**Jude Commentary**

**Jude Chapter 1**

Jde 1:1

**“Jude.”** In the Greek, Jude is the name “Judah,” a common name in the first century AD. The name Judah was very familiar in Judaism on account of such prominent figures in the OT like Judah, the son of Jacob, whose descendants became known as the tribe of Judah.

**“brother of James.”** This James is the brother of Jesus and head of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). He became the head of the Jerusalem church sometime after the apostle James, who was the brother of the apostle John, was executed by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2). After the apostle James was killed, there is only one other James simply referred to as “James” in the NT (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9, 12) and only one James who had a brother named Judas in the New Testament (Mark 6:3). James was well-known and respected among the Jews, and for Jude to identify himself as the brother of James was not as unclear or pretentious as saying “brother of Jesus,” even though he was.

**“called ones.”** In the Epistles, this phrase refers to those who have accepted God’s call and are saved. Richard Bauckham is correct when he calls it “a substantive [an adjective used as a noun]…a technical term for Christians.”[[1]](#footnote-24539) See commentaries on Romans 1:1 and 8:28.

**“kept by Jesus Christ.”** The phrase has an eschatological sense: the believer is kept safe for Jesus Christ at his coming. The phrase would be especially meaningful here in Jude because the false teachers were creeping in and causing problems for the Church, but the “called” are nevertheless safe for Jesus Christ.

Jde 1:3

**“faith.”** In this context, and at this time of writing, “the Faith” refers to the Good News, the Christian message. In that sense, it is the same as Galatians 1:23, where Paul preached “the Faith” he once tried to destroy (and Galatians was the earliest of Paul’s Epistles, AD 48-49). Early on in Christianity, it was clear that there were certain fundamental beliefs that were central to the Christian message: the sinless life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and that he was the Lord at the right hand of God. Those central and simple truths would have comprised “the Faith” in those early years. Some scholars have tried, based on an assumed late date for the writing of Jude, to make “the Faith” into a much more complex fixed body of orthodox doctrine, and a sign that there was an early Catholic Faith, but that is not what Jude is referring to.

**“once for all *time*.”** The vital and unalterable central truth of Christianity was the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. These were delivered “once for all time,” and are not subject to change or modification. But the ungodly people creeping into Christianity were perverting the grace of God, denying the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejecting lordship (Jude 1:4, 8). The Devil is crafty and is always working to destroy the Faith, so we have to be diligent to fight for it.

Jde 1:4

**“written about long ago.”** The Bible does not say how many years previously, and the debate ranges from early times in the Old Testament to as late as 2 Peter. We don’t know exactly what Jude had in mind, but it was before he wrote. Many English versions say that the people were “designated” or “ordained” for this judgment. Understanding the phrase in this way is idiomatic and comes from the idea that anything that is written in prophecy will happen, but that is not what Jude is trying to do in this verse. Jude seems to be saying that the judgments in the Old Testament are comparable to the judgments that will come upon the ungodly people of Jude’s day. He is not saying that there were prophecies written about the ungodly people in Jude’s day, but rather that the various judgments that happened to Old Testament sinners will also come to pass on the ungodly people of Jude’s day.

**“for this condemnation.”** The Greek text literally says, “this judgment” (τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα). But the referent of the pronoun “this” is cataphoric, meaning the word it refers to is located ahead in the text rather than previously. Jude proceeds to list several examples of judgment upon people in the OT and then connects those judgments with the one that will come upon the ungodly people who have crept in among them.

**“perverting.”** The Greek word is *metatithēmi* (#3346 μετατίθημι), and it means to move or transfer from one place to another; to change or alter; to change one’s mind about one’s allegiance. When *metatithēmi* is used as “to change or alter,” as it is here in Jude, it is often used as “to twist” or “to pervert.” Thus, many English versions use “pervert” (ESV, NAB, NIV, NRSV, RSV). Through the ages, many people have perverted the grace of God and used it as an excuse for unrestrained behavior, especially sexual. God gives grace, undeserved divine favor, but it is never the “favor” to sin. The Bible tells us how God wants us to live, and defines sin as breaking the commandments of God or going against His will. God gives us grace to be saved, grace to forgive our sin, grace in times of need, and much more, but God does not overlook our sin “by grace.” We are free in Christ by grace, but Scripture says, “do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh” (Gal. 5:13), nor are we to use our freedom as a cover-up for evil (1 Pet. 2:16).

