

JUDE

The Pulpit Commentary gives the following outline of Jude's Epistle:

- a. The author and his readers (1-2)
- b. The letter Jude did not write, and the letter he did (3-4)
- c. Three warning reminders (5-7)
- d. The analogies of judgment applied (8-10)
- e. Three more Old Testament examples (11-13)
- f. The prophecy of Enoch applies to them (17-19)
- g. The words of the apostles apply to them (20-23)
- h. Jude's exhortation to the faithful (20-23)
- i. Doxology (24-25)

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE READERS (1-2)

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,

To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:

2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

The Tyndale Commentary introduces this epistle with the following: "We can learn a good deal about a man by listening to what he has to say about himself. Jude makes two significant claims. In the first place, he is a servant of Jesus Christ. The very recognition of Jesus as Christ or Messiah meant that the Christian saw himself as the devoted servant (lit. 'bondslave' of Jesus. Even apostles, like Paul (Rom 1:1; Phil. 1:1) and Peter (2 Peter 1:1), gloried in it, and both Jude and James (1:1) who were, it seems, brothers of Jesus, make a point of calling themselves his bondslaves! What a change from the days before the resurrection, when his brothers did not believe in him but thought him deranged (Jn. 7:5; Mk 3:21, 31). Now that he had become a believer, Jude's aim in life was to be utterly at the disposal of the Messiah Jesus. One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that in such glad devotion a man finds perfect freedom.

Secondly, Jude calls himself *a brother of James*. The unadorned name James meant one person, and one only, in the apostolic church – James, the Lord's brother, the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Though others called Jude 'brother of the Lord' (I Cor. 9:5), he preferred to style himself *brother of James* and *servant of Jesus Christ*. It is a further mark of his modesty that he was prepared to accept the position of playing second fiddle to James, his more celebrated brother. [One Bible scholar] cites the parallel of Andrew, content to be known as Simon Peter's brother. 'Both Jude and Andrew might well have been jealous and resentful of their far greater brothers. Both must have had the gift of gladly taking second place.'

The second part of the first verse reads literally in Greek: "To them that are sanctified by God the Father and in Jesus Christ, preserved and called:" The Greek word rendered "sanctified" is *agapao*, which literally means "to love," or in this context, probably, "beloved."

The Pulpit Commentary gives a rather lengthy comment on this verse of which we copy the following: "The terms of this threefold designation are unusual and somewhat difficult to construe. The text itself is not quite certain. The Received Text and our Authorized Version give the reading 'sanctified,' which has the support of one or two documents of good character, and is

still accepted, chiefly on the ground of intrinsic fitness, by some scholars of rank. It must be displaced, however, by the reading ‘beloved,’ which has on its side three of the five primary uncials (the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian) as well as important versions and patristic quotations, and is accepted by the best recent authorities. This, however, gives us so unusual a combination, ‘beloved in God the Father,’ that some are driven to the conclusion that the preposition has got somehow into a wrong place. ...Taking the terms, however, as the vast preponderance of documentary evidence presents them, we have three brief descriptions of the readers, all sufficiently intelligible, and each obviously in point. The most general of the three descriptive notes is the ‘called.’ The idea of a ‘call’ pervades all Scripture. It appears in a variety of applications, of which the most distinctive is that of a call into the Messianic kingdom. This call is ascribed usually, we may perhaps say universally, to God himself. In the Gospels we find the term ‘called’ contrasted with the term ‘elect’ or ‘chosen’ ... (Matthew 22:14), so that the call is of uncertain issue. On the other hand, in the Epistles, at least in Pauline passages of great doctrinal significance (... Romans 8:28, 30; 11:29, etc.), the election appears as the cause, the call as the result; and the latter then is of certain issue, or, in the language of theology, *effectual*.

Jude’s benediction is also rather unusual in the beginning of an epistle. Paul’s epistles all open with the greeting “grace and peace.” Only in his two epistles to Timothy Paul writes “grace, mercy and peace.”

The Greek word rendered “mercy” is *eleos*, which has the primary meaning of “compassion.” “Mercy” has a connotation of guilt which is forgiven. One of the best definitions of “mercy” is probably in Paul’s epistle to Titus, where we read: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his *mercy*. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”¹

Jude’s prayer for his readers is not that God will show mercy to them, because that is what He does already, but that they may have the full experience of this mercy. Jude wants his readers to live as people who are conscious of being forgiven.

Jude wishes them to have this experience over and over again. The Greek words, rendered in the NIV with “be yours in *abundance*” are literally: *plethuno*, from *plethos*, “a large number.” We find the word in the verse about the people who followed Jesus: “Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a *large crowd* from Galilee followed.”² What Jude says is that God’s mercy is inexhaustible.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “Jude wants *mercy, peace* and *love* to be theirs in abundance, in other words, he wants them to be ‘filled to capacity’ (the same word as in 1 Pet. 1:2 and 2 Pet. 1:2) with these three things.

Why *mercy*? It is a rare in greeting (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2, 2 Jn. 3) but singularly important in these four places where it occurs, always against a background of false teaching. It is a reminder that not only at his regeneration (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3), not only at the judgment (2 Tim. 1:16, 18), but every day of his life the Christian stands in need of the mercy of God. Nothing but unmerited mercy can meet the constant need of habitual sinners.

¹ Titus 3:4-7

² Mark 3:7

When a man knows himself to be accepted with God, undeserving though he is, this gives him a deep *peace* in his life. And so this old Hebrew greeting (*sālōm*) is filled out by Jude with deeper meaning.

Nor does this lead to quietism. For the gracious mercy of God not only transforms the life of the recipient, but reaches out through him to others. God's own love is poured out to overflowing in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Mercy from God, peace within, love for men – all in fullest measure (*plēthuntheiē*). Could one imagine a more comprehensive prayer of Christian greeting?"

B. THE LETTER JUDE DID NOT WRITE, AND THE LETTER HE DID (3-4)

3 *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*

4 *For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Jude does not merely talk about love, he displays it, both in the repeated affectionate address of dear friends (3, 17, 20, cf. 2 Pet. 3:1, 8, 14, 17) and also in the serious warning and stern rebuke he administers throughout the Epistle.

Jude never intended to write this letter! ... The phrasing here suggests it was a somewhat unwelcome task, but *I felt I had to write*. The true pastor is also watchman (Ezk. 3:17-19; Acts 20:28-30), though this part of the duty is widely neglected in our generation, under the plea of tolerance."

