even suggest the possibility that it’s referring to their being given a prototype of the Apostle’s Creed, or similar document, that highlighted the major aspects of the faith.<sup>19</sup>

Jude is piling up reason after reason for these Christians to hold on to the faith. God had given them great blessings, news of those blessings had been entrusted to the care of his readers, and God was their Lord and King. Some, however, rejected that final truth. Some rejected the truth for something known as antinomianism.

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<sup>18</sup> Wilder, Terry L. “Jude.” CSB Study Bible: Notes. Ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017. 2012. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Boyce, Stephen. “Creeds and Contending for the Faith.” FACTS, YouTube, Feb 18, 2024 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_e5r8x4l5eE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e5r8x4l5eE)

**This defense is needed because God’s people have been infiltrated by those who deny God and abuse his grace.**

**(4)**

“Certain men” contains some of the ire and contempt of whispering something akin to “Don’t be like, you know, *that guy*.” It’s a dismissive and belittling term that’s fully appropriate for the base sort of men these seemed to be. Every word Jude uses to describe them drives home their corrupt nature. Some of this disgust is felt in the NLT: “...some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches”

These people, having snuck into the church, probably did not blatantly deny Jesus with their mouths, but they certainly did with their actions. They abused the mercy of God, turning that opportunity for a new life into an excuse for ever deepening sexual sin.

(Lasciviousness (Gk: *ασελγειαν*) is giving one’s self over to unbridled lusts, sexual debauchery, and every kind of filthy indulgence. It’s a complete animalistic surrender to desires, rather than a reasoned submission to God.) They also were “ungodly,” a title Jude uses liberally throughout the book. (“The term denotes moral outrage against a deity [...] rather than disbelief in the deity”<sup>20</sup>) and denied our “Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” The Majority Text differs slightly, saying “...deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NKJV) This, then, refers to both the Father and the Son, while the Critical Text’s construction slides everything to refer to Jesus as both the Master and Lord.

This sole reference to Jesus sets up the critical reading of “Jesus” in V. 5, whereas the TR simply has “Lord” there.

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<sup>20</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

John Calvin explains the situation well: “The grace of our God. He now expresses more clearly what the evil was; for he says that they abused the grace of God, so as to lead themselves and others to take an impure and profane liberty in sinning. But the grace of God has appeared for a far different purpose, even that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Let us, then, know that nothing is more pestilential than men of this kind, who from the grace of Christ take a cloak to indulge in lasciviousness. [...]But he means that Christ is denied, when they who had been redeemed by his blood, become again the vassals of the Devil, and thus render void as far as they can that incomparable price.”<sup>21</sup>”

Interestingly, Jude never actually addresses those wicked men in the letter. He never “speaks” to them but only to the faithful readers. He never turns to face them, but instead focuses on challenging believers to step up and root out these evil influences. Even as he brings up the danger these men pose, he also brings up hope to the faithful. Those ungodly people are “ordained to this condemnation.” Or, in other terms, “designated for this judgment.” Here, “this” refers to the various condemnations, judgments, punishments about to be mentioned in the next pericope. Just as those many examples were destroyed, so too these latest foes would be destroyed. Even though these Christians would need to contend against this threat, even though they would need to cling close to God and be faithful to him against opposition, they knew God would come out on top, and as his followers, so would they. God was Lord, he had already noticed these sneaky men, even if those Christians hadn’t. Not only did God move Jude to warn those Christians, but God had already chosen their judgments and prepared the end of these ungodly sinners. They may have taken the Christians by surprise, but not God.

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<sup>21</sup> Calvin, John, and John Owen. Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010. Print.

Therefore, the Christians must remind themselves of the goodness of God, the details of their faith, and their duty to defend truth valiantly.

Ours is not a sideline religion. It is not a spectator sport. It is not a passive play. We are not the audience in the theater, nor the armchair quarterbacks watching the game. No, we are in the arena, we are facing the foes, we are called on, each one of us, to actively contend for the faith.

## Teaching the Text

With the multiplicity of various and sundry “Christian” denominations, beliefs, doctrines, and churches, it’s not hard to convince the congregation that there are many, many, mistaken people that don’t quite line up. Additionally, in this communication-heavy, tech-savvy world, the influence of supposed Bible teachers and preachers is often felt far, far away from their own local church. As such, a preacher could appropriately warn against listening to certain televangelists or reading after famous and mistaken writers. In that sense, a Christian is (unknowingly?) inviting them into their lives and are, thus, in danger of their lies.

God’s people are encouraged to contend earnestly for the faith because certain among them have denied God and abused the grace.

## Illustrations

### Spies in Disguise

Spy stories are often very fascinating. Though our imaginations run wild with the glamourized and action-heavy portrayal by Hollywood films, real spies often worked quietly, unnoticed, hidden in the corner. Yet their work would undermine everything planned, everything hoped for, everything fought for on

the other side. They would smile, they would laugh, they would pretend to be friends, yet on the inside, they answered to a different country, different values, and different priorities. Just as in war, those undercover agents can wreak havoc on the church's efforts unless they are found out and cast out.

### **You can't defend what you don't know.**

In personal conversations I've had, I've heard time and time again from agnostics and atheists that they were once Christians, but then dropped out when Christianity "didn't have answers."

Rather than Christians around them, and even themselves, being equipped to defend the faith and offer thoughtful, intelligent defenses for our beliefs, there was a gaping hole. I can certainly understand why. It's difficult, even in the best of churches, to learn apologetics unless you want to learn it and put effort into learning it. Other churches I know barely mention it, dismiss any opposition as irrelevant, and offer only pat, cliché, light answers for questions that demand so much more. No wonder then, that they are dismissed as backwards, unintelligent, and primitive. If we're to engage with the world around us and truly make a difference, we must be equipped to defend our faith.

### **Doesn't take much to corrupt.**

When painting, it's common knowledge that combining different colors can quickly yield new colors, new shades, and new possibilities. However, it is also obvious that it doesn't take much added paint at all to radically shift what you're working with. Starting with yellow paint, it only takes a very little blue to quickly mix into a vivid green. Likewise, only a little red added to that yellow brings orange. It doesn't take much at all until it completely changes colors.

So too, it doesn't take much corruption to completely shift the nature of a community. Rather than a church being a shining light of moral purity, only a few loud-mouthed and influential antinomians can quickly send it into a nosedive. Soon, what was once a moral and good place can be encouraging behavior that even pagans find repulsive. (I Corinthians 5 comes to mind)

## Application

One easy application is Christians seeking to defend the church and warn against the lust-filled pagans influencing her. But we must also be careful to go beyond just condemning outsiders and look within our four walls.

It's easy enough to find "pastors" endorsing and tolerating homosexuality or promoting positive assurances while never condemning or mentioning sin. It's easy to find clips of those who claim to be Christian and carry no visible Christian morals.

But Jude's letter wasn't just about those outsiders. Though, obviously, we must warn and teach against such vices. Application must center around ensuring those corrupt teachers are expelled from the local church and her member's lives. Beyond that, however, preachers should keep in mind that Jude was warning them to contend and also keep contending. Even if a church somehow purged itself of all rebellious, sneaky influences, those same influences would return, and Christians ought to be prepared and passionate enough for the truth to know what to embrace and what to reject in the future.

What would it look like to face these evildoers in the church?

It would be confronting that deacon who just wants the youth group to be entertaining and attractional and shows no concern for any spiritual instruction. Rather than turn the regular church meetings

into goofy social clubs and shallow, entertaining hangouts, we must contend for the need to share the faith and carefully instruct the next generation of Christians in the faith that was handed down to us.

It would be confronting that influential church member who loves it when the amen button is pressed on his cultural preferences, but refuses to live by any Christian morals and principles, instead just chanting the mantra that any expectation is legalist and using that boogeyman to justify his lifestyle and rampant sin.

It's confronting the teen who is showing up, who made a profession of faith at camp, but who doesn't seem to be growing and openly rejects sexual norms and doesn't see why God's way is important or necessary.

# Pericope #2: Jude 5-16

A Deadly Optimism!

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## Context

Because these false teachers were honored and seemingly doing well, not just enjoying their sin, but also their growing prominence in the community, Jude quickly and dramatically reminds the readers that such success will be short lived. These, like many before them, will fall before God's judgment. As much as they may dream it, they are not exceptions to his punishment. While church members may have been tempted to also think they could get away with sin, and been tempted to follow their indulgent leaders, Jude reminds them of the ultimate end of that path of sin, a path they must avoid.

## Review of Pericope #1

Christians must awaken to the ungodly ones lurking among them and stand up for the truth of God's gospel, the authority of God's lordship, and the holiness of God's grace.

## Purpose of Pericope #2

We should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they dream they are the exception.

## Preview of Pericope #3

God knew enemies would come; so we can build ourselves up in the faith and have compassion on the confused and lost to bring them to God.

## Passage Outline

- I. God's people should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they think they are the exception. (5-16)
  - A. There are no exceptions to God's judgment, even among those that appear to be his followers. (5-7)
  - B. Often, those rebels have little respect for serious matters. (8-10)
  - C. Like those that have rebelled before, these would be judged, and their efforts will come to nothing. (11-13)
  - D. Jesus himself will ensure their ungodliness is punished, making that a sure promise. (14-16)

## Commentary

### **There are no exceptions to God's judgment, even among those that appear to be his followers. (5-7)**

Scholars point out to us that the phrase rendered "I will therefore put you in remembrance" (KJV) was a considerate way to point out what others should have remembered. Rather than accuse them of outright ignorance, Jude was quietly nudging them with a "you remember this, *right?*" It was a kind and pastoral way to subtly rebuke them for either forgetting or not knowing something they needed to know.

Verses 5-7 describe a trio of judgments upon three distinct peoples. First, those that came out in the Exodus but didn't believe. Second, angels who abandoned their position. Third, the famous account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Each of these happened early in biblical history. While each is distinct, they all have interesting similarities. Each of these groups contained rebels that would have thought themselves to be special, and perhaps even the exception to the rule. How so?

Those that came out in the Exodus had seen God's power on their behalf, they saw the plagues, and the Red Sea crossing, and understood God's special care for his people. Those men and women had been given special deliverance by God, unique attention by God, and were chosen by God. That made them privileged above all others of that time. They saw miracles and wonders on their behalf and had escaped the world power of their day. They may have felt invincible and untouchable.

The angels, special spiritual creations of God, privileged to bask in his presence and to hear his voice come next. They were beings of immense might and glory, with great intelligence and power.

The cities of the plain, well known, situated perfectly upon prime trade routes, and enjoying the fertile plains that Lot lusted after, were no doubt proud of their status. In fact, their lands had been compared to the very Garden of Eden for their fertility and fruitfulness. (Gen 13:10) They had many physical blessings.

Each group came from a position of blessing, with unique status and position that easily led them to thinking more of themselves more than was just. This pride, then, drove from their minds the lordship and authority of God, leading them into their respective rebellions against him.

Beginning with those rescued from Egypt, the possibilities of what this is referring to are fairly wide. If there was one thing the Israelites were known for doing in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised land, it was murmuring. Time and time again, they would rebel, complain, murmur, and God would have to judge them. Some commentators are also inclined to identify this with an instance of sexual perversion in order to find that subject linking all three rebellious examples, such as Numbers 25.

Others, however, would disagree. After taking a deep look at the language Thomas R. Schreiner wrote:

“Jude had in mind the events of Numbers 14, where the spies returned (except for Caleb and Joshua) with their disbelieving report, and the Israelites also disbelieved and were judged so that they were prevented from entering the land for forty years. Two words in particular link this verse to Numbers 14.” “Jude said that Israel “did not believe” (pisteu), and the same term is used to depict Israel’s unbelief in Num 14:11 (ou pisteuousin). Jude also said that the Lord “destroyed” (aplesen) those who disbelieved, and the Lord threatens destruction (apol) in Num 14:12”<sup>22</sup>

What a contrast then, from the hope generated by God’s drawing them out of Egypt, those feelings of euphoria and freedom, compared with their despair and ruin by being condemned to the wilderness wanderings because of their unbelief! A favored and beloved people, rescued from Egypt, given God’s law and tabernacle, and granted promises of peace and protection, who took for granted that favored status and through their sin of unbelief threw it all away.

But a word is also needed on the easily misunderstood reference to “Jesus.” Here, the Critical Text contains “Jesus” as opposed to the TR’s “Lord.” While this reading carries some ancient support, including some from ancient translations such as the Vulgate, it isn’t above question. (Bauckman rejects it,<sup>23</sup> along with other commentators.) One less convincing reason some may turn away from it is the reference to Jesus bringing the people out. This, in fact, makes perfect sense, even if it is the only NT example of such a reference.

