

Jude Bible Study #1: Introduction

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs. 1-2

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

Introduction

The Epistle of Jude is the second to last book of the Bible. It is aptly placed in the Canon's ordering, since the book after it is Revelation. As the last of the "Catholic Epistles," those written for universal circulation in the Church, it reflects the priorities of Church leadership during its time. There was a crisis of false teachers assailing the Body of Christ during a period of intense persecution, leading some Christians astray when it was most crucial for them to stay faithful to our Lord. Like St. Peter in 2 Peter and like St. John in 1-3 John, St. Jude acts in aggression against those who would see believers fall into the paths of damnation.

Authorship

The name "Jude" is a translation of Ἰούδας,¹² literally "Judas" or "Judah." The alternative English translation of the name is to distinguish the author from Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ. While the name itself is common for the first century A.D., the author's self-identification as a "brother of James" gives us exactly two candidates that could fit the man writing this Epistle: Jude the brother of Jesus, and St. Jude Thaddeus the Apostle.

Jude, Brother of Jesus

Matthew 13:55 includes people saying thus: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?" As the Church has traditionally held to the Epistle of James being written by Christ's brother James, it is an easy conclusion to make, even if it might not be correct. Though Clement of Alexandria believed that Jude's author was the brother of Jesus,³ he wrote this approximately one century after the Epistle was written in the first place.

One defense of this position is that the author refers to the Apostles in vs. 17 as though they were a distinct group from himself. He says "you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." The logic goes that if he referred to them in the third person then he must not be among them. However, this does not bolster the idea that an Apostle did not write the Epistle, as other Apostolic writings have done the exact same thing, from St. Paul to St. Peter to St. John.⁴

The Apostle St. Jude

St. Jude the Apostle, also known as Thaddeus is the second viable candidate, and much more likely from our perspective. Luke 6:16, part of a list of the Apostles, speaks of "Judas the [son/brother] of James" as one of the Twelve. Some translations say he is the son of James, others as the brother of James – presumably in relation to St. James the Lesser. Either way, this is "Jude of James," an Apostle with very little in terms of mention outside of his name on the list.

James the brother of our Lord was in the habit of residing in Jerusalem.⁵ From Jerusalem

1 Transliterated "Ioudas," Strong's #2455

2 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2455.htm>

3 Clement, *Comments on the Epistle of Jude*, found here: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0211.htm>

4 Romans 16:7, Ephesians 4:11, 2 Peter 3:2, Revelation 21:14

5 Galatians 1:19, Acts 15

he is also seen residing with Mary in the upper room before Pentecost,⁶ as accompanying his mother and brothers was a habit with precedent in the Gospels.⁷ In all likelihood, Jude and James (the brothers of Christ) were in *Jerusalem* and would stay together even during their ministries. If it was *this* Jude that wrote the Epistle, and not the Apostle St. Jude, then we would expect to see language similar to that of the Book of James. However, the language of the Epistle is similar to that of 2 Peter, even sharing statements together, suggesting that both Apostles, Sts. Peter and Jude Thaddeus, collaborated on its writing. The brother of Christ would not likely have traveled from Jerusalem to a Roman prison just to brainstorm a letter with St. Peter, but an itinerant Apostle *would*. Thus, for all intents and purposes we shall refer to the author of the Epistle of Jude as “The Apostle,” “St. Jude,” or “St. Jude Thaddeus” under this assumption.

Canonicity

As stated earlier, Clement of Alexandria demonstrates that the Epistle was widely accepted as inspired Scripture by the Church as early as the 2nd Century A.D. In addition, it has been found in the Muratorian Canon,⁸ suggesting universal acceptance. Claims that it belongs in the category of “disputed books” are based on the doubts expressed by Origen, whose later false teaching casts a wide shadow over his objections.⁹ Suffice it to say we are befuddled by Origen's doubts, since Origen held to 1 Enoch being inspired and Jude quotes that very same text!

Date, Occasion and Audience

Our position is that Jude is a product of collaboration between Sts. Jude and Peter. Traditional dating of the martyrdom of both Apostles is 65 and 68 A.D. respectively, suggesting that this Epistle was penned no later than 65 A.D. The occasion, as evinced by the increasing prevalence of discussion regarding false teachers in the later New Testament Epistles, is just that. The Church was being assailed both externally by persecutors and internally by false teachers, leading the Apostles to agree in making a formal response over a number of letters. Jude, however, ventures to speak to those who are familiar with intertestamental literature, perhaps as an outreach to the Christians who were part of the Jewish diaspora before their conversion. He touches on matters that were important to 1st Century, 2nd Temple Jewish audiences, with priorities that may be found within the Essene, Qumran, and Hellenized communities, as we shall discuss in later installments.

6 Acts 1:14

7 Mark 3:31-35, Matthew 12:46-50, John 7:1-5

8 A 2nd Century A.D. Canon list written in response to Marcion the heretic's canon.

9 Origen famously believed in the preexistence of souls, conciliatory universalism (that is, damned souls and demons would eventually be delivered out of the lake of fire), and a whole host of other bizarre teachings. One wonders why his opinion of Jude's canonicity is of any value at all.