"To contend for" is the rendering of the Greek verb *epagonizomai*. The English verb "to agonize" is derived from this. This is the only place in Scripture where this word is found.

The idea is obviously that a believer in Jesus Christ, a person who has experienced forgiveness of sin and renewal of life, ought to watch and fight for the pure keeping of the Gospel message with the involvement of his whole personality.

I remember the story of a well-known musician in the Netherlands, who had experienced salvation, who was in a church service where the preacher preached a rather liberal sermon in which the Gospel was not presented. He stood up during the service and declared in a loud voice, with typical Dutch frankness, "This is no Gospel!" He illustrated well what Jude is proposing we all do.

Jude's use of the word "faith" is also unusual. Faith usually describes what a person believes. In the context in which Jude uses it, it stands for the Gospel message.

Barnes' Notes observes about the term: "The system of religion revealed in the gospel. It is called "faith," because that is the cardinal virtue in the system, and because all depends on that. The rule here will require that we should contend in this manner for all 'truth.'"

The Pulpit Commentary states: "The particular subject of the exhortation is described as the duty of *contending earnestly for the faith*; the contention being expressed by a strong term somewhat analogous to that used by Paul in ... Philippians 1:27, and the 'faith' being taken, not in the subjective sense of the quality or grace of belief, but in the objective sense of the things believed."

The facts of faith pertain to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and they are well defined by the Apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, where we read: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”³

The faith is the message of salvation as described in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”⁴

Jude states that the message was “entrusted to the saints.” The Greek verb used is *paradidomi*, which can be rendered “transmitted.” The verb has a wide spectrum of meaning, some of which is rather strong or even violent, as in the verses: “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may *hand you over* to the judge, and the judge may *hand you over* to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.”⁵ And: “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be *betrayed* to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death.”⁶

The fact that the Gospel is “entrusted” to the saints implies that it is their duty to pass it on and proclaim it to others. This corresponds to Jesus’ command: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”⁷

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “In this verse Christian experience is summarized by the one word, *salvation*, and Christian belief as *the faith*. Salvation to Jude, meant not only past deliverance (v. 5), but present experience (vv. 23f.) and future enjoyment of the glory of God (v. 25). It is shared by author and readers, Jewish and Gentile Christians alike. ‘The faith’ is here a body of belief ... as opposed to the more usual meaning of *pistis* as ‘trust.’

What is this body of belief? Jude does not expand, but he designates it as *the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*. By saints he means the people of God (as frequently in the Old Testament). By *the faith ... entrusted* he means the apostolic teaching and preaching which was regulative upon the church (Acts 2:42). Indeed, in this verse, he comes very near asserting propositional revelation, a concept widely denied today. God, he implies, has handed over to his people a recognizable body of teaching about his Son, in feeding on which they are nourished, and in rejecting which they fall. *Paradidonai*, ‘to entrust,’ is the word used for handing down authorized tradition in Israel (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-3; 2 Thes. 3:6), and Jude is therefore saying that the Christian apostolic tradition is normative for the people of God. Apostolic teaching, not whatever be the current theological fashion, is the hallmark of authentic Christianity. The once-for-allness of the apostolic ‘faith’ is inescapably bound up with the particularity of the incarnation, in which God spoke to men through Jesus once and for all. And

³ I Cor. 15:3-8

⁴ Heb. 2:3, 4

⁵ Matt. 5:25

⁶ Matt. 20:18

⁷ Mark 16:15

simply because Christianity is a historical religion, the witness of the original hearers and their circle, the apostles, is determinative of what we can know about Jesus. We cannot go behind the New Testament teaching, nor can we get beyond it, though we must interpret it to each successive generation. Jude would agree with 2 John 9-10 that the man whose doctrine outruns the New Testament witness is to be rejected. The test of progress is, for him, faithfulness to the apostolic teaching about Christ (*cf.* 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13-14)."

The Greek text of v. 4 reads literally: "For there are certain men who crept in unawares, who were of old before ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord [God], and our Lord Jesus Christ." "Crept in unawares" is the rendering of the single Greek verb *pareisduno*, which literally means "to settle in alongside." This is the only place in Scripture where this verb is found.

Another interesting verb used is *prographo*, "to write previously." The Apostle Paul uses that verb in two of his epistles: "For everything that was *written in the past* was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."⁸ And: "That is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I *have already written* briefly."⁹

The idea is not that those men were foreordained to go to hell, but that their names are not written in the Book of Life. A footnote in the NIV states: "men who were marked out for condemnation." They are the weeds in Jesus' Parable about the weeds sown among the wheat by the enemy.¹⁰

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Here is the peril which caused Jude to rush off this sudden, short letter. He heard of certain men who had secretly slipped in or 'wormed their way in' (NEB). The rare word *pareisduō* is similar to the *pareisagō* ('smuggle in secretly') of Galatians 2:4; 2 Peter 2:1). It is a sinister and secretive world. ... Such an incursion by godless men was serious just because it was subtle (*cf.* Gal. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:6). It is always more serious when the danger comes from within the church. But it ought not to have been surprising. The Old Testament, the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles all contain ample warnings against the advent of false teachers. There will always be those within the sheepfold who have not passed through the door, but have climbed up some other way; and they will always be a menace to the sheep (Jn. 10:1). Probably the trouble makers were itinerant teachers – a common problem in the early church (see 2 Cor. 10 and 11; 2 Jn. 10 ...).

The condemnation of these men *was written about long ago: progegrammenoi* simply means 'foretold in writing.' But what condemnation he is about to describe so eloquently? ... The obscurity arises from his having written in haste, with 2 Peter fresh in mind. *Palai, long ago*, has been thought to prove that Jude could not have been thinking of 2 Peter, but if the word means 'already' as in Mark 6:47; 15:44, it would make excellent sense. Peter had already marked them down for this judgment of which Jude goes on to write.

Alternatively, it may be that he is alluding to the condemnation of the Old Testament precursors of the false teachers (see vv. 5-7, 11) or to a phrase in 1 Enoch, to which he certainly has recourse in verse 14. ... He is apparently drawing on a source in which the judgment was described in more detail (as in 2 Peter 2:3). ...

At all events, 'some who long ago were designated for this condemnation' (RSV) have been described in prophecy which also predicted that God would judge them. This is precisely

⁸ Rom. 15:4

⁹ Eph. 3:3

¹⁰ Matt 13:24-26

what he now goes on to substantiate in the section verses 5-19 where Jude will both describe them and their sins from various prophetic examples, and will also point out the judgment to be meted out to them. ...