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<sup>22</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R. 1, 2 Peter, Jude. Broadman & Holman, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Bauckham, Richard. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 50, Jude, 2 Peter. Word Books, 1983.

It fits perfectly with the work of the Angel of Yahweh as seen in the Old Testament. He is a figure often, and correctly, identified with Jesus. “Various OT passages attribute God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt to both the God of Israel and the Angel (e.g., Judges 2:1–3; 1 Sam 8:8; Micah 6:4). In light of Deut 4:37, which states the “presence” of Yahweh was responsible for Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, these passages provide a constructive case for binitarianism. The divine presence, of course, is Yahweh Himself, His “essence.” Perhaps most tellingly in this theology is the text of Gen 48:15–16, which fuses God and the Angel...<sup>24</sup>”

Identifying Jesus with the Angel of Yahweh, then referencing how the angel himself refers to his leading and protecting Israel closes the case on this particular objection, even if the text critical debate itself continues on.

Several comments are appropriate on that front, however. As Phillip notes: “Thus, it is likely that Jesus is here being seen as Yahweh the Savior. In other words, from Jude’s perspective, it was Jesus, the I Am (see John 8:58), who was present with the Israelites and operative in their deliverance from Egypt. Paul shared a similar view inasmuch as he proclaimed that “Christ” was the Rock that accompanied the Israelites in their desert journeys and that “Christ” was the one the Israelites constantly “tested” during these times (see 1 Cor 10:4, 9 and note on 1 Cor 10:9). Thus, the reading “Jesus,” though difficult, is not impossible. As such, it should be accepted as the original reading (as it was by Eberhard Nestle [1901, 328–329] and F. F. Bruce [1964, 63])”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Barry, John D. et al. Faithlife Study Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Comfort, Philip W. New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008. Print.

However, after printing “Jesus” in the first and second editions, the UBS textual committee reevaluated their decision and narrowly shifted to “Lord” in the third, showing just how difficult this particular variant is, even writing that the “Jesus” “reading was difficult to the point of impossibility”<sup>26</sup> scoring a slight win for those favoring the TR reading.

Moving on to more controversial waters, we get this reference to angelic sins.

The second major example is a slightly more cryptic one concerning angels. “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling...” (ESV) The LEB says something similar with “And the angels who did not keep to their own domain but deserted their proper dwelling place...” The idea behind this phrase is describing angels who didn’t keep to their boundaries, to their domain, to their authority, and who overstepped what they were first given by reaching out for something forbidden to them. Almost like a soccer goalie who abandons his position of guarding the goal and instead wanders over to midfield, opening himself for punishment by the coach for abandoning his given task.

However, that still isn’t specific. Does this refer to a generic angelic rebellion against God as they followed Satan, or a different event? II Peter 2:4, in a section with striking parallels to this one in Jude, mentions something that is, doubtless, the same event.

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;” (CSB)

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<sup>26</sup> Metzger, Bruce Manning, United Bible Societies. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)*. London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994. Print.

Whatever this sin is, it wasn't simply that of every "angel" in their initial rebellion, since not every fallen spirit is currently chained and powerless. The very next verse in Peter's epistle continues by speaking of the judgment of the global flood of Noah's day before continuing to the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. That means we are looking for an event, directly before the flood, where angels both "sinned" and "deserted their proper dwelling place" and there is something in the Bible that matches this description very well. It's also the interpretation championed by early church fathers and fits perfectly with ancient Jewish interpretation of said event. However, it isn't without controversy.

It would be an understatement to say that Genesis 6:1-4 is a debated passage. There are several ways to understand who those "Sons of God" are. Some say they are men in the line of Seth, others say they were kings and rulers, others maintain they were angelic powers, and still others that they were demon possessed men of some sort. This is not a commentary on Genesis, nor is there space here for that discussion. However, if we, but for a moment, consider the possibility of those "Sons of God" to be spiritual powers, as the phrase clearly means in Job 1:6 and 38:7, several puzzle pieces fall neatly into place.

First, that would explain why some of these spiritual beings (the moniker "angels" comes from word used in the Greek Translation of the Hebrew Bible) are bound in chains of darkness, while others are not. (I Enoch, an ancient Jewish writing, claims 200 angels sinned in this way) Without this event, there is no other obvious explanation why some of them are trapped while others seemingly aren't! As Heiser puts it "There is simply no other sin in the Old Testament that meets these specific details—and no other "angelic" sin at all in the Old

Testament that might be the referent.”<sup>27</sup> Those that rebelled here, that didn’t keep to their realm of spiritual influence but instead dared to physically reproduce and physically corrupt the human race in an attempt to gain power and corrupt the pure line leading to the Promised Seed, would be deserving of everlasting chains.

“While the tradition is found in various forms in the Jewish literature of the centuries surrounding Jude (2 Apoc. Bar. 56:10–14; 1 Enoch 6–19; 21; 86–88; 106:13–17; Jub. 4:15, 22; 5:1; T. Reub. 5:6–7; T. Naph. 3:5; CD 2:17–19; 1QapGen 2:1; Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 6:1–4), Jude is clearly dependent upon the form found in 1 Enoch, not least because he explicitly cites this work in vv. 14–15, but also because of the close parallels between Jude 6 and the account in 1 Enoch 6–19.”<sup>28</sup>

Of course, the reasoning behind this imprisonment may not be revealed in the pages of Scripture. Nothing says it must be. Other commentators would point to “pride and dissatisfaction with God’s plan and purpose for their existence.”<sup>29</sup> However, the best that they can muster is assume that some angels who were imprisoned for some arbitrary reason, were kept chained while others were also arbitrarily allowed to remain free, with some commentators speculating that the chained ones were simply being kept in reserve for release during the judgment of Revelation 9,<sup>30</sup> although why some would be treated that way, while others remained free, can be nothing but pure speculation, often fueled by nothing more than a rejection of the traditional view of the “Sons of God” in Genesis 6.

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<sup>27</sup> Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. First Edition. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015. Print.

<sup>28</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

<sup>29</sup> Rasbeary, James. *Grievous Wolves and Wandering Stars*. Lulu.com, 2009. Page 217

<sup>30</sup> Rasbeary, James. *Grievous Wolves and Wandering Stars*. Lulu.com, 2009. Page 103

A word of caution is appropriate here for those who today champion the authority and superiority of the Bible, since in their righteous zeal, they can easily fall into the trap of forgetting the original meaning of *Sola Scriptura*.

“If God’s written Word contradicts science, philosophy, or reason, all those things must bow to the authority of God’s Word. Nothing can correct the plain teachings of Scripture. However, this does not mean that all these things—tradition, experience, science, philosophy, and reason—cannot contribute to a better understanding of Scripture.”<sup>31</sup>

While these extra writings, like the Book of Enoch, are tradition, not scripture, it is a mistake to dismiss their insights solely because they are not inspired. Right or wrong, if we are to reject their insight, we must render a better reason, lest we require ourselves to throw out every commentary, every resource, every history book, and every sermon we have ever heard to be consistent.

If one accepts a different interpretation of Genesis 6, one can also even more easily accept that these angels were imprisoned for an unspecified (to us) sin. After all, the Bible doesn’t provide every answer to every question, even if this is “a bit like the interpretation of the scarcely known by the still yet more unknown”<sup>32</sup>

But remember, lest we get too side-tracked, that Jude’s emphasis lies on the punishment. This punishment for the angels contains a literary pun. The “kept” early in the verse is the Greek “τηρησαντας” which is later repeated when they are “kept in eternal chains” (ESV) When they

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<sup>31</sup> Svigel, Michael J. *RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith*. Crossway, 2012. Page 289

<sup>32</sup> Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2007, p. 1071.

didn't keep to their boundaries, God now keeps them in everlasting/eternal bonds. Attempting to bypass the boundaries of God leaves one bound in the chains fastened by one's own sin, much as the ghostly Jacob Marley was bound in chains forged by his lifetime of greed and selfishness in Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol."<sup>33</sup>

The final example, at last with no ambiguity of reference, is the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their sensuality and deviant behavior was so thorough that even today in US law unnatural and abhorrent sexual acts are sometimes referred to as "sodomy."<sup>34</sup> While the term, and the criminal charges to go with it, are rapidly being abandoned, leading to Sodomy laws being repealed or rendered unenforceable. Regardless of society's embrace, these are evil and unnatural acts in the eyes of the Divine Lawmaker. Going after strange flesh brings to mind Paul's words in Romans 1:26-28 when he spoke of sinners rejecting God and turning against the natural use of sexuality to homosexual behaviors, making God's position on the subject clear.

One key phrase is "having indulged in the same way as these in gross sexual immorality and having gone after strange flesh" (LSB) This makes it clear that Sodom and the surrounding cities were not the only places guilty of sexual sin. They "indulged in the same way" as those mentioned directly before, namely, the angels. This lends even more credence to the angelic view of Genesis 6 and the direct ties to this passage.

"We should note at this point that Judaism abandoned this interpretation of Genesis 6 as referring to angelic beings only after the time of R. Simeon b. Yohai (in the third-generation Tannaim, i.e., A.D. 130–60), insisting thereafter that the "sons of God" were human

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<sup>33</sup> Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas carol*. ed by Broadus, Edmund Kemper [Chicago, New York, Scott, Foresman and company, 1920] Pdf. Retrieved from the Library of Congress,

<sup>34</sup> Georgia's 16-6-2 Sodomy, Maryland's Criminal Law 27§553 Sodomy, and Pennsylvania's Pen. 130.38 Consensual Sodomy are all examples.

beings rather than angels. In Christian circles this interpretation of Genesis 6 as referring to angelic beings remained unanimous until the third century and continued until the fifth century (Bauckham). Thus, the strangeness of the tradition to our ears does not mean that it was strange to Jude's readers. After all, there is no example of any other Jewish interpretation of Genesis 6 from two or more centuries before Christ (the formation of the early part of 1 Enoch) to two centuries afterward (R. Simeon b. Yohai)."<sup>35</sup>

Some, seeking to find more parallels to the angelic lust for humanity, then claim the great sin of Sodom was the desire for the men of the city to rape the angels visiting Lot. However, there is no indication here, nor in Genesis, that the men of Sodom knew the angels were actually angels until long after they expressed their desires. Additionally, God had already announced the destruction of the city to Abraham before the angels even arrived.

More accurately, a group of seemingly well favored and exalted people is brought down and made an example through dramatic judgment. A "likewise" makes clear how closely these verses ought to be read with the next. We must also remember that these three incidents are not the focus of Jude's letter. They are examples pointing to something similar that was occurring in his day. "False teachers are "licentious" men who indulge in "defiling lusts" (2 Pet 2:2, 10; Jude 8). Like the divine beings of Genesis 6 who "did not keep to their own domain" (Jude 6), defecting from the loyal elohim of Yahweh's council, false teachers "despise authority" and "blaspheme majestic beings" whom angels dare not rebuke (2 Pet 2:9–11; Jude 8–10)."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

<sup>36</sup> Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. First Edition. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015. Print.

These false teachers in Jude's day may exalt themselves on their special status as influencers, they may be enjoying the ill-gotten gains of their offices, they may feel invincible. But their sin will be judged nonetheless. Their character lines up perfectly with ancient examples of rebels who were destroyed and their lives will inevitably meet a similar, even if somewhat less dramatic, fate.

Even today, with much of the western world living in comparative opulence, enjoying the wealth and stability of the American Dream, and consistently being fed the idea that they are special, they are worthy, and they are free to follow their hearts, breeds a similar idea of highly favored people that are nonetheless discontent and lusting after more. A very strong cultural force today is one that teaches people that tradition and authority figures impose boundaries, stifle progress and restrict expression. These horrible authoritarians, we are told, keep people from being their authentic selves and therefore, are seen as bigots, judgmental, and deserving of rebellion.<sup>37</sup> In much the same way, this disrespect for established entities, this casting down of the previously respected and exalted, has seen eternal manifestation in how these rebels treat God.

### **Often, those rebels have little respect for serious matters. (8-10)**

Verse 8 serves as a concluding summary of the vices already detailed. The three part vile description of their behavior "...also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and blaspheme glorious ones."(LSB) Serves as a chiasm to the sins of the previous examples. The men of Sodom defiled their flesh, the angels despised the domination/mastery/authority of God's creation boundaries, and the unbelieving Israelites vilified both God and Moses on a regular basis.