Jude Bible Study #2

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs.3

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Introduction

There is a common misconception concerning length of Biblical texts. The idea is that one might find a longer book of Scripture to be more theologically rigorous than a shorter one; the book of Jeremiah, for instance, might be mistakenly seen as having more religious content in it than 1 John. The habit of shorter Scriptural texts, however, is to *condense* the intended message so as to bring a whole lot more for the reader than meets the eye. A good analogy we might make is the comparison between a pound of feathers and a pound of lead; both weigh the same, despite the feathers appearing to have more volume than the lead and despite the lead seeming to have more weight on account of its greater density. Shorter Biblical books are often more dense while having less “volume” over all. So it is with St. Jude's Epistle, wherein it appears that every word in every verse is full of meaning – and given his occasion for writing, meaning that is essential for the reader to grasp. For this study, a single verse suffices to discuss the occasion and audience for the writing of the Epistle.

Vs.3

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

-Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation

The Apostle had an initial goal in writing his letter, namely to edify his readers concerning “common salvation.” This tells us that those he writes to are already believers. Jude is not a text for the atheist, the Jew, the pagan, or anyone else: it belongs to Christians who share common salvation.

By “common salvation,” we must understand this as the bedrock of soteriology: whoever is saved, is saved in the same manner as everyone else who is saved, and that is in Christ. The Apostle is saved in the same way that the layman is saved, who is saved in the same way as all Old Testament saints. While the details he would have shared with us are not here on account of St. Jude's decision to change the topic of writing, we can surmise that the emphasis *would* have been about this universal application of the Gospel. Since the Church had spent some time debating the Judaizers, who wished to change the universal application of the Gospel by adding the works of the Law to justification, St. Jude would have been directly combating their emphasis on laws, covenants, deeds, etc. He planned to do so not through debate, but positive edification.

-I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith

As he will explain in the next verse, he had a change of heart regarding the subject matter. If, as we assert, the book of Jude is the product of collaboration between the Apostles Sts. Peter and Jude, then it is probable that St. Peter was the one who changed his mind. After all, St. Peter's second Epistle is longer, suggesting that he had spent time

on it already prior to St. Jude visiting him in prison. I confess my speculation here, but circumstantially it makes the most sense to explain the change of direction he presents. Whatever the circumstances, St. Jude exhorts his Christian readers to *contend*. This is to say, he wants them to fight for Christianity. Not in a violent Crusade, but institutionally and rhetorically. The matter at hand, the false teachers plaguing the Church, must be taken care of by expulsion; heretics within the Body must be excommunicated. In case anyone is unwilling or unconvinced, then the Christian must be able to contend for the faith by pure and true doctrine. It is unlikely that this would result in scholarly debate, as our apologists find themselves busy doing today; to the contrary, the stock in which the New Testament Church took in their leaders meant an emphasis on dogmatic proclamation more than reasoned discussion. At first, the dynamic of merely listening to what the Apostles said landed the Church in some trouble, as St. Paul had to contend with “super apostles” in 2 Corinthians, who claimed Apostolic authority in a usurping fashion. His battling against false epistles, or pseudepigrapha, is also evident in the book of Galatians. St. Jude encourages something of a change in direction by telling Christians to contend for Christianity on the basis of authenticity of dogma and character in *addition* to the teachings of the Apostles.¹

-that was once for all delivered to the saints

By the time St. Jude wrote his Epistle, the dogmatic contents of the Christian faith had been entirely revealed to everyone in the Church. *The* faith had been delivered to *the* saints; nothing had been left out which would be necessary for salvation. For any doctrine which comes *after* the completion of the New Testament,² if those who teach it claim that it is necessary for salvation, it is automatically heretical by its patent contradiction of this verse.

With this verse, St. Jude dogmatically asserts that the faith *has been* delivered. This is to say, false teachers may arise coming to teach new or “secret” matters, as though the laity had been deceived or missed some essential matter. The so-called “Secret Gospels” propagated by Gnostic cults are therefore rendered illegitimate, as are any supposed “oral traditions” introducing teachings foreign to the Scriptures.

So St. Jude declares that while he had planned to write an Epistle full of edification for the saints, instead there is a threat which must be addressed. Not only must this threat be addressed by his writing, but indeed by the Body of Christ at large. He anticipates the wider discussion he will make on false teachers by asserting a common salvation and that the faith to be defended is complete in being delivered unto the saints. By proclaiming these two matters – in so few words! – he condemns the two largest groups of heretics in his day. The judaizers despised the idea of salvation being universally applicable to believers without their works, and the gnostics fetishized Apostolic authority so as to invent fake Gospels and pretend that Christian dogmatics were incomplete.

1 Jude vs.17

2 While Revelation comes after Jude in the Canon listing, they appear to have been written concurrently – but that will be discussed during the next Sunday School series, which is on Revelation itself.