These subtle intruders are described further. They are *asebeis*, *godless*. This seems to have been a favorite word of Jude's. It refers here to their attitude of irreverence to God, in verse 15 to their shameless deeds, and in verse 18 to their illicit desires; comprehensive *asebeia* indeed!"

Jude's accusation against the false teachers is that they "change the grace of our God into a license for immorality," literally "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." And they deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. That phrase reads literally: "and denying the only Lord [God], and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Barnes' Notes observes: "The doctrines which they held were in fact a denial of the only true God, and of the Redeemer of men. It cannot be supposed that they openly and formally did this, for then they could have made no pretensions to the name Christian, or even to religion of any kind; but the meaning must be, that 'in fact' the doctrines which they held amounted to a denial of the true God, and of the Savior in his proper nature and work. Some have proposed to read this, 'denying the only Lord God, even *kai* our Lord Jesus Christ;' but the Greek does not demand this construction even if it would admit it, and it is most in accordance with Scripture usage to retain the common translation. It may be added, also, that the common translation expresses all that the exigence of the passage requires.

Their doctrines and practice tended as really to the denial of the true God as they did to the denial of the Lord Jesus. Peter, in 2 Peter 2:1, has adverted only to ONE aspect of their doctrine - that it denied the Savior; Jude adds, if the common reading be correct, that it tended also to a denial of the true God. The word GOD *Theon* is missing in many manuscripts, and in the Vulgate and Coptic versions, and [some Bible scholars] suppose it should be omitted. ... The amount of authority seems to be against it. The word rendered 'Lord,' in the phrase 'Lord God,' is *Despotees*, and means here 'Sovereign, or Ruler,' but it is a word which may be appropriately applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same word which is used in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:1. ... If the word 'God' is to be omitted in this place, the passage would be wholly applicable, beyond question, to the Lord Jesus, and would mean, 'denying our only Sovereign and Lord, Jesus Christ.' It is perhaps impossible now to determine with certainty the true reading of the text; nor is it 'very' material. Whichever of the readings is correct; whether the word *Theon*, 'God,' is to be retained or not, the sentiment expressed would be true, that their doctrines amounted to a practical denial of the only true God; and equally so that they were a denial of the only Sovereign and Lord of the true Christian."

The Pulpit Commentary states: "This ungodliness is next shown to take the form of an immoral perversion of spiritual privilege — *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness*. By the grace of God is meant the whole gift of redemption offered in *the* gospel. It is called here the grace of *our* God; the turn thus given to the expression indicating at once the dear and intimate relation to God into which the writer and his fellows in the faith have been introduced, and their shuddering sense of the shameless use to which his gift was debased. The thing to which that grace was perverted is described by a word of wide and evil application, denoting every species of unbridled conduct, but particularly unblushing licentiousness. The same ungodliness in these men is further declared to rise to a denial and disavowal of all Divine claims upon them. The Revised Version, which is more rigorously true to the original here than the Authorized Version, gives an alternative rendering, *denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*, in the text, but

denying the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ in the margin. The question is whether God and Christ are separately mentioned as both objects of the denial, or whether Christ alone is referred to; both the titles, *Master* and *Lord*, being applied to him. The question is not easy to decide.

Among the strongest arguments in favor of the latter view are the two considerations that the attitude of these men to God has been already stated in the previous clause, and that in ... 2 Peter 2:1 we find both the verb and the noun which are used here applied to Christ. On the other side, it is urged that the parallel in ... 1 John 2:22 favors the double reference here; that the title here rendered 'Master' is never applied to Christ except in the single instance of ... 2 Peter 2:1; that the epithet 'only' is used more properly of God, as in verse 25 of this same Epistle; that it is difficult to distinguish between the two titles, if both are referred to Christ here; and that the analogous expression in the Book of Enoch (48:10) is to be considered. The case is stronger on the whole on the side of the twofold subject being in view. But it is further asked whether this denial of God and of Christ is meant to be a theoretical denial or a practical. It is the practical disavowal of God, which appears in a godless and unbridled life, that seems chiefly in view. But there is no good reason for excluding the idea of corrupt doctrine or teaching. The latter is not expressed, it is true, in the terms adopted in the Epistles of John. Neither is there anything to warrant the supposition that the writer was thinking of ... any of the early Gnostics — a supposition entertained both by the earliest Christian writers and by some in our own time. But it is possible enough that the seeds which were to develop into the pronounced Gnosticism of a later time were already sown, and that in such speculative error Jude saw the ally of a life which was regardless of all Divine restraint."

The Tyndale Commentary asks the question: "Why does Jude go to such length to show that the libertines troubling his readers were prophesied long ago? Surely because the prophetic predictions which they fulfill show that they constitute a serious danger to the church. They must be earnestly resisted as his readers contend for the purity of the apostolic gospel. Nothing less than the faith is at stake. Hence the writer's passion and urgency."

C. THREE WARNING REMINDERS (5-7)

5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "Jude is using a midrashic technique, making five citations, making five citations (vv. 5-7, 9, 11, 14f., 18) each of which is followed by a commentary section (vv. 8, 10, 12-13, 16, 19). ... It is a powerful way of showing that the prophecies from of old are now being fulfilled. Not all five citations are from the Old Testament, for there are two apocryphal quotations (vv. 9, 14-15) and an apostolic prophecy (v. 18) together with another Christian prophecy (v. 11), but the prophecy-fulfillment theme is clear, and sheds light on Jude's background.

After introducing his opponents, Jude proceeds to state in no uncertain terms what will befall them. He does so by drawing upon three instances of divine judgment with which they had once been familiar but which they had, apparently, forgotten. Judgment, he reminds them, was mete out first to Israel, second to angels which sinned, and third to cities of the plain.”

Jude, first of all, reminds his readers of their own history. It has been said that if we forget our history, we have no future.

Jesus proclaimed that His authority was based on His own historic background. He said: “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going.”¹¹ That is why evolutionists have no vision of heavenly bliss. If you believe that you descended from the apes, there is no hope of a glorious family reunion above.

Israel’s birth as a nation began when God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. They became free individuals, who had human dignity because of God’s dealing with them. Forgetting our past also robs us of our dignity.

Their ancestors were a living illustration of the lesson Jude is teaching here. As they arrived at the borders of the Promised Land, they saw the giants and forgot that God had drowned the whole Egyptian army in the waters of the sea through which they had travelled as on dry land.