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<sup>37</sup> Trueman, Carl R., and Rod Dreher. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. Crossway, 2020.

The obvious conclusion for readers is that these current men, while mimicking the sin, will also mimic in their lives the judgment that the previous examples suffered. That pattern would continue in them. They would be no exception.

“Relying on their dreams” is an odd description worthy of extra attention. “A few commentators think it means that the false teachers are living in an unreal world; they were “dreamers” (NIV) in the sense that they imagined God was not displeased with them for their behavior. But most commentators agree that Jude is referring to visionary experiences. The verb he uses here (*enypniazomai*) often refers to the visions that prophets receive, as it does in its only other New Testament occurrence: “Your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 2:28). The same verb is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer to the visions that false prophets claimed to receive (e.g., Deut. 13:2, 4, 6). Apparently, then, the false teachers based their immoral behavior on revelatory visions that they claimed to have received.”<sup>38</sup>

The first, that they are “dreaming” in the sense of living in a false reality in which God was not displeased with them fits immediately with the theme already running through the passage. However, a deeper look reveals the same thread runs even in the second view. Should these teachers be acting as they are on the authority of false visions and dreams, they would then be blatantly ignoring the established Word of God and rather than setting Jesus/God as their highest Lord and master, they would instead be trusting their personal dreams and submitting to their personal visions. Thus, again, despising him is living in the false reality of thinking something else is a higher authority and/or more worthy of obedience.

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<sup>38</sup> Moo, Douglas. *Niv Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude*. Zondervan, 1997.

“Speak evil of” (βλασφημοῦσιν/ blasphemēō ) then sets off a small section in verses 9-10, end capped by the word, that demonstrates just how reprehensible that crime truly was. This aside is as confusing as it is brief. In contrast to the evil examples given, Jude now details a good example, one in which the person under examination refuses to speak evil of a dignitary. This person, tying into the angelic theme, is Michael, the archangel of God.

Michael is mentioned several times in the Bible: Daniel chapters 10 and 12, Revelation 12, then here in Jude. As a side-note, “archangel” never appears in the plural in the Bible, nor is ever applied to any other angel, contrary to Jewish legends that would put their number at seven. (Tobit 12:15) Jude was no doubt acquainted with said literature, as I Enoch also heavily elaborates on the archangels and their number, but canonically speaking, Michael seems to be the sole highest ranked angel that we know of from inspired Scripture. Therefore, this event is recording an encounter between the chief of the angels and the chief of the rebellious spiritual powers.

The reference to this event is baffling for a number of reasons. It is yet another event that Jude references as history yet otherwise goes without mention in the biblical record. The last mention of Moses’ body was Deuteronomy 34:5-6, when Yahweh buried it in an unknown location. The Church Father Origen took Jude’s meaning as a reference to a document called the *Ascension of Moses*, an apocryphal book that is said to cover the account.<sup>39</sup> Today, we have a document commonly referred to as the *Testimony of Moses*, which many believe is the same document. However, the only copy we have of that document today is fragmentary, late, and nothing in the surviving

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<sup>39</sup> Origen, “De Principiis,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 328.

portion directly mentions this encounter between Michael and the Devil.

Upon concluding a thorough investigation of the related literature, which is far more extensive than one may suspect, Dr. Richard Bauckham concluded that the original *Testimony of Moses*, dating from before the time of Christ, contained this story in its (now lost) ending. It fell into a similar genre of literature wherein angels argued with a satan figure in a cosmic courtroom type setting. (Drawing inspiration and language from Zech 3:2) As time wore on, it seems Christians edited, summarized, and somewhat changed the theme of the *Testimony*, eventually resulting in the much more anti-gnostic version often referenced and summarized by early church fathers. This resulted in the document known today as the *Assumption of Moses/Ascension of Moses*.<sup>40</sup>

Not only are the details unknown, but the motivations are equally mysterious. Some postulate that Satan wanted Moses' body to make it into an object of worship, others that he simply wanted to desecrate it, while others imagine he wanted the body to foil some future purpose of God with Moses' body. (The latter may include Moses' appearance at the Transfiguration in Matthew 17 or perhaps as one of the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11.) Bauckham notes that early versions of the story follow more closely to the inspiration in Zech 3. In both stories, a godly man, yet guilty of sin, is accused by Satan who wants to claim him as a sinful, evil, unworthy man. In both stories, godly forces utter the phrase "The Lord rebuke you" citing the power, authority, and ultimately, the forgiveness of Yahweh. This ends the courtroom setting, giving God victory and claim over the human involved.

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<sup>40</sup>Bauckham, Richard. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 50, Jude, 2 Peter. Word Books, 1983

However, we must remember that Jude chose his material wisely. While we may lack some of the background behind his arguments, and may be curious about this tale, Jude's point wasn't to provide all the details, nor is it reliant on all the details. Notice the emphasis lies fully on *how* Michael disputed, and not *why*.

Take a look at Verse 9's "did not presume to bring a slanderous charge against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (BSB) Here, "slanderous" is translating "βλασφημιας" the noun form of the verb "βλασφημουσιν" of Verses 8 and 10. (This explains the ESV's rendering all three with the transliteration "blaspheme/blasphemous") Here, Michael did not presume, or did not dare, to bring a blasphemous or mocking accusation, but instead fought and rebuked him in God's name.

There is no little confusion on the application here. What is obvious is that it has to do with speaking evil, as that word finds itself in every verse. Some commentators, missing that significance, say the point of V. 9 is that, rather than boast of his own authority, Michael, the great archangel, completely submitted to God and would not impose his will, but rather, God's. This is said to be in contrast to the rebellious nature of the filthy dreamers. While indirectly, that rebellion would lead to evil speaking and lacking the respect to honor God with their mouths, that seems a little too far removed. I believe Tom Schreiner nails it when he says:

"The intruders criticized demonic powers, but Michael, by contrast, did not even revile the devil and left the judgment of the devil to God. The breathtaking presumption of the adversaries is therefore featured."<sup>41</sup> (NAC)

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<sup>41</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R. 1, 2 Peter, Jude. Broadman & Holman, 2003.

Bauckham mentions that Michael couldn't reject the devil on his (Michael's) own authority, but instead had to point to God. This proves that "no one is a law to himself, an autonomous moral authority" even if these false teachers tried to act like it. "Even if they were as righteous as Moses and had the authority of an archangel, they would not be above accusations of sin under the law"<sup>42</sup>

Verse 10 reveals these men had no idea what they were dealing with and no proper grasp on spiritual matters at all, with the corrupting experience of carnality being their only area of expertise. Thus, it's easy to understand their brazenness and stupidity in so rashly blaspheming greater powers. These men being ignorant of spiritual matters is one thing, as angels and demons are far, far above complete understanding by any humans. Yet, Jude then points out that their understanding actually falls far below the threshold of what should even be expected of humans, as they seem to only to "know naturally, as brute beasts." Their actions, then, echo "unreasoning animals" (ESV) and only lead to corruption. This level of ignorance spells doom for those foolish enough to descend this deeply into sin and shame. Additionally, Beale comments "Angels are sometimes seen as the guardians of God's established order and thus his authority, or the ones who have mediated God's revelation to us (e. g. Acts 7:38, 53; I Cor. 11:10; Heb 2:2) To "slander" them then, looks like rebellion against God's authority, which admirably fits the context and is in line with the rebellious tendencies of the false teachers."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bauckham, Richard. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 50, Jude, 2 Peter. Word Books, 1983, Page 61

<sup>43</sup> Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2007, p. 1074-1-75

**Like those that have rebelled before, these would be judged, and their efforts will come to nothing. (11-13)**

“Woe to them!” begins this section with a bang and forecasts again the coming doom of those that rebel against God. Again pulling out a set of three examples, Jude transitions slightly to a position that focuses on the modern rebels, while drawing parallels to older examples.

These teachers begin by walking in the ways of “Cain,” that infamous first murderer. Some may see a connection in that these false teachers are leading others to death, only, in this case, spiritual death. More specifically, however, Jewish traditions often painted Cain as one that taught others to sin, leading them to further rebellion against God, and in some more speculative pieces, being partly responsible for the corruption that led to the Flood.<sup>44</sup> That is perfectly echoed in the behavior of these rebels and their antinomian ways.

The lesson of “Balaam” is his insatiable greed for money that led him first to accept the summons to curse Israel, then later, led Moab to entrap Israel and lead her into sexual sin. This, no doubt, was done for additional profit by that false prophet. Thus, his greed directly led to the moral sin of Israel, much as these teachers were now teaching Christians to cast off the authority of God and “defile the flesh”. (V. 8)

The rebellion of “Korah” brings readers back to the book of Numbers, chapter 16 specifically. Here, relatives of Moses, discontent with simply serving as Levites in the Tabernacle, demanded a place in the priesthood, and were eventually swallowed up by a divinely summoned hole in the ground. Each of these, then, led others to rebellion against God and either committed murder themselves, or directly led to the death of others in their quest for power.

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<sup>44</sup> Franklin, J. Chase. “Cain, Son of Adam.” Ed. John D. Barry et al. The Lexham Bible Dictionary 2016: n. pag. Print.

What's interesting here is that V. 11 specifically says they have "perished" in the past tense. Peter H. Davids elaborates that it is in the Greek Aorist tense, meaning an action viewed as a whole, thus allowing the past tense translation on an event that had not yet happened to the teachers in their time, but will surely happen. He also sums up his comments on verse 11 with this "Cain was exiled and Balaam died in the context of a battle, but Korah's fate was public and dramatic. He went down into the ground, and so these teachers will go down, for Jude is implying that they will end up in hell."<sup>45</sup> (Pillar New Testament)

Before that judgment is elaborated on further, this "woe" is continued. Much like in a trial, Jude is listing the crimes and presenting evidence of guilt before the sentence finally falls.

Verses 12 and 13 leave behind the historical parallels in preference for numerous visuals and word pictures.

Verse 12 begins with "these are spots in your feasts of charity" an obvious allusion to a corrupting presence at events that should be pure, holy, and based in love. However, according to G. Abbot-Smith's lexicon, the meaning "spot" was only used in later writings, with writers contemporary with Jude using the word for "a rock or a reef over which the sea dashes."<sup>46</sup> While "spots" was first used by Tyndale, this more accurate reading of rocks/reefs, even adopted by the Geneva Bible, is used universally by newer translations. Rather than their being a spot of corruption among the pure feasts, the imagery shifts to their being hidden, yet deadly, dangers. Like hidden reefs or rocks, this view would see them as objects that tear apart

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<sup>45</sup>Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

<sup>46</sup>Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* 1922: 414. Print.

unsuspecting ships endangering all aboard, these teachers go unnoticed, yet their influence soon brings churches to their knees and wrecks the godly heritage that has been passed down to them.

Some push back against the “hidden” aspect. “The word *σπιλάς* was often used of a mere rock, though it normally was associated with a rock along the shore or one jutting out in the water. Thus, the false teachers would appear as “rocks”—as pillars in the community (cf. Matt 16:18; Gal 2:9), when in reality if a believer got too close to them his faith would get shipwrecked. Some suggest that *σπιλάδες* here means “hidden rocks.” Though this meaning is attested for the word, it is inappropriate in this context, since these false teachers are anything but hidden. They are dangerous because undiscerning folks get close to them, thinking they are rocks and pillars, when they are really dangerous reefs.<sup>47</sup>”

The imagery continues, as they are “self-centered shepherds,” “waterless clouds,” “fruitless trees” and “wandering stars.” Each of these illustrations draws on the idea of deception and ruined expectations. They are also “images apparently drawn from I Enoch 2:1-5:4 and I Enoch 80:2-8<sup>48</sup>” “Clouds without water” pictures a cloud, a promise of rain for their thirsty lands, only keeping the moisture to itself and leaving the ground dry and cracked. Readers of the Gospels will remember Jesus’ own illustration involving the tree that did not bring fruit, again a promise of benefit, yet without any. (Mark 11:12-25) The final picture, of “wandering stars” draws on the idea that the ancients used the stars for navigation. Looking up, they would expect to find reliable guides along their way, especially when out at sea. A wandering star, then, would be a useless guide, one that

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<sup>47</sup> Biblical Studies Press. The NET Bible First Edition Notes. Biblical Studies Press, 2006. Print.

