

THE LETTER OF JUDE



An Explanation of This Letter
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

**ROCK
SOLID
11**

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Especially for You

Rock Solid #11 (Part IV)

Ger de Koning

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Webshop: www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl

Orders: info@uitgeverijdaniel.nl

Cover design: Jan Paul Spoor

Layout: Jan Noordhoek

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Letter of Jude

Introduction

The letter of Jude is a brief and powerful letter. If you read the letter, you notice the drive of a prophet. God's Spirit has used Jude to describe in the dynamic, energetic language of the prophets the evil in professing Christianity and the judgment on it at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

The picture presented to you here of professing Christianity is not a picture that makes you cheerful, but it is reality. If that reality were withheld from you, you would miss the necessary warnings that should help you recognize the attacks made on God's truth. At the same time Jude encourages you. He points at the unfaltering faithfulness and omnipotence of God and the Lord Jesus for those who are willing to hold on to the truth which was once for all handed down to them and to defend it against the attacks.

If you read this letter and compare it with chapter 2 of the second letter of Peter, you will see that certain topics are mentioned in both letters. These same topics, however, are presented from a different point of view. Peter addresses Jewish Christians and speaks about sin and unrighteousness. Jude addresses all Christians and speaks about the apostasy of the Christian truth, the abandonment of the most holy faith.

Jude 1:1-3 | Sender, Recipients, Purpose of the Letter

1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

V1. Jude presents himself as “a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James”. At the explanation of the letter of James we saw that James is a brother of the Lord Jesus (Jam 1:1; Gal 1:19). Besides a James we also come across a Jude among the brothers of the Lord after the flesh (Mt 13:55). It is obvious that he is the author of this letter.

Like James, Jude does not call himself ‘a brother’ of Jesus Christ, but joyfully calls himself ‘a bond-servant’. He neither speaks about ‘Jesus’, but about ‘Jesus Christ’. Any familiarity is missing, although he and James grew up together with the Lord in the same parental home. That undoubtedly has got to do with the fact that they have learnt to know Him as the Risen One (1Cor 15:7). It is more important to be spiritually related to Him and to show that by listening to His Word than to be with Him in a natural family relationship (Lk 11:27-28).

As it already has been noticed, in his letter Jude address all believers without distinction. He calls them “those who are the called”. He has the interest of all believers in mind, all who belong to the worldwide church. At the same time, the letter is also very personal, for a calling is a personal matter of every believer. Those who are called – and by God’s grace you are one of them – he introduces right at the beginning of his letter in two relationships: first to “God the Father” and then to “Jesus Christ”. The relationship to God the Father is connected with love and the relationship to Jesus Christ with preservation.

What Jude does here is the same as what the Lord Jesus does in His prayer to His Father when He asks Him to keep those who are His own (Jn 17:11). What Jude is saying and what the Lord Jesus has prayed is, with a view to the content of the letter, very encouraging. You may know that you are an object of Divine love, no matter how much evil has infiltrated profess-

ing Christianity. You may know that you will be preserved till the end by Jesus Christ, while the infiltrated evil will be judged by Him. What an encouragement! That gives assurance and power to your faith that is tested severely in the time of apostasy in which you live.

V2. After addressing his readers Jude has a threefold wish for his readers: “mercy and peace and love”. In addition he also wishes that it may be “multiplied”. We always find in the greeting of the letters of Paul ‘grace and peace’ as a wish. Only in the two letters to Timothy he adds the wish of ‘mercy’. That shows that ‘mercy’ is especially meant for individuals, which emphasizes the personal character of the letter of Jude.

The combination of the three wishes that Jude speaks out here, only occurs with him:

1. He begins with “mercy”. In this word you find the aspect of need and compassion. Jude knows that the believers especially need that, with a view to the time that he will describe right away.
2. Also “peace” is important in such a time. All evil that has entered the church, may be a reason to get filled with discontent. If everything seems hopeless and there seems to be no way out, discontent can easily creep in.
3. Finally “love” is needed. How evil the times may be, the believer may always be aware of the love of God.

Jude mentions these things in general terms. Of course he wishes them to you from God. At the same time it is the purpose that these characteristics in a time of decay will also be expressions that from you go to others. After all, you have the new life, you are born of God and you have His nature. If the apostasy is manifested more and more clearly, it is more urgently desirable that these expressions of God’s care are present toward one another among the believers. And Jude does not only wish that they will increase, but that they will be in abundance by multiplication, that is, that they may increase more and more.

