

Jude Overview

Tonight we are going to do an overview of the book of Jude. With relatively short books that you can read through without losing track of where you are, it's fun sometimes just to read the whole thing at one sitting and think about the big picture of the book – what's the thought process behind the whole book? What are the main things going on? Why did the writer address the things he did? What can we learn from the overall content, flow and structure of the book? Tonight, since Jude is short, we will use it as an example of how we can do that. And hopefully you will see how helpful that can be. We won't get into the fine details of the book. That would take many more lessons. So – when we get to some of the weird events Jude refers to in his book, we won't dwell on them other than to try to figure out what point Jude is making by referring to them.

What I also see when I do this is that there are things that peak my interest and I make a mental note to go back and think about them.

So – let's get started.

Who wrote Jude? Jude wrote Jude. Jude is the half brother of Jesus, and the full brother of James. He does not claim to be an apostle – in fact, in Verse 17, he excludes himself from the category of apostles. Here's an interesting tidbit - Jude actually should be translated "Judas". However, according to Arnold Fruchtenbaum, the name has been translated as "Jude" to avoid the negative connotation of the name Judas (because it is associated with Judas Iscariot).

The date Jude wrote his book is hard to pin down. There are many similarities with II Peter – so some commentators believe they were written about the same time. Some say II Peter describes the infiltration of false teachers as being future, with Jude being written at a time after II Peter when Peter's warnings were beginning to happen. If that is the case, Jude was written after II Peter. Tom Constable puts the date range as somewhere between 67 AD and 80 AD. Arnold Fruchtenbaum dates it between 67 – 68 AD. Remember – Paul was martyred in this same time period, and so was Peter.

What type of literature is this book? According to Tom Constable:

Many scholars regard this epistle as an "epistolary sermon." Jude could have delivered what he said in this epistle as a homily (sermon) if he had been in his readers' presence. Instead, he cast it in the form of a letter because he could not speak to them directly. Other New Testament epistles that are actually written homilies include James, Hebrews, and 1 John.¹

Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jud 1.

Since we are doing an overview, it will be helpful to read the entire passage before we start so that we can hear the whole thing and get a sense of the flow of the passage. So – here's Jude:

¹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jud 1.

¹ *Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.*

³ *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

⁵ *Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. ⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.*

¹¹ *Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. ¹² These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. ¹⁴ It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." ¹⁶ These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.*

¹⁷ *But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.*

²⁰ *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on some, who*

are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Now, from the description of the recipients in verse 1, we can be sure Jude is writing to believers. Verse 1 describes the recipients as “the called”, “beloved in God the Father”, and “kept for Jesus Christ”. Only believers fit these three characteristics.

The way the Greek works here is that they are described as “the ones who are called” – a description of their position - with a description of two works of God which pertain to that position – they are loved by God the Father – “loved” is a perfect passive participle – which means this love began at a particular time in the past and is and will continue. The other work is that they are “kept for Christ Jesus” – “kept” means to “keep watch over, guard, preserve” – “kept” is also a perfect passive participle – which means that this began at a particular point in time in the past and is and will continue. So – they are “the called”, and being “the called”, they have been and will continue to be loved by God the Father and they have been and will continue to be guarded by and preserved for Jesus Christ. Jude is reassuring them that God has and always will love them and He has and always will guard and preserve them. They are not dependent on themselves, but on God.

In the context of the whole letter, what might be the reason Jude chooses to emphasize these aspects of their salvation? They are about to be commanded to go to spiritual battle and they need to know that God loves them and will protect them. We need to remember the same thing.

Also, when we read through the passage, did you notice all the references to Old Testament events? Did you notice references to “extra-Biblical” information – like the references to Michael disputing with Satan over Moses’ body and the reference to the prophecy of Enoch? What do these things tell us about the recipients of the letter? It tells us that they were very familiar with the Old Testament and not just the Old Testament, but possibly other Jewish writings. So – this leads us to conclude that the recipients of the letter were predominantly Jewish believers.

Now, there is something I need to address briefly. The extra-Biblical references Jude may be referring to are thought to be the apocryphal books of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. However, we need to understand something – even if Jude is referring to something in these apocryphal books, it does not mean these books are the inspired word of God. They aren’t. It merely means that the event as Jude describes it happened. It doesn’t mean that the details of the event as described in the apocryphal books are true and accurate. It merely means that the event happened as Jude describes it. And if you try to go beyond that you can get yourself in trouble.

