



THE BOOK OF JUDE

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INTRODUCTION

1. The book of Jude was written as a result of an emergency situation, Jude 3.

False teachers had appeared to seduce the saints, Jude 4. This called for immediate action on the part of the writer to offset this teaching. The result was this letter.

2. The author identifies himself simply as ‘Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,’ Jude 1.

We know very little about him. The ‘James’ to whom reference is made was probably the James who was so prominent in the Jerusalem church, the half-brother of Jesus. This would also mean Jude was a fleshly brother of Jesus also, Galatians 1:19 / Matthew 13:55.

3. The epistle is addressed ‘to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ’, Jude 1.

Since no geographical details are given, it is not possible to know to whom it was originally sent. It seems that the readers were of Jewish background since there are so many references to the Old Testament.

4. It is not possible to determine the exact date or place of writing.

Tradition says it was written from Palestine. There is a very close similarity between Jude and 2 Peter. In Jude 17-18, Jude appears to quote 2 Peter 3:3, which indicates he was familiar with Peter’s letter. Thus, we would assume Jude was written sometime after 2 Peter, maybe around 65 A.D.

SUMMARY

In Jude 1-16, Jude identifies himself and quickly delves into the dilemma of false teachings. ‘For certain persons have crept in unnoticed’, Jude 4, heresy was obviously seeping into the region, disturbing the churches, and deceiving believers. He begins by illustrating similarities between false teachers and condemned individuals from the Old Testament, citing Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

In Jude 17-25, Jude urges Christians to ‘remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ’, Jude 17. He was referring to all of the apostles and disciples in the past, who had warned about false teachers and prophets who were coming to deceive. His advice is to focus on Jesus Christ and to watch out for each other so that no one is misled into error.

OUTLINE

Opening charge. Jude 1-4
 God’s judgment on the ungodly. Jude 5-16
 A Call to Persevere. Jude 17-23
 Doxology. Jude 24-25

THE TEXT

‘Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.’ Jude 1

Jude refers to himself as a servant and does not play on the fact that he was a half-brother to Jesus. It is a consensus of scholars that the ‘James’ to whom reference is made was probably the James who was so prominent in the Jerusalem church and also a fleshly brother to Jesus.

This would also mean Jude was a fleshly brother of Jesus also, [Galatians 1:19](#). In [Matthew 13:55](#), the brothers of Jesus are named, they were James, Joses, Simon and Judas.

Judas is the same as Juda, but as we know, despite being the brother of Jesus, he wasn’t a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he here acknowledges as his Lord, [John 7:2-5](#) / [Acts 1:14](#).

Jude does not make a play on the fact that he was a half-brother to Jesus, which indicates his humility. None of Jesus’ family believed in Him during His earthly ministry, [John 7:5](#). However, after His resurrection, a great change took place; they believed, [Acts 1:13-14](#).

Notice he doesn’t describe himself as an apostle, which tells us he wasn’t an apostle, but he does describe himself as a servant. The word for ‘servant’ here is the word ‘doulos’, which means one ‘born into slavery,’ thus witnessing the fact of Jude’s being ‘twice-born,’ having experienced the new birth.

Although the meaning of this word in Greek is ‘slave,’ the translators have wisely rendered it ‘servant,’ because of the degrading associations connected with the other word.

Without a doubt, Jude valued the fact that Jesus was his half-brother and that he grew up in the same household as Jesus. But even more valuable to him was his new relationship with Jesus. To Jude, the blood of the cross that saved him was more important than the family blood in his veins that related him to Jesus.

Jude could say with Paul, ‘So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer,’ [2 Corinthians 5:16](#). They were loved by God the Father; some translations use the word ‘sanctified’, which means they were set apart, set apart from the world and set apart to God.

What an incredible thought that is to be loved by God, [Romans 5:6-8](#). The word ‘called’ in the New Testament always has the sense of a call that is accepted and obeyed. Here we have a parallel to Paul’s use of the words, ‘in Christ.’ One’s being either ‘in God’ or ‘in Christ’ is automatically equivalent to his being in the other; it is clear that here is another New Testament witness to the conception reaching back to the Lord himself of the ‘corporate body’ of God’s people.

The word ‘kept’ means to be ‘guarded’ and points toward Christ’s return. In other words, we are being guarded or protected until Jesus comes back. Jesus Christ is our guardian and our protector, [John 10:28-29](#).

In the old TV programme Kung Fu, David Carradine spent a lot of time with his master and his master used to say to him, ‘snatch the pebble from my hand’, but he could never do it. Jesus says as Christians we have double protection, we’re in Jesus’ hands, but we’re also in the Father’s hands, [John 10:28-29](#) / [Romans 8:31-39](#).

‘Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.’ Jude 2

Jude seems to have a fondness for triads in his letter. ‘Mercy, peace and love’, which are similar to Paul’s ‘grace, mercy and peace.’ Notice how Jude uses three examples throughout his letter.

In these first two verses, we have three names: Jude, Jesus Christ, and James. Then we have three forms of relation: servant, Lord, and brother. Then we have three blessings: mercy, peace, and love.

In Jude 5-10, we have three examples of apostasy: Israel of the Exodus, the rebel angels, and the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then we have a three-fold characterisation of the evil men as walking in the ways of Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

But ‘mercy, peace and love’ or ‘grace, mercy and peace,’ 2 Timothy 1:2. These are three great attributes that only Christians have the privilege of enjoying. And notice he wants us to have grace, peace and mercy in ‘abundance’, which means he wants us to experience even more of God’s grace, even more of God’s mercy and even more of God’s peace.

‘Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.’ Jude 3

The book of Jude was written as a result of an emergency situation. False teachers had appeared to seduce the saints. Some news must have arrived that caused him to lay aside a letter he was already writing to them about ‘the salvation we share’, and now writes this letter.

The news he had received called for immediate action on his part to offset this false teaching. This has the meaning of salvation, which is offered to all people alike, upon the same conditions, from the same source and entailing the same obligations. This salvation is not common in the sense of being ordinary, but the most precious treasure ever made available to mankind today.

Notice he’s not writing with further instructions, but is compelled to write and urge them. He wanted to write one thing, but God needed him to write about something else.

Jude accepted the challenge even though we don’t know what led to the change of plans, but it may be because some things are more important at that moment. Are preachers and teachers willing to do that today? Are they ready to change the lesson plan when something happens and needs to be addressed?

Notice he says, ‘dear friends’, now that’s interesting because the only other example of a New Testament book beginning with this particular word is 3 John 2. So what Jude is doing here is asserting his affection for them so that the rest of the letter, which has strong language used, doesn’t offend them.

Jude states the purpose of the book was to exhort the brethren ‘to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.’ They were to strive or literally wrestle for the truth. This denotes the extreme effort they had to put forth. This was to be of a persuasive nature and not the use of physical force.

Since the very beginning of the church, there has always been hostility to the truth. Truth is vital and essential to the people of God, John 8:32. Without truth, men wander into all kinds of evil and sinful things. The word ‘contend’ means that all Christians should vigorously fight for and defend the truth.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Greek word used here ‘contains the root of our English word agony. The defence of the faith may well be a costly thing, but that defence is a duty which falls on every generation of the church’.

The ‘faith’, which they were to contend for represents the sum of all that the Christian is to believe and obey. It stands for the whole system of Christianity, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 / Ephesians 4:13 / 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Faith, apart, is put for the whole, because belief is basic to the system of Christianity. Without it, no one would ever accept Christianity.

Blum, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The faith’ doesn’t mean our own personal belief, or faith in the sense of our trust in God. The phrase the faith means “The essential truths of the gospel that all true Christians hold in common.” The faith is used in this sense repeatedly in the New Testament, Acts 6:7 / Acts 13:8 / Acts 14:22 / Acts 16:5 / Acts 24:24 / Romans 1:5 / Romans 16:26 / Colossians 2:7 / 1 Timothy 1:2 are just some of the examples. We must contend earnestly for the truth. “The faith is the body of truth that very early in the church’s history took on a definite form, Acts 2:42 / Romans 6:17 / Galatians 1:23.’