V3. Jude calls his readers “beloved” and in this way connects to God the Father of Whom he has said that the believers are loved in Him (verse 1). He has the same feelings for them as God the Father has. It is important to

see your brothers and sisters the way God the Father sees them and to feel for them what He feels for them.

Jude tells that he was making every effort to write them a letter. He indeed wrote that letter. He also tells them about what he had in mind to write to them, but that something has changed. He would have loved to share with them what he and they possess in common in the salvation that they have received (cf. 2Pet 1:1). However, the wish to write about the “common salvation” had been replaced by a burden that God’s Spirit placed on his heart. He has been obedient to that and has acknowledged the necessity to write an exhortation instead of about enjoyable truths.

He tells about this change in his plan because this makes you feel the seriousness of the content of his letter even more. It shows that sometimes plans need to be changed and that instead of enjoying the truths of faith these truths of faith are to contend for.

The faith – this refers to the truth of faith and not so much to your personal faith – is extremely precious. It is everything that you know of God in Christ, as you have it in the inspired, infallible, authoritative and complete Word of God. It also has to be maintained and defended as such. Everything that comes from God will always be attacked and must therefore be defended. You are to hold on to it that only to the apostles it has been given to determine the touch stones of the faith in the inspired Scriptures.

To explain and teach the faith is not the task of all, but of the gifts who are given by the Lord Jesus (Eph 4:11). But it is certainly the task of each believer, therefore also of you, to defend the faith and to contend for it. That is not a matter of only a few. It is after all the faith which was “once for all handed down to the saints”, which includes *all* saints and not only a small group of privileged people. The result is that all saints are to defend it. The expression ‘saints’ also emphasizes the contrast with the ungodliness of the ungodly men about whom Jude writes in the following verses.

What you have to defend is “the faith which was once for all handed down”. It is not about a new discovered faith or a faith that is developing and to which new things are continually added. It is once for all and fully revealed by God. Men contributed anything to it, although they are the

instruments through which it has been passed on. There will be no more new revelations. It has been stated this way: If it is new, it cannot be true and if it is true, it is not new.

Now read Jude 1:1-3 again.

Reflection: What encouragements do you find in these verses?

Jude 1:4-9 | Examples of Apostasy and God's Judgment

4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. 8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

V4. Jude is now going to explain and support his appeal to contend. In case you may already have considerations whether you will or will not participate in the fight for which he appeals you to, you will get convinced of the necessity of your effort by his explanation. In an impressive way he portrays the situation of professing Christianity as it already developed in those days. That development has not stopped since then, but it got worse more and more. That means that the necessity to contend has only been increasing more and more.

For "certain persons", which means men with a certain character, "have crept in", very secretly, with a deception, through a side door (cf. Gal 2:4). Those people are no believers. They are emphatically called "ungodly persons" by Jude. They are men "who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation". That does not mean that their names are written, but it means that men who do such things will be struck by this judgment. The judgment was announced by Enoch already many centuries ago, even before the flood. Then God already made known what He was going to do with these ungodly men in the end time (verses 14-15).

There are people, including sincere children of God, who from what Jude is saying here, conclude that God has predestined men to be perished. This conclusion is not in accordance with the teaching of the Scripture. God does not predestine anyone to be perished forever. The predetermined condemnation regards people who have prepared *themselves* for destruction (Rom 9:22; 2Pet 2:3). It can be compared with the fine I get if I park my car somewhere without buying a ticket, which results in the payment of a fine. If I park my car on that place without buying a ticket, I am condemned to get a fine. The condemnation is ready for everyone who commits this violation, but there is only mention of registering names if the violation is committed.

Jude is not cautious with his exposure of these people. He does not make gradual steps to come to that point, but he criticizes them immediately. He does that to make their character immediately clear and in that way open the eyes of gullible people in the church for these corrupt persons. Such people present themselves as Christians and have sweet talks, as you will see later. Jude is quite clear. They are “ungodly persons”, who destroy the faith. They have two main characteristics. The first characteristic is that they abuse grace by using it as a cover for fulfilling their own lusts. The second characteristic is that they reject the authority of the Lord Jesus.