**“immoral indulgence.”** The Greek is *aselgeia* (#766 ἀσέλγεια, pronounced ä-'sel-gay-a), and it refers to living without any moral restraint, especially referring to sexual immorality. It is excess, wantonness, outrageousness, licentiousness, lasciviousness, indecency, sensuality, lustful indulgence, flagrant immorality. The difficulty in bringing *aselgeia* into English is that if we make it all about sexual excess, we miss the fact that the immoral behavior can also be about money, power, fame, etc. On the other hand, if we make the English translation too neutral, we miss the fact that the Greek word usually has a clear sexual overtone, and that would be true here in Jude also. Sexual sin has been a scourge of the Church since the first century (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-13), and it still is today. Sadly, while most people recognize their sexual sin as a moral weakness and are ashamed of it, some Christians play a mental game and pervert the grace of God such that they assert their sin is not sin, but allowable as part of God’s great grace. Any honest and straightforward reading of the New Testament will show that this is not true, but is what Jude says it is: a perversion of the truth.

**“Master.”** The Greek is *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης) and means master or lord, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cf. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9). It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4). Here it refers to Jesus Christ. See commentary on Luke 2:29.

Jde 1:5

**“want.”** The word “want” is from *boulomai* (#1014 βούλομαι), which here has the undertone of “counsel” or “plan.” This shows Jude’s thoughtfulness for his readers, more than just *wanting* to write to them, he deemed it necessary according to his counsel.

**“the Lord.”** The Greek texts of Jude 1:5 differ. Some Greek manuscripts read “Jesus,” and some read “the Lord.” There is even one manuscript that was obviously changed, and reads, “the God Christ.” The Aramaic texts read “God.” The weight of evidence is that “the Lord” was the original reading of the Greek texts. It is possible that an early scribe made a mistake and changed “the Lord” to “Jesus” (early scribes often used abbreviations, and the abbreviation for “Lord” was KC, and the abbreviation for Jesus was IC (both had lines over them). A scribe could have easily mistakenly substituted an “I” for a “K.”

It is also possible that the change was made on purpose. In the early centuries after Christ, the debate between Biblical Unitarians and Trinitarians was very heated, and “losers” of debates were often banished or killed. Therefore, there was a lot of pressure to change the text of the Bible to read in a Trinitarian fashion. Bart Ehrman (who is an agnostic but a good textual scholar) wrote a book, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, which has many examples of the original text being modified to conform to the developing orthodox position.

The modern English versions differ as to what reading is original, but the majority of them say “the Lord” (cf. HCSB, KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, and YLT), while the ESV and NET read, “Jesus.” The RSV says, “he,” apparently following a conjecture of F. J. A. Hort, that perhaps the original text read *ho* (ὁ; literally “the” but used for “he” or “the one”), and that the longer readings of “the Lord” or “the Jesus” (proper names usually had the definite article before them), came from that short reading, but most scholars feel that is not likely.

When the Greek sources are divided, we can sometimes get help from the scope, the context, and other readings, and that clearly seems to be the case here. First, there is no Old Testament text that says or even implies that Jesus led Israel out of Egypt. Thus, the concept of Jesus leading Israel out of Egypt would be totally foreign to Jude’s readers. Furthermore, Jesus never said or implied that he had anything to do with the Exodus or Israel’s journey out of Egypt. Also, Jude nowhere else calls Jesus Christ by the singular name of “Jesus,” as Jude 1:5 does in some Greek texts, but always refers to him as “Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1, 4, 17, 21). All this is good evidence that Jude did not originally read “Jesus” in verse 5.

Given the textual evidence of the Greek and Aramaic texts, the difficulty for Jude’s audience that “Jesus” was inserted into the Exodus record, the scope of Scripture concerning the Exodus, the uses of the name “Jesus Christ” in the book of Jude, and ease of making the text say “Jesus” either by mistake or from the pressure to produce a Trinitarian text to bolster the doctrine of the Trinity, we can conclude with the editing committees of the majority of modern Bibles that “the Lord” was the reading of the original text.

**“at one time.”** This is the meaning in this verse of the Greek word *deuteron* (#1208 δεύτερος), meaning “second.” The “first time,” God delivered all the people out of Egypt by grace, even though they did not all deserve it. But then the second time, he made a distinction according to faith and destroyed those who did not believe in the desert after the Exodus. BDAG translates *deuteron* in this verse as “the second time,” and notes that Jude is making a “contrast between two special moments of display of divine power, one in salvation, and the second in destruction.” The versions that read “afterward” miss this point.

Jde 1:6

**“And.”** The Greek word is *te* (#5037 τέ), a copulative enclitic particle. It differs from *kai* (“and”) in that *kai* is conjunctive, whereas *te* is adjunctive. Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon says, “καί introduces something new under the same aspect yet as an external addition, whereas τέ marks it as having an inner connection with what precedes; hence, καί is the more general particle, τέ the more special and precise; καί may often stand for τέ, but not τέ for καί.”