<sup>48</sup> Charlesworth, James H., and Lee Martin McDonald. Jewish and Christian Scriptures: The Function of “canonical” and “Non-Canonical” Religious Texts. Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2019.

would only lead them astray. While, by being a star, it seemed to promise guidance and help, the wandering would only bring trouble to those that tried to follow it. In the same vein, a shepherd only concerned about himself undermines the very purpose of his job.

Jesus himself will ensure their ungodliness is punished, making that a sure promise. (14-16)

NT scholar Tom Schreiner wrote: “A prophecy from 1 Enoch (1:9) is cited here. Probably Jude quotes the book because it was important to the readers. No major group of Christians has ever argued that 1 Enoch is canonical scripture, and we need to remember that pagan writers are also cited in the NT without there being any thought of canonical authority (cf. Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12.<sup>49</sup>)”

Needless to say, the final verdict is not flattering on these deceivers. Four times the drumbeat descriptor of “ungodly” sounds. Their actions, their way of life, their words, they all with one voice express just how unholy, untrue, unrighteous, and ungodly these people are.

“Vocally discontented, sinfully self-centered, extravagantly egotistical, and deceptively flattering—such are apostates, then and today.<sup>50</sup>”

Now, in the effort to uplift the authority of Scripture and silence any possible source of doubt in the canon collection, some have postulated that this quote from I Enoch originated from divine inspiration given to Jude, then later copied and integrated into the pseudepigraphal document we now call I Enoch. I have found this group often treats the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament in

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<sup>49</sup> Schreiner, Thomas. “Jude.” *The Gospel Coalition*, 5 May 2023, [www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/jude](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/jude).

<sup>50</sup> Pentecost, Edward C. “Jude.” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. 921. Print.

circulation in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry ) similarly, claiming the textual variation between the NT quotes of the OT originated in the inspired text and were later integrated into the Greek translation of the OT. However, it's important to remember, as one author put it, "It cannot be claimed that the Book of Enoch quotes the Epistle of Jude – it was written before Jude and we have a copy in the Dead Sea Scrolls to prove the point."<sup>51</sup> More on that in a minute.

In these situations, it is seen as potentially compromising to the integrity of the NT inspiration for the writers to quote from pre-existing literature, especially when that literature either changes the wording of the OT (in the case of the Septuagint) or is quoting as true the words of a book that certainly isn't canonical. (in the case of Enoch)

In both cases, the charge that said documents were altered to match the NT text, which came first, is simply not true. This quote in Jude stems from I Enoch 1:9, and the manuscript we have containing that exact verse from the Dead Sea Scrolls dates to around 200-150BC.<sup>52</sup> (4QEnoch c ar) Other fragments of I Enoch date from similar times, including one which picks up in the very next verse. (4QEnoch a ar)

Sadly, because some falsely see Jude quoting I Enoch as a threat to Biblical canon, they can reveal a historical ignorance or lack of nuance in their approach. Rather than recognize several legitimate ways of solving the perceived paradox, they blindly insist that being quoted by Jude must, therefore, impart inspired status to I Enoch, and therefore, shy away from any possible link to the work. While some, including

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<sup>51</sup> Biblical Historical Context. "Biblical Historical Context." Biblical Historical Context, 5 Jan. 2019, [biblicalthistoricalcontext.com/biblical-inspiration/does-jude-quote-enocho/](http://biblicalthistoricalcontext.com/biblical-inspiration/does-jude-quote-enocho/). Accessed 5 Jan. 2025.

<sup>52</sup> Milik, Josef T.; Black, Matthew (1976). *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic fragments of Qumran cave 4*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.

Tertulian,<sup>53</sup> have made this argument in support of accepting Enoch, others took the perhaps even worse opposite, by using this to argue against Jude's inspiration!<sup>5455</sup>

There are, thankfully, several far better solutions. One is not forced into doubting Jude just because he quotes I Enoch. First, we can easily recognize truth even in otherwise flawed writings. Any given history book may contain true facts alongside other statements that are false. I Enoch may easily contain some statements by the true historical Enoch, even if other aspects, or even the majority of the book, is more speculative. Additionally, it is also possible that Jude is quoting the well-known Enoch just as we may quote a fictional character like Spider-man, Aragon, or Lucy Pevensie. While this is unlikely, with Jude specifically citing Enoch as the "seventh from Adam" rather than more generically, it is a workaround that one could adhere to.

## Teaching the Text

Now, one of the biggest challenges to teaching this passage is, no doubt, the noncanonical literature referenced in it. How to handle Jude's reference to the angels/Sons of God being only the first. While it is possible, with the growing resurgence of the view, that some church members have heard that as a possibility, many have not. Therefore,

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<sup>53</sup> Tertullian. "On the Apparel of Women." *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*. Ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Trans. S. Thelwall. Vol. 4. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885. 15. Print. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

<sup>54</sup> Jerome. "Lives of Illustrious Men." *Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, Rufinus: Historical Writings, Etc.* Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson. Vol. 3. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892. 362. Print. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*.

<sup>55</sup> Gene L. Green, "Jude & 2 Peter." *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), Page 28

Jude's use of what was, to him, a common and well accepted example in need of no further explanation now becomes a giant elephant in the room.

Introducing the idea of fallen *elohim* mating with humans and how that is elaborated on in a non-canonical work and how said view was also the dominating view of early Christian and Jewish interpreters alike is a big pill to swallow. Exploring the fascinating and astonishing implications of the true depth of the unseen realm could sadly overshadow the very real focus of Jude's point. As expositors, it is essential for us to present the main point of the text as the main point of our lesson. However, with so many fascinating and potentially distracting forces at play, this passage would no doubt be more difficult than others. The following story of Michael confronting Satan only adds to the already bewildering number of new ideas parishioners would need to learn to understand this passage.

However, we must remember that Jude's purpose wasn't to bewilder us with strange and unknown allusions. It would be much like a modern preacher who may quote Mr. Tumnus' line about it being "always winter, and never Christmas."<sup>56</sup> To those familiar with Narnia and the works of C S Lewis, this would need no explanation. But what about others? For that matter, if a 1st century Christian were exposed to that quote, they would have no idea who Mr. Tumnus is, what Narnia is all about, what Christmas is, or even what a book is! What is an easy and well understood quote in our own day is a distracting and bewildering obscurity to another!

It's important, then, to smoothly transition the main points of comparison between the examples, the teachers of Jude's day, and the similar contemporary threats to the church.

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<sup>56</sup> Lewis, C S. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. New York, Harpercollins, 1950.

Otherwise, “Distracted by the strange allusions and even an unknown quotation, the casual reader [and hearers] may completely miss the message that Jude writes to convey.”<sup>57</sup>

There are several strategies that a mindful pastor may employ to aid in this.

First, many would brush over or abbreviate the odd elements, regulating them to one or two brief statements to keep on track and on time. Depending on your ministry set up, this may be necessary.

Second, others will simply inform their church that this message will be a little longer and more complex than usual. While hitting these complex themes, the pastor should also consistently draw people back to the main point of the passage lest both he, and they, get distracted by the trees and miss the forest. If the pastor regularly has longer sermons anyway, adding a little time should be more than feasible.

Third, while brief statements could be made in the service, provisions could be made to further explain these issues in the preceding or following Sunday School/small group setting. Equipping leaders with material to go more in depth would be profitable. It would smoothly make use of that extra time if the usual practice is discussion of the sermon’s text, but would be awkward if that setting is typically discussing a different text or series.

Fourth, it’s possible to split this pericope into two sermons, both with basically the same Take Home Truth, but allowing the extra time to explore the details of the text. This isn’t exactly optimal, but is an option. The only place a break would work naturally is after verse 10,

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<sup>57</sup> Frei, Benjamin. A NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND STUDY of JUDE 9 and 14-15. Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, Dec. 2011.

causing 11-16 to handle the more application focused side along with the Enoch quote, and front loading much of the more controversial material into the first, which covers verses 5-10. This is the approach David Helm took in his volume of the *Preaching the Word Commentary*.<sup>58</sup>

If this last approach is taken, the first lesson could concentrate on the theme of actions leading to self-destruction and judgment, and the second lesson concentrate on the destruction possible to the church and the need for diligence and discernment.

## Illustrations

### **Too privileged to face punishment**

There's a famous, but unproven and probably apocryphal, story recounting an exchange between the boxing legend Muhammad Ali and an unnamed plane stewardess. As the plane was about to depart, the stewardess noticed that Ali was not wearing a seatbelt. She confronted him, and he replied "Superman don't need no seatbelt." Her quick retort was "Superman don't need no plane either."<sup>59</sup>

Whatever the truth of the story, we can immediately understand the grandiose self-image that sees itself as the exception to every rule only to realize the truth of their own vulnerability when the hard wall of reality hits them full force.

Much like the drunk driver who is under the delusion of his own abilities, who then quickly causes a wreck and destroys the lives of

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<sup>58</sup> Helm, David R. *1 and 2 Peter and Jude : Sharing Christ's Sufferings*. Edited by R. Kent Hughes, Wheaton, Ill., Crossway, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Ali, Muhammad, and Karl Evanzz. *I Am the Greatest : The Best Quotations from Muhammad Ali*. Andrews McMeel, 2002.

those around him, we can easily dream we are the exception and we won't fall as others did or we won't get caught as others do.

Of course, the internet is full of stories of folks who messed around, messed up, and made a mess of their lives. They found out quite quickly that some of life's lessons are learned the hard way and some lessons leave permanent marks.

In 2023, nearly 10,000 people in the US were injured from fireworks. Thankfully only 8 resulted in death.<sup>60</sup> The odds of dying to fireworks is incredibly low, but even those would never have imagined they would be the ones to die or get hurt.

### **Being flippant about the important**

It doesn't take long to hear stories from those of previous generations complaining about the younger generation refusing to be respectful. These stories can range in subject matter from lamenting the lack of formal attire at funerals, to the lack of taking off ballcaps indoors or in churches, to a general attitude of disdain towards authority figures. More concretely, being flippant and dismissive of truly important things can bring great harm.

Being casual about showing up on time can cost your job.

Being flippant to a police officer can net you even harsher charges.

Being dismissive of your date can end whatever romantic spark you had hoped to cultivate with her.

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<sup>60</sup>“CPSC Urges Caution While Celebrating as Fireworks Related Injuries Trend Upward.” U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 24 June 2024, <https://www.cpsc.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/2024/CPSC-Urges-Caution-while-Celebrating-as-Fireworks-Related-Injuries-Trend-Upward>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2025.

## Application

“We should have confidence in God’s judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they dream they are the exception.”

We cannot allow ourselves to be tempted towards sin, since we know it will not be overlooked. Instead, we must confront that wrongdoing in our own lives and in our churches.

When we hear of a Sunday School teacher in the church mentioning his porn habit, even in a joke, we should confront him and explain the sin of his habit and the problems that will bring. Rather than cross our fingers and hope it doesn't bring problems, he should be removed from his post and brought into counseling, working towards repentance. Not only will that sin bring destruction in his own marriage, it will set up his children for a warped view of sexuality and normalcy. This sexual deviancy also matches much of the pattern seen in the evildoers here in Jude. Teachers and leaders in the church allowing and encouraging sin is the major issue in Jude and a major issue today.

We should beg God to examine our own hearts regularly, even as the Psalm says: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

If we each set the example in our churches as seeking God and rooting out sin, then the culture of the church will become uncomfortable for those living in blatant sin.

# Pericope #3 Jude 17-23

Help the hurting hunger for holiness!

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## Context

Jude finally moves into practical territory, after establishing the threat of false teachers, and their looming judgment, he calls Christians to a multi-pronged response. They were not to gloat and mock the sinners over their coming fall, but instead, to reach out in compassion to draw them to repentance. However, even that is to be done with fear and in the love of God to avoid also falling into the muck of misdeeds instead of pulling them from the slime of sin.

## Review of Pericope #1

Christians must awaken to the ungodly ones lurking among them and stand up for the truth of God's gospel, the authority of God's lordship, and the holiness of God's grace.

## Review of Pericope #2

We should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they dream they are the exception.

## Purpose of Pericope #3

God knew enemies would come; so we can build ourselves up in the faith and have compassion on the confused and lost to bring them to God.

## Preview of Pericope #4

In the ideal world, God's redeemed and watched over people would erupt in doxological praise of him for eternity for his attributes and acts.