Caton, in his commentary, says the following, concerning ‘the faith.’

‘It includes in the meaning all of the basic New Testament requirements of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ of all who would be saved initially, and the ethical, moral and religious obligations of Christians, including their faithful observance of the Lord’s Supper, along with the reception and cherishing of the earnest of the Holy Spirit, as necessarily manifested in their subsequent lives.’

Alford, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Faith means the faith, which is believed, not the faith by which we believe.’

Because it is so basic and fundamental, it is often used to stand for the whole in the Scriptures. This faith was ‘once for all delivered,’ that is, delivered for all time. It is a permanent deposit and will never be superseded, amended, modified or added to. It is perfect, adequate, and a complete inviolable deposit of truth.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The use of the Greek word ‘hapax’ carries the meaning of ‘once only and forever.’

The Gospel delivered to mankind was not, ‘here a little and there a little’, as in the Old Testament, Isaiah 28:10, but the full message in its entirety and completeness as delivered through Christ to the apostles. The word ‘hapax’ is the same as in such New Testament expressions as ‘appointed to man once to die,’ Hebrews 9:27.

Modern-day claims of additional revelations are false. The fact is that the faith has once for all been delivered, and this leaves no room for additional revelations, Hebrews 1:1-2.

The question is, how could the book of Jude be a part of ‘the faith’ (meaning the body of New Testament teaching recognised as ‘the faith’) if the book of Jude states that ‘the faith was once and for all delivered to the saints,’ Jude 3? ‘If Jude says, ‘the faith’ was ‘delivered’ once and for all in the past, then how could his writing, being written after the fact, be part of ‘the faith’?

Along those same lines, how could Peter state that God ‘has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness’, 2 Peter 1:3, if Peter was writing material after that statement was made that pertained to ‘life and godliness’?

The Apologetic Press gives the following answer.

‘The simple answer lies in the fact that when something is recorded is not necessarily when it is ‘delivered.’ Throughout the first century, God inspired the apostles and various first-century prophets to deliver ‘the faith’ to the early church. Much of that material, however, was preached long before it was written down. ‘For instance, God inspired Peter and the apostles to preach the Gospel on the day of Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven. That sermon was not recorded, however, until about 30 years later by the inspired writer Luke. Since that is the case, we understand that the material had been delivered to the church long before it was preserved in written form by the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.’

The Apologetic Press continues and says the following.

‘This fact is evident in the books of 2 Peter and Jude, the two books under discussion. Both authors made a special point to insist that they were reminding their audiences of material that was already out there and available. ‘For instance, Peter stated, ‘I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth’, 2 Peter 1:12. Later in the book, he stated, ‘Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder)’, 2 Peter 3:1.’

The Apologetic Press continues and says the following.

‘Jude made similar statements when he wrote, ‘But I want to remind you, though you once knew this,’ Jude 5. And when he stated, ‘Remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ These authors insist that they are reminding their readers of material that the readers had access to before they read these letters. When we stop to consider the situation, this would have to be the case. Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit would help the apostles know what to say when they stood before rulers, Matthew 10:19. Yet we read of only a very few instances of such messages in Acts.’

The Apologetic Press continues and says the following.

‘Certainly, it was the case that Matthew, Andrew, Thomas, and the other apostles preached inspired messages that we have no record of. In 1 Corinthians 14:31, we learn that certain people in the Corinthian church were prophets, but we do not have a record of their messages. The point is this, throughout the first century, the Holy Spirit was delivering ‘all things,’ John 14:26, guiding the inspired writers into ‘all truth,’ John 16:13, and making known ‘the faith’ to the church in several ways. When we see it preserved by an inspired writer, that does not mean it had not been previously delivered in one form or another to the church before that.’

‘For certain individuals, whose condemnation was written about long ago, have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.’ Jude 4

These evil persons were the reasons for Jude’s writing this letter. We don’t know how he got the information about them, but we know that he did. Possibly, someone wrote to him, or he had a visit from someone informing him what was happening.

The church needs to learn to gather the facts before making any decisions or judgments on anyone or any situation that arises. Too many times, the church has got it wrong because it has only gathered part of the facts and because of this, many people have left the church or have been discredited.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘But whoever these men Jude got told about were, we know that they were evil men and at that time they were ‘ungodly,’ which is a favourite word with Jude, he uses the word five times, Jude 4 / Jude 8 / twice in Jude 15 / Jude 18.’

The Greek word ‘asebeia’, which means ungodly, is found four times in Romans, three times in Timothy and Titus, one time in 1 Peter, two times in 2 Peter, and six times in Jude.

They had basically corrupted the concept of the grace of God to make it a cover for false teachers who had slipped in undetected, making the situation dangerous because the saints were unaware of who they were and what they would attempt to do.

This severe denunciation reminds us of some of the denunciations of evil men by the Old Testament prophets and Christ's denunciations of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. Notice how Jude describes how they work, their outcome, their practices and what they believe.

1. They entered secretly, Jude 4.
2. They were prophetically consigned to doom, Jude 4.

Note the footnote says the following.

‘Or individuals who were marked out for condemnation’.

Jude was not referring to predestination; he was referring to the writing of the Old Testament.

3. They are ungodly, Jude 4.
4. They deny Christ, Jude 4.

They would turn God's grace into licentiousness and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. This no doubt refers to the same false teachers. ‘Gnostics’ that John dealt with in his letters.

His mentioning of lasciviousness would imply that some were teaching the Gnostic doctrine, which justified sexual debauchery. The apostle John deals with this doctrine extensively in his gospel and epistles. This doctrine was an abuse of Paul's teaching regarding the grace of God.

Perhaps there had not been a long gap of time since Paul wrote Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, where Paul devotes a considerable amount of space to God's grace. Their teaching went so far as to deny the Lord, Jesus. The Gnostic doctrine denied that ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’, John 1:1-2 / John 1:14.

‘Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.

They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.’ Jude 5-7

Jude says that the Scriptures relating to the doom of Sodom, the punishment of angels, etc., whose sins were the same as those of these wicked men, were to be understood as examples of the punishment God would inflict upon them, Jude 5. Here again is the Greek word, ‘hapax’, Jude 5, which tells us that the Christian knows the whole message once and for all, Jude 3, before they are even converted, in the sense of its basics.

Jude powerfully presents these false teachers' inevitable doom by giving three examples of divine vengeance upon evil-doers. The Israelites, after leaving Egypt, and angels who sinned, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

1. There was the doom of certain Israelites after they left Egypt because they did not believe, Jude 5.

Numbers 14 basically tells us that God delivered the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. They went out of Egypt and, without unintended delays, came to a place called Kadesh Barnea, on the threshold of the Promised Land.

But at Kadesh Barnea, the people refused to trust God and go into the Promised Land of Canaan. Therefore, almost none of the adult generation who left Egypt entered the Promised Land.

Think of what God did for the people of Israel in this situation, and then how they responded to Him. They experienced God's miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea. They heard the very voice of God at Mount Sinai.

They received His daily care and provision of manna in the wilderness. Yet they still lapsed into unbelief, and never entered the place of blessing and rest God had for them.

Those who doubted and rejected God at Kadesh Barnea paid a higher price than just not entering the Promised Land. They also received the judgment of God. Psalm 95:10-11 describes how the Lord reacted to them. The point was that the goodness of God does not hinder Him from punishing the wicked under the new dispensation, any more than it hindered Him from punishing them under the old.

In other words, the goodness of God will not hinder Him from punishing the wicked under the new dispensation, any more than it hindered Him from punishing them under the old.

