

JUDE

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Lecture Notes



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THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

A Verse by Verse Commentary
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Jude is one of the shortest epistles of the New Testament—only 25 verses (2 John = 13, 3 John = 14, Phlm = 15). Although a brief epistle, it packs a lot of teaching. Like chilli padi, it is small but powerful. It is polemic in tone. Verse 3 is the key verse: “ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Maxwell Coder aptly calls it “The Acts of the Apostates.” The Acts of the Apostles presents the GROWTH of the TRUE Church; the Acts of the Apostates predicts the DEATH of the FALSE Church in the end-times. The order of books in the NT interestingly charts the history of church: Gospels—APOSTLES—Epistles—APOSTATES—Revelation = The SEED of the Church—The GROWTH of the (True) Church—The INDOCTRINATION of the (True) Church—The DECLENSION of the (False) Church—The DEATH of the (False) Church. The evil nature of the end-time apostates are given in verses 4,8,10,11,12,13,16,19. The world is not getting better and better towards a utopia but getting worse and worse towards Armageddon.

CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.”

The name “Jude” comes from the Hebrew *Yehudah* (Judah), and the Greek *Ioudas* (Judas). The prominent Judes in the NT are: (1) Judas Iscariot; (2) Judas not Iscariot, a.k.a. Lebbeus, or Thaddeus who was the brother of James, the son of Alphaeus (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13); and (3) Jude, the half-brother of Jesus Christ (Mark 13:55) who also had a brother James.

Which of the above Judes wrote this epistle? The popular view is #3. There is a general reluctance to attach the epistle to the Apostle. The main arguments are: (1) Nowhere in the epistle did Jude called himself an apostle. This is an argument from silence. Although such arguments are sometimes valid, they are by no means conclusive. The phrase *doulos* of Jesus Christ” may have apostolic implications (e.g. Rom 1:1, Jas 1:1, 2 Pet 1:1), It is possible that Jude did not bring up his apostleship because it was already a well-known fact to those whom he was writing to. His apostleship was not being challenged, and therefore there was no necessity for him to defend it unlike Paul whose apostleship was constantly being questioned by false teachers. The Apostles did not flaunt their unique office. John, for example, chose to use the title “elder,” or “presbyter” rather than “apostle” (2 John 1, 3 John 1).

(2) Verse 17 seems to exclude Jude from the Apostolic band. 2 Pet 3:2 has a similar statement, The personal pronoun “us” indicates clearly that Peter included himself in the Apostolic team. No such pronoun was used by Jude. Yet, this is not altogether fool-proof for John also mentioned the Apostles as a distinct group even though he himself was part of it (Rev 18:20, 21:14).

There is nothing decisive against taking Jude the Apostle as the author of this Epistle. Origen, and Tertullian, early Church fathers, ascribed the letter to the Apostle Jude.

Jude called himself a “servant” of Jesus Christ. The word is *doulos* which means “slave.” It comes from the verb *deoo* “to bind.” Thus, Jude is not just calling himself a “servant (*diakonos*),” or “slave,” but a “bondslave.” It is the kind of slave spoken of in Exod 21:1-6. God made provisions that those in debt could pay it off by offering themselves as slaves. Such will serve their masters for a period of six years, and on the Jubilee year will be released. However, at the time of release, he may choose to work as a slave for life in gratitude for the love and kindness his master had shown him. The word *doulos* in the Judeo-Christian context refers to such a *willing* slave.

The word *doulos* is also used with reference to worship. Its verbal equivalent *donleuoo* is used in the LXX frequently to mean “worship” (Judg 2:7, 2 Chron 30:8). Jude was not only a *willing* slave, but also a *worshipful* slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, It speaks of a new slave-master relationship. We have been freed in order to be bound to another (Rom 6:18,22). We are no longer slaves to Satan, to sin, and to the world, but only to Christ. We serve the One who in the first place had come to serve us (Mark 10:45, John 13:15, Phil 2:5-7). We are slaves of JESUS our SAVIOUR *willingly*, and of CHRIST our MESSIAH *worshipfully*.

Jude did not write to any particular individual or church but to believers in general whom he called (1) *heegiasmenois* meaning “sanctified ones,” (2) *teteereemenois*, “kept ones,” and (3) *kleetois*, “called ones.”

(1) *The Sanctified Ones*: The word *hagiazoō* means “to purify.” It has a twofold idea: to be made holy in order to be *set apart for sacred service*. The doctrine of *separation* is intrinsic to this word. The believers are reminded that they are a people made holy by God for His holy work. And in order to fulfill that purpose, it is vital that they separate from all forms of apostasy and unbelief.

This sanctification performed by God the Father occurred in the past, and the effects of it still exists in the present. Sanctification has three aspects: (1) *Positional*—our purification by the blood of Christ at the point of regeneration (1 Cor 6:11), (2) *Progressive*—the continual process of consecration as we become more Christlike (2 Cor 3:18), and (3) *Permanent*—the time of the resurrection when we are given sinless glorified bodies (Rom 8:30). The sanctification spoken of here is #1.

(2) *The Kept Ones*: The word *teereoō* means “to keep,” It comes from the noun, *teros*, “a warden.” It has the idea of “to watch over,” “to guard,” or “to protect.” The KJV has correctly translated it as “preserved.”

This is one proof text for the fifth point of Calvinism—*Perseverance/Preservation* of the Saints (John 10:28-29, Rom 8:35-39, 2 Tim 1:12). “Once saved always saved.” One who has been truly *called*, and *sanctified* will not and can not lose his salvation. Note that it is not we who are preserving ourselves but the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one can pluck us out of His hand. We have been kept and will continue to be kept to the very end. Christ’s preservation of the saints sees no interruptions or disruptions, This is comforting to know in the midst of rampant apostasy when so called “Christian” leaders are falling away from the faith. Why? The only conclusive answer is that they were not saved in the first place. Those who really belong to Christ will never apostatize, but “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Although there is *divine sovereignty*, there is also *human responsibility* (Phil 2:12-13).