That they are ‘ungodly’ – the word ‘ungodly’ appears seven times in this letter –, means that they are without any respect and fear for God. That attitude is expressed in the two mentioned characteristics. They dare to abuse grace to justify their lawlessness – see and compare Titus 2 where grace teaches the opposite (Tit 2:12). They abuse the Christian freedom to lead a life “in licentiousness”. They lack every sense of what is appropriate. They also “deny” and despise the absolute and Divine authority of the Lord Jesus.

You can recognize these persons, who “crept in unnoticed”, by their way of life. It is absolutely out of the question that they could be born again. They live just like man has lived apart from God since the fall. They follow the lusts of the flesh to which they succumb in debauchery and live their life in pride as they see fit. They also totally do not take into consideration the authority of the absolute Ruler, “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”.

You especially notice that by the way they deal with God's Word. They do not have any respect for it, they do not bow to it, it does not impress them in any way.

V5. From that same Word that is denied by them Jude wants to remind you of three cases from the beginning of the Old Testament. In these three cases the apostasy he speaks about and God's judgment on it are clearly shown.

You are addressed as someone who "knows all things once for all". That is true for each believer, also for you, no matter how long you have been converted. For you have the "anointing of the Holy One" and you "know all things" (1Jn 2:20). After a course of time the awareness of it may sink away. Then it is good to be reminded of it.

The first case is that of the people of Israel when they were saved out of Egypt. God had saved the people and promised them the land of Canaan. This promise also included that He was going to help them to take the land into possession. But when the people listened to the evil rumor that the ten spies spread about the promised land, they rebelled against the Lord and did not believe Him. They flatly refused to take that land into possession (Num 14:1-28; 1Cor 10:5-10) and in that way they showed their unbelief. They pushed God aside.

After God had dealt with them by grace by saving them out of Egypt, He dealt "subsequently" with them on the ground of their unbelief. The result was that all died from twenty years old and upward when they left Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua (Num 14:29-30,35; Heb 3:16-19).

V6. The second example of rebellion and apostasy is that of angels who had sinned horribly. They did not keep "their own domain", which means their original and exalted state, "but abandoned their proper abode", which God had given them. About this event we read in Genesis 6 (Gen 6:1-7). There is mention of "God's sons" of whom we know from the book of Job that these are angels (Job 1:6; 2:1). These sons of God took human form and took daughters of men as wives for themselves.

This evil is that bad that God has deprived these angels of any freedom of movement. He now already has kept them in "eternal bonds", that are bonds with which they are bound forever, and with which He keeps them

“under darkness”, so that they will never see light again. They are “kept” there till the definite judgment on them will be executed on the great day of judgment.

V7. The third example is directly connected to the previous one, which you can derive from the word “just as” with which this verse begins. What happened in “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them” is of the same corruptness as what the angels did, and even worse. It causes the apostasy to reach a pinnacle. It is about the most outrageous shamelessness, a shamelessness which is directed against all that is natural, given by God. This particular perversion is that of homosexual relationship of men who “in their desire toward one another” commit “indecent acts” (Rom 1:26b-27). They have left their own nature. That is rebellion and apostasy. This is “gross immorality” and going “after strange flesh”, which means that it is completely against the natural order of God.

The uncommitted free life style, promoted by liberals, and the pressure to fully accept a homosexual life style as a ‘normal’ life style, are compared with the practices of ‘Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them’. What God has done with those cities shows His judgment on homosexual practice. This should be a warning to everyone who lives like that or who accepts that as normal and who probably even fights for general acceptance. The “punishment of eternal fire” shows that there is no end to God’s judgment on that. All apostates will be struck by this judgment.

In the three examples you do not find a chronological, but a spiritual order. The apostates will

1. like the Israelites who did not believe, die the physical death,
2. then like the angels who did not keep their proper domain, be kept under darkness for the judgment before the great white throne and
3. finally, like Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around it, undergo the punishment of eternal fire.

V8. After these examples of apostasy and God’s judgment on it, Jude returns to his theme of the apostates of his time. The whole thinking of those people is unclean. They are “dreaming”, they live in a fantasy world with filthy fantasies. They ultimately find the fulfillment of their dreams

in disgusting sexual sins, just like the men of Sodom. They live in rebellion against God and reject every form of authority ordained by Him. They also speak in a reviling way about everything that God has given a certain honor, a certain glory in which something of Him is seen.