Ok, now that we have established that Jude is writing to predominantly Jewish believers, let’s move on to verse 3 to see what he is writing about. Here’s one of those interesting nuggets of info that it’s fun to remember and think about from time to time – he began writing one thing and ended with something else – he began work writing to them about “our common salvation” – he began writing with the intention of expressing something about the gospel to them –he doesn’t say what, maybe it was a treatise on some aspect of the gospel. And it sounds like he was very focused on

that work – he was “making every effort” to write about that topic. At the time he began, he was convinced it was something they needed to hear.

But look what he says happened – something changed his mind. He “felt the necessity” to write about something else. In Greek, the word “felt” is not used – the phrase is “I had necessity” – the word translated necessity can have the idea of compulsion. The picture I get is that the Holy Spirit had made something pretty clear to him – that there was an urgent need for him to write something else that took precedence over his intended topic. He was working hard on one thing and the Holy Spirit compelled him to write something else. That’s a bit of an insight into the Holy Spirit’s work in the inspiration of Scripture. Jude thought he knew what these believers needed to hear (and maybe they did hear it later), but the Holy Spirit knew what they needed to hear right then, and the Holy Spirit also knew what He wanted to preserve in the canon for the rest of us. Jude may have ended up writing about salvation, but if he did, it’s not something that the Holy Spirit preserved in the canon for us. But the Holy Spirit for sure preserved this for us.

So what was this urgent need? These believers needed exhortation to “contend earnestly for the faith”, and they needed it right away. The term “the faith” isn’t referring to the subjective faith an individual exercises to be saved. It is referring to Biblical doctrine – Biblical truth. And this Biblical truth is said by Jude to be “once for all handed down to the saints”. What does he mean by that? The idea is that the body of Biblical truth has been given and that it has been handed over to the saints (believers) as stewards responsible for its preservation and protection. Think of it this way – God has handed believers a Bible and we are supposed to make sure that its content is protected against corruption.

This is apologetics – the defense of the faith. And Jude is exhorting them (and us) to “contend earnestly” in defense of Biblical truth. Wuest says this about what “contend earnestly” means:

“Earnestly contend” is epagonizomai (ἐπαγονίζομαι), found only here in the New Testament. The simple verb was used of athletes contending in the athletic contests. The word speaks of a vigorous, intense, determined struggle to defeat the opposition. Our word “agony” is the English spelling of the noun form of this word. The Greek athletes exerted themselves to the point of agony in an effort to win the contest. With such intense effort does Jude say that saints should defend the doctrines of Christianity.²

We are entrusted with the truth. We must protect it against corruption. We are not to be timid. We are not to be easily dissuaded. We are to be determined to overcome the opponents. We have to train hard to prepare ourselves – to get ourselves in shape for the contest. We are to expect it to be a struggle and are to be committed to endure. That’s the attitude we must have when we “contend earnestly” for the faith.

So what happened to make it so urgent that Jude be re-directed from his intention to write to them about the gospel? What made it so urgent that he write to them urging them to “contend earnestly for the faith”? The church – the living body of Christ - is in immediate danger – it is being infected by a deadly virus.

² Kenneth S. Wuest, [*Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*](#), vol. 16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 235.

Lets take a look at verse 4:

⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Certain persons have “crept in unnoticed”. They are “ungodly” – meaning they have no reverence, respect or fear of God. In my opinion this indicates that the instigators of this corruption are not believers, though they pretend to be. Believers can certainly behave like ungodly men, but Jude is saying that they are “ungodly”. And they have snuck in secretly. Stealthily. Like an undercover agent of the enemy who is sent to infiltrate the church, move into positions of influence, and use that influence to corrupt and destroy the church. Satan has sent his agents – ungodly men – unbelievers – to infiltrate the church.

What are they doing? They are spreading corrupt doctrine. They are false teachers and their followers who - through their teaching and their behavior - entice others to join them in their corruption. In particular, this verse tells us that they are doing two things – they “turn the grace of God into licentiousness” and they deny Christ. What does it mean to “turn the grace of God into licentiousness”? They are teaching people that God doesn’t care how believers live. There is no rule by which we live. By His grace, all sin is forgiven, past, present and future. So, go ahead and live it up. Live your life in accordance with whatever your fleshly heart desires to do. God has already forgiven you for it. It’s antinomianism - the opposite of legalism.

The other thing they are doing is denying Christ. In this context, I don’t think that Jude is saying that they are publicly repudiating or disowning Christ – I don’t think they are publicly saying they are not followers of Christ. I don’t know how they could sneak in under the radar if that is what they are doing. The church would spot them right away. I think this means that their teaching and behavior is in total disregard for what our Lord and Master Jesus Christ has taught us and how He expects us to behave. These ungodly men are teaching that believers can presume upon the grace of God and live by the flesh - and this false teaching repudiates all that Christ has revealed about grace and how we are supposed to live.