(3) *The Called Ones*: The word *kaleōō* means “to call” or “to summon,” The benefits of sanctification and preservation stems from the fact that they have been, in the first place, called of God. There are two kinds of call: (1) *Outward*—a general call of the gospel to both elect and

non-elect issued by the preacher (cf Matt 11:28, John 3:16, 7:37-38). The outward call by itself does not save. (2) *Inward*—a special call whereby the Spirit convicts the heart of sin, and enables the sinner to understand, and believe in the gospel, One cannot effectively resist this call, It is *irresistible grace*—fourth point of Calvinism (John 6:37,44, Rom 8:14,30). The call referred to by Jude is #2.

This seeks to remind the believers that they are a called out people—*ekklesia*. The purity of the Church depends on its separation from the world. Peter states it well, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God” (1 Pet 2:9-10).

Verse 2

“Mercy unto you, and peace and love, be multiplied.”

Jude reminds his Christian readers that they are recipients of three divine gifts: (1) Mercy, (2) peace, and (3) love. The word “mercy” here refers to God’s compassion for man in his sinful condition, unable to redeem himself, This compassion God has for sinners was translated into action when Jesus Christ—“the Son of God became the Son of Man, so that the sons of men might become the sons of God” (Calvin). Eph 2:4-7 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Mercy is something we need especially in trying moments. We may be tempted to backslide from the Lord, to join the apostate bandwagon. So the encouragement is given, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

The word “peace” speaks of our standing before God. The order is correct: peace logically follows mercy. It is because of God’s mercy that we can have peace with Him. We were once enemies of God, under the curse of the Law, and facing His wrath, But, in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have made peace with God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:14-19). The last days are difficult days. There will be a lot of turmoil in the political, economic, social, and ecclesiastical realms. How should the Christian respond? “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6-7).

The word “love” is the Greek *agapee*. It is love in its most comprehensive sense involving both mind and heart, word and deed (1 Cor 13:4-8), It is used frequently to describe God’s love to man. God loved, and He gave (John 3:16). Jesus had warned that love will not be easily found in the last days, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:12).

This love invariably refers to our love for God, and for man. We will find it difficult to keep the commandments of God. It is easier to give in to pressure, and be popular, rather than to take a stand for God. The ministry of warning is not an easy one, But if we truly love our friends, we must tell them the truth, and warn them against apostasy. If we love God, we will keep His commandments, “By this we know that we love the children of God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2-3).

Jude prays that the above graces may be multiplied in the life of the believers. It is interesting that Jude writes the word “multiplied” in the optative mood which is a mood of prayer. It reveals an earnest desire on his part that his beloved readers be thoroughly filled with mercy, peace, and love to overcome perilous situations.

Verse 3

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Jude shared with his readers what he felt when he began to write this epistle, He said that he “gave all diligence.” This word *spoudeen* has the sense of *making haste* (Mark 6:25, Acts 20:16). Jude felt an urgent need, and an intense burden to write about the “common salvation.” Why did he feel this way? Evidently, the church was beginning to be infiltrated by false teachers who are attempting to destroy the Christian faith. So, Jude thought it necessary to remind the believers of the salvation that all born again believers possessed. The word used to describe the salvation is *koinees*. Here, it refers to something that is shared by all. Qualitatively and quantitatively speaking, every Christian receives the same salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as different degrees of salvation; one is “more saved,” and another is “less saved.” Jude wanted to write on the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) in all its various aspects: justification, sanctification, glorification etc, This was probably so because he wanted the believers to know for sure what they have believed and whom they have believed in, and in so knowing will not doubt their salvation when false teachers try to tempt them away from God.

At first, he wanted to teach the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, but later felt constrained as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, in view of the potentially dangerous situation the Church was then facing, to *apply* the doctrine of salvation instead. The Christians have already been well-grounded in the Christian Faith. The great salvation epistles of Paul, namely Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, were already written, What is really needful now was to *defend* that body of truth. The subject he originally chose to speak on was retained. What Jude changed was his *theme*, from the *Principles* of the Faith (i.e. know it), to the *Protection* of the Faith (i.e. defend it).

Jude says that he was duty bound—*anagken*—to write the Epistle in view of end-time dangers that surrounded the Church. He strongly urged (*parakaloon*) the believers to “earnestly contend” for the faith. The word “earnestly contend” is significant. It is the Greek *epagoonizesthai* which is a strong word for “struggle.” It is a call for one “to exert intense effort on behalf of something” (LN, 1:496). Although it is only found here in the NT, its root *agoonizomai* occurs seven times in Luke 13:24, John 18:36, 1 Cor 9:25, Col 1:29, 4:12, 1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 4:7. It is a military word and is usually translated as “fight.” For example, Paul tells Timothy, “*Fight* the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). In the Christian context, it has to do with spiritual warfare. It has nothing to do with rifles and grenades (cf John 18:36). We are called rather to defend the faith against false teachers, heresies, worldliness etc. by means of the Word of God which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). We earnestly contend for the faith by way of *preaching, writing, and conduct*.

This contention for the faith is going to be a long drawn affair. We need to earnestly contend for the faith day by day. Jude tells us to keep on contending for the faith. There should be no letting down, but a constant, consistent, and continual struggle for the purity of the Church and her message. It will be agonizing work. You should not expect to find overwhelming support from the general populace. When a person believes in the Holy Bible and obeys it, he goes against the philosophy and praxis of a God-denying and Gospel-hating world. Persecution in the form of verbal abuse, discrimination, incarceration, etc can be expected. The Christian contender is called to endure it all and remain faithful to His Lord.