V9. These people have the brutality to say things that even “Michael the archangel” did not dare to say “when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses”. Jude tells about this event which cannot be found in the Bible. He received this information through God’s Spirit. We know that God has buried Moses in the valley in the land of Moab and that nobody knows about his grave (Deu 34:6). It is not unlikely that the devil was looking for the place where Moses was buried, with the intention letting the people know that place in order to make it a place of pilgrimage, which is a place of idolatry, for the people. In that, Michael opposed him.

In the future Michael will appear to be stronger than the devil, for he will throw him out of heaven (Rev 12:7-9). Michael knows his time to act against the devil and does not anticipate it. That’s why he does not dare pronounce a “railing judgment” against this prince of angels in the kingdom of darkness. The archangel leaves the judgment on blasphemy by the devil, to the Lord. Look also at the attitude of David toward Saul for a moment when Saul was already rejected by God. As long as Saul is ruling David adopts a submissive attitude (1Sam 24:9-16; 26:4-25).

There is a danger that we may want to exercise power over those who are doing the work of the devil. Therefore it is necessary that we bear in mind what is written in the Scripture: “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). We may also learn from the attitude of Michael that we should not mock the devil and think that we can make him ridiculous by giving him all kinds of contemptible names, as it happens sometimes.

Now read Jude 1:4-9 again.

Reflection: How can you recognize people who have crept in unnoticed?

Jude 1:10-16 | Characteristics of Ungodliness

10 But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. 14 [It was] also about these men [that] Enoch, [in] the seventh [generation] from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." 16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their [own] lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of [gaining an] advantage.

V10. Again Jude uses that contemptuous "these". In contrast to Michael these apostates audaciously and recklessly "revile the things which they do not understand". That is arrogance and pride all over. Naturally, they have a knowledge which is also present with "unreasoning animals". This knowledge concerns the natural instincts, needs which they do have, like eating and drinking and sexuality. Animals act after their nature, their instinct. They cannot think, for they have no mind. These people behave just like animals. But just because they are supposed to be able to think of what they do, while they contrarily still act like animals in fulfilling their lusts, they abase themselves and destroy themselves in their way of acting. With the unreasoning of animals they indulge in sexual satisfaction.

V11. The "woe" is spoken out over them, which is the only time that we find it spoken out in the letters. It is the language of the book of the final judgments, the book of Revelation. Using the example of some Old Testament wicked people, Jude describes the way that leads to this 'woe'.

They have "gone the way of Cain". They are like Cain and his way, that is the way of a religion that does not come from God's righteousness, but

from their own righteousness. Cain was the first who went this way and this way is still extremely popular. He believed in God, but believed he could honor God in his own way, with his own 'good works' (Gen 4:3-8). God had to be satisfied with that. He did not think for a moment of coming with a bloody sacrifice. God Himself showed that after the fall (Gen 3:21) which was understood by Abel (Gen 4:4). This attitude of Cain, serving God with good works, an attitude which is normal for Gentiles, has crept in into professing Christianity and is imitated by countless people.

The next step is "the error of Balaam" (Num 22:7; 31:16). That implies their self-enrichment in the service of God. Balaam called himself a prophet of God, but he was greedy and wanted to sell his prophetic gift for money, which implied that he was willing to curse God's people for money.

Like Balaam today's false teachers are also good in using the tongue and speak for money what the people like to hear. They manipulate the truth for the sake of money. In that way they turn the house of God into a commercial market. To make merchandise out of the good that comes from God occurs frequently in professing Christianity, especially in the roman-catholic church where all the so-called blessings from birth to death cost money. Even the situation after death becomes a source of profit, for people are enabled to shorten their time in the fabrication of 'purgatory' with a duration that is dependent on the amount that is being paid.

The third and last step in the apostasy is the unmitigated rebellion against God, such as to be seen "in the rebellion of Korah" (Num 16:19-35). Korah rejected God's choice of the priesthood and in that way His authority. He wanted to have the function of priest himself and wanted to take the place of mediator, through which he could exercise control over God's people. We see that also in the most clear way in roman-catholicism. God's judgment was executed on him and his companions. They descended in the realm of death alive.

All these three persons have in common that they arrogated something what they were not. In Cain we see a *false worshiper*, in Balaam a *false prophet* and in Korah a *false priest*. The apostasy of each of them had to do with religion. Also here the ranking is not chronological but spiritual: Cain

went, Balaam rushed headlong and Korah perished. It shows the spiritual downturn and the end of the people who are concerned.