The Israelites were destroyed for idolatry in worshipping the golden calf, their fornication with the Midianites, their murmuring and complaining, etc., but all of this is summed up as ‘they did not believe,’ Jude 5.

2. Jude next brings up the angels who ‘did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation,’ Jude 6.

This has nothing to do with Satan having sex with Eve, Genesis 3:13, as some claim or the sons of God having sexual relations with the daughters of men, Genesis 6:1-2, as some people like to claim, Matthew 22:30 / Isaiah 14:12-14.

These were probably the angels of Satan mentioned by the Saviour in Matthew 25:41, who clearly rebelled against God from the very fact of their belonging to the devil.

This assures us that certain men causing trouble in the church will be judged, no matter what their spiritual status had been. These angels at one time stood in the immediate, glorious presence of God, but now they are in everlasting chains.

If God judged the angels who sinned, He will judge these certain men. This also reminds us that we must continue walking with Jesus. If the past spiritual experience of these angels didn’t guarantee their future spiritual state, then neither does ours. We must keep walking and be on guard, 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The expression, ‘great Day’ Jude 6, occurs in Revelation 6:17, and nowhere else in the New Testament. This is to be identified with John’s ‘last day’, John 6:39-40 / John 6:44-54 / John 11:24 and John 12:48.’

Other New Testament expressions for that great final occasion are ‘that day,’ Matthew 24:36, ‘the day of judgment,’ Matthew 12:26 / Hebrews 9:27, and ‘the day of the Lord,’ 2 Peter 3:10.

3. There was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the punishment of angels, which served as examples of the punishment God would inflict upon false teachers, Jude 7 / 2 Peter 2:4.

Sodom and Gomorrah were the wicked cities whose shameful sin is remembered to this day. Their story is found in Genesis 18 and Genesis 19. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, chose the well-watered plain just north of Sodom because it was very fertile. He pitched his tent toward Sodom and finally moved into the city itself, Genesis 13:12. The result would be a total disaster for Lot’s family.

Ezekiel 16:49 tells us of other sins of Sodom. Sexual depravity was not their only sin, but it was certainly among their sins, and Jude makes this plain. The sins described in Ezekiel 16:49 show that Sodom and Gomorrah were indeed prosperous, blessed areas.

You don’t have the fullness of food, and the abundance of idleness if you don’t have material blessings. But despite their great blessing from God and material prosperity, they sinned and were judged.

The sin of sodomy was shamefully present. Lot had to turn away a mob that sought to rape the visitors who were staying in his house. Their punishment was the complete destruction of the cities.

Their destruction is the nearest thing that can be found in the world to describe the destruction which awaits those who, in Jude’s time, were teaching and practising evil.

In Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire from heaven. But that wasn't the end of their judgment by fire. Far worse than what happened in Genesis 19, they suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. This again assures us that certain men causing trouble in the church will be judged, no matter how much they had been blessed in the past. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were once wonderfully blessed but eventually suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, so will it be with these certain men.

The cities about them were Admah and Zeboim, both of which are mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:23. All four cities were destroyed because of fornication, which was so rampant among them. Jude is simply pointing out the reality of the eternal retribution of God on evil men, Jude 7.

'In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams, these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.' Jude 8-10

Their dreams could refer to several things, such as impure speculations, sensual thoughts and imaginations, Jude 8. In the days of Noah before the flood, it is said that every thought and imagination of the people was evil constantly before God, Genesis 6:5.

Can you imagine people being so defiled that it was impossible to have one good thought? Those spoken of by Jude were running a course like that of the cities of the plain, Jude 8.

Whatever the exact meaning, all of their activity was directed to a single objective, that of defilement, whether self-pollution, the corruption of others, or both, Jude 8. All dominion belongs to God, as stated in the benediction, and the evil teachers rejected God's authority. Their sins were threefold.

1. They pollute their own bodies, Jude 8.
2. They reject authority, Jude 8.
3. They abuse celestial beings, Jude 8.

This could refer to both spiritual and civil authority. Certainly, their doctrine opposed the authority of heaven where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords, 1 Timothy 6:15 / Revelation 17:14 / Revelation 19:16.

They would also be opposing the authority of the apostles, prophets, and teachers who were all inspired by the Holy Spirit. Some think this rejection also included civil authorities.

Michael, Jude 9, was an archangel, which means he was above the other angels. This angelic being is mentioned by name in four passages of the Bible, Daniel 10:13 / Daniel 10:21 / Daniel 12:1 / Revelation 12:7, and here in Jude 9. Every time Michael appears, it is in the context of battle or readiness to fight. He is an archangel, which simply means a 'leading angel.'

The last time we read about the body of Moses is in Deuteronomy 34:5-6. At some point after the death of Moses, Satan, for some reason, wanted the body of Moses, Jude 9. We do not know why he wanted his body. Maybe to appear to others in his body.

We know that in New Testament times, demons often possessed human bodies, bringing on them all kinds of torments and hurtful things, Matthew 15:22 / Mark 1:23-26. Some lived in tombs, Mark 5:2-5, which may indicate they were in dead corpses. Their appearance in human bodies was not for any good purpose.

In Moses' case, his spirit had separated from his body, thus leaving only a corpse. Why Satan wanted his body, we do not know, but it was for some evil purpose, no doubt.

The point that Jude is making is that one as high as Michael, an archangel, would not bring a railing judgment against Satan himself, but instead said, ‘The Lord rebuke you,’ Jude 9 / Zechariah 3:2.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following concerning Jude 9.

‘If the greatest of good angels refused to speak evil of the greatest of evil angels, even in circumstances like that, then surely no human being may speak evil of any angel.’

How vile and evil that even today men will speak against God using his name in a vain and disrespectful which is something that Michael would not do, even with the devil.

What he is saying here is that there was a conflict between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses; it could have been a Jewish tradition, but we simply don’t know. Maybe Satan wanted to use the body for purposes like the worship of relics in succeeding ages.

MORE ON THIS DISPUTE

I think that all Bible students will understand me when I say that I have come to appreciate that some questions are important because they relate to great spiritual truths on which our salvation depends, but there are others that, whilst being essentially unimportant, arouse our curiosity, mainly because they relate to events that are extraordinary, strange or mysterious.

Can you imagine a more unlikely trio than those brought together in Jude 9? Here we have mention of the archangel Michael, the Devil and Moses, the greatest leader in Israel’s history.

What is more, we learn from Jude that the occasion was a confrontation between Michael and the devil concerning the body of Moses. When did this remarkable event occur? Well, obviously, it must have occurred sometime after the death of Moses, which is reported in Deuteronomy 34:5-6.

In versions such as the A.V., the Revised Version, the Revised Standard Version, and certain other translations, Deuteronomy 34:6 reads as though God personally buried Moses, but the verse ceases to be a problem if we understand that an action performed at the command of a person is sometimes described as having been performed by that person. God caused Moses to die and to be buried, therefore He ‘buried’ Moses.

Later translations, such as the New Revised Standard Version, clarify the verse by giving us, ‘and he was buried in a valley’, without revealing who was responsible for the burial. But, of course, we’re tempted to speculate!

Was Moses buried by Joshua, his divinely appointed successor? Or was he, as a Jewish tradition claims, buried by Michael the archangel himself? The fact is that we don’t know, we’re not meant to know, nor is it important that we should know, Deuteronomy 34:6.

The probable reason for keeping the location hidden is that, if it had been revealed, it may well have become a shrine and a place of pilgrimage for the Israelites.

Remember that the ‘serpent of bronze’, which Moses erected in the wilderness, Numbers 21:9-10. Centuries later, it did become an object of worship, and it had to be destroyed by Nehemiah, the reformer, who scornfully described it exactly when he said I was ‘nehushtan’, ‘a piece of brass’, 2 Kings 18:4.