Jude Bible Study #3

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs.4-7

4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. **6** And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— **7** just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Introduction

St. Jude had initially planned on writing an Epistle aimed at building up the Church by a discussion of common salvation in Christ. The situation changed, likely as he spoke with St. Peter on the matter, and it became clear that a threat must be addressed instead. The Apostle believes that every Christian must be equipped to contend for the true faith in light of this threat, and he exhorts all of us to engage in the struggle *actively*. But what is the threat, exactly? For the verses covered here, he speaks of false teachers – but does not identify them by name. In so doing, he maintains the focus on the truth, allowing him to maintain some of his original intent for the Epistle: building up the saints in our common salvation.

Vs.4

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

St. Jude refuses to identify those false teachers who were plaguing the Church in his day. He could have easily done so without controversy, as the other Apostles had set a precedent. St. Paul was willing to name Hymenaeus and Alexander as blasphemers who forsook the truth.¹ St. Luke related the events concerning Simon Magus.² Christ Himself speaks openly of the Nicolaitan group (formed by Nicolas), and condemns them.³ St. Jude does not avoid naming these heretics because he is afraid of them – by no means! To the contrary, the subsequent verses demonstrate that he understands their wicked activities as part of a historical pattern. By speaking of false teachers more broadly, he ensures the perennial application of the Epistle to other false teachings that would arise in the future.

The language used here is similar to that of 2 Peter 2:1-3, which states the heretics' teachings are denial of Christ; their condemnation is “from long ago.” They have also made God's Grace an excuse for licentiousness,⁴ denoting an antinomian attitude – that is, being “against the Law” they believe that the Atonement gives them permission to sin as much as they like. We do not know how exactly they denied Christ, but it appears to be related to their antinomianism; a man who believes he can sin as he pleases does not see Christ as Master. St.

1 1 Timothy 1:19-20

2 Acts 8:9-24

3 Revelation 2:14

4 As discussed in the 2 Peter study, ἀσελγείαις, or “haselgeyais” may be translated “Sensuality,” but it has a connotation of anarchic liberty.

Jude uses the term Δεσπότην, from which we have the English word “Despot,”⁵⁶ declaring Christ to be the unquestioned ruler over all believers. The heretics deny that Jesus has any real authority over them. Their condemnation being “from long ago” is not because they were predestined to damnation, but rather that the standards have been set for a long time which actively condemn them in the moment.

Note that St. Jude says Christ is our *only* Master and Lord. This ties into the original intent he had in mind, the common salvation of all believers. The Christian must always recognize that Jesus Christ is above any and all earthly authorities. One does not obey his pastor or deacon because of any special qualities of that man; one obeys the pastor or deacon insofar as he proclaims that which Christ has declared. Jesus, being our Savior, has bought us with His Blood, and thus He owns us in a quite literal sense. Earthly authorities are only obeyed insofar as they are given secondary authority by Christ; none of them have any power in and of themselves. Note that this does not give us anarchic liberty to reject all earthly authorities, but it does serve as a curb on them; when we are bound to obey them, it is because of the Word of God – which is the Word of Christ, who *is* God. Our Lord Jesus gave us the New and Old Testaments, reflecting the spiritual authority delegated to the Apostles and prophets. Their words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, form the teachings and instructions by which we live. Thus St. Jude is pushing us toward Sola Scriptura, and a more vigorous Sola Scriptura than we would at first imagine, since he holds the Word above civic authority. When the civic ruler goes against the Word in his decrees, we must obey God rather than men.

Vs.5

5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

The Apostle puts a finer point on the previous verse by identifying Christ Jesus as the very same God who enacted the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt. He was the One descending upon Mount Sinai to speak with Moses and the elders of Israel, He was the One traveling by pillar of fire and smoke, and He was the One killing those who were rebellious. The author mentions this on account of the false teachers denial that Christ is our Master. If they shall not repent of their ways, then Christ shall destroy them in the same fashion.

Note that St. Jude stresses the matter of *belief* as a qualifier here. The matter which determined which Israelite went to the Promised land and which Israelite perished in the wilderness was *not* rote obedience to the Law of Moses, but *faith*. Against all judaizers, St. Jude asserts Sola Fide as the dividing line between whether someone is saved or damned. A Christian who really trusts in Christ as his Savior will *also* see Christ as His Lord; faith comes first, but with a consequent obedience out of gratitude. The Apostle does not contradict St. Paul on the matter of justification, but highlights faith as a crucial precursor to true obedience.

Vs.6-7

6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— **7** just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

A pattern is established in these verses. Just like the Israelites who fell in the wilderness by their faithlessness, the rebellious angels fell as well, and so did those ancient cities who rebelled against God by their homosexuality, so too shall these antinomians fall at the Judgment

5 Transliterated “Despoten,” from Strong's #1203.

6 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1203.htm>

of our Lord. Unlike 2 Peter 2:4-6, which mentions both incidents to establish God delivers the righteous, St. Jude brings them up to *connect* all three, from the angels to Sodom&Gomorrah to the false teachers of his day. He shows that the antinomians are continuing the pattern of behavior by which they rebel against Godly authority, especially rebelling against God Himself, and thus are brought to judgment. In a word, he is explaining that this is nothing new, and must be opposed by faithful believers at all times. It connects also with him not naming any of the heretics specifically, as this pattern most certainly continued well after the New Testament was finished, and even to today. Rebellious, fractious false teachers have not ceased!