This section of Jude (Jude 1:5-7) is a very strong warning against ignoring or defying God. Jude gives three examples of those who turned away from God and suffered very serious consequences: 1) Israelites who, during the wilderness wanderings after the Exodus, did not believe God and were destroyed. 2) Fallen angels who sinned and now are in gloomy darkness awaiting their judgment. 3) The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who indulged in sexual immorality and were destroyed by fire. So it is not just humans who defy God and receive harsh consequences, but “angels too.”

[For more on how the fallen angels sinned, see commentary on Gen. 6:4, “Nephilim.”]

**“angels.”** What we refer to as “demons” (or “devils”) today are angels who decided to follow Satan and defy God. When Satan rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19), some of the angels joined him and became part of his satanic army of evil spirits, which is why demons are referred to as “his” angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9). They will eventually be thrown into the Lake of Fire and destroyed. The Bible refers to the spirits aligned with Satan as “angels” in Matthew 25:41; Jude 1:6; and Revelation 12:9, and they are also called “stars of heaven,” another designation for angels (Rev. 12:4).

Sometimes Satan’s angels are called “fallen angels,” but that is not a biblical term; it is man-made, so we must understand it when we use it. The Devil and demons have access to heaven, and will have that access until Michael and his angels cast them out of heaven during the Great Tribulation, which is still future. From that time until when they are locked up in the Abyss after the Battle of Armageddon, Satan and his angels will only be on earth and will not be allowed in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9, 12-13). If we use the term “fallen angel,” we must understand it in the sense of fallen from their previously exalted positions, fallen from God’s grace, and they are now defiant enemies of God. “Fallen angels” are not “fallen” in location from heaven to earth until they are thrown out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9).

[For more on the angels who follow Satan, see commentary on Rev. 12:9.]

**“did not keep their *own* domain, but abandoned their proper dwelling.”** To understand Jude 1:6, we must understand what it is referring to, which is the record in Genesis 6:1-4 and the records of the Nephilim. These records are not well-known to Christians today, and so what Jude says is confusing to many Christians. However, it is likely that the vast majority of Jude’s audience was very familiar with the teaching in Genesis that fallen angels married human females and produced a race of Fallen Ones; the Nephilim. The rabbis taught that; it is spoken about in the book of Enoch, and even the Jewish historian Josephus writes about it in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.

In Genesis 6:1-4, some “sons of God,” fallen angels (Jude just calls them “angels”), did not stay in their natural spiritual domain, the spiritual world, but came into the physical world. They also left their natural spirit bodies (their “proper dwelling”), and came into concretion, and lived in the physical world, taking human females as wives and corrupting the physical world of humans. As a consequence of that sin, God put those fallen angels in Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4), a prison for gods, and kept them in gloomy darkness in that prison.

The Greek word translated “domain” is *archē* (#746 ἀρχή, pronounced ar-'kay), and in this context, it means the dominion entrusted to them.[[2]](#footnote-11874) God entrusted a domain in the spiritual world to angels, but some of the angels did not keep their own domain. Instead, they left the spiritual world and came into concretion in the physical world.

Not only did some angels leave the spiritual world, they also left their natural spirit bodies and came into concretion into some kind of physical body so they could live with humans. The word “dwelling” in Jude 1:6 is a translation of the Greek noun *oikētērion* (#3613 οἰκητήριον, pronounced oy-kay-'tay-ree-on), derived from the Greek verb *oikeō*, “to live in, to dwell in.” An *oikētērion* was a dwelling place, a body, for one’s life and intellect, which was the “real you,” the real person inside the body. The only other place in the New Testament that *oikētērion* is used besides here in Jude is in 2 Corinthians 5:2, where it refers to the new body that the Christian will get at the Rapture. In this world, Christians have a body, but we look for a better body, a new “dwelling place” (*oikētērion*) from heaven.

So Jude is saying that the fallen angels left their domain, the spiritual world, and their proper dwelling place, which was their spirit body, and for that, they were punished. In order for us to know what the fallen angels did after they left their spirit bodies that was such a great sin against God that they are now in gloomy darkness awaiting judgment, we have to go to other parts of the Word of God, specifically Genesis 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Peter 2:4; and Jude 1:7.

We learn from Jude 1:7 that the fallen angels engaged in sexual immorality and went after “unnatural flesh.” In the dark and demonic world of witches and warlocks, it is well-known that demons come into concretion—into physical forms. They can take on any number of physical appearances, which explains why there are so many reputable people who have seen ghosts and spirits of all types, or who have had problems with poltergeists or hauntings. As well as coming into various physical forms, demons can also affect the physical world by making sounds, moving things, causing hot or cold areas, and such things as that.