Moses said to the people who refused to conquer Canaan: “You did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. When the Lord heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: ‘Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly.’”¹²

There is no clear Biblical record of the fall of Lucifer and of angels who turned into demons when they abandoned the position God had given them at the time of their creation. Isaiah and Ezekiel refer to these events under images of the kings of Babylon¹³ and of Tyre.¹⁴

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Jude’s second example concerns *the angels*. They, too, were intended to be ‘a people for God’s own possession.’ They, too, had many privileges on which they might have relied. In both respects they were like the false teachers to whom Jude addressed himself.

Jude refers here to the sin and fate of the fallen angels. Jews were very interested in angels in the last few centuries BC, and *1 Enoch* records some of their speculations on the subject. The Greek myth of the destruction of the Titans by Zeus, the Zoroastrian legend of the fall of Ahriman and his angels, and rabbinic elaboration of Genesis 6:1 all show how widespread such a belief was in popular religion, as an attempt to rationalize the contradictions and the evil in the world. Jude does not necessarily endorse its truth; he does, however, like any shrewd preacher, use the current language and thought forms of his day in order to bring home to his readers, in terms highly significant to them, the perils of lust and pride.

For it was lust and pride that led to the downfall of these angels. Pride, because they were not content to keep their positions of authority (*archēn*) given them by God; the word *archēn*

¹¹ John 8:14

¹² Deut. 1:32-36

¹³ Isa. 14:12-16

¹⁴ Ezek. 28:2ff.

here probably means, as Wycliffe has it, ‘princehood.’ Each nation was thought to have its governing angel Pride in the angels caused civil war in heaven, and the evil angels were cast out (see Is. 14:12; 24:21f.) and sentenced by God to everlasting doom. ... Thus ‘until the judgment of the great day’ comes frequently in *1 Enoch*, with associated expression ... where we also read that angels ‘have deserted the lofty sky, and their holy everlasting station’ ... and the fate for Azazel, one of their principal offenders, is ‘Cover him with darkness, and let him dwell there for ever’.... The other evil angels are to be bound with great chains until the day of their judgment.”

Another example of judgment Jude uses is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. From the Genesis account, we gather that the sexual perversion referred to here, was homosexual.¹⁵ Jude seems to say that the fire that fell upon those cities was an paradigm of the fire of hell.

The Pulpit Commentary gives some rather lengthy comments on Jude’s reference to the destruction of the cities: “The third example is taken from the history of the cities of the Plain. This example is closely connected with the immediately preceding by the event as with which the verse opens; which phrase expresses a likeness between the two cases, to wit, between the reservation of those angels in bonds for the final judgment, and the fate of those cities as subjects of the penal vengeance of God. Two of those cities of evil memory, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, are mentioned by name. The other two, Admah and Zeboim, are included in the phrase, *and the cities about them*. Attention is rightly called by some of the commentators to the remarkable frequency with which the case of Sodom and Gomorrah is brought forward, both in the New Testament and in the Old, and to the use which Paul makes of it (as he finds it cited by Isaiah) in the great argument of Romans 9. The sin charged against these cities is stated in express terms to have been the same in kind with that of the angels — the indulgence of passion contrary to nature. They are described as having in *like manner with these* (that is, surely, in like manner with these angels just referred to; not, as some strangely imagine, with these men who corrupt the Church) *given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh*. The verbs are selected to bring out the intense sinfulness of the sin — the one being a strong compound form expressing unreserved surrender, the other an equally strong compound form denoting a departure from the law of nature in the impurities practiced. The sin has taken its name from the city with which the Book of Genesis so fearfully connects its indulgence. It forms one of the darkest strokes in the terrible picture which Paul has given us of the state of the ancient heathen world (... Romans 1:27). With the Dead Sea probably in his view, the writer describes the doom of the cities as an *example* of or a *witness* to (the noun used being one that occurs again only in ... James 5:11, and bearing either sense) the retributive justice of God. They are *set forth* (literally, *they lie before us*) *for an example, suffering the vengeance* (rather, *the punishment*) *of eternal fire*. So it is put by the Authorized Version and the Revised Version, as also by Wickliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish. There is much to be said, however, in favor of the order adopted by the Revised Version in its margin, viz. ‘set forth as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment.’ It could not, except in a forced manner, be said that these cities, in being destroyed as they were, suffered the penalty of *eternal* fire, and continued to serve as an instance of that. But it could be said that, in being destroyed, they suffered punishment, and that the kind of punishment was typical of the eternal retribution of God. ‘A destruction,’ says [one Bible scholar], ‘so utter and so permanent as theirs has been, is the nearest approach that can be

¹⁵ See Gen. 19:4, 5.

found in this world to the destruction which awaits those who are kept under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

D. THE ANALOGIES OF JUDGMENT APPLIED (8-10)

8 *In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.*

9 *But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

10 *Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals — these are the very things that destroy them.*

The Greek text of v. 8 reads literally: “Likewise also these (filthy) dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.” The word “filthy” may, or may not be in the original.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “From the preceding three analogies Jude draws three clear points. His false teachers are arraigned for lust, for rebelliousness, and for irreverence. These men are *dreamers*; the participle *enupniazomenoi*, applies to the three actions which Jude goes on to detail. By saying they *pollute their own bodies*, he may simply be referring to their voluptuous dreams (*cf.* Is. 56:10, LXX). Or he may mean that they are dead to decency, sunk in the torpor of sin; so Calvin. But as the word occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Acts 2:17, where it is used of prophetic dreams (*cf.* Joel 2:28), it probably indicates that the false teachers supported their antinomianism by laying claim to divine revelations in their dreams. ‘On the strength of their dreams they pollute the flesh, reject the Lord’s authority, and slander the glorious ones.’

Second, they *reject* (NEB ‘flout’) *authority*, thus displaying the arrogance and pride which has run through all three of the examples Jude has quoted. The question is, what authority? Some have taken *kuriotēta*, ‘lordship,’ to be parallel to *doxas*, ‘glorious being,’ and refer both to angelic beings. Yet, whereas *kuriotēs* is certainly so used in Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:16, and *doxai* in 2 Peter 2:10f., nevertheless the form of the sentence here (three clauses denoting what these dreamers do) suggests a distinction between ‘lordship’ and the ‘glorious beings.’ It is possible to apply *kuriotēs* to human authority, either the civil power, the church leaders, or authority in general. Any would make excellent sense here, but in view of what Jude has to say about their denial of the Lordship of Jesus (v. 4), it seems best to take the word in the same sense here. The heretics, like the Israelites, the fallen angels, and the sodomites, were essentially turning their back on (*atheteō*, *reject*, is a very deliberate word) the Lord, though this may have found expression in civil or ecclesiastical insubordination. These men were anti-law, a common state of affairs when people follow their own lusts and exult in their own knowledge.”

