

CLASS NOTES ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

Lesson 12 — Jude 1:1-8

VERSES 1-2: 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: 2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Nothing matters more than our relation to Jesus Christ.

Jude tells us that he is a slave of Jesus Christ. (The Greek word he uses is not the Greek word for “servant” but the Greek word for “slave.”) Paul said the same thing in Romans 1:1 and Philippians 1:1; Peter said it in 2 Peter 1:1; and James did in James 1:1.

If anyone could have opened their letters proclaiming a more exalted relation to Christ than bondsman, it would have been James and Jude, his earthly brothers, but they did not.

There is nothing more important than our relation to Jesus. If we get that wrong, then nothing else is right. And when someone asks us who we are and what we are all about, we could give no better answer than “slave of Jesus Christ.” And we could have no better goal for our life than to make that statement true.

Jude gives us three remarkable descriptions of what it means to be a Christian.

In Isaiah, Israel is described as being called, loved, and kept by God. Jude takes over those attributes of the historic Israel and applies them to Christians.

First, Christians are sanctified or loved by God the Father.

The text here is uncertain; some translations have “loved” while others have “sanctified.” The Greek is similar between the two words, but “loved” has more support and is likely correct. But either provides an accurate description of Christians, who are both loved by God and sanctified by God.

Second, Christians are kept by Jesus Christ.

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

Jesus keeps what we commit to him. But we should compare Christ’s keeping power in verse 1 with our own responsibility in verse 21, where Christians are told to “keep yourselves in God’s love.” There are two sides to being kept by Jesus Christ. Jesus keeps our boat from sinking, but we must do our part by not jumping out of that boat.

And that Christ keeps us means that we belong to Christ. He purchased us with his own blood. We are the Lord’s church.

Third, Christians are called.

How are we called? Christians are called the same way everyone is called. In John 6:44-45, we read: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

The Calvinists seem to stop reading at verse 44, but verse 45 is crucial in understanding verse 44. The “drawing” in verse 44 occurs in response to the “teaching” in verse 45. It is the gospel that draws men to Christ, and it is in the gospel that we find the call of God. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

So if *all* are called, why does Jude refer to only Christians as the called? Because Christians are the ones who have answered that call. As Hebrews 3:1 tells us, Christians are the “partakers of the heavenly calling.”

Just as Israel of old was known as God’s chosen or called people, so today the church is known as the called of God. Read Revelation 17:14. (“For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”)

If this “calling” is the irresistible call of Calvinism, then why in 2 Peter 1:10 are we told to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure”?

Verse 2 gives us the second of many triads in this short letter.

In verse 1, Jude used a triad to describe the church: loved, kept, and called. In verse 2, Jude uses another triad to describe the qualities that he wants his readers to have: mercy, peace, and love.

The Greek word for “be multiplied” means that Jude wants us to have these qualities in abundance; he wants us to be filled to capacity with these qualities.

First, Jude wants his readers to have mercy.

That quality is rare in a greeting, but it does occur also in 1st and 2nd Timothy and in 2 John. Each letter in which it occurs was written against a background of false teaching.

It is interesting that “grace” (which is part of almost every New Testament greeting) is omitted in this triad, but mercy does include the idea of grace.

Jude’s desire that we have mercy in abundance is a reminder that the Christian need God’s mercy not only at his regeneration (1 Peter 1:3) and at the judgment (2 Timothy 1:16,18) but every day of his life.

Second, Jude wants his readers to have peace.

And this peace follows naturally from the preceding quality, mercy. It is only through God’s mercy that we can experience peace. Apart from the grace of God, there can be no peace.

Third, Jude wants his readers to have love.

Once we experience the mercy of God and the peace that mercy brings, our natural response is love – love for God, love for the things of God, and love for others. While the kingdoms of this world are founded on force, Christ’s kingdom is founded on love.

“Mercy from God, peace within, love for men – all in fullest measure. Could one imagine a more comprehensive prayer of Christian greeting?” And it is with that greeting that Jude opens his letter.