When demons take on human physical form, sometimes they have sexual relations with, or sexually satisfy, humans. When a demon takes on a male form it is called an incubus, when it takes on a female form it is known as a succubus. Jude 1:7 tells us that the demons in prison in gloomy darkness went after unnatural flesh and committed sexual immorality, and then Genesis 6:1-4 expands that and we can tell from Genesis that the demons also, through the human females, produced a genetically altered race of humans called the Nephilim, or “Fallen Ones.” The demons did not actually breed with the women the way that human males impregnate females, but were able to genetically alter children born by the women in the same basic way that they genetically altered God’s creation to produce dangerous animals and plants with thorns (see commentary on Gen. 6:2).

[For more on the “sons of God” being fallen angels, see commentary on Gen. 6:2. For more on the Nephilim, see commentary on Gen. 6:4. For the place where the demons are kept being called a “prison,” see commentary on 1 Pet. 3:19. For more on the fallen angels being chained in Tartarus in gloomy darkness, see commentary on 2 Pet. 2:4. For more on what is meant by “fallen angels,” see commentary on Rev. 12:9.]

**“in gloomy darkness.”** The word “in” is the Greek preposition *hupo*, which technically means “under,” but in this context, we would say “in.” The idea of the demons being “under” gloomy darkness” is somewhat similar to our English idea of being “under house arrest.” A person sentenced to house arrest is not actually “under” anything, it is more like “being subject to” house arrest; similarly, the demons are “being subject to” gloomy darkness. *The Kingdom New Testament* by N.T. Wright translates the phrase, “under conditions of darkness.”

The phrase “gloomy darkness” is translated from the Greek word *zophos* (#2217 ζόφος), which means “darkness, gloom, blackness; the darkness of the nether world,” and it is a darkness or gloom which is associated with fear and foreboding. It can refer to partial or total darkness, depending on the context.

Jude 1:6 is a verse that may well take its meaning from the way the phrase *hupo zophos* was used in the poetry of the Greek culture. The Greek poets used the phrase *hupo zophos* to refer to the underworld or netherworld. Thus, an ancient Greek person reading Jude 1:6 might understand it to be saying that the angels who did not stay in the spiritual world and did not remain in their spirit bodies are now imprisoned in the underworld, which, of course, was a place of gloomy darkness.

**“eternal chains”** In this context, “eternal” is a hyperbole, an exaggeration for effect. The bonds are not “eternal,” they last until the Judgment, when the fallen angels are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). However, it has been thousands of years since many of those demons were bound in Tartarus, and so “eternal” is an effective hyperbole.

**“until the judgment.”** The Greek word translated as “until” in the REV is the preposition *eis* (#1519 εἰς). In this case, *eis* seems to have the meaning of “until,” that is, the angels are imprisoned “until” the judgment, at which time they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Many versions and commentators use “until” here (cf. ESV, NJB, RSV). However, the word *eis* is also a word that indicates purpose and is often translated “for” (cf. CJB, HCSB, NASB, NET, NIV). Although in this verse the purpose of the imprisonment seems to take a second position to the timing described in the verse, we must allow for the possibility that God’s righteous judgment is certainly a purpose for the imprisonment.

Jde 1:7

**“in a similar way as those *angels*.”** The fallen angels left their spirit-bodies and went after “unnatural flesh,” humans, who were not “natural” for them, and similarly, the people in Sodom and Gomorrah committed sexual immorality, and went after “unnatural flesh” by having homosexual relations. God’s Word says the “natural” sexual relationship is a man with a woman (cf. Rom. 1:26-27). The men of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house and demanded he bring out the men who were visiting him so they could have sex with them (Gen. 19:5).

[For more on fallen angels being with human women, see commentary on Gen. 6:2.]

**“unnatural flesh.”** The Greek word translated “unnatural” is *heteros* (#2087 ἕτερος), meaning “another of a different kind.” In this case, the “other kind” of flesh is still flesh, not something other than flesh, so the emphasis of the word is on the fact that the difference makes it “unnatural” (cf. ESV, NAB, NET, NRSV).

**“of the fire of the age *to come*.”** The “age to come” is the Messianic Age, the future age in which Christ rules the earth, and the fire of the age to Come is the Lake of Fire spoken of in the book of Revelation. The phrase, “*the* age *to come*” is a common biblical meaning for the Greek word *aiōnios* (#166 αἰώνιος), however, it can also mean “everlasting” or “long-lasting.” We believe it is best translated here as “*the* age *to come*.” Also, the fire of the age to come is spoken of in Matthew 25:41.

The wording of Jude 1:7 can be confusing. If the verse is translated the way most English versions do, which is that Sodom and Gomorrah undergo the punishment of eternal fire, we have the problem that the fire on Sodom and Gomorrah was not “eternal,” it was quite short. If “eternal” (actually, more accurately “everlasting”) is the way *aiōnios* is understood in this verse, then “everlasting fire” is a metonymy of effect for the effect of the fire, which is everlasting, i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah are everlastingly destroyed by fire.