The Pulpit Commentary continues: “Having set in the forefront of his warnings these terrible instances of gross sin and overwhelming penalty, the writer proceeds to deal with the real character of the insidious troublers and corrupters of the Churches of his time. He describes them as *filthy dreamers*; or better, as the Revised Version puts it, *men in their dreamings* — an expression pointing to the foul and perverted fancies in the service of which they lived. He charges them with the particular sins of defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and railing at

dignities. He further declares of them that, in practicing such sins, they run a course like that of the cities of the plain, and run it in defiance, too, of the warning held forth to them by the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. For such seems the point of the terms connecting this paragraph with the preceding, which are best rendered ‘nevertheless in like manner,’ or ‘yet in like manner’ (Revised Version). The difficulty lies, however, in the description of their offences. What is intended by the charge that they *defile the flesh* is obvious. But what is referred to in the other clauses, *and set at naught dominion* (or, *lordship*), *and rail at dignities* (or, *glories*), is far from clear. It has been supposed that a lawlessness is meant which expressed itself in contempt for all earthly authority, whether political or ecclesiastical. The whole scope of the passage, however, and the analogy of ... 2 Peter 2:10, etc., seem to point so decidedly to higher dignities than the earthly institutions of Church and State, that most interpreters now think that celestial lordship of some kind is in view. But of what kind? That of *God* and that of *good angels*, say some. That of *Christ* and that of *angels*, say others. Both clauses, say a third class of interpreters, refer to angels, both to good angels and to evil, or to good angels alone, or to evil angels alone, as the allusions are variously understood. Pointing to the particular word which is used here for ‘dominion’ or ‘lordship,’ some contend that there is a definite reference to the dominion of *Christ*, the *Lord* distinctively so called. But the same word is used elsewhere (cf. ... Ephesians 1:21; ... Colossians 1:16) of angels, while the term translated ‘dignities,’ or ‘glories,’ occurs again only in ... 2 Peter 2:10. If, therefore, any single kind of lordship is in view, we should conclude in favor of angelic dignities, and the authority of good angels in particular. But it may be that Jude uses the terms here in a general sense to cover all kinds of authority, especially celestial authority. This is favored by the undefined expressions which meet us in the Petrine parallel (... 2 Peter 2:10, etc.). It is supported, too, by the consideration that in leveling three separate charges against the men, Jude has probably in view the three separate cases which he has just cited in verses 5-7. In which case the parallel between these latter and the men now described can naturally be only of a general kind. It is remarked by [one Bible scholar] that the passage in ... 2 Peter 2:10, etc. ..., taken in connection with this one in Jude, suggests that ‘the undue worshipping of angels in the Judaizing Gnosticism which had developed out of the teaching of the Essenes’ (... Colossians 2:18), had been met by its most extreme opponents with coarse and railing mockery as to all angels, whether good or evil, and that the apostle felt it necessary to rebuke this license of speech.”

There is no biblical record of the dispute between the archangel Michael and Satan about the body of Moses at the time of his death. We read in Deuteronomy: “And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.”¹⁶ Jude is quoting from apocryphical sources. According to a footnote in *The Tyndale Commentary*, similar stories are found in “*The Slavonic Wisdom of Moses 16*, and in the *Targum of Jonathan*.”

The Pulpit Commentary observes: The Targum of Jonathan, on ... Deuteronomy 34:6, speaks of Michael as having charge of the grave of Moses, and there may be something to the same effect in other ancient Jewish legends But with this partial exception, there seems to be nothing resembling Jude’s statement either in apocryphal books like that of Enoch or in the rabbinical literature, not to speak of the canonical Scriptures. Neither is the object of the contention quite apparent — whether it is meant that the devil attempted to deprive Moses of the

¹⁶ Deut. 34:5, 6

honor of burial by impeaching him of the murder of the Egyptian, or that he sought to preserve the body for idolatrous uses such as the brazen serpent lent itself to, or what else. The matter, nevertheless, is introduced by Jude as one with which his readers would be familiar. Whence, then, comes the story? Some have solved the difficulty by the desperate expedient of allegory, as if the body of Moses were a figure of the Israelite Law, polity, or people; and as if the sentence referred to the giving of the Law at Sinai, the siege under Hezekiah, or the rebuilding under Zerubbabel. Others seek its source in a special revelation, or in some unrecorded instructions given by Christ in explanation of the Transfiguration scene. ... Calvin referred it to oral Jewish tradition. Another view of it appears, however, in so early a writer as Origen, viz. that it is a quotation from an old apocryphal writing on the *Ascent* or *Assumption of Moses*, the date of which is much disputed, but is taken by some of the best authorities ... to be the first decade after the death of Herod. This is the most probable explanation; and Jude's use of this story, therefore, carries no more serious consequences with it than the use he afterwards makes of the Book of Enoch. Beyond what could be gathered from a few scattered references and quotations in the Fathers and some later writings, the book in question remained unknown for many centuries. But in the year 1861 a considerable part of it, which had been discovered in the Ambrosian Library of Milan, was given to the public by Ceriani, in an Old Latin version, and since that time various editions of it have been published. [One theologian] observes that the quotation 'shows how early the attempt was made to describe exactly the final moment of the life of Moses, and to weave into this description a complete answer to the questions which arose concerning his highest glory, and his guilt or innocence' Some, who are not prepared to accept the theory that the passage is a quotation from this ancient book, understand Jude to refer to a traditional expansion of Scripture, based partly on the narrative of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy, and partly on the scene between Joshua and Satan in Zechariah 3."

V. 10 has a rather complicated construction in the Greek text; it reads literally: "But these things which they know not what: speak evil of but naturally as those brute beasts in those things they know they corrupt themselves." The Greek verb, rendered "corrupt themselves" is *phtheiro*, which can be rendered "to spoil," or "to ruin." It has a moral connotation. We find the same word in the verse: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being *corrupted* by its deceitful desires."¹⁷

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "How ironical that when men should claim to be visionary, they should actually be ignorant; when they think themselves superior to the common man they should actually be on the same level as animals, and be corrupted by the very practices in which they seek liberty and self-expression. Jude is stating a profound truth in linking these two characteristics together. If a man is persistently blind to spiritual values, deaf to the call of God, and rates self-determination as the highest good, then a time will come when he cannot hear the call he has spurned, but is left to the mercy of the turbulent instincts to which he once turned in search of freedom. And those instincts, given free reign, are merciless. Lust, when indulged, becomes a killer."

