

## A SHORT COMMENTARY ON THE LETTER OF JUDE

### **Jude the letter.**

Someone named this book *The Acts of the Apostates*. It is a short but very powerful statement, addressed to the entire church of Jesus, regarding unbelievers who have infiltrated the church. In that sense it is not about “apostasy” as is often stated. Apostasy would involve those who were saved, and teaching the truth, having fallen away and now teaching un-truth.

No, these are “certain men who have crept in unnoticed...” Men with an agenda. Slick. Sneaky. Well-armed with evil ideas from Hell. (And they are with us today and need to be called out today.) Men of this world who do not like the “old-fashioned” message of the Cross, the Blood, the power of God. They have advanced, in their way of thinking, beyond the “old stuff” to a modern way of looking at things. Peace. Caving in to the flesh instead of fighting it. The profit motive. Following the winds of the times, keeping up with the culture, blending in with society, pleasing the world.

Heretics. And this letter not only exposes them, but consigns them to eternal loss, and then encourages the church to strengthen itself and go on without them.

Not bad for only 25 verses!

### **The setting for the letter.**

**Jude the man.** Which “Jude” was this? Jude is short for *Judah* or *Judas*. That leaves us with several choices. There was another Judas that was an apostle of Jesus, besides the one who betrayed him. We see him in the book of John, asking a serious question of Jesus. He was surnamed *Thaddaeus*.

There was a prophet in the book of Acts who traveled with Silas to work some difficulties out with Paul. Judas returned to Jerusalem alone, as Silas became Paul’s new traveling partner.

And several others of no serious consequence to the Biblical narrative. Except one. And it is that one that most tradition points to as the writer of the book.

Notice that this “Jude” calls himself a brother of James. This points us to the Gospel account of several brothers, half-brothers that is, of the Lord Jesus Himself. We know that there was a James who headed up the Council of Jerusalem, and that it was not the apostle James, for he had been murdered by Herod. James is mentioned by Paul in Galatians as the “brother of the Lord.” His reputation was sealed. And in those days, to call yourself “the brother of James” brought immediate understanding: this man is the brother of our Jerusalem leader.

Some point to the similarity between James 1:1 and Jude 1:1 as another connector of these two. For it is also understood that the epistle of James was from that same half-brother who administrated the Council.

Note also that Jude does not call himself an apostle but in verse 17 refers to apostles as separate from himself. It is supposed that the similarity of this chapter to some of Peter’s writing in 2 Peter is explained

by the fact that Jude looked to the apostles for his own spiritual direction, and passed it on to believers everywhere.

(These points were gleaned in large measure from John MacArthur's *Bible Commentary*.)

Think of it. Judas, named for the great patriarch and son of Jacob, from who Messiah was to come. And as soon as he was able to discern what life is about, a small child, there is that Messiah in his own family! But who can believe such a thing? Who can believe that the Saviour of the World is my own half-brother? His heart, as the heart of all his siblings, was hardened to this big brother of his. For 33 years the hardness continued.

Did he hear rumors about Jesus? Did he wonder why Jesus looked and acted so differently from the others? Was there disgrace. Certainly a cynicism slowly arose in the children's minds and by the time Jesus had actually begun His ministry, it took the form of verbal assaults. Home was not a safe place for the Son of God. Only Mary knew. How much she tried to share with her family, we don't know.

Thirty-three years. And then it happened. We don't know how, but suddenly the grace of God came upon Jude and James, and perhaps the others. The agonizing death. The resurrection. The Spirit of God working in them.

The next time we hear of him is in this little letter. A giant of the faith. A skilled communicator. A shepherd guarding the flock of Jesus, his brother in a new sense now. This is the Judas with whom we are dealing. More than any of the twelve, he knew all about the earthly Jesus, and I suggest that his heart broke daily in regret that he had offered such treatment of the Messiah who lived at home.

#### **vv. 1-2. Intro, address.**

Judas, the lowest form of slave. That's not feigned humility. He really believed that. For thirty-three years I assaulted God the Son in my own home, but in His own world. I am not fit to speak for you, work for you, I am your slave forever, just like my brother James. Please have mercy on me.

Many are called by God. But this letter is addressed to those who have been not only called but made holy by Him. This is for the seriously committed, the ones whose names are written in the Book of Life, and therefore are being preserved by Jesus one day at a time.

Even in his salutation we see fire. He is about to expose the false. So let's be clear about who are the true, to whom I am writing. To those folks only: mercy and peace and love. No, not just the normal amounts, but multiplications of all three. You see how intense the man is. Every word serious, focused.

#### **v. 3. Re-directed purpose.**

Pastors today, the good one, really want to be positive. They'd really like to talk about happy things involving our salvation. And quite often they do. But, like Judas, there are a lot of other things that need to be discussed as the church grows. The not-so-good pastors will take a pass on "negative preaching", assuming the people don't want to hear it, and that they might turn against him if he continues in it.