Romans 6 deals with this strain of false teaching directly:

Romans 6:1–2 (NASB95)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans 6:15 (NASB95)

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

In short, false teachers and false teaching have infected the church with this deadly doctrine. Jude indicates that it started out secretly and then spread. How can that happen?

Somehow, someway, what they are promoting is attractive to some believers. I don't know what kinds of things were attractive and tempting to the people in that time and that culture, but we can think about it in terms of our time and our culture. What kinds of things are attractive to us? Good looks. Well spoken. Persuasive. Magnetic personality. Intelligent. Biblically literate. Can make a great case for themselves from Scripture. Lots of charisma. Maybe a celebrity of some sort. But these things mask a carnality that appeals to our sinful disposition. They appeal to our flesh and make it sound like it's ok. And our flesh is weak and is always looking for a way to rationalize getting what it wants. If a false teacher can make it sound like what you want is ok with God, then you will give in if you let yourself buy in to that teaching.

These guys are not obvious. They begin in secret. They draw people to themselves. They are attractive precisely because they appear to know what they are talking about and they tell you what your flesh wants to hear. They are a mortal danger to the spiritual vitality of the church.

But we need to notice something else. They are not unknown to God. They don't sneak in under God's radar. They aren't a surprise to God. God in His infinite wisdom has permitted this to occur. Notice that Verse 4 tells us that these teachers were "long beforehand marked out for this condemnation". In Greek, the term translated "marked out" refers to having been written about beforehand. So, the idea is that the condemnation of false teachers was prophesied long ago. This is not something that surprises God or is not in His plan for history. These false teachers are part of God's plan for history. These men will not prevail, everything God has promised will take place. These enemies will be defeated and will be judged. The church can rest in God and not be afraid.

We can look at it this way – we – the church are the living body of Christ, with joints, sinews, organs, heads, arms, fingers, eyes, etc.. False teaching is like a virus that infects some part of the body. What happens when our bodies get an infection? We get sick. But what else happens? There is a system in our bodies that is tasked with eliminating infection – our immune system. Our immune system responds to infection to destroy it and eliminate it from the body. That's what happens with false teaching. It infects the church, but guess who the immune system is in the body of Christ? – believers are. As the immune system for the church, we believers have to be able to recognize a virus and we have to respond to eliminate it or else it will take over.

So - in Verse 4, Jude has described the problem. In the next section of the book, he will expose these false teachers for what they really are. When I was studying for this lesson, I tried to think about why Jude dedicates almost half the book as a polemic against these false teachers – and really hammers home the fact that God is going to judge them severely - as opposed to the five or six verses in which Jude counsels them about what to do. I'm sure there are lots of reasons, but three that I could think of are these – First, he's doing this to completely shatter the illusion of attractiveness by stripping off all their makeup and exposing their rotten ugliness, their foolishness, and their ultimate destruction. They will no longer be attractive, but repulsive. They will no longer be intelligent, but foolish. Their ability to influence others should be destroyed.

Second, knowing who these people really are, the church will have the confidence to "contend earnestly for the faith" and will not be timid or intimidated by them.

Third, this is a written document. The church will be able to show this letter to these false teachers and their followers. Like holding up a mirror to them. And, hopefully, some of them may see themselves as they really are and repent.

So, let's go through the next section – verses 5 to 16. We will break this part down into two subparts. Verses 5-10 and Verses 11-16. Here's 5 – 10:

Jude 5–10 (NASB95)

⁵ Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. ⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

Jude begins his unmasking these false teachers by taking his readers back into history – he uses three events to help them remember some things about God that they already know – Jude is helping them learn how to think when they encountered problems like this. He takes them back to the character of God and how God has demonstrated His character in history. They need to think about what they already know about God. They know that God is sovereign, righteous and just, and that He has the authority and power to judge any creature that rebels against Him - and because He is righteous and just, He will judge. And He has demonstrated the execution of His justice in human history so that men will know that there comes a time when God will judge. These false teachers are rebelling against God (and threatening His people) and they are going to be judged for it.

The first thing Jude reminds them of is the experience of the Exodus generation of the Israelites. Through very public displays of His mighty power, God delivered them out of Egypt and miraculously provided for all their needs. However, when He took them to Kadesh Barnea on the border of the Promised Land, they refused to believe God would deliver it to them and God made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years until that entire generation who didn't believe God died. I think the key phrase in verse 5 is this – who did God destroy? – those who were **unbelieving**. Jude is comparing the false teachers to the unbelieving Israelites and will suffer God's judgement just as they did.