What is important is that we should understand that the death and burial of this great servant of God were at God’s command, and the only truly sad aspect of the event is that, after a wearisome journey lasting for almost forty years,

Moses died within sight of the Promised Land, not allowed to enter because of an act of disobedience, Numbers 20:8-12 / Numbers 27:12-14.

Why does Jude mention the dispute about the body of Moses? This is explained in Jude. Jude had intended to write a letter concerning basic Christian doctrine, but, as a result of information that had reached him, he felt it necessary, instead, to deal with problems created by false teachers who had succeeded in entering the fellowship by stealth, and who were undermining the faith of others, Jude 3.

He describes the character of these interlopers and exposes both their motives and methods in very vivid and uncompromising language. They are arrogant, rebellious, disrespectful and thoroughly ungodly people, whose conduct, he declares, stands in stark contrast with that of Michael the archangel in his confrontation with the devil.

Jude says that, out of respect for the position of honour once occupied by the now-fallen Satan, or to give him his original name, Lucifer, Isaiah 14:12, Michael refrained from pronouncing a reproachful judgment on him, but simply said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Jude 9.

The form of this reproach is significant, because the word 'rebuke' is a verb in the 'optative mode', that is, in the form used to express a wish, and, as used here, it means, 'May the Lord rebuke you'! Michael leaves the passing of judgment on Satan to God Himself. This is a lesson we all may learn from Jude 6.

But is there evidence that a dispute about the body of Moses actually occurred? The Bible itself doesn't contain anything that corroborates the story. A single verse, here in Jude's letter, is the only place in the Scriptures that mentions it. So, where did the story originate?

It's found in one of the 'apocryphal' books, which are books that were written mainly during the Inter-Testamental Period, that is, in the four hundred years between the Old and New Testaments.

This was the period during which prophetic witness was silent, and when, as a result, literature appeared claiming to be inspired, often under the name of some genuinely inspired and well-known servant of God.

This particular book is known as 'The Assumption of Moses', and, in common with all the other 'apocryphal' writings, it has never been regarded as inspired or authoritative by either Jews or Christians, and was never accepted as the Word of God, and never included in the 'canon' of either Old or New Testament Scriptures.

Indeed, the word 'apocryphal' itself means 'of questionable or doubtful authenticity'. The document was probably produced early in the Inter-Testamental Period by an unidentified Jewish writer.

Among his other 'revelations' is the claim that, like Elijah, Moses was translated directly into heaven, and it's this assertion that gives the book its name, 'The Assumption of Moses'. The word 'assumption' in the title means 'ascension'.

You perhaps already know that the 'Church of Rome' makes the same claim for Mary, the Lord's mother and speaks of 'The Assumption of Mary'. This doctrine states that, when she died, 'her body was preserved from corruption and shortly afterwards it was assumed.' The Latin word 'assumere' means 'to take to', in this case, to Heaven!

The odd thing is that, according to Catholic teaching, to believe that Mary was taken bodily to Heaven isn't an article of faith, but it's said to be 'impious and blasphemous' to deny it!

Of course, we know from Matthew 17:3 that more than fifteen hundred years later, Moses appeared with Elijah when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. The difference between the two, Moses and Elijah, is that the Scriptures tell us plainly that Moses 'died and was buried,' Deuteronomy 34:5-6, whilst Elijah, like Enoch before him, was 'translated that he should not see death', Genesis 5:24 / 2 Kings 2:11.

However, considering what we read in Hebrews 11:23-27, where Moses is honoured as a man of faith if, at the end of his life, he had indeed been taken up into heaven, we might have expected such an important fact to have been mentioned in those verses.

Probably because Daniel 12:1 seems to suggest that the archangel Michael was appointed by God to be the ‘Guardian of Israel’. The writer of ‘The Assumption of Moses’ also states that Michael was commissioned to bury the body of Moses and to be the guardian of his grave.

But the book declares that Satan opposed the burial of the patriarch, and claimed that the body belonged to him, on the grounds that he claims to be the ‘lord of matter’, to this Michael is said to have replied, ‘The Lord rebuke thee, for it was God’s Spirit who created the world and all mankind’.

A FAMILIAR STORY

There is no doubt that this piece of ‘primitive Jewish tradition’, as Dean Alford, the very highly respected theological scholar, described it, was known to those to whom Jude sent his letter.

It ranks with other stories of a similar nature, such as the claim that, after predicting the Fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity, the prophet Jeremiah took the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle and the Altar of Incense, and hid them in a cave on Mount Nebo, intending, after the ‘Return from the Babylonian captivity’, to retrieve and restore them.

Tradition said that after the return from captivity, Jeremiah lived on in Jerusalem for another three hundred years, and that he even appeared to Judas Maccabees, another two centuries later, as ‘a man with grey hairs and exceeding glorious’.

It seems, then, that, in exposing those who were troubling the church with their false teaching, their denial of the Lord Jesus and their rejection of authority, Jude makes use of a story that, even though it lacks Scriptural endorsement, was familiar to his readers.

He used the story in order to encourage them to remember that the apostles of the Lord had warned that such men would arise, and, being aware of the danger, they should build themselves up in their faith, keeping themselves in the love of God, waiting for the eternal life that comes through the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

Whatever this verse means, we mustn’t lose sight of the point Jude is making, which is simply that it isn’t about why Michael was disputed, but how he disputed with the devil.

How strange it is that mortal, weak, ignorant, vile and sinful men would rail against heavenly beings, a thing which the archangel would not do, even though apparently has the right to have done so.

The people Jude speaks about in this verse were probably Gnostics who were speaking out against things they knew nothing about. Most Gnostics claimed to have superior knowledge to the average person.

They were totally blind to the truth. They had no reasoning about them. The statement, ‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,’ well describes their true condition. Their doctrine opposed two fundamental truths.

First, that the Word (deity) became flesh and dwelt here on earth.

Second, their doctrine allowed and even justified all kinds of immoral living.

Such will be destroyed, which can be understood as being both in the present and also in the future torment of hell itself. Men living sensual lives often bring diseases upon themselves, which destroy their bodies. Such serves as a prophecy of their eternal ruin as well.

These false teachers defile the flesh like those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and exhibited contempt for authority and did not hesitate to speak evil of men who occupied high places.

They spoke of dignities in a fashion that even an archangel did not dare do when speaking to the devil. They spoke evil of things which they knew nothing about, which were entirely outside their sphere of knowledge.

Far from having any superior wisdom, these licentious Gnostics were totally blind to all of the highest knowledge and the things which they could not help knowing, such as their passions, which they used only for the purpose of sinning. They, too, will be destroyed. Before moving on, I think it's worthwhile asking another question.

WAS JESUS THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL?

It never ceases to amaze me what people actually believe and come to make a doctrine out of something which has no Biblical reference and no Biblical authority to believe or teach.

The identity of Jesus will ultimately make or break any religious belief system because Jesus and His identity are the core teaching of the whole Gospel message.

There are two religious groups that I know of who teach that Jesus was actually the archangel Michael, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists, and I believe it's always useful to open our Bibles and see what the text actually says and teaches.

In the Scriptures, there are only three angels actually named: Michael, who was God's warrior. Gabriel, who was God's messenger and Lucifer, whom we now know is the devil. For the purpose of this study, we'll be focusing our attention on Michael.

It may come as a surprise to some people that the Archangel Michael is only mentioned by name in five passages of Scripture: [Daniel 10:13](#) / [Daniel 10:21](#) / [Daniel 12:1](#) / [Jude 9](#) / [Revelation 12:7](#).

Please note that none of these passages even remotely hints that Michael was or is actually Jesus. In fact, you won't find one single Bible text that clearly says or even hints at or teaches that Jesus was the Archangel Michael. So for these groups who believe Jesus was Michael, they have to take the text and make them mean something they clearly doesn't mean.