V12. It is as if Jude is tiring himself out in looking for examples in order to make clear to you what kind of people these apostates are. In order to present the character and destiny of those apostates more clearly, he uses some examples from nature in verses 12-13.

The first example is that of “reefs”. The word ‘reefs’ is derived from the word ‘cliffs’, which are rocks below the sea level, that may cause boats to sink when the helmsman does not watch carefully. He calls the apostates “reefs in your love feasts”. ‘Love feasts’ are the fellowship meals that the first Christians connected to the Lord’s Supper (1Cor 11:20).

With these apostates, however, there is nothing present of Christian love and fellowship. During the love feasts they only think of themselves. They “feast”, without any fear to be found improper or greedy. They are feeding themselves shamelessly and in that way are the evident opposite of the Lord Who is seeking the well-being of the sheep. In Ezekiel 34, a chapter that deals with false shepherds, the ‘woe’ is spoken out over them (Eze 34:2).

These people probably have, while enjoying all the goodies, spoken out all their edifying thoughts with nice talks. They have given a swirling show, but it seemed to be nothing more than the sparkling of soap bubbles. It promised to be a refreshment like clouds are expected to be producing water (the next example from nature), but they are “clouds without water”. They form a great contrast to Moses who as his desire regarding to his words, speaks out the following to God’s people: “Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew” (Deu 32:2; cf. Isa 55:10).

There is no handhold in what they say, for they are “carried along by winds”. They behave themselves inconsistently and constantly come with other ideas, which do not make sense. They leave only disenchantment and hopelessness behind. What a difference with what Paul wishes to the believers: “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trick-

ery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:14-15; Heb 13:9)!

They are like "autumn trees without fruit", meaning trees out of which the life has gone and therefore are not expected to produce fruit. They are "doubly dead". In the first place they are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1) and in the second place they are dead in their confession, for therein all life lacks.

They are dead from the root, there is in no way connection with life, which also cannot possibly come, for they have been cut off from the root. They have been "uprooted". In this way the promised fruit will never come, just like the promised water from the clouds will never come. Such trees are to be cut down (Lk 13:9). These people are like trees that are uprooted, they have been taken away from the place of which they confessed to have. The only thing that is left for trees that are uprooted is the fire.

V13. The following example Jude uses is that of the sea. He compares these people with "wild waves of the sea". There is a complete uncontrollability with them like with a raging sea (cf. Isa 57:20). If you have ever seen a sea in the storm, you must also have seen white foamed waves, caused by the wind. Those white foam is blown on the beach by the wind. The foam goes in all directions and finally there is nothing left of it.

This is what happens to these people and their teachings. Despite the noise that they cause, they show nothing more than their own shameless deeds which are visible on the top of the waves and which are being blown on the beach. The white foam seems to refer to cleanness, but it is the whiteness of the whitewashed tombs (Mt 23:27). There is nothing left of it, they leave nothing behind that has any value.

In their whole performance they still want to give the impression that you can take their life as an example to determine your direction, but they are "wandering stars". They will end up where they live and that is in "the black darkness" and that will last "forever". They will never more be able to deceive anyone there and they will also never be able to enjoy anything.

V14. In the earliest days already there has been prophecies about these men, that they will be condemned. As a proof of that Jude quotes Enoch.

To not confuse this Enoch with the other, the man with the same name who is a descendant of Cain (Gen 4:17-18), it is said of him that he is the “seventh [generation] from Adam”. He “prophesied” about the coming of the Lord Jesus to bring judgment on the wicked apostates.

This prophesy of Enoch is only found in this letter. In the Old Testament we do not find it. God’s Spirit has also revealed this to Jude, the same as what is written in verse 9. Enoch prophesied in his days about the coming of Christ for judgment, whereby He will be accompanied by “many thousands of His holy ones”, which include all the redeemed of all times. This judgment has had a fulfillment in advance in the flood.

It is a nice thought that Enoch himself was taken away by God before the flood, without seeing death (Heb 11:5). In that way he is a picture of the church that will also be taken up into heaven before the judgments strike the earth. The believers will not come into judgment (Jn 5:24).