E. THREE MORE OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES (11-13)

11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

¹⁷ Eph. 4:22

12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm — shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted — twice dead.

13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Peter, in his Second *Epistle*, also compares the false teachers to Balaam. We read: “With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.”¹⁸ Jude adds Cain and Korah to the list.

Cain acquired the doubtful honor of becoming the first murderer in the history of mankind. In the well-known story of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, the issue is a sacrifice. Abel sacrificed an animal to expiate his sin. Cain brought the fruit of his labor as a sacrifice, evidently believing that God ought to be satisfied with him in his natural condition. To this God answers: “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”¹⁹ The problem word in that verse is the Hebrew word *chatta'ah*, which is rendered “sin,” but can also mean “sin offering.” We find it used as such in the verse: “But burn the bull’s flesh and its hide and its offal outside the camp. It is a *sin offering*.”²⁰

The difference between Cain and Abel was not that Cain practiced agriculture and Abel was a shepherd; it was that Abel knew himself to be a sinner and brought a sacrifice to atone for his sin, whilst Cain felt that he was good enough for God to accept him as he was. The false teachers, Jude states, know no conviction of sin.

The second reference is to Balaam, the prophet, asked by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people of Israel, as they traveled through the desert. God told Balaam that he wasn’t allowed to do this. But Balaam went anyhow, because of the money offered to him. Being a genuine prophet, Balaam found himself unable to pronounce a curse over Israel. He actually uttered a blessing upon the people. His sin consisted in the fact that he suggested to King Balak another means of corrupting Israel. The girls of Moab offered themselves as prostitutes to the men of Israel, which brought the wrath of God upon the nation. The story of Balaam’s efforts and failure is found in Numbers 22. When Israel defeated and captured Moab, they left some of the young women alive. That infuriated Moses, who said: “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord’s people.”²¹

The Tyndale Commentary comments on Jude’s comparison of the false teachers with Balaam: “Once again there is the obvious point, that he was exceedingly avaricious. It stands out clearly from the narrative of Numbers 22-24. But, as with Cain, there is more to be said. He, like Jude’s opponents, taught Israel to sin. It was Balaam who involved Israel in the immorality and idolatry at Baal-peor (Nu. 31:16). No doubt he told the Israelites, who he had three times found himself unable to curse, that they were so firmly ensconced in the favor of the Almighty that

¹⁸ II Peter 2:14, 15

¹⁹ Gen. 4:7

²⁰ Ex. 29:14

²¹ Num. 31:16

nothing could affect their standing with him. They could sin with impunity. Thus he led them into the *error* of fornication and the denial of Yahweh's sovereign claims through submission to other, inferior deities. This is what the false teachers seem to have done. They were, like Balaam, greedy for money. Like him, they practiced and led others into immorality. Like him, they boasted of prophetic dreams and visions. Like him, they encouraged apostasy. Like him, they would perish."

The story of Korah's rebellion is told in Numbers 16.²² Korah was a Levite, but not from the branch of Aaron's family, which meant that he could serve in the tabernacle, but not perform the priestly duties. Two other Levites, Dathan and Abiram, joined him in his protest. They died when the earth opened up at the place where they were standing, they fell into the opening and the earth closed above them.

The Tyndale Commentary states about the comparison between the false teachers in Jude's day and the people involved in the rebellion of Korah: "These men, like Korah, had clearly defied the duly constituted leadership of the church, refusing to accept their authority and setting themselves up in opposition. The Targums specifically call Korah a 'schismatic.' Insubordination of this sort was not unknown in the early church. It lay behind the injunctions of 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Titus 1:10-11; 3:10-11. ... Korah is mentioned last because his fate was so graphic (Nu. 16:35f.).

So in these three pen-pictures from the Old Testament we see three leading characteristics of the false teachers. Like Cain, they were devoid of love. Like Balaam, they were prepared in return for money to teach others that sin did not matter. Like Korah, they were careless of the ordinances of God and insubordinate to church leaders. It is not without significance for Jude's purpose that each of three Old Testament characters taught others to sin, and each met with ruin. It is equally obvious that these are the three major characteristic of second-century Gnosticism; we may have here in Jude the early inklings of an evil which was later to plague the sub-apostolic church. Claims to special 'knowledge' made men indifferent to the demands of morality (you were, after all, saved by *gnōsis*, not by behavior), indifferent to the needs of their brethren (it was essentially personal illumination and this made you feel superior to the common herd), indifferent, too, to the dicta of church leaders (for, after all, it was you, not they, who had 'arrived'). Those who lay claim to direct, immediate knowledge of the Almighty's mind commonly fall into the same dangers today."

Jude calls the false teachers "blemishes at your love feasts." The Greek word, rendered "blemish" is *spilas*, the meaning of which is uncertain. It is only found in this verse in the New Testament. *Young's Literal Translation* of the New Testament calls the "craggy rocks in your love-feasts." "Love feasts" is the rendering of the Greek word *agape*, which constituted a common meal by members of the early church, probably ending with a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Pulpit Commentary explains: "In adopting the rendering 'spots,' the English Version follows Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish, and is followed by some good interpreters on the ground that the term, though formally different, is essentially the same as that in ... 2 Peter 2:13. The word itself, however, properly means 'rocks,' and therefore the point may be that their immoral conduct makes these men like treacherous reefs, on which their fellows make shipwreck. So the Revised Version gives 'hidden rocks' in the text, and transfers 'spots' to the margin."

²² See Num. 16:1-33.

Jude's accusation that the false teachers "feed only themselves" is an obvious reference to Ezekiel's prophecy about the shepherds of Israel, which reads: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'"²³

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "Jude continues to pile on the invective in four striking metaphors. They are clouds, trees, waves, stars. 'Sky, land and sea are ransacked for illustrations of these men.' ...

In the first place, they are like *clouds* which bring promise of rain, but give not a drop to the thirsty ground, they merely serve to hide the sun. These clouds are carried past by the wind, and the land beneath gets no benefit (see Pr. 25:14). Here is a graphic example of the uselessness of teaching which is supposedly 'advanced' and 'enlightened' but has nothing to offer the ordinary Christian for the nourishment of his spiritual life. I find this a solemn warning to those who, like myself, are professional theologians. We must constantly ask ourselves if our studies and knowledge are benefiting anybody at all.