VERSES 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 does not just talk about love; he displays it.

Jude displays his love through his repeated affectionate addresses of “dear friends” in verses 3, 17, and 20. But Jude also displays his love through his serious warnings and stern rebuke.

Jude knew that Christian love was no substitute for conviction. Rather, he knew that Christian love springs from conviction.

And love cannot be separated from truth. R. L. Whiteside said: “Much is said about preaching the truth in love and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even one unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people.”

Jude never intended to write this letter!

Verse 3 tells us that he wanted and intended to write a letter about the common salvation we share, but he was instead driven to snatch up his pen by the news of a dangerous heresy and write this letter.

Jude understood his role as a watchman. (Ezekiel 3:17-19, Acts 20:28-30) And Jude also understood that there is no place for tolerance when souls are at stake. Something intolerable was taking place, and Jude therefore had no intention of tolerating it.

But we learn a valuable lesson from Jude’s other letter, the letter he did not write. That letter about our common salvation would have been a wonderful, edifying letter to the early church, but they did not receive it because Jude was kept busy dealing with false teachers and the turmoil they were causing in the church.

And what is the lesson? It is this: Turmoil in the church has a tremendous opportunity cost. Each moment we spend dealing with trouble in our own body is a moment we are unable to spend proclaiming God's word to those outside the body. That lost opportunity cost should be placed squarely at the feet, not of those such as Jude who respond to the false teaching, but of those who cause the trouble in the first place and at the feet of the leaders who sit idly by while savage wolves enter the fold.

What is "the faith" in verse 3?

The word "faith" is used here to refer to a body of belief rather than to "trust" as it is often used elsewhere. This is the faith that was preached in Galatians 1:23. This is the faith of the gospel in Philipians 1:27.

So to what does "the faith" refer in verse 3? It refers to all that the heretics denied, and these heretics denied everything, even to the point of denying Christ. They had turned everything upside down. They rejected law and lived immoral lives. Does "the faith" include how we live? Absolutely. Does "the faith" include what we believe and teach? Absolutely.

"The faith" in verse 3 is all of the teachings of Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament because the heretics had rejected all of that. The context here will not permit us to parse "the faith" into various pieces. When someone tries to water down that phrase and limit it to something that will permit them to continue living in their lust and pride, that person is responding to God's message in the same way as the heretics in Jude responded.

But we are nothing at all like the Gnostics, right?

Perhaps, but that is a very dangerous attitude. Satan will always attack us at the point where we feel we are the strongest. Why? Because that is where he will find our defenses down. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

We should be mindful of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's plea in *The Cost of Discipleship* against the cheapening of Christianity until it becomes a set of propositions assented to, of acts performed, of shibboleths ob-

served, rather than a vibrant, vital personal relationship with Jesus that inflames, invigorates and permeates every aspects of our lives.

If we ever begin to see the Christian life as just something we know, then we are not far from Gnosticism. A Christian life is an active life. Faith without works is dead.

This faith was “once for all entrusted to the saints.”

“God has handed over to his people a recognizable body of teaching about his Son feeding on which they are nourished, and in rejecting which they fall.”

Jude says the faith was entrusted "once for all," and that word carries with it the meaning of finality and definiteness. It leaves no room to think that God is going to grant special insights or revelations to some. God's word is unchanging. It has been given once and it has been given for all. And in a world full of change, I can think of nothing better to hold on to than God's unchanging word.

And the faith is entrusted to the saints. What an incredible responsibility! We are in a relay race, and if one generation drops the baton, then the race is lost. We must trust in God, but did you ever think that God is also trusting in us? He is trusting that we will preserve and proclaim the faith he has entrusted to us. Our daily prayer should be that his trust in us doesn't prove to be misplaced.