## Passage Outline

- I. Keeping their focus on the love of God, as they had been told, Christians can discerningly draw others back to him and avoid falling into the same evil. (17-23)
  - A. The Christians were to remember the forewarning of the apostles. (17-19)
  - B. Rather than become like the prophesied ungodly, Christians were to keep themselves in the love of God. (20-21)
  - C. That love would drive them to have compassion on the fallen, balanced with fear to avoid falling into sin themselves. (22-23)

## Commentary

During college, I worked at Subway in the evenings to pay the bills. At times, this restaurant was a bit slow, and with coworkers being a bit unreliable, or sometimes arrested, that meant I sometimes worked alone for most of the shift. Not a big deal. I was usually alone for several hours, so doing it for the entire shift wasn't much more of an ask.

The only thing I dreaded while working alone was a school bus. Buses full of 30 or more hungry people that all came in at once, that had complex orders, and that all wanted their food at the exact same time. One time a coach, with his 30 or so kids, got angry at me for apparently going too slow. One person vainly trying to serve 30 at Subway. I

gently reminded him that if he had called ahead, we could have contacted another employee and gotten them taken care of faster. That forewarning would have been nice-would have been helpful.

Now, I don't remember if it was that bus group, or another, but one time I mentioned it to my manager and she replied: "Oh yeah, we knew they'd show up. Sorry we didn't tell you." Oh, huh. That would have been nice to know! I could have prepared, been ready, not been overwhelmed. Or better yet, could have had some back-up called in!

You think that inspired confidence and trust in that manager? You think that made me really like that manager and want to work for her? Not really. When we get overwhelmed without warning, we long for having a forewarning, a heads up, a tip of the incoming trouble or problem or task. Even a little hint to get prepared can go a long way.

At this point, the readers of Jude's epistle had remembered how God had worked in the past, punishing evil and stuff, but how would that help the present?

After all, God had some miracle workers in the past. God appeared physically in the past. God sent plagues to rescue his people in the past, but not now. While stories of the past do bolster our confidence to a degree, we can also be quick to dismiss their relevance and imagine we are the sad exception to the rule of God's blessing, protection, and love. We can feel overwhelmed and utterly without hope.

Did God get as surprised as they did, being shocked at the rise of evil, and only afterward punishing it? Was he overwhelmed too? They certainly felt overwhelmed by the evil influences around, but how did God feel? Does the abounding evil outside the church, and now as we've seen, corruption even inside the church, mean God too is overwhelmed? Was he blindsided by this?

That's why Jude points them back to the teaching of the Apostles, he doesn't want these Christians to live overwhelmed and in doubt. He has the answer to those questions. He wants them to know why they can trust God in these times. Since this is the middle of Jude's epistle, it's best to back up and get an idea of where we've been and where we are in Jude's train of thought.

Jude began by writing to those that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. We saw that in the opening verses. He's writing to Christians, those who answered the call to salvation, were positionally sanctified by God, and preserved in that state by Jesus. It was in God that they found their new life. They relied on him for salvation and preservation, and it's him they would need to rely on now. Together, these saved believers composed that particular local church, as we believers compose our local churches.

Jude was writing because that local church, as nearly all, if not all, face the problem of false teachers. These teachers had so manipulated the teaching of God's grace, so twisted his words of forgiveness, and so rejected the authority and rule of God that they were justifying their sin! Their lusts were their guide, their whims their lord, and their desires their dictator. Their influence was a great threat! They shuddered at the words "holy living" and were beginning to drown themselves in the excess of their indulgences.

Jude wrote in response that Christians should earnestly contend for the faith. That word contend has the idea of struggling, wrestling, grappling and hopefully, overcoming. The question might remain, then, exactly how Christians were to do that.

But before answering that question, Jude took a side trip to provide some hope in that struggle.

As we saw recently, verses 5-16 prove, beyond any doubt, that Christians can be confident in God because God will punish evil in time. There's no need to despair, panic, or give up when evildoers seem blessed, God will take care of them. So, verses 1-4 tell us we must contend against the threat. Then, verses 5-16 tell us that contending is not in vain, and God's side is the winner in the end.

Now Jude returns to directly addressing the Christians. He returns to the theme of contending, though he doesn't repeat the word, and details the actions that should be in the lives of contending Christians. Here, God wanted to lay a mental foundation on which to build good actions.

After the complex and admittedly controversial subject matter of last lesson, this pericope returns to more straightforward and simple territory. This commentary breaks the passage based on the division found in the ESV, LEB, NLT, NET, NRSV, BSB, and others.

While other transitions split the passage differently (CSB has 12-19, then 20-25; NKJV has 16-19, 20-23; KJV Cambridge Paragraph Bible uses 16-23.) Verse 16 clearly belongs with the extended section describing the sinfulness of those under judgment, as it finishes and summarizes their approach to life. Verses 17-21 are tied by numerous second person pronouns as Jude lays out several commands for the readers. Verses 22-23, while lacking the same use of pronouns continues the theme of direct imperatives, adding to those thoughts. Verses 24-25 obviously shift to an ending doxology, making that split uncontroversial.

### **First, the Christians were to remember the forewarning of the apostles. (17-19)**

"But you must remember, beloved" signals a transition, an end to the previous section and a step closer to Jude's coming application. Jude was asking readers to remember the words of Jesus which had been

passed down through the apostles. It speaks of scoffers, those who mock the authority of God, again, a theme woven all through Jude, and instead of walking in God's way, they "walk after their own lusts."

Jesus himself, it seems, warned them about this. That warning was passed from Jesus, to apostles, and finally, to these Christians. A warning that showed God knew what was coming; it didn't take him by surprise! That's a comfort! God didn't just judge evil as it came up, with no idea when or where it would appear! God knew it was coming and warned his people.

Have you ever seen one of those whack-a-mole games at an arcade or Chuck E Cheese where you have the hammer and the moles pop up randomly and you've got to hit them before they vanish? Some may be tempted to think God rules the world like that. They imagine that he will punish evil once he sees it, but doesn't know where or when it'll pop up next they feel like it's a surprise to him. This warning in our passage today proves God is not surprised; he's not shocked or overwhelmed or ignorant. God knows the challenges we'll face and he's warned us about the opposition. That's a comfort! Our God is in control! That is the quality of our God.

"The OT repeatedly commands God's people to remember (Deut. 5:15; 7:18; 8:2; 24:9), and the NT does the same (Eph. 2:11; 2 Tim. 2:8). Jude has in mind more than mere "predictions"; woodenly, he refers to "the words spoken beforehand by the apostles." Such words must be remembered because they come from "the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostles were the authoritative witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus, commissioned by Christ himself to pass along the good news, both orally and in the writings that eventually formed the NT."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Harmon, Matthew S. "Jude." *Hebrews–Revelation*. Ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar. XII. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 518–519. Print. ESV

But look at the qualities of these men, look at this warning. They are mockers/scoffers. The only other use of “ἐμπαίικται” is the nearly identical 2 Peter 3:1-3.

“This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.”

2 Peter 3:1-3 (ESV)

“The scoffer in the Hebrew Scriptures is the person who despises religion and the morality based on it.”<sup>62</sup> They make a mockery of the authority of God. As one writer put it: “These workers were . . . ever intent on experiencing the thrills of new forms of ungodliness.”<sup>63</sup> What kind of ungodliness? V. 19 gives us more details.

“Separate themselves (ἀποδιορίζοντες). Only here in New Testament. Themselves is unnecessary. Better, as Rev., make separations; i.e., cause divisions in the church. The verb is compounded with ἀπό, away; διά, through; ὄρος, a boundary line. Of those who draw a line through the church and set off one part from another.”<sup>64</sup> Rather than uniting with the truth and pulling together, they were separating themselves, and as a result, causing separation and division in the church. Their false teaching forces people to either follow them, and separate from God,

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Expository Commentary.

<sup>62</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

<sup>63</sup> D Edmond Hiebert. *Second Peter and Jude : An Expositional Commentary*. Greenville, S.C., Unusual Publications, 1989.

<sup>64</sup> Vincent, Marvin Richardson. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887. Print.

or follow God and separate from them. It's a dichotomy, it's one or the other.

One author wrote this: "The teachers Jude opposes certainly did not say, "We are denying the Lord and going to destruction. Follow us!" Rather, they must have said, "We have true insight, and Jude and his group do not. Follow us!" Jude, of course, is arguing a contrary opinion."<sup>65</sup> But, like the indulgent and ignorant deacon that consistently balks at a pastor's attempts to preach holiness and truth, these people are sowing seeds of discontent and deceit. They are constantly trying to undermine the unity of the body of Christ with their lies and lusts, even while claiming to still be a part of the church.

This is because they are "worldly-minded." The KJV renders this with the term "sensual." Sensual is one of those old Bible words that we don't use a lot outside of a church setting. It's also translated as "natural" and set in contrast to "spiritual" in 1 Corinthians. One resource explained it this way:

"of the SOUL or mind, animal, natural, i.e. pertaining to the animal or natural mind and affections, swayed by the affections and passions of human nature, not under the influences of the Holy Spirit, opp. to πνευματικὸς, see in ψυχῇ II. 1 Cor. 2:14, ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Jude 19, ψυχικοί. James 3:15, ἡ σοφία ψυχικῆ, i.e. animal or natural. Comp. ψυχῆ: and so in the heathen Philosophers, e. g. Arr. Epict. iii. 7, 5, ἡ ἡδονὴ ἢ ψυχικῆ."<sup>66</sup>

It's a reference to a mindset governed by animalistic and instinctual desires, not the refined, higher, nobler desires of a spiritual man. The

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<sup>65</sup> Davids, Peter H. [The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude](#). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.

<sup>66</sup> Bloomfield, S. T. *A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament* 1840: 476. Print.

Pulpit Commentary said it like this: “In refusing the Divine Spirit they had sunk to the level of an animal life, immoral in itself and productive of confusion to the Church.”<sup>67</sup>

Again and again, these men have shown an obsession with their basest desires, rejecting the noble rule of Christ for the animalistic whims of their unchecked physical desires. That behavior was not becoming of those who are submitted to God. That behavior was born, in fact, from their not having the Spirit. Sometimes readers of Jude wonder if these evil teachers were Christians, yet here it seems plain they didn’t have the Holy Spirit living in them. They were not saved, and though they may have been members of the church, they were not in any true sense, Christians. No wonder they behaved as they did with seemingly no remorse. No wonder Christians were warned not to fall under their influence!

In direct contrast to the non-Christian, non-united, non-spiritual mockers, Jude sets up the ideal Christian. This is the example of a contending Christian, a true Christian, a Christian whose life is founded on the character of God.

**Rather than become like the prophesied ungodly,  
Christians were to keep themselves in the love of God.  
(20-21)**

Beginning with his affectionate “dear friends/beloved” Jude launches into this final exhortation with a deep passion. Even with the warning and the oppression and the discouragement floating around, Jude never doubts that God has given us the resources to overcome. Not only did God warn us about the ungodly, he provided the solution.

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<sup>67</sup> Exell, Joseph S; Spence-Jones, Henry Donald Maurice. "Commentary on Jude 1". The Pulpit Commentary. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/tpc/jude-1.html>. 1897.

We don't need to feel overwhelmed or helpless, we have his forewarning and his power on our side!

“Keep in the love of God.” This entire section revolves around that single command. In fact, it's obvious when you read the KJV.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” - Jude 20-21 (KJV)

Notice the focus here: building, praying, looking, but then the odd one, that one without the “-ing.” Keep. That's an English way of showing the Greek construction that files each of the other actions under this “keep.” You keep in the love of God by building, praying, and looking/waiting.

“Grammatically his only imperative is to “Keep yourselves in God's love.” There are three participial clauses that modify this command, telling them how to live it out: (1) “build[ing] yourselves up in the most holy faith,” (2) “pray[ing] in the Spirit,” and (3) “wait[ing] for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.” Possibly all four are to be read as commands, that is, the so-called imperatival use of the participle, but, if so, we must still keep in mind that the one true imperative is the core of the sentence and thus the central command.”<sup>68</sup>

Now, this “love of God” phrase can be tricky. Is it the love that God possesses for us, our love for God, or the love that is characterized by God, or what?

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<sup>68</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

Some commentators say that this is God's love for us. "Thus, here Jude is indeed balancing v. 1; they have experienced God's love, but it is possible to depart from that love, as one sees in the case of the teachers he opposes. They too were bought by the Lord, but now they deny him (Jude 4). Thus, it is important that these Christian readers watch out so that they remain in their place and do not leave it, as the fallen angels in Jude 6 left theirs."<sup>69</sup> Now, it's important to note that "leaving their place" in the case of Christian believers, doesn't mean a condemnation to Hell, since they are saved, but rather, judgment. However, since most of these sinful people in the church do not appear to actually be Christian, they will then continue to Hell, even if at one time they dreamed that they were redeemed from it.