Regarding the angels which he speaks of, it is unlikely that St. Jude is referring to the devil. St. Peter most likely does in his Epistle, given Revelation 20:1-3. St. Jude, however, quotes 1 Enoch later in his text. This is to say, St. Peter highlights a final judgment day in which believers are delivered from their persecutors; St. Jude thinks more chronologically, leading to a more natural orientation toward seeing the angelic sin as being related to Genesis 6. This is compounded by his specifically referring to sexual immorality in the sin of Sodom, where St. Peter does not. Regardless, the point is not to say that St. Jude is putting his stamp of approval on the intertestamental literature which speculated on the Nephilim, but instead to point to the punishment of eternal hellfire which awaits those who reject Christ's authority.

Jude Bible Study #4

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs.8-13

8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. **9** But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” **10** But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. **11** Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. **12** These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; **13** wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Introduction

St. Jude has begun discussing the nature of the false teachers which have been plaguing the Church. Like St. Peter's second Epistle, he spends some time comparing them to fallen angels and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. Unlike St. Peter, St. Jude decides to go beyond these two groups and mention other rebels to demonstrate that the people of God have *always* had to contend with figures like this. While it seems self-evident that heretics are not a new phenomenon, the Apostle pieces together the evidence that their outlook on life is nothing new either. To demonstrate further, he employs references to intertestamental literature, leading the reader to greater discernment regarding St. Jude's “Apostolic limitation” hermeneutic as we shall explain.

Vs.8-10

8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. **9** But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” **10** But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

In the previous passage, St. Jude connected the teachers to the fallen angels and to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is crucial to our understanding to highlight his expansion in the eighth verse, saying “in like manner.” The men of Sodom did not just “defile the flesh,” they and the fallen angels were all blaspheming, rebellious, and reliant on fanciful notions. When St. Jude refers to them as “relying on their dreams,” he is actually calling them ἐνυπνιάζομαι,¹² or “dreaming ones.” Their blasphemies come from their instincts, not their reason – their minds are in service to whatever their “dreaming” heart wants to believe in the first place. No matter how intelligent a heretic may appear, his reason is always in service to the falsehood his heart

1 Transliterated “enypniazomenoi,” from Strong's #1797.

2 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1797.htm>

embraces. The tenth verse explains that since these men do not understand the Divine by true experience, they naturally go toward what they “understand instinctively.” They are not real converts, having only changed the outward parts by attaining Christian language; the inner man has not undergone the true change of mind that comes with repentance.

St. Jude speaks of this group of heretics as being antinomian in their outlook, permitting people to sin as though the Atonement granted base licentiousness on the part of believers.³ Church history gives us a clear example, from St. Jude's day, which elaborates on his description of the false teachers being like beasts. Nicolaism, founded apparently by a former deacon named Nicolas,⁴ advocated for unrestrained lives. According to Epiphanius, Nicolas founded his sect after attempting to be celibate but finding it too difficult; legend has it he was so obsessed with sexual matters that he declared “Unless one copulates every day, he cannot have eternal life.”⁵ If this account is true, it illustrates St. Jude's point. Nicolas had not understood true conversion and his belief in celibacy was not Biblical, but instead of seeking help with his struggles he decided to go along with what his natural instincts told him. He made matters worse by refusing to recognize the authority of the Apostles to correct him, and thus in rebellion ended up starting a minor movement in the Church.

Referring to the dispute over Moses's body, the point St. Jude is making regarding Michael and the devil is one of contrast. The false teachers do not recognize Godly authority, and so they do and say as they please; in comparison, not even the mighty archangel Michael dared to step one *inch* outside of his duties. He did not act presumptuously in the slightest, despite having every *emotional* reason, namely anger, to lash out more personally at the devil. The false teachers have no authority, yet act as though they have all authority; Michael has tons of power and authority, yet he humbly refuses to step outside of his boundaries. We will address the use of intertestamental literature at the end of this lesson.

Vs.11-13

Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. **12** These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; **13** wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

St. Jude's “Hall of Shame”

Canonical comparisons resume with a double purpose. First, St. Jude is making a direct comparison to their activities. False teaching harms the soul and may lead to damnation, making the heretics soul-murderers, just as Cain murdered Abel. They seek material gain and manipulate peoples' erotic urges just as Balaam did.⁶⁷ When the writer brings up Korah's rebellion, he not only continues in comparing the 1st Century false teachers, but adds to the theme of continuation: the false teachers *perished* (past tense) in Korah's rebellion. He speaks figuratively here to denote that the ones rebelling against Moses have the same outlook and personality as the heretics of the 1st Century. This is to say, not only is the group St. Jude attacks comparable to those condemned in the Old Testament, but they are also part of the same *cohesive group* of people fitting a particular spiritual profile.