Paul told Timothy to “keep that which is committed to thy trust” in 1 Timothy 6:20 and he wrote, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” in 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

The teaching of scripture, not whatever happens to be the current theological fashion, is the hallmark of authentic Christianity. Jude would agree with 2 John 9-10 that the man whose doctrine outruns the New Testament is to be rejected. The test of progress is not how far we can go but rather how faithful we can be to the teachings of Christ.

Jude tells us something else very important about "the faith" in verse 3. He tells us it is closed in its content. Disputes over the content of the gospel have been common throughout history and have led to many departures from the faith. There have always been those

who would subtract from the faith, and there have always been those who would add to the faith. As for those who subtract, today it is common for some to remove elements from the gospel that are culturally embarrassing or not politically correct. It is common for people to explain away commands they do not want to follow. But the opposite danger is also present - the danger to add to the gospel. The Catholics do this with a simple word, "and." Where we point to Jesus, the Catholics point to Jesus *and* Mary. Where we seek to obey Christ, the Catholics seek to obey Christ *and* the Pope. Where we see the word of God, the Catholics see the word of God *and* Catholic tradition.

And we are to contend for the faith.

In this letter, we see Jude contending for that faith by attacking antinomianism with the same passion that Paul attacked its polar opposite, legalism, in Galatians. Both are perversions of the gospel, and Paul and Jude knew that neither problem would go away by itself.

The Greek word that Jude uses for "contend" tells us that the defense of the faith will be continuous, costly, and agonizing.

The people that Jude is talking about are still with us today. And their hallmark is relativism. They drift from the teaching of the Bible and instead see Christianity in terms of a development or process toward an understanding of God expressed only in contemporary terms. They may well quote the Bible, but they will quote it selectively for illustration, never for authoritative instruction.

The danger is that that relativism, which has completely overtaken our culture, will make inroads into the church. To many who call themselves Christians, Jude's heretics make sense, while Jude himself appears narrow and dangerous.

Jude does not tell us here to believe the faith, or to spread the faith, or to live the faith, although we are told elsewhere to do those things, but instead he tells us to contend for the faith. And he uses an exceptionally strong word. Paul used a related word in 1 Corinthians 9:25 to describe his struggle for the gospel. Jude's word implies an ongoing wrestling match that he wants us to enter.

Contending for the faith is not a popular activity these days. Proclaiming the truth often means saying hard, unpopular things,

whereas people with itching ears want to hear only nice, pleasant things.

Paul's example is instructive because he knew when to affirm and when to confront. When his own reputation was at stake he could say as he did in Philippians 1:18, "What does it matter? The important thing is that whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And it is because of this that I rejoice." But Paul's attitude was quite different when he faced the opposition in Galatia because there it was Christ's reputation that was at stake. And there we saw the fighter in Paul. We saw Paul contending for the faith.

Now our temptation is to reverse those two reactions. We tend to leap fiercely to the defense of our own reputation, while we let heretics teach in peace because we don't want to appear unChristian. We need to remember what Paul told Titus - that false teachers must be silenced, they must be rebuked, because they are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

And to whom was that section of Titus addressed? Elders. Contending for the faith is everyone's responsibility, but Paul tells us that the elders have a special responsibility in this regard.

And it is not a coincidence that he tells us that in a discussion regarding the qualifications of elders. We should not be surprised when an unqualified elder is unable to contend for the faith, because that is what Paul told us would happen, and it is likely what we see happening in Jude.

The eldership is no place for the weak of mind or the weak of heart. Standing up for what is right demands courage, knowledge, and love. Courage to do what is right; knowledge to know what is right; and love to care about what is right. All three are required. For example, a man with knowledge and love may be a wonderful Christian, but if he lacks courage, he will be an ineffective elder. God set up the leadership in the church for a reason, and he did not choose those qualifications arbitrarily.