"Hence, "keeping in love" suggests the public posture of loyalty, constancy, and honor. As the patron has bestowed grace and favor, so the clients respond with loyalty and faithfulness, which is what Jude urged in v 20."<sup>70</sup>

Even with evil teachers around and the temptation to sin strong, keep your focus on God. It's not talking about God's love for you, don't be mistaken, but your love of God/for God. Don't get tripped up by this, as nothing can separate us from God's love for us, we don't need to keep ourselves in that! God does that work! Jude's intro made that clear, Jesus preserves us, not ourselves!

We, however, must keep ourselves in our love for God, that's Jude's idea here. Let me say that again: "We must keep ourselves in our love FOR God." Rather than a love for our lust, we must love our Lord! Rather than be fascinated with our feelings, we must be fascinated

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<sup>69</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

<sup>70</sup> Neyrey, Jerome H. *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 37C. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. *Anchor Yale Bible*.

with our Father! It's far, far too easy to fall away from him, to let that fire of godly passion burn low and choke the crops of godliness with the weeds of this world.

If you don't keep yourself in your love for God, you'll move away from it, walk away from it, and leave God as the ungodly have. That may reveal that you never truly loved him in the first place. Or, if you are a Christian, you may find yourself doing the unthinkable and living as if you were not a Christian. God will not forget, but will seek to bring you back through the painful discipline of his love. A love that will ruin you, or perhaps worse, let you ruin yourself.

How are we, then, as sinful people, to avoid that fate? Don't worry, you're not alone in this! V. 20-22 have all plural verbs in Greek, and we see the plural pronouns even in English if one grabs a KJV. "Ye" V. 20, "yourselves" Vs. 20-21. It's a community project, a group project, a family project. Together-build up. Together-pray. Together-keep up your love for God. Together-look for God's mercy. Together-have compassion.

Look at V. 19, again, these ungodly separate themselves. They have walked in their way, not God's. They have followed their lusts, their desires, their thoughts, they have abandoned the faith of their fathers and the faith of the saints. They have justified their rebellion and excused their ignoring of God's clear commands. They have separated. No wonder God so emphasizes unity. This is a church family; we are in this together.

Notice how these others didn't have the Spirit, yet we Christians are to pray in it. One author worded it this way: "Praying in the Holy Spirit means to pray in God's presence, under God's love and protection, with God's power, and led by God's will. It is a relational idea, rather than a functional one, to pray in the Holy Spirit is to engage with God through prayer." As Charles Westley wrote, concerning the essential

step of not just praying, but praying in the Spirit: “Who alone is able to build you up, as he alone laid the foundation.”<sup>71</sup> Unite with God’s plan and power in our prayers to him. What a wonderful place for a Christian! We can be united with God and together with him!

Notice they separate, tearing apart and tearing down, yet we are to build up. Our “most holy faith” is the foundation, the bedrock of our lives, as we build our families, friendships, hopes, dreams and lives. Fastening our hearts and minds on that foundation stone of the Gospel allows us the stability to build a life that can weather the storms and survive the turmoil around us.

Notice their eyes are on their desires, ours are on Jesus Christ. Usually this is seen as the fullest manifestation of that mercy at Jesus coming again, snatching up his church, and eventually reigning supreme at the King of Kings forever in the New Heaven and New Earth. The ultimate vanquishing of evil, the final judgment of sin, and everlasting reward of the believer!

Keeping in God’s love changes us. Building on our faith, praying in the Spirit, looking to Jesus coming, those change our hearts, those allow us to shine as true Christians! It aligns our minds and desires with God’s. It helps us realize what we value and desire. That true Christian life then reaches out in love, as God did, to help others.

**That love would drive Christians to have compassion on the fallen, but one balanced with fear to avoid falling into sin themselves. (22-23)**

So not only did God warn us about evil influencers, not only did he provide us the tools to keep in our love for him and reject those influences, but he’s given us a task: Turn the tables, go on the

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<sup>71</sup> Wesley, John. Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament. Baker Book House, 1986.

offensive, draw one and all to God, or back to God. Here's how that works.

Have you ever done one of those “spot the differences” puzzles? I remember those activity books as a kid. There would be three or four pictures on the page, each mostly the same, but one having some subtle differences. Perhaps in the top picture the cat has five spots, but only four in the bottom picture. Or there are three flowerpots in one, but only two in the other. You're supposed to spot the differences, make those differences, those distinctions, plain and known. That's the idea here in the TR reading of this verse.

That reads “And of some have compassion, making a difference:” (KJV)

Since this is the cause of some severe misunderstanding, it is worth addressing before exploring the variant shown in more modern translations.

To many, this phrase means bringing a change into other's lives. We often use the idiom today regarding “making a difference” by improving or helping others. While that may appear at first to be what this is referring to, that's sadly not the case. The KJV, in Leviticus 11:47, uses the identical phrase (making a difference) in a way that obviously reveals the idea of distinguishing between clean and unclean.

The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms explains the phrases history, even citing the above verse as support. “Distinguish or discriminate. This phrase appears in the Bible (Leviticus 11:47): “To make a difference between the unclean and the clean.” [Late 1500s]”<sup>72</sup> Webster's 1828 has this for the verb form of difference:

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<sup>72</sup> “Make a Difference.” The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms by Christine Ammer. 2003, 1997. The Christine Ammer 1992 Trust 4 Jan. 2025

“DIFFERENCE, v.t. To cause a difference or distinction. The example is “A regular administration of justice according to fixed laws differences a civilized from a savage state.”<sup>73</sup>

Would one appeal to Greek, rather than solely rely on an older English translation, the point would instantly become clear. Mounce’s Greek dictionary identifies the meaning here as “to make a distinction mentally.”<sup>74</sup> Others back that definition: “to distinguish, make a distinction, cause to differ,”<sup>75</sup>

These follow the near unanimous reading of modern translations in reading “making a distinction.”

Instead of seeing both groups as the same, we’re to make them different, consider them as different. On some, have compassion. On others, save with fear. Different people require different help. don’t lump them all together as a “one-size-fits-all.” Some may be looking at those leaders, unsure if what they say is true, but tempted to listen. Some may have adopted a few of their mindsets. Some may be deeply immersed in their practices. Some may be supportive and totally on board.

We can see this need for different approaches even in our own salvation stories! Some found Christ after a message on the fires of Hell, some found Christ after seeing the love of their neighbor or friend for them. Some began looking to Jesus because they intellectually saw the proof for Christianity, others were swayed by the emotional appeal and the promise of his mental peace. God’s truth

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<sup>73</sup> WEBSTER, NOAH. Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language. EDITORIUM, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Mounce, William. Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words. Zondervan, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Bloomfield, S. T. A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament 1840: 83. Print.

reaches different hearts in different ways! Even Paul said he “became all things to all men.” He used different methods to help others, to build them up in the faith, to help them better know Jesus. Different hearts need different approaches.

In reaching out with the message of salvation, as with this message of realigning with God’s authority and law, the loving outreach of Christians takes different forms to reach different hearts. Some people slip from church and only need a hug, some attention and love, and gentle care to draw them back. Some people need a stronger confrontation to help them see the truth. We can reach out in compassion and help them, rescue them!

One of the Puritans noted, nearly 400 years ago: “The scope of true love is to make the party better, which concealment oftentimes hinders. With some a spirit of meekness prevails most, but with some a rod. Some must be ‘pulled out of the fire’ (Jude 23) with violence, and they will bless God for us in the day of their visitation.”<sup>76</sup>

There are people out there who have been carried off by this strange teaching, with its moral (or rather immoral) practices. They need rescuing. Some are teetering on the brink of moral collapse; don’t sneer at them or harry them, but show them mercy, the mercy we expect from Jesus himself. Others are already in the flames, and need rescuing. It’s hard, particularly if they claim they are enjoying the warmth of the fire, but the effort must be made. Others are deeper into sin, and it has left its mark on them, and on everything about them. In rescuing them with mercy you must also beware. Their very clothes may carry the memory, and the moral stain, of the life they have been living.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sibbes, Richard. *The Bruised Reed*. Banner of Truth Trust, 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Wright, Tom. *Early Christian Letters for Everyone: James, Peter, John and Judah*. London; Louisville, KY: SPCK; Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. Print. For Everyone Bible Study Guides.

But once again in the book, we see a different approach from modern translations.

“This passage (Jude 22–23) occurs in several forms in several manuscript witnesses. Most translations and critics prefer “have mercy on those who doubt, [23] and save others by snatching them from the fire, and have mercy on others with fear.” Other later manuscripts have “on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.”<sup>78</sup>

So, what’s this difference mean for Bible readers today?

“Have mercy on those who waver; save others by snatching them from the fire; have mercy on others but with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (CSB)

Here, the repetition gives this a poetic quality. “Mercy” (ἐλεᾶτε) begins each stanza, with the first focusing more on those needing mercy and the second turning the focus to those showing mercy.

Lest we forget, “Mercy may also be rendered as “pity,” “compassion,” “kindness,” “goodness,” or “love.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, we’re to allow the love and tender care of God to overflow our own lives and cascade into a river of healing that floods into the lives of others.

First, we’re to have mercy on those who waver, who doubt, who are uncertain and uncommitted. Rather than harshly write them off for their lack of confidence, we’re to be kind and value them and pity them. The second phrase brings to mind the bravery and valor of

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<sup>78</sup> Brannan, Rick, and Israel Loken. *The Lexham Textual Notes on the Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014. Print. Lexham Bible Reference Series.

<sup>79</sup> Arichea, Daniel C., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Letter from Jude and the Second Letter from Peter*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

firefighters, courageously diving into the dark, smoky abyss to rescue the trapped and choking children within.

While some commentators float the idea that this fire is an outward pressure and persecution that may lead to wavering or departing the faith, such an interpretation would be more appropriate for, say, Peter's epistles to the "elect exiles" (I Peter 1:1 ESV) undergoing major social pressure. In Jude's epistle, his love for the gospel was already evident in V. 3, and his entire book has elaborated on the judgments of the unbelieving rebels, while a note at the end (v. 24) will reveal the glorious salvation and safety in Christ. As such, reading this "fire" as the eternal torment of those who perish in their sin and rebellion and suffer the torment of their choices. That is the best option. Therefore, Jude is calling Christians to mercifully extend their hands and hearts to draw others from their sin to a life of salvation and sanctification in Christ "for eternal life." (v. 22)

Upon beginning the second line, with the second "mercy" we see the focus turn from the qualities and fate of the sinners to the qualities that must show in our lives and the danger present even for us.

Our compassion must open our hearts and minds and lives to others, drawing them to Jesus. But what about the second thing? That "with fear" thing?

But wait, who here is afraid, and of what? Great questions! Some have taken this as using fear to draw others to God. "Put the fear of God in them" type stuff. Preaching on Hell often attempts that. But most of the commentators I consulted leaned away from that interpretation.

The end of v. 23 give the object of that fear "hating even the garment stained by the flesh" That word, garment, translates *chitōn* their word for something like an undershirt. Something right up next to the skin, something that would absorb all that sweat and dirt and grime from

the body. What a metaphor, then, of the aspects of their lives that are stained by their fleshly desires, their lusts. Christians are to avoid being contaminated by that sin, avoid falling into the very thing they are trying to rescue others from.

Perhaps you've seen the joke played out in cartoons or movies. One person is in the boat, another in the water. And in the noble-hearted attempt to rescue the person in the water, the person in the boat leans out and out and out...And finally, grabs the swimmer's hand and pulls and pulls and pulls! Until, at last, he gets pulled right out of the boat! A rescue gone wrong.

Usually, it's played for laughs and is harmless enough. But when those waters are the depths of heresy, and they are drowning in the waves of false teaching, falling in beside them is the worst that could happen. Be afraid of that! Fear falling from truth! Fear of falling from a deep love of God. A fear that drives us to pull them out of the fire, a fear that drives us to show compassion *with caution*. We reach out, we beckon them back to God, but with caution, lest in trying to reach them, we fall into the same problems. "And though it behooves us to be tender to the sinner, we must never be tender to the sin."<sup>80</sup>

However, while that fear inspires caution, others have suggested that the fear is not fearfulness of sin, but rather a fear/respect/awe of God. Like in Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; Ignorant fools despise wisdom and discipline." (LSB)

We've been equipped to go on the offensive, to draw lost souls to Jesus, to call wandering Christians back to God! That's contending for the faith! That's the result of keeping in the Love of God.