These three verses are also structured as a chiasm, leading to the central point in the

3 Like 2 Peter, this is not meant to *limit* his condemnation to antinomians, as much of his language also applies to the judaizers.

4 Whether this was the Nicolas ordained to the diaconate in Acts 6 is not clear.

5 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, xxv.1

6 Numbers 25:1-9, 31:16

7 This is also present in Revelation 2:14, further connecting the group Jude condemns to the Nicolaitans.

twelfth verse. Chiasm, or the chiastic structure, posits a unique way of positioning lines in a phrase that leads to a central point – comparable to the shape of an X (or the Greek letter “chi,” X). Each line is a parallel or contrast to one comparable to it. The chiastic structure is shown here:

A1 Woe to them!
B1 For they walked in the way of Cain
C1 and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error
D1 and perished in Korah's rebellion.
E1 These are hidden reefs at your love feasts,
F1 as they feast with you without fear,
F2 shepherds feeding themselves;
E2 waterless clouds, swept along by winds;
D2 fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;
C2 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame;
B2 wandering stars,
A2 for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Statement A1 and 2:

All of the groups mentioned here (Cain, Balaam, Korah, and the 1st Century heretics) stand condemned, and the condemnation against wickedness has always been ready for them.

Statement B1 and 2:

Cain was punished with wandering the earth on account of murdering his brother. Not only is heresy a form of soul-murder, but the heretic is not in the Church on account of actually belonging to it. The heretic wanders from place to place with his guilt.

Statement C1 and 2:

Balaam's sin and error led to the children of Israel casting off restraint, revealing their sinful lusts like the waves of the sea show the foam on the shore. So too do the antinomians do the same with their sinful ways.

Statement D1 and 2:

Korah and his fellow rebels were suddenly rooted up and swallowed by the earth because, like a dead tree has no life, he had no legitimate call from God to be an authority over Israel. The false teachers St. Jude speaks of have no legitimate claim to authority in the Church.

Statement E1 and 2:

The group can be compared to reefs which cause faith to be shipwrecked, yet like waterless clouds they provide no spiritual refreshing nor actual substance to their teaching.

Statement F1 and 2:

The central point of the passage. The false teachers St. Jude condemns, being grouped with all the other personages, act in an unassuming fashion at first. Nonetheless, they are condemned for their selfish and unscrupulous ways, like a hired shepherd slaughtering the sheep to feed himself. Given the traditional belief that the Nicolaists were founded by

an apostate deacon, the reference to shepherds may well be an observation that false teachers like Nicolas seek ecclesiastical positions as well.

In other words, St. Jude looks over the entirety of the Old Testament, and determines that there is a spiritual profile that these people fit into, an archetype to which they belong. Because of our common salvation in Christ, his original intent for the Epistle, he points to their ultimate judgment at the Eschaton.

Addition: The Assumption of Moses and Apostolic Limitation

St. Jude refers to Michael and the devil arguing over the body of Moses after his death. This is a reference to the Apocryphal “Assumption of Moses.”

By alluding to the Assumption of Moses, St. Jude concurs with its assertion that there was an argument between Michael the archangel and the devil. He states this not as a reference to literature or storytelling as some interpreters claim, but as a bald fact; lumping this event with the Old Testament events mentioned in the Epistle means that St. Jude believed this *happened*, and since this is inspired Scripture Christians are bound to believe it as well. This leads us to the question, then, as to whether the Assumption of Moses ought to be in the canon of Scripture. For St. Jude, the answer is *no*, but nonetheless introduces a hermeneutic in the New Testament by which Apostles may verify a matter's truth while limiting the impact of the document they reference; we find it fit to call this dynamic Apostolic Limitation, or the “limiting principle” applied to various extrabiblical texts.

The incomplete text of this small tract was found by a Roman Catholic priest and archivist, Antonio Ceriani, in the mid-19th Century.⁸ It is a dry recounting of a supposed set of prophecies Moses gave to Joshua, son of Nun, before he died. Its contents, which include blatantly incorrect prophecies concerning the priesthood, are disagreeable enough, but in context the last portion is the most important for demonstrating the Apostolic limiting principle.⁹ It reads thus:

When Moses came-to-his-end on the mountain, Sammael¹⁰ the slanderer tried to bring his body down to the people so that they might make it a god, but Michael the chief-messenger, commanded by God, came with other messengers to take it, in order to have it buried.

But Sammael would not allow him to remove the body to be buried. Wishing to deceive, he resisted him, and they argued.

The slanderer said, “The body is mine, for I am the master of material things.”

And the messenger said, “For by a spirit of his which is holy, we were all created; and from the face of God, his spirit went forth and the world became.”

The slanderer also said, “God has lied by bringing Moses into the land which he swore he should not enter.”

Michael answered and said, “For the serpent, which you inspired, was the cause of the transgression of Adam and Eva.”

8 Full translation of the most complete manuscript can be found here:
https://www.biblicalaudio.com/text/ascension_of_moses.pdf

9 This “last chapter” is not found in the manuscript Ceriani found. However, it is pieced together from early Church quotations, summaries, and other sources.