And what are we to earnestly contend for? It is for *THE once for all delivered unto the saints FAITH*. Faith may be understood in two ways: in the *subjective* sense of *personal* faith (i.e. belief, trust, submission, surrender etc), or in the objective sense of the *Christian* faith (i.e. the Christian religion, the body of truth that Christianity is based on). Jude here is referring to the latter. This Faith that Jude refers to is contrasted with other faiths in that it is **THE ONLY TRUE FAITH** or **THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION**. True forgiveness of sin with its promise of eternal life is found **ONLY IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST** (John 14:6, 1 Tim 2:5). This fact of salvation, and content of faith may not be altered. It is **THE TRUTH**, and **TRUTH IS UNCHANGEABLE**. Christian Theology is settled and inscripturated in the 66 books of the Bible. None is to add to or subtract from it (Rev 22:18-19). There is no such thing as “new” theology, C.H. Spurgeon was absolutely correct when he said, “There is nothing new in theology except that which is false.”

Verse 4

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Verse 4 tells us WHY we need to earnestly contend for the faith, The Church has been infiltrated by wicked men. These men have already “crept in.” The word *pareisedusan* is interesting. It is a combination of the prepositions *para* meaning “alongside,” or “beside,” and *eis* meaning “into,” and the verb *duoo* meaning “to go down,” or “to sink.” It has the idea of stealthy intrusion by camouflage. These people by clever subterfuge, join the ranks, mingle with the people, and gradually blend in with the crowd. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus already warned, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in *sheep’s clothing*, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt 7:15). The Apostle Paul echoed the Lord’s warning in Acts 20:28-30 when he said, “Take heed ... For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” The Apostle likewise warned in 2 Pet 2:1, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” These counterfeit believers/teachers are described in three ways: (1) *They have been predestined to be apostates*. Like Judas Iscariot—Apostate of apostates—who betrayed the Lord, the destruction of such men has been decreed by God: “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21). “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov 16:4). **DOUBLE PREDESTINATION!** Predestination of the saved, and of the lost. But it needs to be understood that the lost are lost because of their sins. Although God has foreordained that the lost will be lost, they are lost in that they desired to be lost (cf Rom 1:18-32, 3:10-12). **DIVINE**

SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY! Consider the wickedness of their ways:

(2) *They have perverted the grace of God.* Paul taught, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom 5:20). These perverters of grace make the mercy of God a licence to sin. They are saying, “Since grace did much more abound where sin abounded, let us sin all the more.” Jude calls them “ungodly men.” They may claim to be Christian, but the absence of the fear of God or awesome reverence for God in them reveals their Christless condition (see verses 7,8,10,11,12,13,15,16,19). (3) *They have repudiated Christ.* In practice, by perverting the grace of God, they have shown that they are Christ-deniers in doctrine, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit 1:16). They reveal by their evil works that they do not know Christ in the first place. Their Christology is thoroughly heretical. They deny Christ as (1) *despoteen*—the sovereign DESPOT (i.e. one invested with absolute power), (2) *kyrion*—the LORD of their life, (3) *Ieesoun*—the SAVIOUR of their soul, and (4) *Christon*—the MESSIAH of God.

Verse 5

“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.”

Jude is now saying that apostasy is not something new, It happened in the past. Jude here cites three examples of apostasy from the Old Testament. These examples serve an important purpose, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:6, 11-12). This purpose is reiterated by Jude himself in verse 6, “[these] are set forth for an example” (2 Pet 2:6). Jude strongly desired that they not only know the nature but also the *consequences* of apostasy.

(1) *The Example of Israel.* The account of the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt is found in Exodus 12-15. The Lord rescued Israel out of Egypt in a miraculous way, The Israelites witnessed the 10 plagues the Lord inflicted on Egypt to prove He is the living and true God, and to humble Pharaoh. He opened the mighty Red Sea so that they might have a path to safety from the oncoming horde of Egyptian warriors. In the Sinai journey, the Lord guided them through the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. The cloud provided shade from the hot desert sun, and the fire gave warmth for the cold desert night. The Lord fed them with angel’s food—manna—which miraculously appeared every morning on the ground except on the sabbath, and provided sweet water from the rock which followed them. When they wanted meat, the Lord provided quails. It was miracles galore for the Exodus Israelites. And yet when they reached Kadesh Barnea which was just outside the promised land, they revealed their unbelieving hearts after spying the land when they said, “The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num 13:32-33). “And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?” (Num 14:2-3). The Lord judged and punished these unbelievers and rebels. They were not allowed to enter the promised land. Except for Joshua and Caleb, and every teenager, all died in the wilderness after 40 years of wandering (Num 14:28-33).

Verse 6

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

(2) The Example of the Angels. Sin did not originate in the Edenic Garden but in heaven. Lucifer was the original sinner (Isa 14:12-14, Ezek 28:11-17). He was made a very powerful, intelligent, and beautiful angel. He was created without sin, and was appointed the anointed cherub—a chief angel. But all these made him proud. He wanted to be God himself. This is indicated by his 5 “I will”s in Isa 14: (1) “I will ascend into heaven,” (2) “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God,” (3) “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,” (4) “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,” (5) “I will be like the most High.” Lucifer was made a ruler of angels in heaven but was not contented to be under God. He wanted to be above God, and with a third of the angels, he led the rebellion against God (Rev 12:4). “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev 12:9), The Devil and the demons can expect to be thrown into the lake of fire on the great day of judgment (Rev 20:10).