The next thing Jude reminds them of is something that apparently his readers knew about, but that is somewhat of a mystery to us. It is not something humans witnessed – it deals with an event that occurred in the angelic realm. Apparently, at some time in angelic history, a group of angels rebelled and “did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode”. This isn't describing the general fall of the angels in the rebellion of Satan – it can't be because the angels Jude is referring to are now being kept in eternal bonds for future judgment – and have been since

they rebelled. We know there are demons currently active in our world today – so Jude is not describing them – he is describing a particular group of angels who are now bound and held for judgment.

There are various theories about who these angels are and what event Jude is referring to. I think it is probably referring to Genesis 6 when the “sons of God” had intercourse with the “daughters of men”. I think the details here in Jude fit that interpretation of Genesis 6. I’m not going to get into that tonight because Jude didn’t elaborate on it – instead he used the event to make a point. So – what is the point? Well – look at how Jude describes what the angels did to bring this particular judgment on themselves. Jude says they “did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode”. What kind of behavior is this describing? The Greek word translated “domain” is “ἀρχή”. This word has several meanings – two in particular that are relevant here – it can mean the beginning state of something, and it can mean “the sphere of one’s official activity” – like a realm of rule or office. The Greek phrase translated “proper abode” can also be translated “their own place of dwelling” or “their own habitation”. So, the idea is that these angels were created to inhabit a particular place God made for them and they were responsible for serving God in that particular place. But these angels did not stay where they were supposed to. They abandoned it – left it behind. And they went where they were not supposed to go and they did what God did not want them to do. And God has them bound in darkness until they are judged at the final judgment.

How are the false teachers like these angels? I think that this has to do with a rebellion against God’s authority. It’s closely related to unbelief – and is sourced in unbelief – but the focus is on rebellion against authority. God made these angels, made them a place, gave them a purpose in that place and they were not supposed to transgress those boundaries. But these angels rejected these boundaries and acted independently of God. They rejected God’s authority to order His cosmos the way He wanted and violated His divinely established boundaries. That’s rebellion. The false teachers are doing the same thing. They do not have the authority to teach what they are teaching. They have transgressed the boundaries of Scripture. They are rejecting God’s authority and acting independently of God. And they will suffer judgment for it, just like these angels.

The next example is Sodom and Gomorrah. But look at how Jude describes it – look at verse 7:

Jude 7 (NASB95)

7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they – that’s referring to Sodom and Gomorrah - in the same way as these – that’s referring to the angels in verse 6 - indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

The way this verse is written is saying that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is similar to what the angels in Verse 6 did. The Greek grammatical construction indicates that the “they” in this verse is referring to Sodom and Gomorrah and the “these” in this verse is referring to the angels in verse 6. So – it means – since [Sodom and Gomorrah] in the same way as [the angels in verse 6] indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh. The Greek word translated “gross immorality” is ἐκπορνεύω and it means “to indulge in illicit sexual relations” – it’s sexual sin – fornication. “Strange flesh” is “σαρκὸς ἑτέρας” which describes flesh of a different kind or nature. Jude describes the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as illicit sexual relations outside God’s natural boundaries. And Jude seems to be saying that this was the same thing the angels in Verse 6 did. So - this sounds like the angels in Verse 6 were capable of indulging in illicit sexual relations with

flesh of a different kind. There's obviously a debate about this – is the similarity between the angels and Sodom and Gomorrah just the idea that both violated the boundaries God established for them and were punished for it – it doesn't necessarily describe the event of Genesis 6? Or does the similarity go farther – that the sin was similar in that both involved violating sexual boundaries and Jude is relating this to Genesis 6? I lean toward the interpretation that Jude is relating Sodom and Gomorrah to the angels in Genesis 6.

What does Jude say happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? God judged them. And He did it as an example to those who might be tempted to follow in their ways. It is interesting to consider that the grammar here may indicate that Jude is not just referring to the physical death and destruction of these cities, but may also be telling us that the inhabitants are suffering in Hades right now.

So, how are the false teachers like Sodom and Gomorrah? The emphasis in Verse 7 is ungodly behavior - unnatural sexual immorality. Unbelief and rebellion lead to evil behavior – and Romans 1 seems to indicate that this will work its way into gross unnatural sexual immorality. It appears that some of these false teachers may already have gone that far.

Look at what Verse 8 says:

Jude 8 (NASB95)

⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.