True enough. Negative preaching can be taken too far. But the pastor who does not warn the flock from time to time is no true pastor at all, but a hireling, who sees the wolf coming and hides behind positive thinking and happy talk.

Judas was obviously not such a man. He truly had intended to write about our common salvation. The teaching of grace and mercy and the crucifixion and the resurrection and all the rest. But he couldn't. Not in this letter. The wolf was not only coming, he had already gotten in the door!

It was time instead to talk about self-defense, and aggressive action. There was after all a faith that had been delivered to the saints. And it was under attack. Got to do something!

What specifically is this "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"? Alas! There was no King James Bible to contend for. No English Bible at all. No Bible at all. No Protestant Reformation. No Calvin or Luther or Tyndale or Wycliffe. Go back to the church Fathers. They too had not yet lived and taught. No Augustine, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr.

No, the early church continued steadfastly in the *apostles'* doctrine... The faith had been delivered to them, and through them, in the leading and power of the Holy Spirit it was delivered to all those saints of the first century, who passed it on and on to us.

The faith was Jesus and all the things surrounding Him. Before the canon of Scripture, which must include the apostle John's works in the 90's A.D., was even completed, Jude, writing somewhere in the 60's, says the faith, the CHRISTian faith, had been delivered to the saints, in the form of the teachings of the apostles.

Those apostles wrote the essentials down. The church collected their writings, examined them, and passed them to us. The story of the Christian Bible's preservation is one of the miracles of church history, and it all started by a once and for all delivery shortly after the death of Jesus. It was not like the Old Testament, which had evolved slowly over centuries. Once and for all. It was not to be in any way un-done by heretical men who doubted and denied the Divinity of the words of the apostles. Hence the need for this letter. Guard the faith Christians. The deposit has been made to you. Pass it on intact.

We see now just how seriously they took this charge.

**v. 4. Introduction to the seducers.** These men were in the church but not of it. They "crept" in. Like a thief. Sly and stealthy was their entry. Unnoticed by the church, because they were so slick in their relationships, so close at times in their professions of belief. They could worship along with the best of them. They became trusted members, even asked to share the Word from time to time. Little by little the people's faith was being adulterated. The church was changing. It was no longer concerned about the things that concerned God, but the things that concern men. Wealth and power. Food and pleasure. This world. This life. Our bodies.

Long ago, God had placed His plan in their hearts. Yes, whomever He wills, God calls to His side, and whomever He wills, He hardens. Are these not the words of Paul? One could say that it was only their condemnation that was planned by God. But Jude says it was the men. Marked men. Was not Cain a

“marked man”? Was not Judas a “marked man”? Have there not been Judases in the church from then until now? Traitors? Thieves?

Why does God allow them in? Why does the church allow them in, we should say. Why does God allow them even to come to our door? Not temptation, this we know. But testing, straining, dividing wheat from chaff, and purposes far beyond our power to discern. But as long as there is a church in this world, there will be agents asked for by Satan and granted by God to come after it, to destroy it. And when the church of Jesus Christ is not destroyed, God Himself will receive all the glory for he shall be able to point to the victories He has wrought through His Spirit! May your church and mine be among those who bring Him glory!

Judas now begins his lengthy description of these awfully evil men and their actions, these snakes of Satan, these antichrists in Christian garb. We begin the list here.

1. They are ungodly men. Church members. But ungodly. Know any? God is not in their life all week long, but for one reason or another they are in church every week. Making business deals. Talking sports. Eating the food. Going after the women. Or specifically to degrade the teaching ministry with subversive doctrines. Opposite of godly, meaning filled with God, loving God, serving God 24-7. Ungodly. Serving themselves.
2. They turn the grace of God into lewdness. Lasciviousness. Fleshliness. This heresy has come all the way down from the days of the apostles just as surely as the apostles’ teaching. The grace of God is that God has saved you freely. There’s nothing you can do to earn it. It is a free gift of God. By grace you are saved through faith, and all of that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. The false teacher adds a “therefore” to the passage, when there is no “therefore”. Therefore, they say, live it up. You are free. God wants you to live abundantly, so live as you please. Eat all you want. Buy all you want. Rise to fulfill all the dreams of your little heart. Eat, drink, be merry. The grace of God is now naked lust. No, if there is to be a “therefore” in the statement let it be the one given by Paul, “ You were bought with a price [the blood of God!] “therefore” glorify God in your body! Grace demands a holy response, not a fleshly one.
3. They deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Fascinating wording pointing to the Deity of Jesus here. God in Heaven is the only Lord, the only one we should call Lord! He is Lord of all. He created all. “And our Lord Jesus Christ!” Who is this claiming the title of “Lord” when we just said God was the only Lord? Jesus must be God. But not in the heretic’s eyes. Jesus is just a good man with some inspirational teachings who was loved by His followers, so they made up these stories about death and resurrection... To deny Who Christ is is a tragic mistake. Judas is calling them out here.