The breakdown in the congregation that Jude is addressing can almost certainly be traced to a breakdown in the leadership. When you read Jude and the other New Testament epistles, you often wonder where the elders were in all of this? Perhaps they relied on the apostles too much. It could be similar to congregations today

planted by missionaries that just never seem to get off the ground; perhaps they rely too much on others. Undue reliance on a single elder by other elders is what led to the early departures from proper church organization and eventually to the Catholic hierarchy we see today with archbishops, cardinals, and the pope. When elders fail to lead, or worse become followers of men rather than followers of God, then a breakdown is inevitable. And there seems to have been a breakdown of that sort described here in Jude.

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.

In verse 4 we meet the intruders who caused Jude to write this letter. Jude had heard that certain men had secretly slipped into the congregation and were causing trouble. One translation says that they had wormed their way into the congregation. The Greek word is a sinister and secretive word.

This incursion of godless men was particularly serious because it was apparently very subtle, at least at first. Rarely does a false teacher arrive wearing a big sign. Instead, they usually worm their way in as we see here. It is also particularly troubling when, as in Jude, the danger comes from within rather than from without. These men were not attacking the congregation from without; they were attacking from within after first worming their way in from the outside.

But none of this should have been surprising. The Old Testament, Jesus, and the apostles all warned that such people would appear. As one commentator wrote, there will always be those within the sheepfold who have not passed through the door but have climbed up some other way. Perhaps these troublemakers were traveling teachers, which we know caused trouble for Paul as well.

The condemnation of these men was written about long ago.

Where was it written? Jude may have been referring to Second Peter as we discussed in our introductory lesson. The phrase "long ago" has been thought by many to preclude a reference to Second Peter here, but the Greek word translated "long ago" could also mean "already." Jude instead could have been referring to the Old Testament or even to the Book of Enoch that we discussed in our previous lesson. Most likely Jude is referring to all of the events that he is about to discuss in verses 5-19.

Some have taken this verse to mean that these heretics were predestined to damnation long ago, but all that Jude is telling us here is that the church should have expected these false teachers because their presence in the church has been foretold. It seems that the church had been caught unprepared, and Jude tells them they have no excuse for not being ready and watching.

The Greek word translated "was written about" means to write on a placard in public, with the legal sense of a public accusation. Apparently, Jude's readers had been so blind to the clear warnings of Scripture that they had not noticed the intruders who had slipped in among them.

The intruders were godless.

Jude tells us bluntly that these false teachers are godless. It is a word that seems to have been a favorite of Jude's and that crystallizes his view of these heretics. Although they no doubt mouthed Christian phrases, quoted the Bible, and knew all the new songs, they were not to be taken at face value. And perhaps Jude's readers were shocked at what Jude was telling them about their new, oh-so-spiritual friends. Today, people are often shocked that anyone could say a bad word about their favorite TV preacher. Jude tells us that the "TV preachers" of his own day were anti-Christian pagans.

They turned God's grace into a license to sin.

Jude tells us that they turned the grace of God into a license for immorality. Such a reaction has always been a risk with a gospel of free grace, and we see it elsewhere in the New Testament. Even today we see those who presume upon the grace of God - those who continue in sin that grace may abound.

What they failed to recognize is that if we accept Christ's easier yoke and his lighter burden, we are still taking up a yoke and burden. Christian liberty is not Christian license. We are under the law of Christ.

They also denied Christ.

Jude also tells us that these men were denying Christ and God. They remind us of those that Paul wrote about in Titus 1:16. ("They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.") They certainly denied Christ by their lives, but as Gnostics they also denied him by their false doctrine. And again, we see that the faith Jude has in mind here is multifaceted, including both how we live and what we believe. As Luther noted, these men in Jude regarded themselves rather than Jesus as their Lord, and again we see how modern this book really is.

It is interesting that Jude applies to Jesus not only his usual title "Lord" but also the much stronger title "Sovereign." That word is usually reserved in the New Testament for God the Father. But Jude says that Jesus is our Sovereign, and in fact he says that Jesus is our only Sovereign. Jude's opinion of his brother changed dramatically following the resurrection!