This tells us that the false teachers are involved in the same sins as the unbelieving Israelites, the rebellious angels and the sexually perverted people of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Greek, they are the “dreaming ones” which may mean they claimed authority for their messages on their dreams and visions. They totally disregard the lessons of history and have no respect for God or His terrible wrath. So – they persist in their unbelief, rebellion, and sexual immorality. They even go so far as to “revile” – meaning “slander or blaspheme or disrespect” angels. Verse 9 tells us that not even Michael the archangel had this kind of authority.

Once again, Jude brings up an event which is a mystery to us, though apparently his readers were aware of it. According to the commentators, this event may be described in another apocryphal book – the Assumption of Moses; or it could be based on some rabbinical comments on Deut. 34:6 – which tells us that God buried Moses in an unknown place in Moab. Again, Jude does not expand on the details of this event. He uses this event to demonstrate that even though Michael is an archangel, and Satan is the enemy, Michael did not have the authority to rebuke him, but left it up to God. In their slanderous disrespect of angels, the false teachers were claiming to have power even Michael didn't have, and in a realm they have no business meddling in. They were stepping way outside human authority.

And Verse 10 says that they “revile what they do not understand”. The point is that these false teachers slander things they know nothing about. They know nothing about the spiritual realm – angels - yet they slander and malign them. They claim authority over them. And it's not just the angelic realm. They arrogantly pretend to know things they don't. These false teachers don't understand God or His revelation. But there is something they do understand. They understand carnality – its ways, its thought processes, its reasoning. Like unreasoning animals, their instinctive thoughts, their natural desires and lusts are what drives them. And by those things, they are destroyed.

Here's Verses 11-16:

Jude 11–16 (NASB95)

¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. ¹² These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. ¹⁴ It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” ¹⁶ These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

Verse 11 starts with “Woe to them”. Tom Constable says this is an imprecation - or curse - of doom. It is the opposite of a blessing. It reminds me of Paul’s curse in Galatians 1:8 - ***8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*** Paul pronounces damnation on anyone who preaches a false gospel. And Jude is doing the same thing. Paul was dealing with legalism. Jude is dealing with antinomianism.

Jude then proceeds to describe the core of the false teachers’ sins. He does it in terms of three of well known villains in the Old Testament. First - **Cain** – he says the false teachers are following the same road as Cain. Cain wanted to worship God on Cain’s own terms. He wanted to tell God what God should accept as sacrifice. He got angry and killed his righteous brother Abel when that didn’t work out so good. These false teachers think they can worship God on their own terms and that God should accept their worship. They arrogantly tell God how they will approach Him.

Second – **Balaam** - Jude says they have “rushed headlong into the error of Balaam” for pay. They are greedy and are “all in” to using God as a way to get what they want. Balaam was a prophet for pay and was hired by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites for money – but God made him bless them instead of curse them. Three times. That didn’t stop Balaam, he figured out another way to get paid. He counseled the Moabites and Midianites to become a “stumbling block to the Israelites” – to eat things sacrificed to idols and have their daughters intermarry with the sons of Israel – to turn them away from God and to Baal. Balaam was more than willing to counsel people to oppose God if it paid well enough. These false teachers are the same way. They have no problem leading believers astray if it makes them rich.

Third – **Korah** - he says the false teachers “have perished in the rebellion of Korah”. Korah and his followers attempted a coup against Moses. They craved power and authority. They did not respect that God appointed Moses as leader over His nation, and thought they could take over. They did not consider that opposing God’s appointed leaders was the same thing as opposing God. And the Lord opened up the ground and they all went down to Sheol alive and then God closed the ground back up over them. Talk about an object lesson. These false teachers were apparently

acting the same way. They apparently did not recognize God's authority or the authority of the church to reign them in and sought to take over leadership in the church.

In Verses 12 -13, Jude uses 5 illustrations from nature to describe what the false teachers are like:

1. **Hidden Reefs That Cause Shipwreck** – they infiltrate the fellowship and communion of the local church. They work their way in, get people to like them, listen to them, and then wreck the church. “Love feasts” are the regular feasts where the church would gather for meals and to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. These men attended these feasts for their own selfish motives without fear of judgment or discipline. They didn’t care about the church – but they made sure they took care of themselves. They apparently were unaware of – or completely disregarded – Paul’s instructions about communion in 1 Cor. 11, and the fact that believers had been disciplined to the point of death for abuse of communion. It is interesting to consider that God may have allowed these false teachers to abuse communion without the same consequences as the Corinthians.
2. **Clouds Without Water Carried Along By Winds** – we can relate to this one very well - clouds without water have no substance. You see a cloud, it looks like it could bring rain, and then nothing. It just blows away. The only thing these clouds provide is false hope of something good. But they can’t deliver. The false teachers do just that – they look good, they sound good – particularly by abusing Scripture. They sell false hope. And then blow away.
3. **Autumn Trees Without Fruit, Doubly Dead, Uprooted** – these autumn trees should have fruit, but they don’t. There’s a lot of speculation about what doubly dead is. Here’s my take. We have all seen trees that look dead and didn’t produce a crop that year, but they may still have viable roots that can grow into a productive tree. If you prune it back to the roots, it may still live and be productive after a while. However, some trees are totally dead – no fruit, dead leaves, dead branches, dead roots. There’s nothing to be done with them but uproot them and burn them. These false teachers are like root dead trees. They have no source of life. It is impossible for them to ever produce any fruit.
4. **Wild Waves Casting Up Shame Like Foam** – raging sea waves that generate filthy sea foam. The activity of the false teachers brings their shameful deeds to the surface for people to see.
5. **Wandering Stars** – the term “wandering star” could mean planets – which move differently than stars. Or it could be referring to comets or meteors which appear briefly then disappear. Either way, stars could be used for navigation, but you couldn’t navigate using a planet or a comet – if you did you would go way off course. That’s what these false teachers are like. They persuade people to rely on them to show them the way, but they are no good for navigation. Whoever relies on them gets lost. Because they lead people astray – away from God – they are doomed to eternal punishment – for them, the “black darkness” – separation from God - “has been reserved forever.”

In Verses 14 and 15, Jude describes the judgement that is coming for these false teachers. As we said before, they are not unknown to God, they are not a hitch in His plan. Seven generations after Adam, Enoch prophesied about how God is going to execute judgment on the ungodly. Enoch’s prophecy is in verses 14-15:

Jude 14–15 (NASB95)

14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

Now, from what we know from Scripture - What does it look like this is describing? When does Christ come with his holy ones – this passage says “holy myriads” - to execute judgement? The Second Coming when Christ returns to earth with His Church to deliver believing Israel and establish the Millennial Kingdom. Remember – before the Millennial Kingdom begins, all living unbelievers will be judged and removed from the earth. Only believers will be on the earth at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. There will be unbelievers later on at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, but none at the beginning. The false teachers who are living at that time will be judged and removed from the earth.

Notice the elements of this judgment. They will be convicted of their works and how they did them – their ungodly deeds done in an ungodly way - and their words – all the harsh things which they have spoken against Him. And Jude connects these things to the false teachers in Verse 16 – he says:

16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

These false teachers will be convicted for their ungodly words – they are grumblers – like the Israelites who grumbled against God in the Wilderness. They find fault – this describes a person who complains about his lot in life – like the Israelites in the Wilderness. They speak arrogantly – they teach authoritatively but know nothing. They flatter people for personal advantage. And the false teachers will be convicted for their ungodly works – following after their own lusts.

Ok. Let’s think about what Jude has just done in these verses about the false teachers. He’s made it very clear that they are classed with those who will forever live in infamy. It’s like the opposite of the Hebrews 11 Faith Hall of Fame. The Exodus generation, the Genesis 6 angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Korah, Balaam. God judged all these and their followers severely. No Christian – particularly a Jewish Christian (in fact, no Jew) - would ever want to be associated with these groups. It’s like Jude has hung a sign on them that says “Radioactive”. Like the Korah incident – God told the Israelites to move away from Korah’s tents before He the earth opened and swallowed them up. That’s what’s happening here. The Holy Spirit, through Jude, is saying. This is what you are dealing with. They must be stopped. Don’t let them take you or your brothers and sisters down with them.

Starting with Verse 17, Jude is going to turn to his readers – who are believers – and discuss how they are supposed to “earnestly contend for the faith”.

First, he wants them to remember and understand that this is all part of God’s plan. Notice how he keeps doing this over and over in the letter. God is in control and God is allowing this to happen. Jude doesn’t say this, but the implication is that God, in His infinite and manifold wisdom, is using false teaching and false teachers to accomplish things that God wants to be done before He takes them out. Look at what Jude says in Verse 17:

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

The apostles described these false teachers and what they would do to a “T”. God has given us this information so that we can prepare ourselves do deal with it. He has given us this information to comfort us, keep us calm when it looks like things are falling apart, and give us confidence that, through His abundant power, we can handle the circumstances. God told them, and He is telling us, that this will happen. We shouldn’t grumble and complain about it happening. We should be prepared to serve God in these circumstances. In fact, in a sense we should rejoice that God’s plan is working out just as He said, and that He has called us to serve at this time. It’s not easy, but it’s good.