V15. The judgment will be executed upon all unbelievers. Christ will judge all *works* as well as all *words* of the ungodly sinners. Do you see how the Holy Spirit emphasizes the nature of ungodliness? The people are ungodly, as are their deeds and ways and their harsh words which they “have spoken against Him”. Therefore every soul that has committed that sin will be personally punished by Him. Because judgment does not immediately follow after the deed, it may seem that God forgets to punish and man keeps on doing evil (Ecc 8:11). But the day of reckoning will come.

V16. Their ungodly words have been uttered in grumbling language. They are dissatisfied, they always want more or differently, they complain about their destiny. They always blame God. Why does He allow the wars and miseries to happen? If He is that almighty, why does not He change the world?

Those are people who are “following after their [own] lusts”. They always seek to fulfill their passions. They speak “arrogantly”, using sensationalizing language, words that are haughtily and hypocritically spoken out. They crawl for people who are above them and they flatter them purely out of selfishness, in order to benefit personally. Meanwhile they follow

their own hidden agenda, for they do not care about others. Only one's own 'I' is important.

Now read Jude 1:10-16 again.

Reflection: Which examples of ungodliness does Jude present in these verses?

Jude 1:17-25 | Exhortations and Encouragements

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

V17. Jude has extensively described the characteristics of the apostate ungodly men. With the words "but you" he again addresses the believers. Just like he did in verse 3, he again addresses them with "beloved". He tells them that they should not have to be surprised that there are such people he previously described, among them. They only have to remember what the apostles of "our Lord Jesus Christ" have said. If they only take that to heart they will be kept from getting involved with these people or allow themselves to be influenced by their mockeries and ungodly lusts.

You see that Jude refers to the inspired Scriptures, in which it is written what the apostles have said. Back to the Scripture and not to human writings, how fundamental biblical they may be. In Acts 20 you find warnings from the mouth of Paul concerning the performance of people for whom Jude warns here (Acts 20:29-30). Peter and John also write about such people (2Pet 2:1; 3:3; 1Jn 2:18-19).

V18. Their warning words come down to that "in the last time there will be mockers". That time began when the Lord Jesus came to earth and was rejected and it will last until His return. This whole time is characterized – not by a submission of the world to the gospel, but – by the performance of mockers who do whatever they like to and who do not take God into

account at all. Their whole life is dominated by the fulfillment of “their own ungodly lusts”.

V19. The people whom Jude is talking about are incorrigible. Because they have no part in what the believers have in common, they form their own group in the midst of the church. They separate themselves like the Pharisees and form a group in the church to carry out their evil works there. They feel themselves superior to others who in their eyes are narrow-minded and petty and therefore look down on them with disdain.

They are “worldly-minded”, which means that they are guided by their soul, their feelings and not like God meant them to be, by their mind in relation to Him. They have no new life, but they are and remain sensual people who live according to their lusts. Each trace of life from God is missing. They are not born again and therefore are people who are “devoid of the Spirit”. Whatever they may claim in view of their being a Christian, their condition cannot possibly be the work of God’s Spirit.

Here we find the end of the verses that deal with apostasy and apostates in which there is not one glimmer of hope of improvement. Judgment will break loose on them in full force at the return of the Lord Jesus with all His own.

V20. From this verse Jude passes on a number of encouragements. In verses 20-23 he does that in the form of exhortations and in verses 24-25 in the form of a praise. The exhortations are seven in total of which four refer to you personally and three to your relation toward others.

The exhortations are again introduced with the words “but you, beloved”. It again marks the contrast to the category of the people of the previous verses. Then we have the exhortations:

1. V20a. You should not only contend for the faith (verse 3), but you also need building yourself up on your “most holy faith”. That’s something you need to take care of yourself. You do that by engaging with God’s Word to better know the truth of faith. The truth of faith is the foundation that you lean on with your heart and soul. The sound teaching that is being taken in by your heart is necessary for your spiritual well-being. It is a matter of your heart.

2. V20b. Beside the necessity of the building up in the faith, there is also the necessity of “praying in – and not ‘to!’ – the Holy Spirit”. This is not possible for those who do not have the Spirit. But it is also not always the way of praying of every believer. A believer may pray in a formal way, after a standard model, or by praying a prayer in which the ‘I’ is centered (Jam 4:3). There is no power in such prayers. A prayer “in the Holy Spirit” is a prayer *in the power of* the Holy Spirit, in which He together with the spirit of the believer asks God what matters to God’s work and is to the glory of the Lord Jesus.