10 Identified by St. Jude as the devil.

The slanderer also slandered Moses, proclaiming, "Moses is a murderer; he struck a man in Egypt and hid him in the sand."

And because of this, the slanderer would not allow him to receive the honorable burial.

Michael the chief-messenger did not tolerate the revilement against him. Yet, since he lacked authority, he dared not bring a reviling judgment against him; instead, he declared to the slanderer, "I wish that the Lord would rebuke you, slanderer!" Then Michael prayed to God. And the Lord, in answer, sent thunder and lightning out of the heavens.

St. Jude verifies only two parts of this account, that there was a disputation and that Michael called upon God to rebuke the devil. Internally, however, other parts of the Epistle of Jude *actively contradict* the narrative present in the Assumption of Moses. Where "Sammael"¹¹ proclaims himself to be "the master of material things," Michael is portrayed *not arguing* about that point, choosing instead to highlight Moses's righteousness while ceding the frame; meanwhile, St. Jude recounts several events which point to God as the true master of all reality, both physical and immaterial. He references Sodom and Gomorrah, in which God sends brimstone on the cities;¹² he brings up Cain, who received a mark from God, demonstrating the Lord's sovereignty over Cain's very body;¹³ he brings up Korah's rebellion, in which God opens up the earth to swallow the rebels;¹⁴ he also brings up God putting fallen angels under chains so that they have no authority at all. Clearly, God is the true master of material and spiritual reality as St. Jude demonstrates. He also does this in the last verse, ascribing all authority and dominion to our Lord. It is this same authority that undoes the claim that the devil "would not allow him to take" Moses's body; having no true claim over it, the dispute could not possibly have been that the devil was actually preventing Michael from taking it!

This is the essence of Apostolic Limitation demonstrated and defined effectively through examination of St. Jude's Epistle. Whenever a New Testament writer cites an extrabiblical or apocryphal source, the New Testament book which makes that reference will contradict the extrabiblical source in other areas. In doing this the Apostolic writers, by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, are showing us the only valid uses of these works. When St. Jude quotes the book of 1 Enoch, he does the same, contradicting other parts of it throughout the Epistle; in this way he limits any valid use of 1 Enoch by the Christian as being effectively only for that one verse. Whenever the contention arises that the New Testament makes allusions to these other texts and therefore these other texts must be considered canonical, our response is that the Apostles were blessed to discern which parts of these books are valid and or not. In referring to the Assumption of Moses, St. Jude is telling us that the only valid part of that text is Michael's disputation and adjacent rebuke – and thus binding Christians to only accept that part of it.

11 "Sammael" is the name of a dark angel in Jewish mythology. St. Jude corrects this by simply calling the being the devil, further illustrating the limiting principle.

12 Genesis 19:23-26

13 Genesis 4:13-15

14 Numbers 16

Jude Bible Study #5

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs.14-16

14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, **15** to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” **16** These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Introduction

St. Jude has brought up intertestamental literature already, citing and quoting from “The Assumption of Moses.” Examining his Epistle however, we find the principle of Apostolic limitation being applied to it: St. Jude's own writing contradicts the theology present in the Assumption of Moses document, namely in the Epistle denying that the devil is the master of material reality, as the Assumption posits. In this way, the author limits the Christian use of that particular writing, hence the Church's refusal to add the Assumption to the Canon as inspired Scripture. Verses fourteen through sixteen quote another, more expansive document, the Book of Enoch (or 1 Enoch), wherein we see the same dynamic. The Christian's use of 1 Enoch is limited in scope, such that we may say St. Jude's quote is the only inspired part of that text: we shall discuss the issue of canonicity after commenting on the verses.

Vs.14-16

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Genesis 5:21-24 provides the account of Enoch, the seventh generation son of Adam in the line of Seth:

21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. **22** Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. **23** Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. **24** Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

There are only two mentions of Enoch elsewhere in Scripture that are not just including his name in genealogical records. The author of Hebrews proclaims that it was by faith that Enoch did not experience death, as part of his larger discussion on the nature of faith itself.¹ The other mention is here in Jude, where the author quotes the only legitimately known words of Enoch to connect them to the false teacher archetype that St. Jude is surveying. Admittedly, it is an approximate quote, not word-for-word. Here is 1 Enoch 1:9 as written in extant manuscripts:

“Behold, he comes with the myriads of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to destroy all the wicked, and to convict all flesh for all the wicked deeds that they have done, and the proud and hard words that wicked sinners spoke against him.”

¹ Hebrews 11:5

The use of the text is to highlight the *judgment* which shall come upon those who do and say ungodly things. In particular, this applies to those who fit the spiritual profile that St. Jude has written about: fallen angels, the men of Sodom, Cain, Balaam, Korah, and the coterie of antinomians (likely the Nicolaitans) which plagued the church as St. Jude was writing. This judgment which shall befall *all* of them involves a very large group of “holy ones,” presumably angels, fulfilling the punishment. This is seen in action when St. John has a vision of the Great White Throne judgment in Revelation: “if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”² The fourfold repetition of “ungodly” in St. Jude's rendering highlights that these sinners *deserve* what is coming to them.