Now, in Verses 20-23, Jude is going to tell us what to do. Here’s Verses 20 -23:

Jude 20–23 (NASB95)

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Notice there are two parts – self protection and engagement in battle. Self protection is the building up of the immune system so that it is healthy enough to detect and engage the virus. Then the immune system needs to attack the virus and wipe it out.

Verses 20-21 describe self protection - how to protect ourselves against the attractions and temptations of the false teachers and their teachings. Let’s consider these verses:

Jude 20–21 (NASB95)

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

There is a command in this verse. The phrase “keep yourselves in the love of God” is an imperative – a command. “Keep” is the same Greek word used in Verse 1 – which we said means to “keep watch over, guard or preserve.” The command is for them (and us) to do what it takes to make sure we aren’t persuaded by the false teachers and turned away from God. The phrase “in the love of God” is describing a place of blessing and enablement. If we keep ourselves in the love of God, we are in a realm where all His power and blessings are available to us. His power will protect us. If we turn away from God, we take ourselves outside this sphere or realm of blessing. We are defenseless. An illustration of this is the way the Mosaic Covenant operated. Under the Mosaic Covenant, there were blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The Israelites were commanded to obey and keep themselves in a place where God would bless them. That’s “keeping themselves in the love of God”. But if they didn’t obey, they moved out of that realm of blessing and God would remove His protection from them.

This does not mean that if we don't keep ourselves in the love of God that we lose our salvation or that God somehow rejects us as His children. Once again, Israel is a great illustration of this. Under the Abrahamic Covenant, they are God's chosen nation and the nation will never lose that relationship. God's promises under the Abrahamic Covenant are unconditional. Just like Israel, by faith in Jesus Christ we become God's children and we always will be. He will always love us as His children and our future with Him is certain because it is not dependent on us, but on Him.

So, think of "keeping in the love of God" as making sure we are in a realm of blessing – like when Israel obeyed under the Mosaic Covenant – and not under the realm of cursing – like when Israel didn't obey under the Mosaic Covenant. It's another way of expressing maintaining ourselves in fellowship with God.

Notice that this is a command – "keeping ourselves in the love of God" is something we are responsible for. God is always faithful to us. He always fulfills His responsibilities to us. We are the ones who can do the things to keep ourselves in that place of blessing and we are the ones who can do the things that take ourselves out of that place. Just like the nation of Israel was responsible for keeping themselves in the realm of God's blessing.

Ok. So – we have been commanded to "keep ourselves in the love of God". How does Jude tell us we are to do that? That's in Verse 20. Two things – we keep ourselves in the love of God by (1) building ourselves up in our most holy faith, and (2) praying in the Holy Spirit.

"Building ourselves up" is the Greek word *ἐποικοδομέω*. It has the idea of building on something that is already built. Like building up a house on a foundation that has already been laid. When a person places his faith in Christ, the foundation of his life is laid. His sins are forgiven, he is no longer under condemnation, he is regenerated – given new life, he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and all the blessings God has promised to believers are his. This is the foundation. The "most holy faith" is a reference back to Verse 3 where we are commanded to contend earnestly for the faith. Remember what we said about "the faith" referred to in Verse 3 - the body of Biblical truth that has been given to us by God (that's why it is most holy) and has been handed over to us (believers) as stewards responsible for its preservation and protection.

We build on the foundation - laid when we believe - by knowing and doing the Word of God. This is our responsibility. Just like the Israelites had to know and obey the Mosaic Covenant in order to keep themselves in the place of God's blessing and protection, we have to know and obey what God wants us to do. We have to know and understand the Bible. And when we know what it says, we have to do it and not ignore it. That's how you build yourself up in the faith. It is doing what it takes to mature spiritually. Living by faith. That is the first way we "keep ourselves in the love of God".

The second way Jude says we "keep ourselves in the love of God" is by prayer – "praying in the Holy Spirit". What does "in the Holy Spirit" mean? When is prayer "in the Holy Spirit" and when is it not? "In the Holy Spirit" describes a place or realm. A believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Romans 8:26-27 describes how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our prayers. When we come to God in prayer, many times we don't exactly know what God's will in that particular circumstance is, but the Holy Spirit does and He intercedes on our behalf so that our prayers are in accordance with God's will. When is prayer not "in the Holy Spirit"? When we ask for things that are clearly contrary to His will according the Scripture, when we ask with wrong motives, and

when we aren't submissive to His will in the matter. We need to constantly pray, but we need to make sure that our prayers are "in the Holy Spirit".