For example, they tell us that Michael was THE chief prince of angels, but read [Daniel 10:13](#) again. Notice that the text actually says that Michael is ONE of the chief princes; it doesn't say Michael is the ONLY one or THE one.

The New World Translation has a footnote for [Daniel 10:13](#), for the phrase 'one of the chief princes,' and the alternate translation which is given is 'a prince of the first rank.'

Now, remember the footnotes aren't inspired by God, but ask yourself, even if this footnote were true, could it not imply that Michael is ONE of a number of princes of first rank, just like any modern-day army can have a number of generals? Surely common sense tells us this is what it means.

Another example, one which can only be described as ‘clinging on to straws,’ is that they tell us that ‘the proof text’ that Jesus was Michael is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

They tell us that this Scripture ‘suggests’ that Jesus Himself is the archangel, Michael. However, notice the word ‘WITH’, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. If I were to say to you that ‘I’m going shopping WITH my wife’, doesn’t that mean that my wife is accompanying me?

And if this text implies that Jesus is the one who is ‘the voice’, then surely to be consistent, you have to say that Jesus is also ‘the trumpet’, because the text says, ‘WITH the trumpet call of God.’ We know that Jesus isn’t returning alone, He’s coming WITH His angels, 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

How many times have you heard the saying, ‘someone has the voice of an angel’? This doesn’t mean they are angels; it simply implies they sound angelic when they sing.

In other words, when Jesus returns, the angels will be accompanying Him, and their voices will be heard. Let me repeat, the Bible nowhere declares that Jesus was Michael in any shape or form, but what the Bible does tell is the exact opposite.

We have no record anywhere in the Bible of this actual event recorded in Jude 9; however, we know it must have happened, otherwise the event wouldn’t be included in the inspired Word.

Notice what the text says. It says that Michael wouldn’t dare to condemn the devil; instead, Michael said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ The very fact that we see that Michael the Archangel said, ‘The Lord rebuke you,’ demonstrates he can’t be Jesus.

In other words, if Michael were the Lord Jesus, why would He refer to someone else as Lord? Also, if Jesus was Michael and wouldn’t dare to condemn or rebuke Satan, then why did Jesus rebuke Satan on at least two occasions? Matthew 4:10 / Mark 8:33.

Please remember that, without knowing it, Peter was speaking for Satan. One of the most compelling Scriptures that teaches the exact opposite of what these people believe and teach concerning Jesus being Michael is found in the opening chapter of Hebrews.

If you read the opening verses, we see the writer is speaking about Jesus, and I’m no Biblical scholar, but the Hebrew writer also clearly shows us here the distinction between Jesus the Son and the angels. Jesus has a better Name, Hebrews 1:4.

We must go back up to Hebrews 1:4 to see the first argument, as the Son is compared to angels. The first point the writer makes is that the Son has a superior Name, Philippians 2:9.

The argument is fairly simple: the angels are merely messengers of God. But Jesus is the Son, the Son of God. The difference in the NAME is significant and immediately denotes the superiority of the Son. The writer now deepens the argument.

In Hebrews 1:5, we see that in both of these quotations, it’s not the quotation alone that is powerful but the location of the quotation, Psalms 2:7. Psalms 2 is a Messianic psalm speaking about the coronation of the Messiah as King, Psalms 2:6. The Son has been enthroned with power, Psalms 2:8-9 / Psalms 2:12.

The second quotation is also about the enthronement of the Messiah. The quote comes from 2 Samuel 7:14. In the previous verse, the Lord declared the establishment of the throne in His kingdom forever.

So, the question that comes from the text is, when did this coronation and enthronement happen? This is especially of interest because in 2 Samuel, this is spoken of as being in the future, ‘He will be my Son’.

The New Testament, in a couple of places, points out when the coronation and enthronement of the Son occurred, Romans 1:3-4. Notice that the Son was appointed by His resurrection. The coronation and enthronement of the Son took place at His resurrection. The apostle Paul makes the same argument.

Notice again in Acts 13:32-34 that this psalm was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead. Now, this is important: Jesus is enthroned now! Jesus must be enthroned now.

The kingdom must be now, and Jesus is ruling now because the resurrection from the dead was when the coronation of the Son occurred. The Son has a superior NAME through the resurrection, crowned as King.

Jesus has greater dignity, Hebrews 1:6. The Son receives worship, but the angels worship the Son. The Son is clearly greater because He receives worship. Angels do not receive worship. They are to render worship, particularly to the Son. Notice that the Son is called the firstborn. This concept has led to much misunderstanding. The Son isn't being called a created being, nor is the Son being described as lesser than God. The Son isn't a generational reference.

The firstborn held the highest place of privilege, honour, and responsibility. He has preeminence. This is the meaning of the Son as the 'firstborn.' The Son has greater dignity. Angels worship the Son, and He receives that worship.

Jesus has a greater status, Hebrews 1:7. The angels are simply servants; this point will be repeated in Hebrews 1:14. But angels are simply servants, wonderful servants, but still servants. They are spirits, and they are flames of fire, but still servants.

Carefully watch the argument that is made about the Son in Hebrews 1:8-9. The writer says that this quotation is speaking about the Son, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.'

This is speaking about the throne of the Son. In speaking about the Son, 'your throne, O God.' 'The Son is God.' The writer states this point clearly, and it cannot be missed or avoided.

This is a quotation from Psalms 45, and it is useful for us to understand this psalm and tie it to the argument made here in Hebrews. Psalms 45 is a royal wedding song written for the King, see particularly Psalms 45:10-11 / Psalms 45:13 / Psalms 45:16.

But the psalm is strange in Psalms 45:6, because the king is called God. But Psalms 45:7 is even stranger. The king is God, but He has a God, 'your God'. There is no king in the Hebrew Scriptures that this describes. This is about the Messiah. Again, it is a coronation picture. The Son has been chosen above all and has been anointed with the oil of joy. Olive oil was used to anoint the kings of Israel at the inauguration of their rule. It is a Messianic royal wedding.

This image explains the parables in the Gospels Jesus told concerning 'The wedding feast', Luke 14:7-14 / Revelation 19:6-8. Now, let us back up and include Hebrews 1:7 again. The angels serve, but the Son rules. The Son is superior. Jesus is greater in function, Hebrews 1:10-14. The writer of Hebrews says that these quotations are still talking about the Son. He emphasises the role of the Son in creation. The Son laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens. Further, the Son is eternal. All of creation will perish, but He remains.

In Psalms 102, this song was written to God. Therefore, the argument continues that the Son is God. He remains the same, and His years will never end. Further, He has been enthroned until all enemies are placed under His feet.

The comparison is to the angels. They have a lesser function. Angels are serving servants; angels serve, the Son rules. Angels serve; the Son creates. Angels serve, but they serve us, the created.

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, they believe Michael and Jesus are both identified as the leaders of an army of angels in Revelation 12:7. The Book of Revelation contains a vision in which John says, 'Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon', Revelation 12:7.

Jehovah's Witnesses note that this statement refers to 'Michael and his angels,' while elsewhere the New Testament speaks of Christ and 'his angels', Matthew 13:41 / Matthew 16:27 / Matthew 24:31 / Mark 13:27 / 2 Thessalonians 1:7. Later in the Book of Revelation, John describes a vision in which Christ, called 'the Word of God,' leads 'the armies of heaven', Revelation 19:13-14. The Watchtower argues, 'Since God's Word nowhere indicates that there are two armies of faithful angels in heaven—one headed by Michael and one headed by Jesus—it is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role.'

This argument, if pursued consistently, would 'prove' that Christ is not only Michael the archangel but also God the Father since the New Testament also refers to the angels as God's angels or the Father's angels, Matthew 4:6 / Matthew 22:30 / Matthew 26:53 / Luke 4:10 / Luke 12:8-9 / Luke 15:10 / John 1:51 / Hebrews 1:6 / Revelation 3:5.