VERSE 5: I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

After introducing his opponents, Jude tells us very clearly what will happen to them. He reminds his readers of the judgments that fell upon Israel, upon the angels that sinned, and upon Sodom and Gomorrha. The three examples he gives in verses 5-7 are illustrations of the fact that rebellion against God does not succeed.

And all of this Jude provides by way of reminder.

Remembering in the Bible is an act of will. It is something we do on a regular basis. When we partake of the communion to remember the death of Christ, we do not do so for fear that we will forget the

facts of that event. We do so for fear that we will forget the meaning and significance of that event.

Jude knew perfectly well that his readers already knew the basic Bible stories he was about to discuss. But he also knew that it was clear from their behavior that they did not really understand those events and had not learned from them the lessons that God had intended. Perhaps they, like we do sometimes, treated Old Testament events as good stories for children that have no message for adults.

Were the intruders ever Christians?

A widely debated question about Jude is whether the opponents were former Christians who had now fallen from grace or whether they had never been Christians at all. Of course, the Calvinists must argue for the latter situation, but those who reject the false doctrine of "once saved, always saved" understand that either situation could have been true.

In favor of these men once having been Christians, many point to the example of Israel that Jude leads off with because Israel fell from belief to apostasy, as did the angels in the second example. But we should remember that Jude also mentions Sodom and Gomorrah, and there is no indication that those people were ever believers.

In favor of these men never having been Christians we have Jude's description of them as intruders who wormed their way into the congregation.

In my view the most likely solution is that the group included some of each – some who had one believed but had now been seduced and had fallen away, and some who never believed but were just trying to fleece the flock from the very start.

What does Jude want his readers to remember in verse 5?

He wants God's chosen people in the New Testament, the church, to remember what happened to God's chosen people in the Old Testament, Israel. They were saved from Egyptian bondage, but later those who did not believe were destroyed.

In Numbers 14:35 God said, "I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

The Gnostics saw a different God in the Old Testament, but that was because they had totally misunderstood the nature of God. God is a god of love, yes, but we must also remember that God is a god of wrath (Hebrews 3:11). In fact, perhaps the most sobering phrase in all scripture occurs in the last book, Revelation 6:16, where we read about “the wrath of the Lamb.” Sometimes we all need to be reminded of that.

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.

Jude's second example concerns the angels. They, like Israel, had many privileges on which they might have relied but instead they fell.

Verse 6 is difficult to untangle.

The Jews were very interested in angels in the last few centuries BC, and much of their speculation is recorded in the Book of Enoch. Jude's references to angels and his reference to Enoch suggest that these false teachers were likely very much involved in wild speculations about angels. And that right there is a lesson for us as we embark on this section of the letter. What we can know about angels is what is revealed in the Bible. Anything beyond that is speculation.

There is nothing wrong with speculation so long as it remains clearly labeled as such and so long as it does not contradict what has been revealed. But when that is not the case, speculation can lead to great harm and great confusion. Over the years many have been led astray by a misguided focus on and obsession with angels. In fact, if you have walked into a Bible bookstore and seen the numerous angels plaques and trinkets on sale, you may have cause to wonder if there are some today who have wondered off into the worship of angels.

These angels fell because of two main problems. the first being their pride and arrogance.

Pride was one reason they fell, because they were not content to keep their positions of authority given them by God. In my opin-

ion, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 tell us more about the pride of these fallen angels. (See our lesson on Ezekiel 28.)

A second reason these angels fell was because of their lust.

Lust is not something we generally associate with angels. But where does Jude tell us that these angels lusted? I don't see any mention of lust in verse 6, right? Right. We need to look forward a bit to verse 7 to find the connection.

In verse 7, we see a description of the lust of Sodom, and we see the words "in like manner." To what does that phrase refer? Some argue it refers to the other cities of the plain, but "cities" is a feminine noun and "manner" is masculine. The nearest antecedent of "in like manner" is the masculine noun "angels" in verse 6. Thus, Jude is linking the sexual perversion of Sodom to the fallen angels in verse 6.