#### **vv. 5-7. Examples of three former seductions and the outcomes of all.**

Jude interrupts his listing to remind his readers that this is not the first time that unbelievers have had to pay with their lives for ignoring the ways of God.

**Example 1:** Unbelievers in Israel, verse 5. With a mighty hand God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Such power! Such devastation! A nation liberated in a day! The Israelites were such a happy people, the joy was real. Jehovah was their God.

But it wasn't long before unbelief slowly and very surely eroded the joy and faith of these pilgrims. All but two of the originals died in the wilderness, never to see God's Promised Land. Don't assume, church, that God has changed His mind about sin and judgment. Those who sow unbelief and perverted teachings, and those who believe those doctrines, will be judged just as surely as the millions of Israel.

We hear stories in our own day of "entire villages" being saved. Yes, people are happy when the Gospel comes. It usually means a better standard of living, medicine, prosperity. But we must not assume that everyone in that village has been or will be born again. Eventually, when the hard times come, many fall away, showing they were not a part of the faith to begin with. Look among your own group. Exhort those that assemble to be sure their sins have been taken away!

**Example 2:** Fallen angels, verse 6. Jude steps back from humanity altogether and looks at the broader picture of the judgment of God. Even angels are not shielded from His wrath, says Jude! False teachers take notice! Nothing escapes His eye!

Jude seems to have in mind here the story that has given rise to many myths through the millennia of time. This is the original. This really happened. The story took place in Genesis 6. Recall that Satan has fallen, from Genesis 3. The counter-attack has begun, and at least a part of the agenda is exposed here in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.

Satan commissions a number of his agents to go to Earth and actually form relationships, personal ones, with whatever females they desired. Their own domain had been in the regions where God is. But when they were removed from God, His glory, His beauty, they desired other things.

It is true with men also, isn't it? The less desire for God, the more desire for "other things."

How human desire actually formed in angelic beings is not totally explained, but the enemy of our soul was able to wrest permission from God to make it happen. The "giants" that were born to these relationships were meant to wage war against the people of God and God Himself. It was this wickedness that precipitated the flood.

Jude gives us another insight on angelic beings. The disobedient ones are in some spiritual way bound in chains. They are in a dark place. Their judgment will be made public on the "great day" that is coming.

Oh what a day that will be. All men should tremble, even those who know the Judge. It will be an unparalleled catastrophe when the rejected Creator and Savior of the world metes out the final manifestations of His justified wrath.

In a similar way, as an aside here, we understand how human spirits can be “bound” in the “Pit” mentioned in Revelation. The antichrist waits there even now for the angel to come and release him to do his dastardly work.

**Example 3.** Sodom and Gomorrah, verse 7. Sexual immorality is the reason given for the downfall, the utter destruction, of the cities destroyed in spite of Abraham’s prayers. Ten righteous people could not be found there. And the symbol, the clearest manifestation, of their unrighteousness, was in the area of sexual sin. They were unfaithful to their marriage partners. Probably there was child sexual abuse. Name all of America’s present sexual evils and you will get a picture of it.

But there was more then, and more now. These men were not just craving other women, and little girls. Jude is very specific here. Not your run-of-the-mill sexual cravings, but cravings for *strange* flesh. We could wish that the translators had just left the Greek word alone here, and translated it as it is translated in most of the rest of the New Testament. The word *heteros* simply means “other.” Other flesh. Not the “normal” sins of the flesh, if any sins can be labeled normal, but “other” flesh. We know from reading the Sodom story exactly what Jude was referencing.

There’s a pattern here. Israel not satisfied with God’s miracles and guidance, and beginning to crave for more until God has had enough of their dissatisfaction. Angels not satisfied with their lot in the very heavens, beginning to lust for things they see on earth. The residents of Sodom and surroundings, not satisfied with the gifts of intimacy God has ordained, go after “other” flesh, and bring judgment.

A question comes at the end of the verse, as it seems Jude is saying here that the vengeance they suffered, fire and brimstone from heaven, is somehow still burning, and will do so eternally. Those who want to deny an eternal hell will call out this verse and tell us that “eternal” is not really eternal. Eventually even hell fire will end, they say, just as Sodom and Gomorrah’s fire has ended.

Not so fast. Reaching this conclusion over the serious words of other Scriptures will mislead you.

First possibility: is the Lake of Fire, invisible to us now, not still burning? Is it not possible that the fire that only began to judge these evil ones on Earth, continues to judge them under the Earth? What torments the unsaved suffer now is without their bodies, to be sure, but one must deal with the rich man of Jesus’ story who was tormented in the flames of Hell immediately after his death. The soul does not sleep. God’s people go immediately to Jesus. The others immediately to their punishment. Bodies of saved and unsaved will be resurrected one day. Unsaved bodies will be eternally equipped to bear the punishment God has for those who disobey. But there is a form of fire that has already begun.