3. V21a. To the building up of yourself on your most holy faith and the prayer in the Holy Spirit, you should also add keeping yourself “in the love of God”. Herein lies the command to keep yourself aware of God’s love. The love of God is the atmosphere in which you are. It is your responsibility to be aware of it. It is living in the conscious assurance that nothing can separate you from the love of God (Rom 8:39).

It is like the shining of the sun. The sun always shines, but something can come between you and the sun, which causes you not to be standing in the sun anymore and not to feel the warmth of it. If sin and unbelief are present in you, they will cause you to shut yourself off from the beams of God’s love for you. His love is surely there, but you are not able to enjoy it at that moment. You have shut yourself off from it. Not only sins cause that effect. You can also be focused on the difficulties in your life in such a way that you forget God’s love. The point is that you do not allow that something comes between you and God’s love for you.

4. V21b. As the fourth and final exhortation in view of yourself, Jude says that you should be looking for “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life”. This is about the second coming of Christ. His first coming was also an expression of God’s mercy (Lk 1:72,78). Now that He in the last of times is about to come for the second time, your attention is drawn to that. When He comes the apostates will no longer be able to do evil. He will then take you away from the circumstances of misery to be with Him and enjoy the eternal life with Him to its fullness.

V22. Now three exhortations follow in view of others. If you take the four previous exhortations to heart you will be longing to help others who may

have got caught up in the trap of the people who secretly have crept in or in one way or another have been influenced by them.

However, the translation of these verses are rather diverse. In my explanation I use the translation that seems most convincing to me.

1. The first category regards the doubters. They must be 'corrected' – which seems to be a better translation than 'have mercy on' – because they make their doubts turn into points of dispute. You should help them to step out of the doubts and disputes by convincing them of the firm foundation of God's truth.

2. V23a. "Others" have already been more influenced by the people who crept in unnoticed. You see that they go the wrong way, the way to the fire. Think about the evolution theory, a poison that is taken in by countless unsuspecting young people, due to nice sounding so-called scientific arguments. That also includes Bible critics. Not only correction is in its place here, but these 'others' must be snatched out of the power these people. The earnest prayer of a righteous man is necessary to save them from their erring way (Jam 5:16b-20).

3. V23b. The third group has gone the furthest. In case you have a task toward them, you must do that "with fear", which refers to yourself, that you may not be dragged by them. You need to watch out carefully not to be involved yourself with their uncleanness in some way, even not with that of its appearance, represented by "the garment polluted by the flesh". In your efforts to help them you run the risk of getting into temptation by participating in their sinful way of living instead of keeping distance.

Every connection with sinful life must be removed, even if it is about things that are not sinful in themselves. You may think, for example, of things that another person has gained in a sinful way, through which he made his life pleasant. In this way I once received a device for my computer as a sign of gratitude for my help from a person who wanted to cleanse himself from sin. After a while it appeared that he had bought that device with borrowed money. He had piled up a huge debt with several instances to afford himself a luxury life style. He gave that device to me without ulterior motives, but it was a 'garment defiled by the flesh'. He did not

have that feeling when he gave it to me. I gave that device back to him and said that he had to sell it himself to reduce his debt.

V24. If you become thoroughly aware of what Jude has said, a feeling of powerlessness may overwhelm you. How great is it that he concludes his letter with focusing your eyes on Him “who is able to keep you from stumbling”. He not only keeps you from stumbling on the way, but it is His purpose “to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless” and that also “with great joy”. That purpose will be accomplished and the joy will in no way be disturbed.

V25. God keeps us and makes us perfect because He is “God our Savior”. That He is “through Jesus Christ”, as He does everything through His Son. Jesus Christ is also “our Lord”. He has all power. If you consider that and become thoroughly aware of that, you will glorify Him for that. In this dangerous time there is yet always a reason to glorify God, or maybe just because of the particular circumstances. You will wish Him everything that Jude mentions here:

1. “glory”, which is all excellence that is visible from Him,
2. “majesty”, which is His dignity and splendor beyond everything,
3. “dominion”, which is His omnipotence, all the resources He has, all that is available to Him to carry out His plans and
4. “authority”, which is His personal right and inner ability to do that.

This all is wished to Him “before all time” and also through the ages, both “now” and “forever”, by all His own.

With that you and I agree wholeheartedly and say together with Jude “amen”, so it is and not otherwise.

Now read Jude 1:17-25 again.

Reflection: Which exhortations and encouragements do you find in this section?

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