Verse 7

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

(3) *The Example of Sodom and Gomorrha.* The account of the sin and destruction of the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrha is found in Gen 18-19, Sodom and Gomorrha were sexed crazed cities filled with homosexuals and lesbians. Not only was unnatural sex practised, but they went after “strange flesh” when they wanted to sleep with the angels who came to rescue Lot from the impending judgment (Gen 19:4-5). The wickedness of the people resulted in their destruction by fire and brimstone. The Lord rained burning sulphur upon the cities, and they are buried forever, never to be inhabited again. The above examples tell us in no uncertain terms that apostates will be dealt with severely by God, Those who rebel against God will receive their just deserts.

Verse 8

“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

Jude here returns to the apostates he spoke of in verse 4. What are they like? Well, they are like those described in verses 5-7. They are a faithless, proud, and corrupted people who purposed in their hearts to rebel against God. They likewise will be punished with eternal fire.

Jude calls them “filthy dreamers,” These apostates fill their minds with impure thoughts. It is totally opposite of what God commanded in Phil 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things that are true, whatsoever things that are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Instead of thinking of things morally good, their minds are continually filled with evil thoughts, views, and fantasies.

As filthy dreamers, they (1) *defile the flesh*. The word “defile,” *miainousin* has the idea of staining with colour like the staining of glass windows. Such dreamers dirty themselves through immoral activities of the flesh. They indulge themselves in the lust of the flesh.

They (2) *despise dominion*. The word for “despise” (*athetousin*) has the idea of looking down on or taking a low view of someone or something. It is the lust of the eyes. These people despise the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, denying that He is *Despot, Lord, Saviour, and Christ* (cf v.4). They not only despise His Person, they also despise His Law. The same word is used in Heb 10:28 with reference to Moses’ Law. It is also used in John 12:48 where Jesus said, “He that *rejecteth* me ... receiveth not my words.” A rejection of the Living Word invariably involves a rejection of the Written Word. They hated the authority of Christ and His Word, and sought to demean the Lord and dilute His laws.

They (3) speak evil of dignities. The word for “speak evil” here is *blasphemousin*, where we get the English “blaspheme.” These apostates curse “dignities.” Who are they? In the light of verse 9, the dignities probably refer to *the devil* and *the demons*. Such conceited men consider themselves so mighty that they do not think twice is scolding or insulting the fallen angels. This is the pride of life. It is the sin of presumptuousness, “Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption” (2 Pet 2:10-12).

Verse 9

“Yet Michael the archangel when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”

In 2 Peter 2:11 just read, holy angels in general though more powerful than man, and more knowledgeable of the spiritual realm, refrain from rebuking “them” (i.e. fallen angels). The words “speak evil,” in the previous verse, and “a railing accusation” here are the same Greek word, “blaspheme.” Jude thus identifies who the “dignities” spoken of are. The object of the verb “blaspheme” here reveals the identity of the object of “blaspheme” of verse 8. Jude here specifies one incident involving the chief angel Michael when he was challenged by the devil. The apostates, mere human beings with finite knowledge, arrogantly “blaspheme” the devil, of whom Michael a high ranking angel did not even dare to “blaspheme” against. Michael merely said, “May the Lord rebuke you.” It is interesting to note that the mood of the verb is not in the indicative, or imperative, but in the optative. The indicative mood is the mood of assertion, the imperative the mood of command, and the optative of possibility. The optative mood is a *mood of prayer*. Michael prayed to the Lord to censure him. These apostates on the other hand were personally declaring war against the devil, and engaging him in one-to-one combat with words like, “Satan, you foul spirit, I command you in the name of Christ to go to hell.” Such audacity, not even Michael had.

The dispute between Michael and the devil had to do with the body of Moses. Moses was not allowed by God to enter the promised land. He saw the land from a distance, from Mount Nebo. He died in transjordan and was buried by God in a secret place in Moab (Deut 32:5-6). Jude here tells us that the Lord sent the Archangel Michael to bury Moses. The devil was also interested in the body of Moses but Michael would not let him have it. Michael did not pick a fight with the devil, nor rebuked him personally but simply prayed to the Lord to stop the devil from disturbing his work. Some have suggested that this account was taken from the pseudepigraphal

book of “The Assumption of Moses.” This need not be the case at all. Jude by divine inspiration received this information directly from the Lord (cf John 14:26, 16:13).

Verse 10

“But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”

These apostates “speak evil” (blaspheme against) of things which they are quite ignorant of. The intelligence of man is finite, and cannot fathom the many mysteries of the world beyond. The word “know” here is the Greek *oida* which means “to know *fully*.” We do not know comprehensively the things belonging to the invisible realm. It would be utterly foolish to speak against entities which we know so little of, and our finite minds cannot fully comprehend.

These apostates are described as wild animals which live and survive by instincts. Although they are made in the image of God, they wilfully chose to live at the level of “brute beasts.” The word “brute” here is the Greek *alogos* which literally means “without logic.” These do not live according to the mind or reason, but according to the flesh or senses. Wine, women, and song are things which characterise their daily life. In so doing they corrupt themselves. The word “corrupt” (*phtheirontai*) speaks of a corruption that leads to destruction. These people are killing themselves by the sinful things they indulge in. These are exactly the same people Paul spoke of in Rom 1:18-32.