Second possibility: Translators who have seen a difficulty in this verse have corrected the text to read, essentially, that the punished souls of Sodom are set forth as an example of those who will

suffer eternal fire (in hell). The Greek will bear such a translation. Several translations bring forth this idea.

#### **v. 8. The descriptive list continues.**

4. They are dreamers (verse 8). Not sure where the word “filthy” (KJV) came from, but it is not in the original Greek. The phrase is “these men, dreaming...” Could it be that they actually believed they were hearing from God in their dreams when they came into the church with their perversions? As their doctrines were filthy, we assume that their dreams were also, since these men lived in the flesh, not the Spirit. A man who is not on guard spiritually is indeed subject to the possibility of dreams that do not line up with God’s truth. Carnal men have dreamed everything possible. And if a man is being used by Satan to destroy a church, we cannot even imagine what his dreams might have looked like. Beware church! Men in our own generation will feed their dreams to you as though they were all of God. This is not to say that a godly man might not have a godly dream, but a godly man will know better than to foist his dream on the church as some new revelation that the church is to follow. Oh for discernment!
5. They defile the flesh (verse 8). Two of the three examples he gives above have to do with sexual immorality bringing the judgment of God forth. It is no surprise here that these false men are, based on their dreams, using sexual means to infiltrate the church. Paul talks about using the grace of God to promote lasciviousness. To say that “anything goes” now because of God’s grace, is what is meant. These men are loose sexually themselves, boasting no doubt of their “freedom in Christ”, and therefore they are encouraging the church to be the same. One thinks immediately of naked Israel under Aaron’s watch, as the man of God was on the mountain.
6. They reject authority (verse 8). Pastors, elders are trying to tell them their teachings are off base, but they continue on? Their teachings fly in the face of apostolic letters already being circulated, and apostles themselves? They are even perverting the Old Covenant Scriptures, perhaps denying their authenticity? In other words, the liberals of the day have already invaded and caused the people to doubt God’s true men.
7. They speak evil of “glorious ones” (worthies, dignitaries, glories). Are these angels? Perhaps they make light of angelic beings, doubt their existence (as the Sadducees)? Or are they rulers in the church, i.e. apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, men worthy of the honor of the church, men who are to be the very glory of the church? Some suggest these are civil rulers. “The powers that be are ordained of God.” We are to fear governmental leaders, respect their authority, never speak evil of them. But these men do not have a high regard for anyone’s position except their own. Dangerous, dangerous attitude, and this too is in the modern church. How we must be careful!

#### **v. 9. An example of respect to counter the attitude of disrespect in the false teachers.**

Jude gives us a fascinating insight into the spirit/angelic world here to remind us just how important respect is for the child of God. There are levels of authority in place for our own safety and we are to honor them.

Jude recounts an episode of contention between two angels, one extremely good, the other extremely evil: Michael and Lucifer. It seems that the two were arguing about the body of Moses. Whence this story? Men have speculated down through the centuries, and do not seem to be sure. Divine inspiration, where God just told Jude about this? Possible. A legend that had been passed down among the Jews? Also possible. There is an apocryphal book from the first century that contains something of this story. This much we know: Jude's use of it was allowed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the story itself, regardless of the source is true. Truth can be found in books that are not all true. Later Jude will quote from another questionable book, but that quote makes us believe that at least that part of the source is from God and can be trusted.

Only the incident itself is to be believed, however. Not the legends surrounding it. Why were they arguing? We don't know. Were they arguing? Yes. Legend: Michael was the guardian of Moses' grave. Lucifer wanted Moses' body so he could use it as a means of false worship by the Jews.

Truth of the matter: As I said, we don't know.

But Jude is using the incident to let us know that even the mighty Michael did not dare to disrespect Satan on his own. He referred all judgment to God. The Lord rebuke you, but I will not. This is to be our attitude toward civil rulers, leaders who have gone astray, angelic beings. The only power we have been given is in the name of Jesus and His Word. May we never endanger ourselves by fighting "dignitaries" in our own name.

One interesting insight from this verse helps us solve the "angel of the Lord" question that arises so often in Scripture. The conversation between Michael, the chief of the angels, at least for Israel (per Daniel), and maybe for all angels, is echoed in Zechariah 3, where the Lord Himself says the same words to Satan: "The Lord rebuke you." Here, as in Revelation, and Genesis and elsewhere, the very words of God are put in the mouth of an angel. Many want to conclude that the angel of the Lord is therefore the Lord Himself!

This is a dangerous conclusion, as the confused apostle John discovered when he tried to worship the angel he saw. Angels are mighty in power and glory, and as messengers of the Lord, they of course have the Lord's words in their mouths! But that does not make them the Lord! To say so is to join hands with Jehovah's Witnesses and other cult groups who claim that Jesus is Michael, a created being.