But didn't Jesus tell us in Matthew 22:30 that angels do not marry. Yes, he did. But it seems that there he was speaking of good angels in Heaven, whereas the angels in verse 6 are fallen angels who left their own habitation. We know from other scriptures that when angels came to earth, they generally came in the form of men, and perhaps in doing so some became infected by sin. Perhaps that explains how they were able to fall in the first place.

Is Verse 6 a reference to an Old Testament event?

Verse 5 refers to Numbers 14 and verse 7 refers to Genesis 19. What about verse 6?

There is a fascinating and much debated event in Genesis 6 that many associate with this verse in Jude. Let's first consider the text from Genesis:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ... 4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare chil-

dren to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

The first thing you will note about that passage from Genesis 6 is that angels do not appear to be mentioned. But if we look at verse 2 we do see the phrase “the sons of God,” and we see also in that verse the word “men,” which might cause us to wonder if “the sons of God” are somehow different from “men.” Looking further, we see that “sons of God” is used in Job to refer to what were most likely angels. (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7)

So, if we take Genesis 6 to be an event about angels, then there, as in Jude 6, we see angels that were not satisfied with the role God had given them and so they exceeded the boundaries God had set for them by having sexual relations with humans. It all sounds very strange, but then as I told you in the last lesson, Jude is a strange book.

Seven Reasons Why I Think Jude 6 Refers to Genesis 6

(1) The events from Genesis 6 receive extensive elaboration and speculation in the Book of Enoch, and we have already seen that Jude seems interested in that book.

(2) The Jews of that day commonly believed that Genesis 6 referred to fallen angels. Josephus wrote, “Many angels accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust.”

(3) I don’t think it is a coincidence that as soon as the event in Genesis 6 occurred, God’s next action was to wipe mankind from the face of the earth. Something seems to have gone drastically wrong.

(4) The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, translated “sons of God” in Genesis with the phrase “angels of God.”

(5) Early Christian writers took Genesis 6 to be a reference to angels. It was not until the latter part of the 4th century that some began to suggest that the sons of God in Genesis 6 were the descendants of Seth, which is a common view today. But where do we get the idea that the sons of Seth ever had such piety that they could be called the sons of God? All but Noah were destroyed in the flood just a few verses later.

(6) The phrase “in like manner” links the angels in verse 6 with the unnatural practices of the Sodomites in verse 7.

(7) If we assume that Jude’s three references here all look back to the Old Testament, then where else would we look to find the events in verse 6?

Admittedly, this view is not the most common view today, especially in the church. Why? I think one reason is that it is a strange and inexplicable view, and most people understandably prefer the commonplace and easily explained. But that preference, while understandable, should not guide our exegesis when the text itself is leading us in another direction.

So what then is Jude’s point?

Were these false teachers arrogant? Well, let them remember that arrogance ruined the angels. Were they consumed by lust? Well, that too had led to the downfall of the angels. Privileged position and vast knowledge had not saved the angels.

Finally, Jude ends with a touch of savage irony. The evil angels had been too arrogant to keep their position, and so God had kept them reserved for punishment.

VERSE 7: Even as Sodom and Gomor-
rha, and the cities about them in like
manner, giving themselves over to for-
nication, and going after strange flesh,
are set forth for an example, suffering
the vengeance of eternal fire.

The third example of judgment that Jude gives us involves Sodom and Gomorrha.

Jude leaves the Flood and Lot aside, unlike Peter, and instead concentrates on what is perhaps the most graphic example of judgment in the Old Testament. In fact, the overtones from that event are heard throughout the Bible, including right here. The destruction of these cities made an indelible impression on antiquity. “The glare of Sodom and Gomorrha is flung down the whole length of scripture.”

Sodom and Gomorrha were in a beautiful position. Genesis 13:10 tells us that it was well watered, like the garden of the Lord. But

that did not lead them to be grateful to the Creator, because they were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned, and they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before God, and therefore God took them away as he saw good. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

But Jude focuses on their sexual sin, and the word he uses is strong.