Verse 11

“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”

In verses 5-7, Jude gave three examples of apostasy. Here he cites three examples of apostates, namely, Cain, Balaam, and Core. He begins with a statement of doom, “Woe unto them!” When man seeks to walk away from God, and refuses to heed His admonitions, there comes a point of no return. They have committed the unpardonable sin, and God and gave them over to destruction. This was the case with Judas Iscariot. The same “woe” was pronounced on him, “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him, but *woe to that man* by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

The Way of Cain. Cain was one of two sons of Adam and Eve. Abel was his brother. The way of Cain was the way of *pride* and *anger*. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, God had laid down the way whereby man should approach him. Sinful man must approach God by way of the *blood*. God slew a lamb and made coats of skin to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve to indicate to them that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Gen 3:21, Lev 17:11, Heb 9:22). Adam and Eve must have told their sons the story of the fall, and the divine provision for forgiveness through a lamb sacrifice. We find in Genesis 4 that Abel obeyed for he “brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.” But Cain rebelled, he “brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.” And we are told, “God had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect” (Gen 4:4-5). Why was Abel’s sacrifice accepted, and Cain’s rejected? “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts” (Heb 11:4). Abel’s faith was based on the Word of God preached to him by his parents, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 11:17). Abel’s sacrifice was called “excellent” because he offered a *blood* sacrifice in obedience to God’s Word through his parents. Cain

showed contempt for God's Word. He rejected God's way of salvation, He told himself, "Surely, I am good enough; God must receive my offering which comes from the sweat of my brows." His self-willed works revealed his faithless heart, He did not love God, and certainly did not love his brother Abel. The Apostle John tells us that Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Cain killed Abel (Gen 4:8). He killed Abel because he was very angry (Gen 4:5). It was an anger directed against God. Cain was angry at God, not Abel. To spite God, he killed Abel whom He had favoured. Now, do you see the evil that characterised Cain the apostate? A proud man is an angry man. And "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jas 1:20). Cain was cursed by God and banished from His presence (Gen 4:11-12,16).

The Error of Balaam. The story of Balaam is given in Num 22-25, and 31:8,16. Israel was at this time about to enter the promised land. This brought fear to the Moabites and Midianites. Balak, king of Moab, requested the prophet Balaam to put a curse on Israel. So Balaam asked God if he could curse Israel. God said, "No." But when Balaam heard Balak's offer of wealth, "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people" (Num 22:17), Balaam went to ask God again whether he could curse Israel. "God's anger was kindled" against Balaam because he showed contempt for His Word. It is a great insult against God to ask Him the same question the second time when He had already given a definite answer. This time the Lord said, "Go" (Num 22:20). When the Lord said go, it meant "Go to your death." Balaam was finally slain by the sword together with the Midianites (Num 31:8). The error of Balaam was the error of greed or covetousness.

(3) *The Gainsaying of Core.* The rebellion of Core or Korah is recorded in Num 16:1-35. Korah came from the Levitical line, and was Moses' cousin (Exod 6:18-21). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—an unholy trinity—led a rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron, These Levites were not contented with ordinary priestly service, they wanted to be high priests. In questioning the priestly office of Moses and Aaron, they are in effect challenging God's appointment of those men. The word "gainsaying" is the Greek *antilogia* which literally means "a word against." They spoke against God who by His Word had appointed Moses and Aaron as leaders of Israel (Exod 3:10, 4:14-16). This very grave sin sent them to their graves for all three were swallowed up by the earthquake (Num 16:25-33), and their 250 followers were consumed by fire from heaven (Num 16:34-35). The sin of Korah was the sin of speaking against God, against His Word, and against His appointed servants.

Verse 12

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Jude continues in his description of apostates. He now uses the natural realm to add colour to his description of them, There are a total of five metaphors.

(1) *Spots.* The Greek word here, *spilades*, refers to submerged rocks of the sea which pose a danger to ships sailing over them. The apostates are like treacherous reef rocks which cause shipwreck to the faith of unsuspecting Christians. They are those who destroy the meaning and significance of *Agape* feasts or Love feasts. In the New Testament Church, the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion was preceded by a communal dinner called the love feast. The rich was given an opportunity on this occasion to help the poor by contributing and sharing their food. But the

apostates in the Church turned the love feast into a lust feast. This happened in the Corinthian Church. Paul described the situation, “Now in this I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper, For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not” (1 Cor 11:17-22). The love feast was turned into a wild party of gluttony and immorality.

But the problem was a deeper one. The above abuse of Lord’s Supper is only an outward manifestation of an inward rebellion. Paul was astute in his judgment when he told the Corinthian Church that “there must be also heresies among you.” If there were heresies, there must be heretics. These heretics were the apostates. They abused the Lord’s Supper because they did not believe in the substitutionary atonement of Christ (i.e. “the body and blood of the Lord” [1 Cor 11:27]). To such, Paul pronounced a curse, “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body (1 Cor 11:29). These people partook of the Holy Communion “unworthily” by “feeding themselves without fear.” They did not have a holy reverence for God. The root problem was not that of practice but of doctrine. They were people without faith—unregenerate.

(2) *Clouds Without Water.* The apostates are “waterless clouds.” This is of course a most unnatural phenomenon for clouds are made up of suspended water particles which produce rain when condensation takes place. If there is no water, there can be no clouds. The point driven across is that such men claim to know, but really they are devoid of knowledge. They offer no spiritual help to the Church for they themselves are spiritually dead. They are described as waterless clouds which are blown in any and every direction by the wind. They are not anchored at all in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. They readily accept any new doctrine that comes along without trying to ascertain whether it is heretical or not. They are devoid of doctrinal discernment, unable to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error.

(3) *Trees Without Life.* The apostates are described as leafless, fruitless, rotten, and uprooted trees. There is no life whatsoever in such trees. Jude is trying to say that such men are not born again or regenerate. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) is totally absent in their lives. Jesus the true vine said, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away” (John 15:1-2). And “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Matt 15:13). “Wherefore by their fruit (in this case “fruitlessness”) ye shall know them” (Matt 7:20; parenthesis mine).