Never! Jesus is Jesus, Michael is Michael. To earthlings, the glory of the angelic and the glory of the Divine seem intertwined, but when we are raised in our own glorious bodies we will be able to see clearly the difference in glories. Meanwhile we have only His Word to give us the light we need. And we know that our God is not a created being! The closest He came to His creation was allowing Himself to be born through a human instrument. But He never stopped being God during that process, nor will He ever.

The Lord is not "the angel of the Lord." Even the English does not compute when we say so.



### **Continuing the list... vs. 10**

8. They speak evil of whatever they do not know. That's an odd statement, but with only a little reflection we can remember people in our own day who have done the same. These are the ones who write off the Christian faith because of its seeming absurdities and inconsistencies and hypocritical members... but they have never tried Christ themselves. Authorities on the unknowns of life. Ridiculously proud people. Mocking those who believe in a "Holy Spirit" and a life to come and being born again. These are totally carnal men who have had no glimpses into the realities of Heaven. Men that need to be avoided at all costs.
9. In the things they do know, they have become corrupt. They walk in the flesh, they know things "naturally", that is, by their own fallen nature they are able to grasp the delights of things they can see and feel and taste. Jude compares them to animals. Body and soul they have but the spirit in them is dead. Knowing only flesh, they are never satisfied with the flesh and corrupt themselves by exploring more and more possibilities of mental and physical pleasures. How in the world did they "creep" into the church and gain such acceptance? By appealing to the fleshly ways of some of the truly born again but not very mature saints, of which every church has its supply.

### **Three Old Testament comparisons, v. 11, are three further identifiers of these evil men.**

10. They are like Cain. Followers of Cain are these evil men. We assume that Jude is not speaking here of murder, though Cain did go that far. Rather, these are men whose offering to God is simply not acceptable. These are men who, when rebuked by God's men, find ways to get even rather than ways to get right with God. We can imagine them stirring up entire congregations and causing them to take sides. The flesh in the church begins to respond to the flesh that has "crept in", partly because of that welcoming party of fleshly people. And so they come in, and begin to act out and speak out about things that bother them in the church. The elders warn them. They are not intimidated, but rather seek out ways to retaliate for the hurt to their egos. The battle rages on, with the immature joining in behind them. Next, probably, church split.
11. They are like Balaam. Slowly some of these fleshly men become teachers, recognizing that the people of God are a generous lot, and will gladly fork over offerings to entertaining speakers. Sound familiar? Oh, the sheep are often ready to go astray for a while when some new and promising voice arises. The profit motive begins to consume these men, while the sheep think they are motivated prophets of God. Would that the book of Jude could be held up in Wetsern congregations, where the leaches are everywhere.
12. They are like Korah. The rebel. You remember him. He thought he could do it better. He thought the man of God had no right to be usurping authority over a whole nation. He had not heard from God and he assumed no one had. The Korah-ites are with us today also. Critical. Ready to condemn. Looking for faults. And offering themselves as replacements. No clue about the order

God has put in place in the church. Wanting a new order. Down with pastors. They have failed us. Let's start from scratch, with the new breed of leaders in charge. Oh, it's out there. God help pastors to be strong in this age of deception.

**vv. 12-13, five metaphors continue the describing of falseness in the church.**

13. They are spots in your love feasts, verse 12. The church had expanded the invitation of Jesus to remember Him regularly in the bread and the wine. They had added on a common meal, probably in keeping with the traditions of fellowship in the Jewish community up until that point. But in Christ, there was potential for a truly spiritual component to the simple task of eating. These Christians loved one another, and wanted to be together as often as possible, sharing as many of life's activities as possible. Over a good meal they could discuss even more the faith that had been delivered to them. Their practice should not be used by the modern church as an excuse to pander to the fleshly among us. This was eating, not gorging. Foods harmful to the body were never intended for God's people, whether in church or out of church. So here was a beautiful event happening weekly, and the false teachers saw it as a perfect time to show up and mix in. But their un-saved nature showed up with them. Coarse language, decidedly un-Christian conversation, gluttony, serving themselves before others, countered the ways of believers. Stains. Defects, the word can mean. As a tablecloth where the juice has spilled.

Yet the believers extended fellowship to them, perhaps in the name of tolerance, "Christian love," etc. It was a "love-feast" after all. How could they deny a place at the table to anyone, since Christ had accepted them? It is a philosophy we use today, one mixed with poison of error. Christ's church, as Christ Himself, never tolerates evil in His presence. Jesus rebuked Pharisees in their own home, taught truth so strongly that people who were not of the truth would walk away. In many church houses, and evidently in the ones Jude is now addressing, it was "I'm OK, you're OK. I don't judge you, you don't judge me." We need to read again God's call to holiness for His people, lest we arrive at the sad state of Jude's addressees.