If, however, *aiōnios* is understood as referring to the Age to Come, which it seems to be, then God is drawing a comparison between the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah and the punishment of the fire of the Age to Come, which is punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). In that case, Jude 1:7 is saying that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the same punishment as the punishment that will occur in the fire of the Age to Come, and that punishment is total destruction; total annihilation.

It is in part because the Lake of Fire does not burn people forever, but instead, people burn up in it and are annihilated, that in Jude 1:7 *aiōnios* should be taken to mean, “*the* age *to come*,” and not “eternal.” Sodom and Gomorrah were specifically said to be burned up by fire and burning sulfur (Gen. 19:24), and the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation also has fire and burning sulfur (Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8), so the fire on Sodom and Gomorrah is the same kind of fire as “the fire of the age to come.” Furthermore, the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were burned up, and the people thrown into the Lake of Fire will not burn forever, but will be burned up too.

[For more on the fallen angels going after “unnatural flesh” and the Nephilim that were produced, see commentary on Gen. 6:4. For more on *aiōnios* referring to the age to come, see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.” For more on the Messianic Age on earth, see commentary on Matt. 5:5. For more on people being annihilated in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Jde 1:8

**“because of their dreams.”** The participle *enupniazomenoi* (#1797 ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι) refers to the process of sleeping and is not used in a figurative way as we do in English with dreaming (as in having goals or desires). Although this phrase is quite strange and a little unclear as to how their “dreaming” caused them to sin in these ways, this statement most likely refers to fantasies that these people had while they were sleeping which they falsely attributed to revelation from God. In other words, they used what they received as “revelation from God” to justify their sinful actions. They used their dreams as “divine approval” for these sinful actions.[[3]](#footnote-29094)

**“slander.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“the glorious ones.”** See commentary on 2 Peter 2:10.

Jde 1:9

**“ruling angel.”** When God created the spiritual world with different spiritual beings, He made some of His angels to be “archangels.” The Greek word is *archangelos* (#743 ἀρχάγγελος), a word built from the Greek prefix *archi* (chief; highest; first) and the word *angelos* (“messenger,” “angel”). “Archangel” means “chief angel” or “ruling angel,” and the Christian world would have a much better grasp of the authority structures of the spirit world if the Greek word *archangelos* had been translated as “ruling angel” instead of transliterated as “archangel.”

The angelic world has a hierarchy, with some angels ruling over others. The ruling angel Michael is specifically called one of the “chief princes” (or “primary rulers”) in Daniel 10:13. Similarly, Revelation 10:1 and 18:21 mention “strong” angels who are more powerful than others. Not only do the angels differ in authority and power, there are also more kinds of spirit beings than just angels, such as cherubim and seraphim.

[For more information on ruling angels and the spiritual world, see commentary on Gen. 1:26.]

**“Devil.”** The Greek word is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which literally means “Slanderer,” but *diabolos* gets transliterated into English as our more familiar name, “Devil.” Slander is so central to who the Devil is and how he operates that one of his primary names is “the Slanderer.”

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil”].

**“he did not dare.”** The Greek verb is *etolmēsen* (#5111 ἐτόλμησεν) and means to dare or be bold or courageous enough to do something. One might wonder where Jude is getting this story. Jude is recounting this incident from the *Assumption of Moses*, [[4]](#footnote-27927) which we do not have the full copy of today. In this story, the Devil is arguing with Michael about the body of Moses. The Devil was claiming that Moses did not deserve an honorable burial because he was charging Moses with the murder of an Egyptian. Michael disagreed but would not bring a charge of defamation against the Devil.

In context, it may seem like Michael is scared or fearful of the Devil, and that is why he does not want to bring a charge of blasphemy against him. However, it is not that Michael is fearful of the Devil, but he is fearful of God. He fears God and does not want to overstep God’s role as Judge. Michael wants to leave the judgment up to God, he is not hasty to defame, like these evil people (Jude 1:8). Jude is making a beautiful contrast between these sinners who are quick to defame things they do not really understand (Jude 1:10), and Michael, who even though he was in the right, did not want to take justice into his own hands.

**“defamation.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία) and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Jde 1:10

**“slander.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. This is the third time in three verses that *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* have been used, and the contrast is stark between these beings who do not mind slandering the “glorious ones,” and Michael the archangel, who would not slander the Devil.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“whatever things they do not understand.”** Jude has great contrasts between godly and ungodly beings. Godly people (and angels) understand spiritual matters such as salvation (Jude 3), faith (Jude 3), and grace (Jude 4), but ungodly people have no spiritual understanding and defame these wonderful things. For example, they ignore salvation, and speak of the Christian’s hope as “pie in the sky, by and by.”