Of course the Apostle does not stop at approximating a quote and moving on. He wants the reader to understand in no uncertain terms that this group of people is *bad*. In the sixteenth verse we learn that they are grumblers, trafficking in slander and lies: they are malcontents, never happy with their circumstances; the only authority they listen to is their own desire; they brag and boast; they swindle their way up the ranks. In other words, St. Jude leaves us with no room for nuance. The false teachers are *bad people*, plain and simple in black and white. One suspects that he utilizes such harsh language not only because it is true, but because the heretics were known for appearing personable and charismatic. No heretical teacher introduces himself by proclaiming his evil motives – imagine the absurdity of an *honest* Joseph Smith: “Hello, I am here to swindle you with my made-up doctrines so that I can obtain all of your money and sleep with your wife.” Instead, heretics *hide*, and present themselves as righteous, leading St. Jude to hold up this verse like a sign, crying out “Do not trust them!” No matter how nice the false teacher looks or sounds, we must never forget how devilish he is.

Addition: Apostolic Limitation of 1 Enoch

St. Jude's use of text from 1 Enoch raises the question of canonicity for the book itself. Since he quotes from it as though it were Scripture, why not include the entirety of 1 Enoch into the Bible? The simple reason is that, just as he did with the Assumption of Moses, St. Jude's writing contradicts 1 Enoch in multiple places and multiple ways. The principle of Apostolic limitation is thus repeated.

We shall include just two examples from the book, given the limitations of time. Consider the following from 1 Enoch 10:4-8.

4. And again the Lord said to Raphael: ‘Bind Azâzêl hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dûdâêl, and cast him therein. 5. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there for ever, and cover his face that he may not see light. 6. And on the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire. 7. **And heal the earth which the angels have corrupted, and proclaim the healing of the earth, that they may heal the plague, and that all the children of men may not perish through all the secret things that the Watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons.** 8. And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azâzêl: **to him ascribe all sin.**’³⁴

1 Enoch 10 includes a prediction that after the Flood, when all the “Watchers” and their Nephilim children are slaughtered, righteousness will be restored forever. This is patently false, or else St. Jude would not catalog so many false teachers who arrived long after the Flood. But

2 Revelation 20:15

3 Full text can be found here: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Enoch_\(Charles\)/Chapter_10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Enoch_(Charles)/Chapter_10)

4 Emphasis mine.

for the later writer of 1 Enoch, such a thought never occurs. According to him, human responsibility for sin is abolished on account of Azazel and his Watchers; they are hapless sheep that were merely deceived. Later on in the book, the gloomy chains judgment continues this evaluation. From 1 Enoch 54:1-9,

1. And I looked and turned to another part of the earth, and saw there a deep valley with burning fire. 2. And they brought the kings and the mighty, and began to cast them into this deep valley. 3. And there mine eyes saw how they made these their instruments, iron chains of immeasurable weight. 4. And I asked the angel of peace who went with me, saying: 'For whom are these chains being prepared?' 5. And he said unto me: 'These are being prepared for the hosts of Azâzêl, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete condemnation, and they shall cover their jaws with rough stones as the Lord of Spirits commanded.

6. And Michael, and Gabriel, and Raphael, and Phanuel shall take hold of them on that great day, and cast them on that day into the burning furnace, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance on them for their unrighteousness in becoming subject to Satan and leading astray those who dwell on the earth.'

7. And in those days shall punishment come from the Lord of Spirits, and He will open all the chambers of waters which are above the heavens, and of the fountains which are beneath the earth. 8. And all the waters shall be joined with the waters: that which is above the heavens is the masculine, and the water which is beneath the earth is the feminine. 9. And they shall destroy all who dwell on the earth and those who dwell under the ends of the heaven. 10. And when they have recognized their unrighteousness which they have wrought on the earth, then by these shall they perish.'⁵

Like the Assumption of Moses, the writer conflates the devil and some other fictional figure. For the Assumption, it was "Sammael" arguing with Michael the archangel: for Enoch's confused text, it is Azazel, who is sometimes distinct from satan and other times the same person. It makes no mention of Eden, the forbidden fruit, or the ways in which humanity corrupted *itself*, preferring to blame all wickedness on fallen angelic "influencers" rather than on human beings as accountable individuals, and portrays God as judging mankind for something that brainless humans could not control. In contrast, St. Jude lays the blame squarely on those that fit the spiritual profile of the false teachers he condemns. They deserve what they shall receive on Judgment Day *because they are bad people*.

Note also the language concerning a Final Judgment. The writer of 1 Enoch places language of judgment as belonging to the Flood with 1 Enoch 1:9 applying to the *Flood* rather than the Last Day. St. Jude here corrects the author of 1 Enoch by saying that it is a future judgment to which the quote was to be applied. It appears that whichever pseudipigraphal author had access to the verse decided to make stories surrounding it; St. Jude puts it in its proper context.