14. They are clouds without water, verse 12. You see a cloud, or a group of clouds forming in the sky, and you think "rain." But it is not always so. Sometimes those clouds just move on to the next town, depositing nothing but darkness. So with these men. They were eloquent. They promised liberty with their new ideas. They seemed happy and successful, with promise that their hearers and friends could be the same. But they only brought darkness, a covering of the light of God already given by the apostles. No rain, no refreshing from God. Soon they would move on to the next church and pull their shenanigans there.

15. They are late autumn trees, verse 12. They have had the spring and all the summer and now most of autumn to bear fruit. They've been around. They've heard the message. They know about this Jesus and the men who followed Him. But no fruit. No effect has the Gospel had in their lives. Dead as ever. Fully governed by flesh when the Spirit has been available to them as to all.

Twice dead? Jude seems to be speaking of eternal judgment here, as in the second death. They are dead while they live, for they are barren of any fruit. But they are also consigned to eternal

separation from God, and will be exposed before all as truly dead, truly judged, one day in our future.

To be without fruit is bad enough. To be without God forever, is so much worse. Remember that Jude is basing his appraisal of these men on the foreknowledge and foreordination of God (v.4) and can speak with total authority on the destiny of evil men such as these.

16. They are raging waves of the sea, verse 13. What a picture! How deeply does the brother feel about these men's influence! These are powerful men, leaving an indelible mark on the churches. So it has been in every generation including our own. Strong men arise, though they "creep in" at first. They make friends, they influence people, they subvert whole congregations, become a movement, sweep across a nation as a mighty wave, broadcasting to the true saints just how shameful they are as the fruit of their work becomes obvious. It would be easy enough to come up with a very lengthy list of men who have ridden roughshod over the church and shaken it to its core. Divisions, upheavals, evil publicity and shame that has been attributed to Christ Himself and turned millions away from the true faith.
17. They are wandering stars, verse 13. Macarthur suggests that perhaps Jude is referencing meteors that appear brightly in the night sky then as quickly as they appear, they are gone. The false teachers make a big splash, and false people in droves follow them. But the church moves on, the true church is tested and found out by the light of these "stars" that appear among us from time to time.

### **v. 13, the "blackness of darkness."**

I will not attach this phrase to "wandering stars", for in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:17, the blackness of darkness is attached to the "clouds" description. No, this final phrase in the current descriptor listing is meant to apply to everything he has been saying so far. These men I have described so graphically, Jude says, will be forever in darkness, as their time of stardom and light will end in disaster for them.

What a phrase. Blackness of darkness. Forever. Utter darkness. Gloom. Horrid picture. But you say, how can this be, when we see such persons thrown into a lake of fire? One key might be in John's final look at things in Revelation 20. A lake of fire yes, on planet Earth. But then, in verse 11, that Earth "flees away" and in 21:1, the Earth has "passed away". There is a new Heaven, a new Earth. First one is gone. But the first one contained the lake of fire. Where has everything gone? Into the darkness of space? Wandering, wandering, forever in darkness? Could it be? What an unspeakable fate. Separated from God and everything good while being tormented in an eternal fire? Who can comprehend such a thing?

Jude could. And he made it clear that these evil men who disgraced Him and His people have a reservation, a place reserved in this darkness, forever and ever.

How can we read all of this warning without emotion? Without repenting? Without caring for the lost among us?

**vv. 14-15, a prophecy from Enoch inserted for emphasis.**

Yes, there was and is a book of Enoch. You can read it online. The quote that Jude excerpts is taken directly from the book. That much we know. Questions arise as to the nature and the author of that book. Tradition tells us, and obviously Jude believed, that the man Enoch wrote and passed on this book. The Jews as a whole, and Christians as a whole, do not accept this book as inspired Scripture, though some very small groups within each, do. Church fathers even quote the book as having some authority. The doubts that have arisen about this book have put it into that broad category of “apocryphal”, that is, of doubtful origin.

But that is not to say that the Holy Spirit Himself writes the book off in its entirety. As we have said regarding the book used by Jude in verse 9 above, so we say here. There is truth in other books, whether the entire book is true. Falseness can creep into an otherwise good document and cause the Spirit-led people to say no to it. But that does not negate the fact that much of the book is indeed true. The portion of “Enoch” that we shall consider inspired and true is that portion which Jude quoted, simply because we believe that the Spirit inspired him to quote it. Probably best not to go beyond that in the discussion.

Note that Enoch is called the seventh from Adam. That is to distinguish him from the Enoch who was the son of Cain (Genesis 4:17). The birth line goes: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch. Enoch is the seventh generation of the line that leads eventually to Jesus.

Jude, inspired by God, actually links the prophecy given by a man at the beginning of the revelations of God to his own work, near the end of those revelations, and the message has not changed in all that time or from then until now. Namely, God is just and will bring justice to the ungodly. And the men of whom Jude is speaking in his letter are samples of what God means when He says through His prophets, “ungodly.” Church, take note.