**“understand.”** The Greek verb is *epistamai* (#1987 ἐπίσταμαι), and in this verse, it is a present indicative, they are understanding or comprehending.

**“by instinct.”** The Greek adverb is *phusikōs* (#5447 φυσικῶς, pronounced, foo-see-'kōs), and it means in a natural manner, by nature, under the guidance of nature: by the aid of the bodily senses, by instinct. This is the only place this word occurs in the NT. These people are, or should be, taught by nature, even as animals are taught by nature or can be trained (although there is quite a bit of instinct built into animal behavior). Thus, while it is true that we more or less “instinctively” know about sex (or at least instinctively feel the attraction), we should be taught about it by our experiences. The same goes for stealing, lying, anger, drunkenness, etc. These ungodly beings participated in “unrestrained behavior” (Jude 4), and ignored examples from which they should have learned (Jude 7, 11). These evil and ungodly things that they participate in and enjoy are the very things for which they will be judged and that will destroy them.

Jde 1:11

**“they were destroyed in the rebellion of Korah.”** The false teachers have sinned egregiously and will be destroyed. God uses examples from the Old Testament to make his point. They were destructive and followed Satan, as did Cain, who murdered Abel. They were greedy like Balaam. And in the future, they will be destroyed just as Korah and his compatriots were when they rebelled against Moses (Num. 16:1-35). All the verbs are in the aorist tense: “they walked,” “they committed themselves,” and “they were destroyed,” but the final aorist is a “proleptic aorist,” and is used to describe that the false teachers will be destroyed in the future. The proleptic aorist is similar to a “prophetic perfect,” which describes a future event in the past tense to emphasize the certainty of the event.

[For more on the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

Jde 1:12

**“hidden reefs.”** The Greek word here in Jude 1:12 is *spilas* (#4694 σπιλάς), and scholars have disagreed as to whether it means “rocks” (or “hidden reefs”) or “spots” (“blemishes). Although *spilas* means “rocks” or “hidden reefs,” because a passage that is very similar in 2 Peter 2:13 uses *spilos*, “spots,” some scholars have suggested that the two words mean the same thing (it has been also suggested that Jude misspelled *spilos* as *spilas)*. But spilas, “rocks” or “hidden reefs” makes good sense in Jude, although there is scholarly disagreement as to why.

Some commentators think that “rocks” should be the preferred translation because the false teachers looked like “rocks” (pillars) in the community, but were actually dangerous rocks that destroyed people who got close to them. The more likely translation, however, is “hidden reefs” (hidden rocks). A hidden reef would not alert a sailor to the danger below, and then destroy the unsuspecting ship, and in the same way, false teachers infiltrate the ranks of the believers and then, unseen and unsuspected, destroy them.

**“love feasts.”** “Love feasts” was the term that first-century believers used for the meals they ate together that included an early form of communion in which the broken body and shed blood of Jesus was recognized, cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34. The Greek is simply just “loves,” *agapais* (#26 ἀγάπαις), which is the plural form of *agapē*, the noun “love”). The term “loves” was idiomatic for the communal “love feast” (or perhaps better: “love meal”), which, as we can see from 1 Corinthians 11 was sometimes not as loving as it should have been. Christians must always fight the old nature and strive to be genuinely loving and Christ-like.

Jde 1:13

**“shameful deeds.”** The literal Greek is the word “shames,” (plural), but “shame” is used by the figure of speech metonymy for “shameless deeds.”[[5]](#footnote-22865) BDAG translates the phrase: “*casting up their shameful deeds like* (waves casting up) *foam*.” There are quite a few times in Scripture where the effect produced by the action (the shame) is put for the action that causes the effect.

**“has been reserved until the age *to come*.”** The gloom and darkness of the Judgment and Gehenna that unsaved sinners will be punished with in the future has been known for millennia. That there will be “darkness” for the unsaved is not a new doctrine. Jesus taught the unsaved would be thrown “into the darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). While saved people will live forever with Jesus in a wonderful and well-lighted place, in contrast, Gehenna will be dark. It is portrayed as a fiery lake, but even the red and yellow colors of flame are not like the clear sunlight of daytime. Gehenna will be dark.

The ending of Jude 1:13 can be translated in two different ways, both of which are true. It can be like the NIV, “has been reserved forever,” or more like Young’s Literal Translation, “to that age has been kept” (we would say, “has been kept to the age”). If we understand the phrase to be “reserved forever,” then the “forever” is the figure of speech hyperbole, expressing a very long time. If, on the other hand, the translation is “reserved until the age to come,” then the Bible is letting us know that the punishment of the unrighteous people has been reserved until the future time at the Second Resurrection, when the unrighteous people are judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Since this second way of translating the phrase is literal, that is the reading in the REV.