Since Jesus is not the Father, there is something wrong with this reasoning. We shouldn't understand the Bible to be saying that there are two separate armies of angels, one headed by Christ and the other by Michael, nor that the one army of angels is headed by Christ, who is Michael.

Rather, Michael leads the army of angels in Revelation 12:7 on behalf of Christ, who is his superior. Just as we might speak of the president's army and also refer to it as a general's army without identifying the general as the president, the New Testament speaks of Christ's angels and also of Michael's angels without identifying Christ as Michael.

In Revelation 12, Michael and his angels are fighting the 'great red dragon,' which represents Satan the devil, in a 'war in heaven' after Jesus Christ was born on earth as 'the Lamb,' shed his 'blood' to conquer the devil and ascended to God and his throne, Revelation 12:3-11.

Far from identifying Christ as Michael, this passage pictures Christ sharing God's throne and ruling with him while Michael and his angels throw the devil and his angels down to the earth. Reading Revelation 12:7 in context, then, makes it quite clear that Michael is not Christ.

If we downgrade Jesus to a mere angel and say that He was no more or no less than an angel, then we're actually knocking Him off His throne. This is why it's so important to clearly identify Jesus for who He really is.

'Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.' Jude 11

Now, remember, we noted that Jude gave three examples of apostasy. 1. The ancient Israelites. 2. The rebel angels. 3. The wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jude 5-7.

Next, he told us that these licentious Gnostics were just as guilty as the ancient apostates, and he emphasised their sinful and ignorant behaviour by contrasting it with the restraint of the archangel Michael, Jude 8-9.

He then returned to the accusation of the wicked men in Jude 10, but here in Jude 11, he equates and compares their conduct with the wickedness of three of the worst Old Testament apostates, Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Jude assumed that his readers were thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament events associated with these three names.

But why choose these three examples? Possibly because these three examples might have been remembered because of the spectacular punishments they received.

Cain was cursed by God, Balaam was found dead with God's enemies fighting against Israel, and Korah was swallowed up by an earthquake that split open the earth, taking Korah and all of his company to their death.

The lesson is that a grievous punishment will be carried out on wicked men. Another reason for the selection of these three was probably that their sins were similar to the sins of the wicked Gnostics.

Like Cain, they were innovators with a fierce hatred of anyone who rejected their ideas. Like Balaam, they were greedy, covetous, and willing to do any dishonourable thing whatever for the sake of money.

Like Korah, they rebelled against God's appointed authorities, the sacred apostles, prophets and teachers of the new covenant, just as Korah had rebelled against Moses.

Still another possible purpose in using the example of Cain derived from the need to refute the Ophites, called also Cainites. The Ophites were an early Christian sect that rose up in the second century. They were characterised by their adherence to Gnostic beliefs.

They viewed the material world as inherently evil, a creation of a lesser deity known as the demiurge, whom they called Jaldabaoth. In contrast, they believed in a higher, more spiritual God who represented true knowledge and salvation. We see this in 1 John 3:12, where Cain is cited as an example of wickedness, and in 2 Peter 2:15, Balaam is similarly used as a bad example.

All three of these, Cain, Balaam, and Korah, were considered to be especially notorious sinners and frequently referred to as examples and warnings. What will you be remembered for? A good example or a bad example?

Jude now compares the conduct of these Gnostics with the wickedness of three of the worst Old Testament apostates, Cain, Genesis 4:1-16, Balaam, Numbers 22-24, and Korah, Numbers 16. His Jewish readers would be well acquainted with these Old Testament characters. He may introduce them because of the punishments they received.

The Gnostic doctrine would eventually take on different variations and would become a thorn in the side of the church for many years. The divine retribution of God that came upon the cities of the plain very clearly shows how God feels about homosexuality, Leviticus 18:22 / Leviticus 20:13 / Romans 1:26-27 / 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 / 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

Many today try to justify it as something that some are born with and cannot help being this way. The truth is, they have a choice. They can reject it or practice it.

CAIN

Cain's story is found in Genesis 4. Each of the sons of Adam and Eve brought an offering to the Lord. Cain, being a farmer, brought an offering from his harvest. Abel, being a shepherd, brought an offering from his flocks. God accepted Abel's offering, but He rejected Cain's sacrifice, Hebrews 11:4.

You can give to God whatever you have or whatever you are, but you must offer it in faith. Genesis 4:5 says that after God rejected his sacrifice, Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. He became angry because he knew he was rejected by God.

In a fit of anger, Cain murdered Abel, and then he lied about it to God, Genesis 4:8-9. 1 John 3:12 tells us that Cain murdered his brother because Abel's works were righteous, by faith, while Cain's own were wicked. Cain's lack was not in works but in faith.

Jude says that Cain typifies a way that certain men follow. It is the way of unbelief and empty religion, which leads to jealousy, persecution of the truly godly, and eventually murderous anger.

BALAAM

Balaam's story is found in [Numbers 22-25](#) and [Numbers 31](#). During the time of the Exodus, Israel advanced to the land of Moab after defeating the Amorites. When the Israelites came near, King Balak of Moab sought the help of a prophet named Balaam.

The first delegation from King Balak arrived, and God told Balaam to have nothing to do with them. God's initial words to Balaam were, 'Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed', [Numbers 22:12](#).

After the first visit, another, more prestigious delegation came with great riches. Balaam wanted to go with them, and God allowed him to go. Balaam lusted after the riches and prestige offered to him, and God gave him over to his own sin.

God warned Balaam to turn back when he was on the way to see Balak. Yet his heart was set on the rich reward King Balak promised, and he continued. Balaam even ignored a talking donkey, sent to warn him to turn back.

Balaam knew that he had done wrong. In [Numbers 22:34](#), he said to God 'I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.' But he didn't turn back. He continued, refusing to see that when God says no, we must take it as a no. Instead, God gave Balaam what his sinful heart desired.

After meeting with King Balak of Moab, Balaam prophesied over Israel four times: [Numbers 23:7-10](#) / [Numbers 23:19](#) / [Numbers 24:3-9](#) / [Numbers 24:15-29](#). But as he spoke forth God's word, he didn't curse Israel; instead, he blessed her each time.

When he was unsuccessful in cursing Israel, Balaam advised Balak on how to bring Israel under a curse. Instead of trying to have a prophet curse Israel, he should lead her into fornication and idolatry, and then God would curse a disobedient Israel.

Balak did just that, sending his young women into the camp of Israel to lead Israel into sexual immorality and idolatry, [Numbers 31:16](#) / [Revelation 2:14](#). Because of the people's sin, God cursed Israel. He brought a plague of judgment upon Israel that killed twenty-four thousand people, [Numbers 25:9](#) / [Deuteronomy 23:3-6](#).

Therefore, Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins: deliberately leading others into sin, [Numbers 31:16](#) / [Revelation 2:14](#). Worse yet, he did it for money, [Numbers 22:7](#).

Greedily, in the error of Balaam for profit, the greedy error of Balaam was that he was willing to compromise everything for money, [2 Peter 2:15](#). The certain men Jude warned about had the same heart, [Jude 4](#).

Many Christians would never deny Jesus under persecution, but might deny Him if offered a large sum of money. There is not a single sin that a corrupt man will not commit for the sake of money. Covetousness is such a dangerous sin that it killed Jesus; thirty pieces of silver helped put Jesus on the cross, [Matthew 26:14-16](#).

KORAH

Korah's story is found in [Numbers 16](#). He was a prominent man in Israel, and one day came to Moses, saying, 'You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?' [Numbers 16:3](#).

Korah and his followers resented the authority God gave to Moses and Aaron. When Korah said this, Moses fell on his face, knowing God's judgment would soon come. Moses then proposed a test: each group took censers, for burning incense, and came before the Lord, Numbers 16:5-7.