Literally, Jude says they went after other flesh. What does that mean? I think we all know what that means, but it is not a popular message in a world in which “sexual preference” has become a protected class.

In their attempts to take Sodom out of Sodomy, liberal commentators do handstands when it comes to these events. Some have even suggested that the sin of Sodom was simply a lack of hospitality to strangers. Well, I don't know about you, but I would classify an attempted homosexual gang rape of angelic beings as quite an extreme lack of hospitality — and that is exactly what happened in Genesis 19.

The Bible consistently portrays homosexuality as rebellion against God's natural order. And perhaps Jude is telling us here that these false teachers were expressing their claimed freedom with homosexual behavior. And if so, he was seeing in the first century something we may view today as only a modern phenomenon.

The same two characteristics are found with regard to Sodom and Gomorrha as were found with regard to the fallen angels: lust and pride. It is interesting that today the phrase most closely associated with homosexuality is "Gay Pride." Not much has changed.

In addition, Jude stresses the unnatural nature of their conduct.

What did Jude mean by unnatural? The most likely explanation is that Jude means exactly what we think he means - homosexuality, something for which Sodom was well known, even to the point of having provided its name, sodomy.

Another possibility, however, and one that some argue fits better with Jude's previous example, is that the unnatural behavior here refers not just to homosexuality, but rather to the Sodomites' attempted gang rape of the angelic visitors that we read about in Genesis 19. I am sure we would all agree that lust for angels would also fall in the category of unnatural. One problem with this theory, however,

is that the Sodomites do not seem to have known that the visitors were angels.

And what is this example that Jude says remains?

Jude could have in mind the Dead Sea, which most believe sits above the remains of those cities as a permanent reminder of their destruction. It has been called "Hell with the sun shining on it." But generally, eternal fire means literal Hell fire, and so Jude likely means that their fiery destruction was a foretaste of that eternal fire that awaits the Devil and his followers.

VERSE 8: Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

From the preceding three examples, Jude draws three clear points. His false teachers are guilty because of their lust, because of their rebellion, and because of their irreverence.

Jude tells us that these men are dreamers.

And by that word, Jude most likely means that the false teachers supported their false message by claiming to have had divine revelations in their dreams. One translation reads, "On the strength of their dreams they pollute the flesh, reject the Lord's authority, and slander the glorious ones."

A dreamer of dreams in the Old Testament was one who claimed to have a message from God. And it looks as if the issue facing Jude was that under the cloak of a pretended revelation from God, these dreamers were claiming to have their special knowledge. And the members were too sleepy to notice what was being smuggled in under their noses.

Jude says they reject authority.

They were displaying the same arrogance and pride that we saw in Jude's examples. The question is what authority? It could be human authority as in the civil powers or the church leaders. But since Jude has already talked about their denial of Jesus, it would be

most natural to assume that he has in mind here the authority of Christ over his church.

We are told that they slander the glorious ones.

As in 2 Peter 2:10, this phrase should be taken to refer to angelic beings. But does Jude speak here of good angels or fallen angels? The most natural view would be that they slander the good angels, just as the men of Sodom were irreverent toward the angels who visited their city. On the other hand, the parallel with verse 9 (which we are about to get to) might suggest that Jude has in mind here the evil angels. But it is hard to see how the phrase "the glorious ones" could be used to describe the evil angels. (Although Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 suggest it would not be impossible to describe them so. Even Paul describes Satan as an angel of light in 2 Corinthians 11:14.)

But why would the false teachers slander goods angels?

Perhaps, when we recall that Gnosticism grew from a reaction to Judaism, they had become disenchanted with the notion of angels, which as a field of study held a high place in Judaism at that time. Or, as Gnostics, perhaps they blasphemed the good angels as agents of what they thought of as the inferior God of creation. But the most likely possibility comes from the fact that the angels carried and preserved the Mosaic law (Acts 7:38, 53; Hebrews 2:2). So it would hardly be surprising that antinomians would speak against those who guarded the law.