Jde 1:14

**“Enoch, the seventh from Adam.”** This phrase is a section heading in the book of Enoch. The book of Enoch (also referred to as 1 Enoch), is an ancient apocryphal religious text that is traditionally said to have been written by Enoch who was the great-grandfather of Noah. Actually, the book was written much later, and most likely in Hebrew or Aramaic. While some parts of the book of Enoch are thought to date from 300-200 BC, the part of Enoch that deals with parables probably dates to 100 BC or so. In contrast, the man Enoch mentioned in Genesis lived more than 3,000 years before Christ.

The book of Enoch contains some material that agrees with the Bible; some material that contradicts the Bible; and some material that would add facts about things that are in the Bible, but there is no way to prove whether those facts are true or not. For example, the book of Enoch deals with fallen angels, the Genesis flood, and even the reign of the Messiah on earth, but is what Enoch adds about those things true? Would someone who lived after the Old Testament was written have knowledge about Old Testament realities and spiritual realities that are not in Scripture? There is good reason to doubt that, and thus good reason to believe that much of what was stated in Enoch that is not in the canonical Bible was based on traditions, not facts.

The book of Enoch was known by the Jews, and apparently believed by many, and also known by early Near-Eastern Christians. Furthermore, there is evidence that it was influential in affecting the beliefs of many early Jews and Christians. Fragments of Enoch have been found written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin, and also some fragments of it have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The most complete manuscript of the book of Enoch is from Ethiopic manuscripts, which is in part why some Ethiopic Jews and Christians believe it was likely written in the Ethiopic Geez language. However, in spite of the fact that the book of Enoch was well-known, neither the ancient Jews, nor Roman Catholics, nor Protestant Christians consider the book of Enoch to be part of the God-breathed canon of Scripture. However, there are Ethiopian Jews, Christians of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and Christians of the Eritrean Orthodox Church who consider the book of Enoch to be canonical. A few of the Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Origin, and Justin Martyr quoted it, but some did so positively while others did so negatively.

Jude 1:14 mentions “Enoch, the seventh from Adam,” and that sounds like Jude is making an actual reference to the man, Enoch, who was the seventh from Adam. However, that is unlikely. The patriarch Enoch lived before the Flood and there is no evidence that the book of Enoch, or any of the sayings of Enoch himself, survived in a way that was credited to him. None of the Old Testament books quote or reference the man Enoch or the book of Enoch, which makes sense if the book of Enoch was written around 300 BC or later, because by that time all the books of the Old Testament had been completed, so no Old Testament writer would have had the book of Enoch to quote from.

Jude mentioning “Enoch, the seventh from Adam” is Jude referring to a part of the book of Enoch that his readers would be familiar with. One of the apparent section headings of the book of Enoch is “Enoch, the Seventh from Adam” (1 Enoch 60:8). So, when Jude wrote, “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, also prophesied about these,” Jude was not talking about the man Enoch of Genesis, but rather was quoting a section heading in the book of Enoch that his audience was familiar with.

By quoting the book of Enoch, Jude could help his readers believe the truth of what he was saying. Paul did the same thing when he addressed the Greeks in Athens. Paul quoted Greek poetry to help his Greek audience see the truth in what he was teaching, that the earth and all people were created by the god they knew as “the unknown god” (Acts 17:28).

The problem Christians should have with the book of Enoch is straightforward. The book was written after the Old Testament was completed, and it was rejected from being canonical by most Jews and Christians. What it says that is not in the Bible cannot be trusted to be truth, even though some of it may be true. The Christian is on safer ground reading and believing the Protestant Bible that has been passed down for generations.

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“The Lord will come.”** The Greek is in the aorist tense, and is being used as a “proleptic aorist” (see commentary on Jude 1:11). In the proleptic aorist, a future event is spoken of as if it happened in the past to emphasize the certainty of the event and that it will absolutely happen. Thus, the Lord’s coming to conquer the world and judge evil is so certain it is spoken of in the past tense. The NASB literally translates the Greek verb: “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones.” This prophecy by Enoch is not recorded in the Old Testament, but it is similar in wording to Deuteronomy 33:2, which speaks of Yahweh coming from Sinai with myriads of His holy ones at the time of the Exodus. Nevertheless, it is clear from the context in Jude that this “coming” of the Lord is future, because Jesus Christ will do what was not done at the Exodus: “execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 15).