Secondly, they are like barren fruit *trees*. There is much discussion over the precise meaning of *fihinopōrinōs*. The AV, wrongly, takes this as 'whose fruit withereth.' [One Bible scholar] favors 'autumnal' (*cf.* NIV, *autumn trees*), the literal meaning of the components of the word being 'end of the fruiting'; the season when growth has stopped and the branches are bare. [Another Bible scholar] complains that if this were the case, how could the trees be blamed for not fruiting? He thinks it means 'autumn-fruiting.' It may, indeed, simply mean this, and the blame may all be concentrated in the word *akarpa* (which NIV construes with what follows) – they carry not fruit; though it is also possible that the word means they blight their fruit before bringing it to maturity. At all events, these teachers had barren lives, when they should have been fruitful. They were like the barren fig tree of Jesus' parable (Lk. 13:6-9). They had forgotten Jesus' words 'by their fruit you will recognize them' (Mt. 7:20). Peter had a similar complaint to make about his readers. They had ceased to grow (2 Pet. 1:8; 3:18). They are called *twice dead* and *uprooted* because they had once been 'dead in transgressions and sins' (Eph. 2:1) and were now dead again, in the sense that they were cut off from their life-giving root, Jesus Christ (contrast Col. 2:7). The content of what Jude is saying has outstripped the confines of the metaphor, it would seem; though at a pinch the tree could be thought of as once dead because barren and twice dead because uprooted. The uprooting of trees is a favorite Old Testament metaphor of judgment (Ps. 52:5; Pr. 2:22)."

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "The late autumn is not the time, from the Eastern point of view, for the putting forth of fruit. The tree then becomes bare, barren, leafless. So is it with these men. Nor is it only that they have no fruit to show. The capacity of fruitfulness is extinct within them. The possibility of recovering it is gone from them. They are as dead to all good service as trees are which are rooted out as hopelessly useless. The phrase, 'twice dead,' may mean no more than 'utterly dead.' The point, however, is rather this — that they are dead, not only in respect of barrenness — which is a death in life — but in respect of the extinction of all vitality."

In comparing the false teachers to ocean waves that foam up their shame, Jude may have thought of Isaiah, who prophesied about the wicked: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea,

²³ Ezek. 34:2

which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.”²⁴ “Foaming up” is the rendering of the Greek verb *epaphrizo*, which only occurs in this verse in the New Testament. The suggestion is that the immoral behavior of these teachers is not something that is carried on in secret, but that it is openly displayed as a lifestyle that is part of the “freedom” propagated by these people.

As the ocean waves are governed by the position of heavenly bodies in our universe, so the morality of the false teachers is inspired by the evil powers in the heavenly places.

The Tyndale Commentary comments on Jude’s picture of “wandering stars”: “Jude is not thinking of planets, but of shooting stars which fall out of the sky and are engulfed in darkness – to the confusion of all who watch them. For this metaphor he goes to *1 Enoch* once more ... where the angel shows Enoch ‘a prison for the stars of heaven.’ Later, he sees stars bound together, and is told, ‘these are the angels which have transgressed ... and this is the prison of the angels in which they are kept for ever.’ This suggests that Jude is thinking of the doom of the fallen angels (of which he had spoken in v. 6), when he talks of the doom reserved for wandering stars. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that he goes on to quote *Enoch* in the next verse. They pretend to be lights, but have gone sadly astray and doom awaits them (there is probably a play on *planētai*, *wandering*, and the *planē*, *error* of v. 11). The allusion to Enoch is peculiarly fitting, as Irenaeus pointed out. For whereas the wicked angels lost their heavenly home by disobeying God, and fell to destruction, Enoch gained heaven by obeying God, and was saved.

In these two verses, then, Jude has evoked a swift, bold picture of the men he is castigating. They are as dangerous as sunken rocks, as selfish as perverted shepherds, as useless as rainless clouds, as dead as barren trees, as dirty as the foaming sea, and as certain of doom as the fallen angels.”

The Pulpit Commentary observes about the doom that awaits the false teachers: “The doom which is declared to be in reserve, no doubt takes its form so far from the immediate figure of the comet vanishing into the unseen. But the idea expressed is not so much that of suddenness as that of certainty and irreversibility. It is the doom which Christ himself pronounces to be *prepared* (... Matthew 25:41), and, therefore, inevitable and perpetual. In confirmation of this statement of the certainty of the doom, the readers are next reminded of the Lord’s judicial coming, and of that as the subject of prophecy. The prophecy in question, though not one of those recorded in the canonical Hebrew Scriptures, seems to have been familiar enough to the readers to make it a natural and pertinent thing to quote it. So Paul cites heathen authors or common popular sayings in support of his statements.”

F. THE PROPHECY OF ENOCH APPLIES TO THEM (14-16)

14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones

15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

16 These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

²⁴ Isa. 57:20

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Nowhere in the Old Testament, incidentally, is Enoch called *the seventh from Adam* (though this could be inferred from Gn. 5), but he is so called in *1 Enoch* lx. 8, xciii. 3. *Seventh* is important, for seven is the perfect number in Hebrew thought, and emphasizes the stature of this man Enoch who walked with God (Gn. 5:24). A prophecy, for Jude, clinches the matter. There is nothing more to be said about the fate of the false teachers. It is interesting that Jude applies this prophecy of long ago to the situation of his own day, much as the men of Qumran (who also valued *1 Enoch*) applied the writings of Habakkuk to their own time and situation. Although we have only a third of the text of *1 Enoch* in Greek, we do possess this fragment, and Jude sticks very closely to his original. Where Enoch was thinking of the Lord as God coming in judgment, to Jude, of course, the *kurios* is the Lord Jesus and his coming is the parousia; *the holy ones* who accompany him to judgment are the angels (*cf.* Mt. 25:31) and judgment is exercised on the wicked in respect of both their deeds and words. It is on their words that Jude will concentrate in verse 16, having already dealt fully with their deeds in verses 5-11. In *1 Enoch* the harsh words are uttered against God. This may well be the thrust in verse 16. ...

Whether or not he regarded *1 Enoch* as inspired is perhaps beside the point, for he is quoting a book both he and his readers will know and respect. He speaks to them in language which they will readily understand, and that remains one of the most important elements in the communication of Christian truth.”