Verse 13

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

(4) *Raging Waves.* Apostates are here likened to the raging waves of the sea. These waves are a result of a hurricane or typhoon, uncontrollable and destructive. When these waves roll back to the sea, they leave behind all kinds of debris and rubbish on the shore. Jude must be thinking of what Isaiah said in his book, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:20-21). These wild and fierce apostates will only destroy that which is good. When they do finally leave the Church, it would be in a state of utter chaos and confusion.

(5) *Wandering Stars*. Apostates are like comets or shooting stars which appear for a moment and then vanish away. The word “wandering” is the same word used of “error” in verse 11 (*planeē*; English: planet). They veer away from the correct path, and they keep on taking the way of error which leads to their ultimate destruction. The apostates will end up like the evil angels in the darkness of hell forever (cf v.6). In the day of judgment, the Lord Jesus Christ will say this to the apostate, “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 22:13).

Verse 14

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.”

This verse on Enoch is unique to Jude. This is the third time Enoch is mentioned in the New Testament (cf Luke 3:37, Heb 11:5). Enoch is introduced to us in Gen 5:18-24. In order that we do not mistake him for somebody else, Jude points out that he is “the seventh from Adam,” After Adam, we find Seth, then Enos, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared and finally Enoch, the one who “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Gen 5:24). Enoch was the first saint to experience the rapture; a preview of the great rapture of the Church when Christ returns (1 Cor 15:51-57, 1 Thes 4:14-17). Enoch was a righteous man. The author of Hebrews tells us that “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5).

Not only was Enoch a man of faith, Jude tells us that he was also a prophet when he foretold that the Lord will come with ten thousands of his saints (1 Thes 3:13, Rev 19). This information is not found in Genesis, nor elsewhere. Where did Jude get this prophecy of Enoch? The answer is simple: from God Himself (2 Pet 1:21). God spoke, and Jude recorded it down. Enoch prophesied of these apostates of the last days. God revealed to Enoch the truth of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the second time with great power and glory. Enoch was a man of faith because he believed as Abraham did and “it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gal 3:6, Gen 15:6). The same may be said of Enoch when Christ spoke of Abraham “who rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56).

Verse 15

“To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against them.”

Jesus Christ came the first time as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). When He comes the second time, He will come as “Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Rev 19:11). The second coming of Christ is for a twofold purpose: (1) *To execute Judgment*. The world will be ripe for judgment when Christ returns, God destroyed the whole world the first time through water (Gen 6-8). The whole world will be judged again, this time by fire—“the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Pet 3:12). On that day, “Jesus shall be revealed from the heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess 1:7-9).

(2) *To convince the ungodly.* The word “convince” here *elegxai* means “to convict.” It has the idea of convincing someone that he is wrong, to reveal his fault or error, to prove that he is guilty. This conviction is directed against all the ungodly. The word “ungodly” is used four times in this verse. This ungodliness involves both deed and speech. Their ungodly deeds of the flesh have already been pointed out in verses 4 (licentiousness), 7 (fornication), and 11 (covetousness). Their irreverent speech was mentioned in verses 4 (against the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ), and 8-10 (against the invisible angelic forces in high places).

Verse 16

“These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.”

Jude here elaborates on how the apostates have sinned in their speech. (1) *Murmurers.* This word reminds us of the sin of the Israelites in the wilderness when they grumbled against God: “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Exod 16:2-3). See how spiteful the words were? God must have been deeply hurt. These apostates likewise in their lustful desire to live the sensual life often find themselves discontented, and when frustrated, hurl vindictive words against God. The law of success, “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6) is totally alien to them.

(2) *Complainers.* The word *mempsimoiroi* is a compound word comprising *mempbomai* which means “to find fault with,” or “to blame,” and *moira* which means “a portion,” or “an allotment.” Such complainers are those who are dissatisfied with their lot in life and so blame God for it. This kind of a complaining spirit was found in Job’s wife when she told him to “curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). The apostates are quick to raise their fist against God when things untoward happen to them, or when they do not get their way or what they want, They lust after evil things and when their ungodly deeds eventually cause their own downfall, they blame God instead of themselves. It is the complete opposite of Job who was a thanksgiver. In a state of destitution, Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15), “the LORD gave, and the LORD taketh away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

(3) *Boasters.* The word *huperogka* translated in the KJV as “great swelling words” is significant. It comes from two words *huper*, “over,” and *ogkos*, “a mass.” Literally, it means “overly massive.” It is particularly applied to the conceited, arrogant, and boastful man. These apostates think so highly of themselves that cannot stop talking about themselves—their degrees, achievements, commendations, medals, prowess etc. It is an over-inflated case of the self-esteem syndrome revealed in the pompous statements they make of themselves. Such were the false teachers in the Corinthian Church who called themselves “super-apostles” (2 Cor 11:5, 12:11, *hyperlian apostoloon*). This is revealed in their (1) self-commendation (2 Cor 3:1, 10:13-18, 11:12,18), (2) self-promotion (2 Cor 4:5), (3) self-ostentation (2 Cor 5:12), and (4) self-righteousness (2 Cor 11:20), The APOSTATIC spirit seeks always to promote SELF while the APOSTOLIC spirit seeks only to promote CHRIST. The Apostle Paul said, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5).

(4) *Flatterers.* The phrase *thaumazontes prosoopa* literally means “admiring faces,” The Hokkien dialect has an equivalent, *kua lang* or *kua been*. These apostates heap adulations on men of wealth or power in the Church for their own profit. They are “Yes” men. They preach not to prick the hearts but to tickle the ears of sinners. These are exactly the ones whom Jeremiah preached

against, “They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you” (Jer 23:17). These are “rice-bowl” preachers “whose God is their belly, and whose religion is their kitchen” (John Calvin). If a person is really called of God, he would no doubt say, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men”. for if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10 cf Eph 6:6, Col 3:22). May we never curry the favour of men, but always seek the approval of God.