Jude speaks here of the rapture and the second coming as one. Jesus and Paul tell how the saints will be gathered from the four winds of heaven, in the twinkling of an eye, and revelation finishes the picture by talking of the bloody but very quick war that shall soon follow. Judgment will follow the statement of indictment, namely that ungodly men did ungodly things in an ungodly way, evils that included even things which these same men have spoken against God.

Un-God reminds us of anti-Christ. There is godly and there is ungodly. There is Christ and there is anti-Christ. The world that Jesus, the Lord, shall visit in that hour will have been ruled for years by the anti\_God, anti law, anti righteous, anti holy, anti Christ Himself. When the two meet, Christ and antichrist, the clash will be heard throughout the universe.

**v. 16. Back to the list.**

18. They are grumblers, complainers, walking after their own desires (verse 16). I will treat these three entries as one, since they are so inter-related. The first two words are used nowhere in the New Testament but here, and can be interchangeable, as some translations prove. “Fault-

finders” is the word most often used in the translations to replace “complainers.” But the reason for either the grumbling (murmuring in many versions) or the complaining, is the third part of the sentence: they want what they want, and if they do not get it, you will hear about it. This characteristic is certainly not limited to false leaders, but many false followers as well. This is in fact the sin that brought Israel to its near end in the wilderness. We spoke of it above. Elevated to a public forum and leveled against church leadership, as wilderness people practiced, this sin is magnified a hundred fold. I don’t like what the church is teaching about this matter. So, I’ll grumble awhile. I’ll murmur awhile. I’ll complain awhile. And church members will hear me, and they’ll join me, until there is a full scale revolt, which can end in tragedy. And the reason I don’t like such and such doctrine is because it touches my very flesh and bones. It hits me where it hurts. My life style will be affected by the holiness that preacher is talking about. My worldliness will be exposed. So I must expose the preacher before it goes any farther.

19. They know how to flatter. So, some people resist me. I know how to get through to them. I’ll flatter them. Tell them things they have not heard for a long time, or ever. I’ll even try to say it publicly. How can they turn against me when I say such nice things to, and about, them? This too is connected to the rest of verse 16. Fleshly men, who want their own way, get it by grumbling about leadership, but flattering membership. Like Absalom of old, they sit at the city gate and win the hearts of the people to themselves.

**vv. 17-18. The brothers had been warned.**

Here Jude separates himself from apostleship by referring to that group as outside himself. And he refers them to the fact that these apostles are the true authority in the church, and need to be heeded. One thing the apostles had mentioned was the fact that mockers would come. This seems to be a clear reference to 2 Peter 3:1-3. Peter brings his flock even further back in history by mentioning the admonitions of the prophets, but includes as equally authoritative “us, the apostles of the Lord...” He goes on to say that scoffers will come, walking after their lusts (just as Jude here mentions). He warns of the changes of doctrine regarding the second coming of Jesus (which is happening in our present church, too). It would seem that this is the evidence we need to show that Peter wrote before Jude, and that Jude leaned on the great apostle for much of his information. This gave the church of old even more reason to include the little – but potent – letter in the canon of Scripture.

**v. 19. The list concluded.**

20. They are sensual. In the English, we can understand this word as one who lives by his natural senses. What he sees, hears, tastes, etc, are his guiding lights. He is blind, deaf, and tasteless spiritually. The Greek does not exactly bear this translation out, for in fact there is no English word that fills the bill. The closest we could come to it, say the experts, is the word “soulish”, as in some translations. The word in Greek means “soul” or “life”, that is, natural human life, lived out in the soul of man, which, connected to the body, composes our existence, above the animals, but still dead to God in spirit. Soulsh people can be very smart, very talented. They have human dreams and strive to make them come true, sometimes egged on by well-meaning

Christians. But their dreams are meant only for themselves ultimately, even though what they are doing may seem altruistic at the moment.

These false teachers may have seemed like “good” people in some instances. After all, they only wanted what all people want. Financial security. Freedom. A nice home. A good career. Fun. This was their message. Go after “life”. Eat, drink, be merry. Your best life now. Be positive. But the Gospel of Jesus, the cares about eternal values, were absent from their lips.

21. They cause divisions. They create factions, because there are indeed some immature who will follow them, while the advanced saints know better. Fleshly men can be very persuasive, and when they are joined by baby saints or other fleshly men, their influence can be daunting to even the holiest of pastors. And the longer they are unchallenged, the stronger they become. Eventually they want change across the board. The music must start sounding like the music of the world. The preaching must be more positive. Get a preacher in here that understands us, and isn't always harping on holiness. Once the division process is begun, who can stop it. There are more mature but still not holy saints who see both sides and want a compromise group. Now there are three churches in the church, and more will follow, as the flesh, guided by Satan, wants its own way, and must be surrounded by flesh that is in agreement. Some groups leave, some stay, to the torment of the leadership. The witness in the community is destroyed. These are just people after all. Who needs it?
22. They do not have the Spirit of God. The final blow is the worst that can be said of anyone calling himself a child of God. If Jude's assessment is true, and we know it is, then all under this description are damned. They are in the church but not of it. They are intruders. They are sons of Satan. No Spirit of God? No life. No hope. No salvation.