What do we pray for? Everything we need to pray for in order for God to help us keep ourselves in His love. I'm not even going to try to list everything that involves. Understanding, wisdom, courage, love, peace, perseverance, the list goes on and on. It would be interesting to study all the prayers in the New Testament – really all of Scripture - to see what to glean from them about prayer.

Ok. So in Verses 20 and 21 we have a command "keep ourselves in the love of God" and we have instructions about how to do that – by building ourselves up in the most holy faith, and by praying in the Holy Spirit. The last part of Verse 21 tells us the attitude we need to have to be able to withstand the struggles that we are going to have when we strive to "keep ourselves in the love of God". - We endure these struggles "anxiously awaiting" the return of Christ and the mercy that will be ours for eternity. We work hard, we persevere, we endure, because we know that our Lord and Master, the one we serve, is returning for us and that He will bring us safe into His presence and we will remain there in eternity. We know that Christ has a job for us to do now, but we do that job knowing that eternal freedom from all our struggles in this present dark and sinful world awaits us. As attractive and tempting as these false teachers may be, they can't deliver anything other than despair of the future and temporal and fleeting gratification of the flesh – which never satisfies. Christ delivers life and freedom. The false teachers deliver death and despair and are fools.

Now, that's our self protection. In Verses 22 and 23, Jude talks about how we should attack the virus. These verses are difficult to interpret and there are several differences of opinion about how they should be translated. However, it looks like the verses are describing three categories of people – those who are doubting and in danger of being persuaded by the false teachers, those who have already been persuaded and are in danger of God's discipline, and those who are "all in" and are actively spreading it. Whether the groups are believers or not, isn't stated, and there are differences of opinion among the commentators about that, as well.

The first category of people – **those who are doubting** – these are people who don't know what to think about the false teaching and are seriously trying to figure it out. The use of the word "doubting" makes me think that these are weak believers whose faith is being tested. What does Jude say to do about them? We are to show them "mercy" – meaning that we should not shun them, but come alongside them and help them. Recognize their struggle and do whatever is needed to help them through it. This is a command. So we all need to be vigilant to recognize when this is happening and be prepared to minister to a vulnerable brother or sister.

The second category of people – **those who are persuaded and are living according to the false teaching**. The passage makes it sound like the fire has started and these people are in imminent danger of being consumed – which leads me to believe that Jude may be describing believers who are in imminent danger of severe discipline. Things are urgent and time is of the essence. Fruchtenbaum says that the Greek word used in this context implies strenuous effort on our part. The picture you get is that someone's house is on fire and they are trapped inside and it is only a matter of time before they are consumed by the fire. Jude says we have to make every effort to save them. We have to give it everything we've got to snatch them out of the fire. Like a fireman, we are always on call, and we have to be prepared to set everything else aside to rescue a brother

or sister in this kind of imminent danger. This involves wisdom, personal commitment and risk to the rescuers. But we have to be prepared to do it.

The third category of people – **people who are “all in” and are actively spreading the false teaching.** They are false teachers themselves. I think this category could possibly involve believers and unbelievers. How does Jude say to handle these people? Jude commands us to “have mercy with fear”. We have to engage them, but in engaging them we have to recognize that we are very vulnerable to being contaminated by their sin. These people are very dangerous – not just to weak believers, but to mature believers as well. We have to be very, very careful. When Jude says we do this “hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”, he is stating the attitude that is required to deal with this type of person. “Hate” refers to a strong aversion to something – detesting something. So – if we are going to engage with this type of person, the one engaging them must detest their sin – otherwise, he is opening himself up to temptation. We all have our vulnerabilities and we need to recognize them and not put ourselves in a position for Satan to capitalize on them.

It is interesting that Jude doesn’t expressly command the church to kick these people out of the church community. Due to the harshness of the indictment against the false teachers and their followers, it seems pretty clear that they have no business in church gatherings as long as they persist in their rebellion. I sure can’t see them being allowed into the communion meal after this letter. But they will still be influential in the local community and, because of that, will need to be dealt with.

Jude concludes with the benediction that we hear every Sunday morning after the 10:45 service. Thinking about it in the context of the rest of Jude, it assures us that God is able to protect us during this life and bring us safely into His presence in the future. He can and will do as He has promised. There will be setbacks but we need not fear defeat because we are safe in God’s hands. And God can do this because He alone is God Almighty, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let’s close by reading Jude’s benediction:

Jude 24–25 (NASB95)

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

[Prayer]