Verse 17

“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

Jude here speaks directly and only to the believers of the Lord Jesus Christ who are the “beloved ones.” These are the genuine sheep, not the wolves in sheep’s clothing, These are the ones who have truly experienced the special love of God in their lives. They are here commanded to recall all the things taught to them by the Apostles. Stated negatively, Jude is saying, “*Don’t forget* what we have taught you!”

The Apostles in their divinely-inspired ministry “have not shunned to declare ... all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). The Apostles have not failed to warn them of apostates. Consider all these verses:

- (1) Acts 20:28-30, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”
- (2) Rom 16:17-18, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
- (3) 2 Cor 11:13-15, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”
- (4) Phil 3:1 7-19, Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample, (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)”
- (5) 2 Thess 2:3-12, Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ... Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion; that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”
- (6) 1 Tim 4:1, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from

- the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”
- (7) 1 Tim 6:20-21, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.”
 - (8) 2 Tim 3:1-8, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”
 - (9) 2 Tim 4:1-5, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”
 - (10) Tit 1:10-11,16, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. ... They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”
 - (11) Heb 6:4-6, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”
 - (12) 2 Pet 2:1-3, 3:1-4,1 7, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. ... This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. ... Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”
 - (13) 1 John 2:18-19, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. ... Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”
 - (14) 1 John 4:1-3, “Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit

that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

(15) 2 John 7, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Apostolic warnings against apostasy are not few. Although the great commission as positively stated in Matt 28:18-20 tells us to “Go and teach all nations,” the negative equivalent is implied, “Stay and protect the Church from all forms of heresy and apostasy.”

Verse 18

“How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.”

The Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had constantly from time to time warned the Church concerning end-time apostasy. The “last time” here means “the last days” (2 Pet 3:3). To which period of time is this referring? Heb 1:1-2 has the answer, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son.” The period called “the last days” began at the first coming of Christ, and will end at the second coming of Christ. The first coming of Christ is the beginning of the last days, the second coming of Christ is the end of the last days. We are heading into the 21st century, and in view of the apostasy taking place around us, we can be quite sure that we are in the last of the last days. The clock is just about 5 minutes to midnight.

During this period of time, “mockers” will arise. The same word is translated “scoffers” in 2 Pet 3:3. The Greek *empaiktees* is used with reference to charlatans or imposters. They mock or scoff so as to make light of truth, to throw people off the right track to follow their wicked ways. These mockers are habitually walking after the lusts that is sourced in their own godless condition.

Verse 19

“These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

The apostates are further described as separatists. The word used is *apodiorizontes*, found only here in the New Testament. It is a combination of the prepositions *apo*, “away from,” *dia*, “through,” and *horizoo*, “to draw a line.” It means “to divide,” or “to separate.” The word is to be distinguished from *aphorizoo* of 2 Cor 6:17 where God commanded His people to separate from sin and idolatry. The meaning “separate” there is accurate, But here, the word is better translated “to isolate;” it is not just “to separate,” but “to twice separate” as intended by the double prepositional construct of *apodiorizoo*. The verse may be translated, “These men are isolationists.” These apostates cause not only churches but also families to break up. This is one common characteristic of cults.

Not only are they isolationists, they are unspiritual. They are the *psychichoi* “natural,” and not the *pneumatikos* “spiritual” type of man. In other words, the apostates are men who do not have the Holy Spirit within them, and thus are totally devoid of spiritual understanding. They are given over to fleshly appetites to obey the lusts of their sinful nature. These may claim to be Christians, but in terms of spiritual condition, they are no better than the unbelieving and unregenerate populace outside the Church.

Verse 20

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”

Jude here contrasts the believers with the unbelievers of the previous verse. The apostates are described in verse 19 as those who (1) tear apart others from the faith, and (2) are without the Holy Spirit. The saints on the other hand are here described as people who (1) build themselves up in the faith, and (2) pray in the Holy Spirit.

The word for “building up” here *epikodomountes* literally means “to build upon” and is often translated “to edify.” Contrary to apostates, the saints are concerned for the edification of the body of Christ and not the destruction of it. A child of God is interested in knowing more about his heavenly Father, and His Lord and Saviour so that he might grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is one thing Christians who live in apostate days must do if they are to keep themselves from falling. Peter warned, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:17-18). Christians must not remain where they are after conversion. They must mature spiritually in their knowledge and application of the Word of God (1 Pet 2:2-3, 2 Tim 3:16-17). They are called to build upon “the most holy faith.” “The most holy faith” is a restatement of “the once-for-all-delivered-unto-the-saints faith” of verse 3. It is the objective faith—the Christian Faith—the faith that is inscripturated in the Holy Bible. And the building on the faith entails the *defending* of the faith as well. The example of the Jewish returnees who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem is a case in point. Neh 4:17-18 says, “They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, everyone with one of his hands, wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.” Every Christian must build with a spade in one hand, and with a sword in the other. A Christian who is Bible-believing is also Bible-defending.

In our efforts to defend the Faith, it is vital that we remember we contend not with our own strength but in God’s. We must not fail to include God in the battle; He is our Captain. We must be very dependent upon God in prayer. Paul likewise when he spoke of spiritual warfare, did not fail to bring in prayer: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph 6:11,18). If we are to keep ourselves from being led astray by, and to earnestly contend for the faith against false teachers, we must heed the words of the Lord in Zechariah, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6). The faithful warrior is the prayer warrior.