The Lord Himself would choose which man He wanted to represent Him, Moses or Korah. When they both came before God, the Lord told Moses to step away. Then, the ground opened up and swallowed Korah and his followers, Numbers 16:32. After that, fire came down from heaven and burned up all of his supporters, Numbers 26:10. They all perished. Korah was a Levite, but not of the priestly family of Aaron. As a Levite, he had his own God-appointed sphere of ministry, yet he was not content with it. He wanted the ministry and the authority of Moses.

Korah needed to learn this essential lesson; we should work hard to fulfil everything God has called us to be. At the same time, we should never try to be what God has not called us to be.

The rebellion of Korah was also a rejection of God's appointed leaders, especially God's appointed Mediator. When certain men rejected authority and spoke evil against dignitaries, they walked in the rebellion of Korah.

These three men came from quite different backgrounds: Cain was a farmer, Balaam was a prophet, and Korah was a leader in Israel. Apostasy is never confined to one group of people. As someone once said, 'there are apostates in the pulpit, in the palace, and the poorhouse.'

‘These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.’ Jude 12

Jude says they are ‘hidden rocks’ in their social gatherings, not being detected. He's using the metaphor of something which has sunk under the sea and can't be seen, but will sink the ship if they don't know it's there. They are selfish shepherds that feed only themselves.

Like everything else in his letter, Jude here drew this from the Old Testament example of ‘shepherds that feed themselves’, Ezekiel 34:2. Ezekiel called them ‘fat sheep’ who abuse the flock of God, fouling their food with refuse, in Ezekiel 34:20, etc., as some would say today, ‘They were fat cats, living in luxury while impoverishing others.’

The ‘love feast’ or ‘Agape Feast’ mentioned here were the feast they celebrated in the church along with the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The early Christians often met for a common meal, something like a fellowship meal. When these certain men came, they were serving only themselves. They ate greedily at the love feasts while others went hungry. At the Agape Feast, everybody brought what they could, some a little, some a lot, but they all shared it together.

For some slaves who were Christians, it might have been the only decent meal they regularly ate. The selfishness of these certain men spoiled the fellowship. It always spoils fellowship when we come to church with a selfish ‘bless me’ attitude. Many who would never eat selfishly at a church meal still come to church concerned with serving only themselves.

They are like clouds that offer a promise of rain but leave no rain, Jude 12. Note that this is a metaphor drawn from the arid area of Judaea, perfectly ordinary and universally known.

Clouds without water were a terrible disappointment to people who needed rain most of the time. A similar cloud metaphor has the meaning of instability. Now one may see such a cloud; then he doesn't. That was the way it was with the false teachers.

He compares them to fruit trees that are dead and without any fruit, Jude 12. The autumn trees here were those which normally bear their fruit in the autumn.

Fruit time was a disappointing time for those who looked at barren trees. In a sense, an unfruitful, or barren tree, was ‘dead’, but, when it had already been grubbed up from the earth, it was ‘twice dead.’ Spiritually, these men were twice dead, Jude 12, in having returned after baptism to the death of sin, Hebrews 6:4-7.

‘They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.’ Jude 13

Jude, like countless others, had visited a seashore following a storm, finding the beach littered and polluted by every kind of filth and trash. They are much like a wild sea that leaves the beach littered with worthless refuse. Isaiah speaks of people like this in Isaiah 57:20.

What better description, a polluted beach, of men who preached the Gnostic doctrine. Jude has in mind the ugly shoreline after a storm has washed up all sorts of driftwood, seaweed and debris.

Furthermore, they are like wandering stars that could not be depended upon for direction and navigation. Jude may have referred to meteorites as ‘shooting stars’, which blaze for a moment in the sky and then disappear into the darkness.

He is speaking metaphorically about meteorites because trees cannot be ‘twice dead’, oceans do not foam up ‘shame’, and stars do not ‘wander.’ Those troubling the church were just like ‘shooting stars’ that would shine for a moment and then plunge into doom and darkness, Jude 13.

ENOCH

‘Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’ Jude 14-15

Jude mentions a prophecy of Enoch that he applied to these false teachers. They would stand in judgment for their evil deeds. Enoch ‘walked with God’ and was taken by God, not tasting death, Genesis 5:21-24 / Hebrews 11:5-6.

His son was Methuselah, Genesis 5:27, whose name means, ‘when he dies it shall come’, referring to the flood. The coming with ‘thousands upon thousands of His saints,’ Jude 14, emphasises the magnitude of the judgment.

This phrase ‘to judge’ or ‘execute judgment’, Jude 15, occurs only here and in John 5:27, but significantly, in John it occurs upon the lips of Jesus Christ Himself.

This is a prophecy that is emphasised throughout the Bible that there will be a day of judgment when God will settle His accounts with the wicked deeds of those ungodly men who have rejected Him.

Also, they will be judged for the things they spoke against Him, Jude 15. Anyone who speaks against God, against the Bible, against Christianity, against all truth and righteousness, God will judge.

Think of someone arrested for a crime, with a date to appear in court, but who made absolutely no preparation for his appearance before the judge. That person would be a fool. We shouldn’t be so foolish and instead take advantage of our court-appointed advocate, Jesus Christ, as 1 John 2:1 reminds us.

‘These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.’ Jude 16

These people are described in six ways.

1. They are grumblers, Jude 16.
2. They are faultfinders, Jude 16.
3. Their sole guide is their evil desires, Jude 16.
4. They are noisy boasters, Jude 16.
5. They are flatterers, Jude 16.
6. All that they do is take advantage of people for their own benefit, Jude 16.

Jude noticed that their methods all revolved around words. On top of their questionable lives, they were essentially a people of deception, departing from the foundation of Jesus Christ, the apostles and prophets. These are grumblers, complainers; these people were complainers, Exodus 16:2-3 / Numbers 14:2-4 / Matthew 20:11-13 / 1 Corinthians 10:10. It has rightly been observed that whenever a man gets out of touch with God, he is likely to begin complaining about something. Grumbling is to insult the God who gives us all things; it is to forget that whatever befalls us, nothing can separate us from His love, nor deprive us of that most priceless of all treasures, the Lord's presence in our lives.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

'You know the sort of people alluded to here; nothing ever satisfies them. They are discontented even with the Gospel. The bread of heaven must be cut into three pieces and served on dirty napkins, or else they cannot eat it, and very soon their soul hates even this light bread. There is no way by which a Christian man can serve God so as to please them. They will pick holes in every preacher's coat; and if the great High Priest himself were here, they would find fault with the colour of the stones of his breastplate.'

These flattering people, these certain men knew how to use smooth, flattering words to get an advantage over other people. They would say anything, good or bad, to get an advantage.

All of their murmurings, complaining and walking after their own lusts were directed toward gaining some personal benefit for themselves. How many today can be described in the same way?

'But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.' Jude 17

Jude recalls for them the words that they had heard the apostles speak regarding trials that were certain to come upon them. Some think Jude is referring to 2 Peter 3:2, where almost the same thoughts are expressed.

Jude would have been familiar with Peter's epistle, as all epistles were circulated among the churches. He would be familiar with what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

'They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.' Jude 18-19

Not only did Peter speak out about these people in 2 Peter 3:3, but all the apostles did. Their statements can be found in Acts 20:29 / 1 Timothy 4:1 / 2 Timothy 4:1 / 1 John 4:3.

They were acquainted with the apostles and would remember their warnings. Jude refers to the 'last times,' Jude 18. This has reference to the last age, the age of Christianity.

The same kind of teaching Jude is speaking of still exists today, as the prophecy applies to all who live in the Christian age. They cause divisions among the churches and 'quenched' or rejected the word of God.