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<sup>80</sup> Spurgeon, Charles. Spurgeon Commentary: Jude. Ed. Elliot Ritzema. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014. Print. Spurgeon Commentary Series.

## Keep in the Love of God!

The cure to the temptation of evildoers, the process by which we can safely save sinners from the temptations of these false teachers, the goal for the lives of every Christian ought to be, must be, to “Keep in the Love of God!”

Three practices/disciplines underline that phrase. First, Building in the faith. Second, Praying in the Spirit. Third, Looking for our Jesus. And it’s done in the plural, it’s done together.

To simplify, I want to give us a single application. This time, consider partnering up with another couple in the church, another member in the church, another family in the church. Choose some Bible reading and special prayer topics, then come back later and report to each other.

## Teaching the Text

It should bear noting that this is finally the section where Jude himself turns to application, and after the doctrinally heavy session last time, this pericope is very hands on and practical.

Keeping in the love of God assures us in troubled times and equips us for proper outreach. But that takes effort, contending, working. It’s inconvenient, it’s awkward, it’s unusual. It’s so much easier to just talk about the food you ate, the news you saw, the car you fixed. But I fear, when we are so bombarded with hysteria and panic and news of doom and gloom and distractions of all kinds, that we can be tempted to isolate ourselves from others in the church, isolate ourselves from the kindly rule of God, isolate ourselves from the truth and power found in him. We can think God doesn’t care, doesn’t notice, or doesn’t act. We can be tempted to justify our sin and think it’ll be overlooked. We

can become those with garments stained by sin, those that cannot rescue others from sin because they are the ones that need that rescue.

I don't want that.

I hope you agree.

The Bible presents two options, those that band together to stay in the love of God and those that separate to the lusts of the flesh. You have a choice. There is no neutral ground. If you won't join together, if you don't hear the preaching that others do, if you don't pray through our prayer list as others do, if you don't read and meditate on your Bible as others do. you will find yourself slipping further and further away. If you're not contending for the faith, you're committing to failure.

## **Illustration**

### **Flaunting their disobedience**

Perhaps you have seen the signs at some shopping centers: "No skateboards or roller skates on sidewalk." Perhaps you've been reading the sign when your view of the sign was blocked by a guy skating along. Or maybe a sign at the park that says "dogs must be on leash" and beside it is an unleashed dog and his owner. Or perhaps you've seen those signs at grocery stores pointing you to travel in one direction or the other and watched as shoppers ignore the signs and travel the wrong way. In each of those cases, they are making a mockery of those signs. They are, by their actions, mocking the rules. They are rebelling and flaunting that rebellion. So too, by their actions, these false teachers were mocking the authority of God, making light of his rule, and ignoring his Word.

### **Rescue with Caution**

One understanding of the phrase "save with fear" leads us to reach out and care for others with a caution, knowing we too could be led astray and abandon the faith. Airplanes are clear to inform parents that, in

the event of an emergency, they must put on their own oxygen mask before aiding their children. If not, the parent may pass out before getting their own mask on, and the children may not be old enough to aid the now incapacitated adult.

In much the same way, when engaging with others and calling them to Christ, that may require debating and discussing. If one is not well founded, or if one is already full of doubt, it may not take much for the Christian to begin to slip away, rather than draw the pagan to Christ.

### **Save using Fear**

As dramatic and dangerous weather approaches, authorities issue various kinds of alerts. This ranges from “Tornado Watches” to “Flood Warnings” to “Winter Storm Warnings.” Each of these, and so many more, seek to provide clear information on the nature of the coming weather and by being specific, help citizens prepare adequately.

Weather authorities often accompany such warnings with graphs or blurbs about how to prepare and what to do, warning of the potential injury or destruction to come.

Sometimes weather authorities have also been known to dramatize or exaggerate from time to time in the effort to help apathetic people become motivated to actually prepare. While the continually more dramatic presentation and wording does create the need for eternal escalation, it does, in the short term, help awaken people to the need of the hour.

In the same way, Christians have a duty to provide vital life-saving warnings to those around us. Only, the danger is real, certain, and very predictable. We are not talking about a possible tornado touchdown, but rather, a very certain eternal torment.

While “fire and brimstone” preaching is often out of style today, Jude’s own catching imagery and powerful examples make it clear that the

Bible is far more accepting, even encouraging, of this style of preaching than many evangelicals are today.

## Application

Burk Parsons once commented on X.com, (Formerly known as Twitter) “In many churches today, it is considered worse to judge evil than to do evil.”<sup>81</sup>

While our rebukes of evil shouldn't be given without love and the opportunity for repentance, many places have so over-emphasized that caveat as to neuter and ostracize any sort of rebuke. This is seen in the deacon who sharply rebukes a youth pastor's wife for suggesting to his promiscuously dressed granddaughter that she should pursue more modest attire, even while freely admitting his granddaughter shouldn't be dressing that way! Yet, in his mind, the act of careful Christian correction is more worthy of rebuke than the sin of immodesty!

It's seen in the mother who is more confrontational and antagonistic with the pastor when he declares God's rule on homosexuality than she is with her homosexual son. She would rather push for the pastor's dismissal than to enact church discipline on her wayward boy.

Sadly, many have forgotten the advice of J C Ryle: “Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth on the altar of peace.”<sup>82</sup> While this must be balanced with Christ's command for us to be peaceable and to have the gentleness of the Holy Spirit flow in our lives, we cannot allow that love for peace to allow truth to be oppressed.

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<sup>81</sup> Parsons, Burk. [@BurkParsons] Nov 6th, 2025, X.com.  
<https://x.com/BurkParsons/status/1854239331373793344>

<sup>82</sup> Ryle, John Charles. *Knots Untied*. 1898.

For us personally, this means a serious evaluation of how we give and receive corrections. Rather than see ourselves as strict judges dispensing the harsh demands of God's Law with maximum violence and immediate, merciless condemnation of others like some religious version of Judge Dredd, we must season our rebukes with the salt of God's mercy. Our motivation is not to delight in seeing others face their punishments, but instead, we are driven by the mercy God showed us to echo that mercy onward to others.

We are to be discerning with how we treat others, not just to keep ourselves from falling headlong into their sin, but also knowing how to best help them see their condition. Some need stern rebuke, others a loving hug, but all need the mercy of Christ shining in us.

How do we, then, cultivate this proper balance of mercy and justice? Compassion and condemnation? By building ourselves up in God.

Together.

“To keep yourself in the love of God means that you continue to be a student of the Word. You build up your faith by taking in God's Word, by daily making the practice of spending time in Scripture a priority, by assembling with other believers to study the Word corporately (Hebrews 10:25).”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Courson, Jon. *Jon Courson's Application Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003. Print.

# Pericope #4 Jude 24-25

To the Only Wise God!

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## Context

Rounding out the epistle, the attention is rightly pressed towards God. His authority was mocked, but now, his reign is magnified. Readers were never to lose sight of his judgment, but even that gives way to the beginning and end of the letter stressing his love and care for his people. Ending on this comforting note, Jude sends the readers off with the ultimate comfort for the hard days of contending ahead.

## Review of Pericope #2

We should have confidence in God's judgment because he will judge those that rebel, even when they dream they are the exception.

## Review of Pericope #3

God knew enemies would come; so we can build ourselves up in the faith and have compassion on the confused and lost to bring them to God.

## Purpose of Pericope #4

In the ideal world, God's redeemed and watched over people will erupt in doxological praise of him for eternity for his attributes and acts.

## Passage Outline

- A. Great praise and honor are due to the God who preserves his people! (24-25)
1. Though Christians may be concerned, having read of the many judgments, they may rest assured knowing God can and will preserve their faultlessness to the end. (24-25a)
  2. For this saving grace, and his great wisdom, Christians should exalt him both now and forever. (25b)

## Commentary

Over and over, the book of Jude highlights the blessings and gifts of God: God's forewarning of the evildoers, God's judgment on rebels, even God's salvation in the first verses! That's a lot of good from God to his people! But, the more one gets, gets, gets, the more one tends to forget the one who gives. That's a big problem, and one Jude addresses in these final verses. These two quick verses serve as the capstone on this incredible series.

1-4 told us that believers of God must awaken to the sneaky ungodly ones among them and stand up for the truth of God's gospel as well as his moral standards of holiness.

"Contend for the faith!" was the cry! But, what hope do we have when it seems evil prevails? We have hope in God, his gift to us in hard times!

5-16 explain that often, evildoers dream themselves to be exceptions to the judgment, or unnoticed by the eyes of God. Yet, hiding themselves among the righteous will not save them, for their lives speak that they are anything but holy, productive, and submissive to God. History shows they shall be judged as many have before. God does not leave

evil unpunished, even among those that claim to be his people. Jehovah, YHWH, is a just God!

In 17-23 we saw the problem, that Christians may get overwhelmed by evil, get worried, and even get dragged into sin. While attempting to help others. The response was to keep in the love of God. When God's people seek him, he provides strength! When they ask him, he aids them to reach others! What a gift! But the very ending of Jude, the emotional climax, isn't a plea to reach others, it is an elevated praise of God himself!

**Though Christians may be concerned, having read of the many judgments, they may rest assured knowing God can and will preserve their faultlessness to the end. (23-24)**

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling” (ESV)

What a promise! This is not to say he has the power but may or may not, but rather makes clear that he will!

Perhaps as a child, you were with your parents at the grocery store, saw a candy bar, and asked for it. Now, at that moment, your parents probably had the money to buy it. They could have bought it, they were able, but did they always? No. Just because one is able, doesn't mean one will. God has the power to do it, and the love to see it through!

If Jude has taught us anything, it's that God is active for his people. It's a promise that God can, and he will! He will keep us safe; he will preserve us; he will help us! When we seek him, keep in our love for him, he will keep us from falling to the sins and mindsets of these men. Notice the call backs to the first verse!

Those that are called, preserved, and sanctified are now assured that his calling to salvation is sure, his preservation is certain, and the sanctification he gave is a promise he will keep, and can keep. Through his faithfulness to judge, his empowering of his people, and enablement to save others, God is proven worthy of praise!

But that word “stumbling” is somewhat unique. It occurs only here in the NT, and only once more in the LXX. (3 Mac 6:39) . “It is used by Xenophon of a horse which is surefooted and does not stumble, by Plutarch of the steady falling of the snow, and by Epictetus of a good man who does not make moral lapses. In the midst of difficult company, turbulent thinking and the questioning of moral standards, it is only the Lord who can preserve us.”<sup>84</sup>

Spurgeon once wrote: “He leaves us with every faculty and propensity that we had before. Yet, by some mysterious, omnipotent working of his Holy Spirit—which we can no more understand than we can the blowing of the wind—he keeps his people from stumbling”<sup>85</sup>

Notice that phrase “present you blameless/faultless” Here’s why that is so amazing! We sin, we still sin. At times, we even rebel against God and his plan for us. And yet, instead of then turning on his own children and judging us as he has so many before, we see God’s role as savior allows him to present a faultless record.

Eternally, no matter our sin, God sees Jesus’ record, a record of faultlessness, a record that cannot fall or fail. We call that eternal security. No matter what we do or choose or mess up, he will preserve us to stand firm before him, enabling us to stand tall for him even now.

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<sup>84</sup> Green, Michael. 2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 18. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Print. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

<sup>85</sup> Spurgeon. The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017. Print.

Contrast that with the wicked! Unlike the wicked, whose judgment is sure, our salvation is sure! Unlike the rebellious, we obey. Unlike the disrespectful, we honor! Unlike the fallen to sin, we stand up in righteousness!

We get to stand before him, not with shame or heartache, but with joy! More, “Great joy!”

“Exceeding joy!” As David Guzik wrote: “God is faithful, we won’t have to slink shamefacedly into the presence of God. We can be presented before Him with exceeding joy.” Don’t forget: That is God’s doing, not ours. Rewind to verse 1: “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called”<sup>86</sup>

Because God sent his son, Jesus, to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Deliverer, we can be rescued from the judgment our own sins deserve. It is not our deeds that earned us that salvation, but God’s.

We know the story well, as John 3:17 says “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (KJV) God loved us when we were unlovable. He sent his Son to die for us, because we could never overcome the chains of our sin alone.