Verse 21

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

In the midst of dangers that arise in an apostate generation, the apostolic injunction is this: “Yourselves in the love of God, keep!” The “love of God” here does not refer to our love for God, but God’s love for us (a subjective genitive). The Church is loved by God (v.3, 17,20). God will keep us from all harm and danger because He loves us. But, at the same time, we must realise that we need to keep ourselves in His love by obeying His Word. Jesus said, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my

commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:9-10). Jesus Christ is the beloved Son of the Father because Jesus obeyed the Father's Word and did His will; He fulfilled all righteousness (Matt 3:15). So must we if we want to remain in God's love.

How to keep oneself in God's love? It is by "looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," The word *prosdexomenoi* means "to wait expectantly for." We are told to keep on looking in expectancy for the Lord's help in time of need, and to wait expectantly for the Lord's return. While the apostates scoff at Christ's return, the saints must eagerly wait for it; "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:13). When we anxiously look forward to that day of redemption, we will then engage in the work of the Lord with zeal because we want to hasten the coming of that day (2 Pet 3:12).

Verse 22

"And of some have compassion making a difference:"

Now that we know how we can keep ourselves from the tide of apostasy, it is important for us to know how to help others. Jude says that we ought to show mercy to others, "making a difference," What does "making a difference" mean? The word is *diakrinoo* which literally means "to judge through." Here, it means "to discern," We are called to discern between the deceived brother and the apostate. We show mercy to the former, but not the latter! This kind of a discernment was exercised by Jesus. For example, Jesus was very gentle, patient, and kind in his dealings with the common folks who had sinned. Consider the woman taken in adultery in John 8:1-11. Jesus did not rebuke her outright, but gently restored her, "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord, And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11). But to the religious leaders of the Jewish nation, the Lord had very severe words, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!", "Ye fools and blind," "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness," "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers" (Matt 23:14,17,27,33). We ought to mince no words in denouncing the false pastors and false theologians. But to the ordinary member of the pew who are being misled by their leaders, we ought to patiently teach them the whole counsel of God, and pray that they see the truth quickly.

Verse 23

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The "others" here refer to stubborn believers who may not be so teachable. Since these will only respond to warnings and threats, then such will they receive, Just like Lot, they must be forced out of the burning city. How was Lot rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah? Genesis 19:15-16 records, "And when the morning arose, then the angels *hastened* Lot (he was taking his own sweet time!), saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city (this was a threat to terrorise Lot into action). And while he lingered, *the men laid hold upon his hand* (in other words, they took him by force), and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him outside the city" (italics and parentheses mine). Lot was literally

“plucked out of the fire,” for the Lord had mercy on him. We likewise ought to waste no time in strongly persuading fellow believers who are in apostate churches to come out immediately.

In our attempts to rescue erring brethren out of apostasy, it is absolutely vital that we ourselves be careful not to be influenced into error; instead of pulling them out, we get pulled in! Love the sinner, but hate the sin! Like the fireman, we go into the burning house, rescue the victims, and get out immediately. What is foremost in the mind of a fireman in the midst of a burning house is the word “out!” Jude is calling for separation, not infiltration. Separation is the method of apostles to keep churches pure (2 Cor 6:14), while infiltration is the method of apostates to cause churches to be defiled (Jude 4).

Verse 24

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”

Jude gives a very fitting conclusion here by way of a most meaningful benediction. In the midst of rampant apostasy, there is only One who is able to keep us from being swept away, and He is the only wise God our Saviour (v.25). The living and true God is powerful to protect us. The word for “keep” here is *phulaxai* which means “to guard,” and is to be distinguished from the word “keep” of verse 21 which is *teereo*. Here, it has the idea of a vigilant watching over. It describes the work of a security guard.

God keeps watch over us to prevent us from falling. The word “falling” here is the Greek *haptaioustos* which literally means “free from stumbling,” In the light of the context, the stumbling here has to do with apostasy. The Lord will protect us from falling into the state of perdition. And God cannot fail in protecting us, In other words, a genuine child of God will never apostatise. The salvation of a Christian can never be lost because God is the One who safeguards it. The Psalmist says, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore” (Ps 121).

God will present us faultless in the presence of His glory. God will keep us from falling to the very end. On the last day, we will be “faultless.” This is the promise of God, The word “faultless” here is the Greek *amomos* which may also mean “blameless.” It is used with reference to the sacrificial lamb which must be without spot or blemish (cf 1 Pet 1:18-10). One day we will be totally freed from sin. That will happen when we receive our glorified body at the time of the rapture, “for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53), This brings us back to verse 21. Our salvation is secure because God loves His Church—“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). Does not this knowledge that we can never lose our salvation bring great joy in your heart? Yes, as Christians we are of all people most happy!

Verse 25

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

When we realise that our salvation is all of God’s work—that He has saved us, is saving us, and will save us to the very end—we just want to say, “Lord, thank You!” He is the only living and true God. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). To Him belong all these attributes of deity: (1) *Glory (doxa)*. This refers to His *shekinah* glory. Jesus radiates the glory of His divine essence. This glory was manifested for a brief moment on the Mount of Transfiguration witnessed by Peter, James and John (Matt 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36). John testified, “*And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

(2) *Majesty (megaloosune)*. This refers to His kingship. The word is used only two other times in the New Testament and both in the book of Hebrews (1:3, 8:1). His throne is above that of all others. He is “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). His greatness is infinite, and His splendour is unmatched.

(3) *Dominion (kratos)*. This refers to His omnipotence. He is all-powerful, and has dominion over all things whether they be in heaven, or on earth. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell” (Col 1:16-19).

(4) *Power (exousia)*. This refers to His authority. He reserves the right to do whatever He pleases. Jesus said, “All power (or authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18). The emphasis here is on His Lordship. Jesus Christ is all the above because God “hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). Since eternity past, and till eternity future, glory, majesty, dominion, and power are His.

Let us therefore take a stand for God, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).