Such is the bio of a false teacher, a false prophet, a false Christian. How serious is this! How much ought we to cringe before God and fear His Holy ways. The Christian life is not a game, not just nice words. The call to repent is real. And yet, as Paul, after serious warnings of this sort, Jude returns his focus to the original intent of his letter. After all, he wanted to write to them (verse 3) about their common salvation. A word to the true saints now!

#### **vv. 20-21. Personal holiness enjoined.**

Yes, Church, there is evil in the world, and even right there in your congregation! You can't ignore it, you must deal with it, but first, take care of your own spiritual walk. Don't be distracted. And you will need to be in the love and power of God to do what needs to be done. Pray in the Holy Spirit seems to be the means of building ones' self in the faith, per verse 20.

Paul prayed with the spirit and with the understanding. There is praying from a list, and praying from the depth of your soul with “groanings which cannot be uttered.” There is natural prayer and there is supernatural prayer. Some things you know about, some things, you have no clue. Clueless praying, yielding all to the Holy Spirit to pray through you, is what Jude is after here. This is no light matter that he is uncovering. God's prayer people – and that is supposed to be all of us – must take it seriously. Ordinary intercession just will not do. Get in touch with God Who lives in you, find out what He is thinking, and pray accordingly.

But that's not the end of the remedy for false teachers. Be sure that your own life measures up to the high standard that Jude produces in these few verses of his letter. Be sure you are not given to your self, that you are not a fleshly person, that you are bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, specifically here the love of God. Be sure you are not a mocker in your heart of hearts, that you truly believe the basics of the faith, in particular the mercy God has shown and will show to the repentant.

Arm yourself with these attitudes before you approach a false prophet. Your anger and meanness will produce nothing. Flesh will not be able to combat flesh. Are you ready to show mercy, should one of these men repent? Or will you be content to score a verbal victory over them, and garner praises for yourself as some great "defender of the faith"? Will you fall into the trap of the church of Ephesus that was sound in doctrine but had left its love base? His last instructions, following, demand this sort of preparation.

#### **vv. 22-23. Dealing with the ungodly in the church.**

We're confronted with a question when we consider these two verses. Has Jude changed the subject? He was talking all this time about evil men in the church, men whose destiny is certain, and not very positive.

Suddenly he is talking about compassion, and saving some. While we want to be open to the possibility that even the worst of false men may repent, to me it seems more likely that he is talking about the would-be followers of these men. And there are two categories in his mind.

1. Some are to be treated gently, carefully, even with pity. These are well-meaning folk, people who truly want to serve God with all their heart. They listen carefully to see if there is something more that God has for them. Unfortunately their ears are not trained to hear subtleties in teaching. Soul and spirit are joined still in their thinking. What seems spiritual to them is carnal to the trained believer, but they have not grown to the point where they can see this. The teachers are clever, and forceful, and make their followers feel they must certainly advance with them so as not to be left behind with the lukewarm. Sad, sad. Make a distinction with these. They are not in the same category as the ones that follow.
2. The others may have to be forcefully "pulled out" of their stupidity. They've stayed with the enemy teachers for so long that it looks like they are going to leave the church and cause others to do the same. They are being fed promises of power and glory in the church. They are being told that God has been waiting for them to take a stand, and that when they do, people will rally around them. Maybe even financial promises are being made. Save them! With fear, some translations add. Fear for their soul. Fear for your own if you are not obediently helping them. Godly fear must motivate you to do something quick. They are flirting with the fires of hell! Pull them out! Using that same picture image of a fire, he suggests that we despise hell's flames so much that we do not want any of our people even having a smell of smoke on their clothing. Drag them away from the fire! They don't know what they are doing. The smoke has gotten in their eyes. They are about to be deceived. Do something!

**vv. 24-25. An ending praise.**

Jude's ending is magnificent. Yes, we must be negative now and then, but let us return to the main theme: God, the only wise God, Who is our Savior.

Notice he mentions a God Who is able to keep us from stumbling, that is falling into the trap being set by the false teachers of the letter. Not only will we not fall, we will continue on and be made perfect! Note also the joy ascribed to Jesus, the One Who is doing all of this leading. He will one day present us to the Father with a huge smile on His Blessed Face, and usher us into Eternal bliss.

Forgotten are the clouds without water, the blackness of darkness. Evil is here swallowed up in the joy of knowing and loving Jesus, and the love He has for us.

It seems that the Spirit takes over the letter with a double portion as Jude rises to the ecstasy of praise in the last verse. No comment is needed. Let us join him:

To God our Savior Who alone is wise be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.  
Amen!