**“many thousands.”** The Greek word is *murias* (#3461 μυριάς), from which we get the English word “myriad” (and some English versions use “myriad,” cf. CJB, RSV, YLT, Rotherham). Although the technical meaning of *murias* is “ten thousand,” there are some mitigating factors that affect that translation in this verse. The first is that in the Greek text, *murias* is plural, “myriads,” and so we are left without knowing how many multiples of ten thousand there might be. Two? Twelve? The fact that the Bible does not say is an indication that *murias* is not meant to point to a specific number. More to the point, however, is that the word *murias* was often used in a hyperbolic way simply to refer to a huge number. People in both the ancient and modern world exaggerate time and numbers all the time, for example, “I waited there forever!” Or, “There were zillions of them!” That fact has influenced many modern versions: “countless” (NAB); “countless thousands” (NLT); “many thousands” (NASB); and “thousands upon thousands” (NIV). The bottom line is that we know that when Jesus comes to conquer the earth there will be thousands upon thousands with him, but we cannot estimate anything like an exact number.

Jde 1:16

**“These people.”** The word “people” is the understood object of “these,” and is added for clarity as it is in a number of English versions.

**“people.”** The Greek word translated as “people” (the second usage, “flattering people”) is *prosōpon* (#4383 πρόσωπον), which is more literally, “face.” The wicked flatter the “faces,” here used idiomatically for people. However, it would have been easy for God to just say “people,” and He did not. In biblical culture, the “face” represented the idea of intimacy, that the evil person would not be abashed at “lying to your face.” An expanded translation might be that the evil person would “flatter people to their face, just to gain an advantage.”

Jde 1:18

**“ungodly desires.”** The Greek here is a genitive phrase, “desires of ungodly *things*,” that can be understood in different ways. We have translated it as an objective genitive,[[6]](#footnote-21805) making “ungodly things” the object that is desired, thus, “ungodly desires.” But the same Greek phrase can be a subjective genitive or productive genitive, and mean “desires *produced by* ungodliness.” It is true that ungodly behavior can produce ungodly desires, and this meaning is certainly implied in the Greek; however, the stronger, and more obvious for translational purposes, is the objective genitive reading: desires for ungodly things. Nevertheless, both meanings are likely intended by God, the Author, making this verse the figure of speech amphibologia, where one thing is said but it can mean two different things.[[7]](#footnote-16817) Undisciplined people desire ungodly things, but the more ungodliness they participate in, the more they are filled with ungodly desire. It is a vicious cycle, all neatly packed into one Greek phrase. Sinful actions lead to more sinful actions. (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16 and Rom. 6:19; and see commentary on 2 Tim. 3:13).

[See Word Study: “Amphibologia.”]

Jde 1:19

**“worldly-minded.”** For more on *psuchikos* see commentary on 1 Corinthians 2:14, “worldly-minded.”

Jde 1:20

**“building yourselves up in.”** The Greek is *epoikodomeō* (#2026 ἐποικοδομέω), a present middle participle, “to build up upon a foundation.” The foundation is our faith.

**“by praying in the holy spirit.”** The Greek text does not have a definite article before “holy spirit.” In Greek, if a preposition (in this case, *en, “in” or “by”*) precedes a noun, the noun can be definite without specifically adding the definite article; the subject and context are the final arbiter. Daniel Wallace writes: “There is no need for the article to be used to make the object of a preposition definite.”[[8]](#footnote-18694) A. T. Robertson writes: “...the article is not the only means of showing that a word is definite. ...The context and history of the phrase in question must decide. ...[As for prepositional phrases], these were also considered definite enough without the article.”[[9]](#footnote-22741) Robertson then cites some examples that use the preposition *ek*. Thus, even though this verse is speaking of the gift of holy spirit, the inclusion of the article is proper in English.

The primary meaning of “praying in (or “by”) the holy spirit” in this verse is speaking in tongues. We see this in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, where speaking in tongues is prayer in the spirit. We can also tell that from the context because the verse says to build yourself up by praying in the spirit, and 1 Corinthians 14:4 says that the person who speaks in tongues builds himself up.

[For more on the gift of holy spirit and that it differs from “the Holy Spirit,” which is a designation of God the Father, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Jde 1:21

**“results.”** This is the *eis* of result. The mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ in this case refers to his Parousia, at which time the Christian is given a new body like Jesus’ spiritual body and will then live forever with Jesus.

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

Jde 1:23

**“clothing.”** Greek is *chitōn*, a long garment worn next to the skin usually under outer clothing.

Jde 1:24

**“without blemish.”** See commentary on Ephesians 1:4.

1. Bauckham, 2 Peter and Jude [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-24539)
2. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “ἀρχή.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11874)
3. Horrell, The Epistles of Peter and Jude, 121–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-29094)
4. Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude [NAC], 459. [↑](#footnote-ref-27927)
5. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 538, “metonymy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22865)
6. Cf. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude, 654-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-21805)
7. Cf. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 804, “amphibologia.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16817)
8. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-18694)
9. Robertson, Grammar of the Greek New Testament, 790-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-22741)