“My chains are gone, I am set free!” One of the many variations of Robert Robinson’s 1758 hymn, *Come Thou Fount* has this verse:

“Here I find my greatest treasure;  
hither by thy help I’ve come;  
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
safely to arrive at home.

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<sup>86</sup> Guzik, David. 1-2-3 John & Jude Commentary. Enduring Word Media, 2005.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
 wandering from the fold of God;  
 he, to rescue me from danger,  
 bought me with his precious blood.<sup>87</sup>”

What a beautiful song! What a beautiful God! But then, Jude doesn't even end on that note. No, instead, he takes things up another notch, zooming his focus in on God, and God alone!

### **For this saving grace, and his great wisdom, Christians should exalt him both now and forever. (25)**

It's easy, as people, to get our eyes off of God. Not just in the way we think. We're prone to think of God only in what he can do for us and to us. We talk about his blessings, we ask for his healing, we long for his benefits, we want his power in us. We love to talk about how much he loves us, how much he's done for us, how his love has shined on us. That's all true!

But I'm afraid sometimes our concept of God is one that still revolves, in ways, around us and our lives and our desires and our dreams. We see the extreme of that, in Christian books that are all about how to get your benefits, dreams, and a life blessed and trouble-free.

God is here for you! That's why it's so important to continually remind ourselves that God is so much bigger. He isn't bound to us, he doesn't exist for our pleasure, but we are bound to him and we exist for his! We need to insist on a high view of God.

Doxologies like this one help us! Doxologies are statements that exalt God, that praise him! One hymn, published in 1675, is now called “Doxology” and goes like this:

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<sup>87</sup> Winchester, Elhanan. *A Choice Collection of Hymns, in Which Are Some Never before Printed*. Philadelphia, General Convention of Universalists of the New England States and Others, 1782.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
 praise him, all creatures here below;  
 praise him above, ye heav’nly host:  
 praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”<sup>88</sup>

“Doxologies do not merely express a desire to see God be glorified or have power as if those things haven’t happened yet or might not happen. They are ascribing to him those things and declaring that these are already true of him”<sup>89</sup>

Here, the Majority Text adds an additional attribute of God, as Philip explains: “μονω σοφω θεω σωτηρι ημων” “to [the] only wise God, our Savior” [...] The WH NU reading is solidly supported by a vast array of witnesses. The first variant displays scribal conformity to Rom 16:27, a parallel verse. The same addition occurred in 1 Tim 1:17, also a parallel verse.”<sup>90</sup>

In this Majority Text reading, God’s wisdom is exalted. “The only wise god.” Why is God called wise here? It’s odd, and it feels a little out of place. Jude hasn’t used “wise” in his letter before, nor has he even used the opposite: Fool. Yes, God is wise, no doubt, no question, but why use it here?

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<sup>88</sup> “A manual of prayers for the use of the scholars of Winchester College.” In the digital collection Early English Books Online.  
<https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A47224.0001.001>. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 4, 2025.

<sup>89</sup> Samra, James George. *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude*. Baker Books, a Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Comfort, Philip W. *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008. Print.

It's not a thing we give to him, not the glory or majesty or dominion or power that we are to praise him for, it's just there. Remember the charge of the false teachers? They denied the authority of Jesus and of God, they rejected God's right to rule their lives, they denied his kingship.

Jude, of course, points us back to the absolute authority of God and provides this as a reminder that God is not only a good king, he is a wise king, a king worth following. His laws are good, his way is helpful, his rules are for the best, because he is wise. He is not foolish and governed by whims and fanciful desires, but by his moral, consistent, unchanging wisdom. He's a foundation worth building on. He's a wise king.

The Critical Text tradition of "the only God" flows smoothly into the doxology. It proclaims not just his wisdom, but the entirety of his divine nature, and even after speaking of the dignity of angelic powers, reminds us who is the only one above them all.

It also reminds us of Jude 4, which also has a textual variant of its own, with the phrase "only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (KJV) or "Only Master and Lord Jesus Christ" (LEB) Either reading stresses the exclusivity of the Godhead's authority, a theme plentiful in the book.

Regardless of that textual difference, the unanimous text continues to proclaim God as savior. "Jude 25 teaches both the oneness of God and equality of Jesus Christ with God the Father. Thus, it militates against the view that the deity of Christ was an invention of the post-apostolic church."<sup>91</sup> As I mentioned above, this stresses the unity of the Godhead, as the confession of the "only savior God" here adds to the

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<sup>91</sup> Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Everett Falconer Harrison, eds. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1962. Print.

declaration of Christ being master (v 4) in the rebuke of Jude's opponents.<sup>92</sup>

And that's just one of the qualities! Our savior, not a title, as some imagine, that is exclusive to Christ, but instead, one applied also to God himself! The-One-Who-Saves. The one who loved us enough to save us.

Then, two pairs follow! Glory and majesty! Glory translates "Doxa" the word from which we get doxology. It means awe, honor, a high reputation! It drives us to bring him majesty! Then, depending on the translation, dominion, authority, or power are summoned to proclaim God's might to rule and strength to reign supreme!

"Still, the focus is on the authority to use the power. Thus, police officers have power in their physical training and in their service revolver, but their authority is symbolized in their badge. The same power applied in a jurisdiction in which they did not have authority (e.g., on the wrong side of the Canadian-American border) could get them arrested. God has power or strength, but he also has authority, the right to exercise it. Here both are attributed to him, for in him they belong together."<sup>93</sup>

His praise shows that his unlimited might extends, not just in all distance, but in all time. Not just now, not just in the past, nor even in the distant future, but "now and ever!" For this moment to the furthest moment possible! God is deserving of praise for all eternity! That's our God! There are so many reasons to lift our songs to him! He is worthy of praise! Praise God!

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<sup>92</sup> Neyrey, Jerome H. *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 37C. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. Anchor Yale Bible.

<sup>93</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006. Print. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

People praise the things they love, and that love can be contagious. What a great thing to spread around! What a wonderful thing to infect others with! What a fantastic attitude to catch!

A habit of praise lifts the attitude of believers and draws their eyes and heart to God! What better way to combat that self-focus than to blind our souls with a glimpse of the brightness of his glory? What better words could close out this letter to the church? What a wonderful habit to form!

## Teaching the Text

While previous lessons have leaned into the far more academic and intellectual territory, this one is far shorter, simpler, and less complex.

Having built the “why” for several lessons, it is now important to tie a bow on the series and stir the emotions with a passion for godly living. In contrast to the heavy mental load of previous texts, this should aim for more application and simple passion. Show that this series isn’t some irrelevant obscure exercise but show how these truths impact every moment of our lives.

To recap the main theme of the book: “Christ is guarding us, but He wants us to guard the deposit He has left in our hands (2 Tim. 1:13–14; 1 Tim. 6:20).”<sup>94</sup>

This lesson also returns to many themes present in the first pericope, those of God being so wonderful and well worth all this trouble down here. But it also means we will endure some trouble.

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<sup>94</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992. Print.

What was written about our individual souls is also true of our churches: “We must have the Spirit of God stride about the house of ourselves and do some serious renovation. It will likely be painful. Walls will probably be knocked out, old pipes dug up, and flooring torn up. He probably won’t settle for slapping a coat of paint on the wreckage and calling it good—he’s no lazy landlord. [...] He is reordering our very loves, because that is the level on which the war is ultimately fought”<sup>95</sup>

Those loves, love for this great God, or love for self, is the crux of our lives. If we love God, we will obey his commands. If we love ourselves, we will do anything and everything to justify our sin.

That is partially why Jude ends proclaiming God’s goodness, to inspire us to love him more. Our lessons on his text must do the same. If appropriate to the setting, it would not be amiss to end the sermon with the salvation testimony of one or two individuals from the church, or perhaps have one speak of how God brought him through and kept him in the worst of times, to encourage all that God will see them through.

## Illustration

### **We praise the things we love.**

One time, I had a guy walk into my workplace and began raving about his new grill. For an entire hour that guy was bragging about that grill and the incredible delicacies he cooked on it. By the end of what was a very convincing sales pitch, I was just about to go buy one of those grills right then and there. Why? His love for it was infectious. His was not a feigned love, or a sponsored promotion. No, this man loved his grill and that love naturally overflowed into the rest of his life. This

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<sup>95</sup> Sauve, Brian, and Ben Garrett. *Haunted Cosmos Doing Your Duty in a World That’s Not Just Stuff*. New Christendom Press, 2024.

isn't exclusive to outdoor cooking either. I've been in the home of people who have an entire room dedicated to their favorite sports team, with what can only be described as a shrine to their team taking a prominent place in their house and more, their minds.

It doesn't take long to learn what people love. It also doesn't take long to notice when people avoid a subject and feel awkward talking about it. Ask a bookworm what the last book he read was and you'd better prepare yourself for an extended run-down of the ups and downs of whatever it is he has been reading. Ask a Star Wars fan what makes the Original Trilogy better than the Sequel Trilogy and you may be stuck there a while. Why? People love to talk about the things they love.

True Christians gush about Jesus. You can't talk to them for more than 30 minutes without finding out what verse they are memorizing, how God answered a prayer, or what preacher they've been listening to lately. Christians, true Christians, fling Jesus everywhere, just like a wet dog shaking himself and thereby dampening anything else within range.

But there's more.

### **We love the things we praise.**

For a darker turn on this principle, perhaps we've run into those people who have lied so much, so often, that they have begun to believe their own lies! Even outlandish and obviously mistaken nonsense can eventually be trusted if it is repeated often enough over and over. Repetition of praise works both ways. If we praise something over and over, be it good or bad, we will start to absorb it.

Companies spend millions getting their names into the heads of potential customers. Everything from "Where's the Beef?" to "Have it Your Way!" and "I'm Loving it!" are slogans meant to remind people of certain businesses and draw customers to their establishment. If,

over and over, the image is shown of happy people delightfully digging into a meal, we start to connect those brands with happiness and a great experience. Eventually those ads begin to shape what we think of the company, and with a good enough PR team, the best companies look even better, and even terrible companies can look reputable.

How much more then, would our consistent praise help remind us of God's goodness, when, unlike every human endeavor, nothing we can say can match the priceless treasure of finding God?

Rather than being the result of slick and less-than-honest marketing, or a clever manipulation of feelings to create a false image, even our best efforts cannot exhaust the goodness of God. We could genuinely praise him all day long and never run out of real and tangible reasons he is so good, no deceptive PR scheme needed!

Yet, if, right now, we fail to see how good God is, then embark on a 30 day journey of writing down a blessing a day on a small piece of paper, then at the end of the month, pull out the box of papers and read each blessing again. No doubt, repeating God's goodness and love each day will help build up our love for him and appreciation for his beauty!

Not only do we praise the things we love, but we also learn to love the things we praise.

### **God will bring us through.**

Much like the tour guide that carefully brings you through the twisting, dark, unfamiliar halls of a giant cave, so God guides us confidently through the darkness around us, guiding our steps and bringing safely through to the bright and glorious end. He knows the path ahead!

When the unfamiliar rock walls seem like they are closing in, and the spiky protrusions on the ceiling feel as if they will smash us any

minute, when we've lost the path and nothing in the damp dark seems the least bit inviting or comforting, when the flashlight begins to flicker and we slip on the moss underfoot, when panic begins to make itself known in our hearts, we only must look to our guide and the light he provides in even the darkest places. He is a good guide and will not lose us. Like the best of park rangers, he will bring us through the dark, showing us the wonder around us and helping us find joy even in the challenges and climbs. He will bring us to the bright end, yet even the journey with him is a good one, even if it is not without pain and fear.

## Application

Here's one way to help develop that habit of praise! As a way to help us remember to praise our God, let's attach a slip of paper to the fridge door asking, "What is God like?" Before opening it, we must think of one attribute of God, "God is holy," "God is just," "God is love." Not just something God has done for us, but something he is.

We get so caught up in God doing things for us, God making our lives better, God giving me this or that, though we mention God, it's always God for us/to us/for me/to me. Let's just set that aside. Let's take us out of the picture, just as Jude does at the end, just as our Doxology in our Hymnbooks does, and focus on God. Take five minutes to pray to God, not mentioning yourself, or even what he's done for you, but praise him for his character, and who he is. In a world gone mad, in times of stress and heartache, in moments of despair or trial, we need to lift our voices in praise of our great savior and king!

Many churches, including mine, close their services with a congregational singing of Doxology. Others end it with one of many forms of praise to God, reminding their people, as they prepare to leave that place and return to their homes, of their amazing God. We need that reminder, those godly habits driving us to recall his goodness.

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