5 Found here: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Enoch_\(Charles\)/Chapter_54](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Enoch_(Charles)/Chapter_54)

Jude Bible Study #6

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Jude vs.17-25

17 But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. **18** They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” **19** It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. **20** But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. **22** And have mercy on those who doubt; **23** save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. **24** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory 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.

Introduction

The best way to see St. Jude's Epistle is as a preparatory document for the study of Revelation. This isn't to say that St. Jude wrote this with Revelation in mind: his Epistle has value in and of itself as it elaborates on the history of wickedness to assist Christian formation. The heretic is not an isolated individual, but a *type* of person who fits the same spiritual profile as those who assaulted the Church before him. Joseph Smith, Mohammad, Arius, Valentinus, and the Zwickau prophets all belong to the same “family” as it were, along with their spiritual ancestors: Cain, Balaam, the men of Sodom, Korah, and Nicolas.

But from the Epistle of Jude, the Christian receives two primary things which are needful for fully understanding Revelation: a warning and a prescription. The warning is that of the heretical sects cropping up and infecting the churches (vs.1-16), and the exhortation is to pursue God's ways instead of the false ways shown (vs.17-25). Being the penultimate book written in the Canon of Scripture,¹ it prepares the Christian with both the knowledge of current threats and the exhortation to Christian conduct. For this reason, the final nine verses are incredibly straightforward. Those who read and internalize these admonitions will be well prepared for St. John's Apocalypse, which provides what *God* does in the midst of such circumstances, that Christians may have hope and a sense of meaning in their struggle.

Vs.17-19

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

The operative word in the seventeenth verse is to *remember*. Engaging in the same style of exhortation as 2 Peter 3:2, the Apostle branches out to remembering the predictions of the *apostles* specifically, whereas St. Peter brings up the predictions of the prophets. Nothing should surprise us regarding the depths of wickedness and heresy that arise, for the Apostles told us beforehand. St. Peter engages in this kind of prediction in 2 Peter, while St. Paul discusses both false teachers and the laity that will accept them with itching ears in various Epistles.² St. Jude paraphrases their warnings as a means of reminding his audience about this body of work so as to get them reading the letters and discussing the visits they received from these leaders. In other

¹ It is possible that 2 and 3 John were written around the same time, but we believe the ordering is accurate: Revelation was written right after Jude, and these two close out the Canon.

² 2 Timothy 4:3 especially.

words, while the seventeenth verse is discussing the present situation in context, it is also an exhortation for Christians to be reading the New Testament works that were in circulation at the time (and of course, for us to be reading our Bibles today).

The Christian ought to recognize that the scoffers cause *divisions*, namely on account of their worldliness and non-Christian character. This isn't to say that all *schism* is necessarily wicked: otherwise we would have to condemn those who leave a congregation when false teachers take over a church! Yet even in that case, the division is still *caused* by those who are morally and doctrinally at fault, not the ones who leave. In this sense, St. Jude is comforting those faithful who would be tempted to feel great guilt at either expelling or departing from heretics; the heretics are the ones causing division, not the faithful.

Vs.20-23

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Unlike those worldly scoffers, the Christian is to build himself up in *his* faith and keep *himself* in the love of God. He does not deny that salvation is accomplished by God alone – or else he would not speak of waiting for Christ's mercy as being the only thing that leads to eternal life! But St. Jude, like all the other Scriptural authors, is a Pietist, holding that each believer must foster personal piety and active devotion to our Lord, taking an active role in sanctification. This is in contrast to the worldly men St. Jude condemns, who perhaps have something like mental assent to the truth of the Christian faith, do not lift a finger to become better people. Yet the believer is exhorted also to pray “in the Holy Spirit,” that is, in accordance with the revealed will of God expressed in the Word; we are not to see sanctification as our own work, but rather as a cooperative effort with the Holy Spirit (who deserves the lion's share of credit anyway).

In showing mercy, the Apostle speaks of evangelism. If someone is wavering in their faith, or undergoing a period of questioning the articles which they have been taught, we evangelize further by being patient with them and continuing steadfast in answering their questions. But in our evangelistic efforts, there will be many who are simply nonbelievers entirely, slated for hell if they do not convert. To bring one of them to the faith is akin to saving someone from a burning fire. Yet there may be some who are nonbelievers of a particularly sinful variety (prostitutes, drug addicts, drunks, etc.), who by their nature may tempt the evangelist to sin; these we must witness to with great fear, keeping aware of ourselves lest we fall into sin while trying to save people from it!

Vs.20-23

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

St. Jude exhorts Christians to call Apostolic teaching to remembrance, to conduct devotional self-improvement, and to continue fulfilling the Great Commission. Nonetheless, he understands that none of this is by our own power. Thus he concludes his brief Epistle with a mixed benediction and doxology. He praises our Savior, who being Divine Himself keeps us preserved in the faith and advocates for us before our Heavenly Father; in this way he reminds his audience of God's blessings on them. Yet the doxology is present to commend our Lord with praise and recognition of His authority in the past, present and future – all eternity. In this way he intends to strengthen our faith for our common salvation, the original intended message for the Epistle.