Many people are committed to godlessness in their personal lives; they make light of all authority, they have foamed out their own shame, and speak blasphemously and contemptuously of heavenly persons, such as they, would naturally laugh at the idea of a judgment to come.

They make divisions by dividing themselves from the true church, and by encouraging others to do so likewise, Jude 19. The rest of the verse means that they live as brute beasts, guided simply by their lusts and passions, their Bible being the manifold devices and covetousness of their own hearts.

The Holy Spirit, long having been grieved, insulted, resisted, lusted against, and at last ‘quenched’ by themselves, such men were no longer capable of any good whatever.

It never ceases to amaze me how Christians fall away and seem to become more evil than they were before they became Christians, 2 Peter 2:22. Note that they don’t have the Spirit, Jude 19 / 1 Corinthians 2:14.

‘But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life’. Jude 20-21

In contrast to the wicked and ungodly, they were to build themselves up by growing, becoming more mature in the faith, and keeping themselves in God’s love by obeying His will, John 15:9-10.

There’s a lot of talk about grace only saves, or faith only saves, but man has a part to play in their salvation too, Acts 2:27 / Acts 2:40. Paul wrote that people should ‘continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,’ Philippians 2:12.

These verses and many others, including ‘building yourselves up’, Jude 20, are all stressing the things people are commanded to do, with the implication that if they refuse to comply with the instructions upon which God’s grace is to be appropriated, their failure to comply is the forfeit of grace.

The need on the part of humans to obey God’s teaching is in no manner incompatible with the conception that no man can earn salvation. Of course, he cannot, but neither can the wilfully disobedient enter heaven. When one thinks of it, what possible use could God have for any soul that refuses to do the things God commanded?

‘Praying in the Spirit’, Jude 1:20, means praying in obedience to, reliance upon, and in harmony with the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit in Scripture, Ephesians 6:18.

Prayer is a vital means of Christian growth, and security is in sight, Jude 20, including the promise of the Holy Spirit who helps us in prayer. Neglect of this vital duty may prove fatal to the believer. Many of our prayers are directed by our own needs, by our own intellects, or by our own wishes and desires, James 4:3.

But there is a higher level of prayer; likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us, Romans 8:26. The Holy Spirit may help us pray by giving us the right words to say when we pray.

Among those in error, there were various classes. Each one must be dealt with differently. Some with severity, others patiently. The closing two verses call our attention to the One we must lean upon, depend upon, and trust in. He is able to keep us from stumbling if we trust Him and obey Him, Jude 24-25.

Again, the human response factor is stressed in Jude 20, ‘keeping oneself in the love of God’, which is the same thing as obeying God’s commandments. We know that God loves even the ungodly, as Romans 5:6 tells us.

Therefore, Jude doesn’t mean living in such a way as to make yourself lovable to God. Instead, to keep yourselves in the love of God means to keep yourselves in harmony with God’s ever-present love. Jude commanded, or rather pleaded, that the faithful should do six things.

1. Work at your faith, Jude 20.
2. Give constant attention to prayer, Jude 20.
3. Receive, cultivate and cherish the indwelling Spirit, Jude 20.

4. Keep yourselves in God's love through strict obedience to His will, Jude 21.
5. If you are frustrated or discouraged by failures, look to Jesus, Jude 21.
6. Look to the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will save the last unworthy one of us, if we give Him half a chance to do so! Jude 21.

Notice that this is preceded by 'bring you to eternal life,' Jude 21, indicating that in some vital aspects of it, we do not now have eternal life but this is not to deny John's great promises regarding this, 1 John 5:13.

Because they may be fully understood as our actual possession of eternal life, in the sense of having the blessed promise of it, the assurance of it, and the vital, living hope of it.

'Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.' Jude 22-23

Jude has two kinds of people in mind here: the false teachers and those who follow them. We have those who are responsible for maintaining due order in the churches must use different methods toward those who persist in teaching rebellious and immoral doctrine and those who have been misled by false teachers.

Some doubting souls need your mercy, Jude 22. These are the people we need to snatch from the flames and save them, Jude 22. Then there are others for whom your mercy must be mixed with fear, who hate the very clothing that is corrupted by the flash, Jude 23.

'Snatching them from the fire', Jude 23, is an obvious metaphor, which basically means to rescue them, as you would someone from a burning building. We have to remember that there is a real danger for Christians who are trying to save others by showing mercy; there must be fear in attempting their rescue. Why?

Because we too might end up getting burnt along with them whilst we're trying to rescue them. Our snatching them from the fire shows them we're not only concerned for our own spiritual welfare but theirs. It proves that we genuinely care about other Christians who are edging towards significant error.

'To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.' Jude 24-25

If Jude is known or noticed at all by today's church, it is because of these verses, which are quoted more than any other verse from his letter. In mountain climbing, the beginning hiker attaches himself to the expert so that if he loses his footing, he won't stumble and fall to his death. In the same manner, if we keep connected with God, we cannot fall. He keeps us safe.

If Christians obey the instructions of their Lord and walk in the light as He is in the light, 1 John 1:7, they will not stumble, and for those who walk with the Lord, the Lord indeed can and does guard us against stumbling, Jude 24.

'Before His glorious presence', Jude 24, refers to the 'great Day' of Jude 6, the judgment day when all nations shall be assembled before the great throne of God.

The use of the words 'without fault', Jude 24, again is a metaphor from the Old Testament sacrificial system, Leviticus 1:3 / Colossians 1:28. And notice that Jude says, 'with great joy', Jude 24.

It carries with it the idea of being proud, be proud that God is redeeming you and His people, be proud that you are God's child, be proud that God is saving you and remember that God can't save anyone unless they accept and obey His Son, Jesus. Jesus is both 'God' and 'Saviour', Jude 25 / 1 Timothy 2:3-4 / 1 Timothy 4:10 / Titus 3:3-4.

All of the glory belongs to God, Jude 25 / Acts 17:29. All of the praise, all of the glory, all of the worship and adoration that human hearts are capable of are rightfully given only to God through Christ.

Our blessed Saviour was, and is, and shall be forevermore, Jude 25 / Revelation 1:4. He is one with the Father, the eternal God who is ever and perpetually the 'I AM' of all time and eternity, Exodus 3:14 / John 8:58-59.

Glory is the sum total of all God's attributes and the affirmation of His existence as God. Majesty is the dignity or splendour God deserves as King of the Universe and existence. It refers to God's regal presence.

Dominion means there is no challenge to God's sovereignty. This is God's absolute power. Power is God's authority to do whatever He wills. He has the prerogative and right to rule sovereignly over all creation. His power is His ability to carry out His plan.

'Amen', Jude 25, means 'So be it', and it calls God to witness the words which are sealed by it. It's the signal that any hymn or prayer concluded by it is held to be sacred in the eyes of God, and is a pledge of the sincerity and integrity of the petitioner. God guarantees Christians' success ultimately in eternity because He has the capacity to do whatever He wills.

CONCLUSION

When you think about Jude, it's amazing that four little boys, all of whom were younger than Jesus, all grew up in Nazareth in the same room with Jesus in the home of Joseph and Mary, and two of them, James and Jude, left the gift of two precious letters.

Think about that, there are two New Testament writers who lived with Jesus practically all of His life on earth. These two men didn't believe in Jesus at first, and like all other Jews, they believed that the Messiah would be a conquering hero who would rally the troops and chase the Romans out of Judea; they knew that Jesus was not that kind of person.

But, when they came to know His real purpose of redeeming people from sin, all they could do was fall down in His presence and hail Him as Lord and Saviour, leading them both also, ever afterwards, to write themselves 'not as His brothers' but as 'Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!'

The problems that Jude deals with in this brief letter are the same problems we must deal with today. This book, like all the letters are relevant today and is a challenge to every Christian living today. Human nature hasn't changed; we face the same challenges.