V. 16 reads literally in the Greek text: “These are murmurers and complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling [words,] because having in admiration of advantage [men’s] persons.” The Greek word, rendered “murmurers” is *goggustes*, which, again, is only found in this verse in the New Testament. The idea seems to be that they are not saying anything out loud, but are grumbling under their breath.

The next Greek word is *mempsimoiros*, rendered in the NIV as “faultfinders.” This word is also unique to Jude. The suggestion is that they blame others for their problems. “Boasting” is the NIV’s rendering of the Greek “great swelling [words], “words” not being in the original text, but understood.

“Boast about themselves” is the rendering of the Greek verb *thaumazo*, which refers to admiration or astonishment. In this context it has, obviously, the first meaning. They considered themselves to be incomparable. The first time the verb is used is in the verse: “When Jesus heard this, he was *astonished* and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.’”²⁵

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Jude completes his picture of the heretics in terms which [one Bible scholar] thinks are taken from chapter 7 of the (Latin) *Assumption of Moses*, but which [another scholar], with greater probability, sees as an application of the prophecy of *1 Enoch*. Thus *grumblers* and *faultfinders* fill out the sins of word which they had committed (‘harsh words ... spoken against him,’ v. 15); *they follow their own evil desires in the ungodly way*’ v. 15). Then, carried away by indignation, Jude adds one more phrase in each category to complete the verse.

For *grumblers*, Jude uses the delightfully onomatopoeic word, *gongustēs*; Paul had used it to reflect the smoldering discontent of the Israelites in the desert (1 Cor. 10:10), and this is Jude’s reference too. Whenever a man gets out of touch with God he is likely to begin complaining about something. To grumble and moan is one of the distinguishing marks of man

²⁵ Matt. 8:10

without God (*cf.* Phil. 2:14). In their case, it was probably, like Israel in the desert, grumbling against God and perhaps the restrictions imposed by his Law. This grumbling extended, too, to their lot in life. They were always cursing their luck (that is the real meaning of *mempsimoiros*, *faultfinder*). The *mempsimoiros* was a standard Greek character. ... ‘You’re satisfied by nothing that befalls you; you complain at everything. You don’t want what you’ve got, you long for what you haven’t got. In winter you wish it were summer, and in summer that is were winter. You are like the sick folk, hard to please, and *mempsimoiros*!’²⁶ ... Unfortunately those words fit many a Christian. This whole spirit of grumbling is condemned roundly in James 1:13. It is to insult the God who gives us all things; it is to forget that whatever befalls us, nothing can separate us from his love, nor deprive us of that most priceless of all treasures, the Lord’s presence in our lives (Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 13:5-6).”

G. THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLES APPLY TO THEM (17-19)

17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.

18 They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."

19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

The NIV’s “dear friends” is the rendering of the Greek *agapeetoi*, “beloved.” Jude’s word show a striking similarity to what Peter wrote in his Second Epistle: “Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.”²⁷ Unless we can determine which of the epistles was written first, we cannot be sure who quotes who.

Even more interesting is the fact that Jude may be referring to personal letters Paul wrote to Timothy. In First Timothy, for instance, we read: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”²⁸ In his second letter to Timothy Paul wrote: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”²⁹

We conclude from this that when Jude wrote, Paul’s personal correspondence had already become public property of the church as a whole.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Jude points out that there is nothing in the current apostasy which could not have been expected. The apostles had foretold it. The use of the word *proecirēmenōn*, *foretold*, does not mean that the apostles all belonged to a previous generation,

²⁶ Probably a quotation from a British popular magazine.

²⁷ II Peter 3:1-3

²⁸ I Tim. 4:1

²⁹ II Tim. 3:1-5

whereas Jude thought of himself as living ‘in the last time,’ *ep’ eschatou tou chronou* (v. 18). It simply means that they foretold it before it came to pass. Indeed, the apostles said it *to you* – palpable evidence that we are dealing with historical contemporaries of the first apostles (v. 18). The apostles themselves were conscious of living ‘in the last time,’ the coming of Jesus into the world had ushered in the last chapter of the world’s history, which would continue until the parousia made an end of all things. Appeal to apostolic teaching would be very right and proper in one, like Jude, who was not an apostle, and seems to have been a very modest man It is noteworthy that he does not say, like 2 Peter, ‘your apostles,’ which could well include the writer, but *the apostles*, which could hardly do so. The whole sentiment is simpler in Jude than in 2 Peter; the latter’s ‘prophets’ are dropped and his ‘commands’ become ‘predictions.’ ... By *the apostles* Jude means those apostles who had brought the gospel to his recipients.”

The Greek text of v. 19 reads literally: “These are they who separate [themselves], sensual, not having the Spirit.” It is not clear whether this means that the false teachers separated themselves from the church, as some Bible scholars interpret the text, or whether they caused separation within the church. The Greek word used is *apodiorizontes*, which can be rendered “separators.” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines it as: “Those who by their wickedness separate themselves from the living fellowship of Christians.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “He uses a very rare word and calls them *the men who divide you*, or ‘create division.’ I may be used (as in Aristotle) to mean, ‘the men that make distinctions’ (*i.e.* invidious distinctions between themselves and the other people). The word, found only here in the Bible, denotes those superior people who keep themselves to themselves – Christian Pharisees. [One Bible scholar] suggests various ways in which this divisiveness may have shown itself. They probably formed a clique of their own at the Agape (v. 12). They certainly despised the simple pastors set over the church (v. 8), and attached themselves to the rich (v. 16). Now, on the whole, the rich would have been educated. ‘It was out of this state of things that Gnosticism arose. Gnosticism was the revolt of the well-to-do, half educated bourgeois class’ ... It is probably with a prototype of Gnosticism that we have to do here. These men were arrogant because they had arrived, spiritually and intellectually. They were the *élite*. That is why they kept themselves to themselves.

They were, indeed, very like the Pharisees, and Jude deals with them much as Jesus had dealt with the Pharisees. The derivation of the name Pharisee probably means ‘separated,’ and denotes the exclusive folk who divided themselves off. And Jesus told them that they were indeed separated – from the God they claimed to know! (Mk. 3:23-26, Gk.) Here Jude does the same. They claim to be separated off. He agrees. They are! Exclusiveness always hurts the exclusive man more than those from whom he separates himself. It seems that they despised the ordinary Christians, and called them *psuchikoi*, men governed by the natural life, not dominated by the Spirit, and not to be bound to the restrictions and inhibitions of ordinary Christians. They were spiritual aristocracy, immune to the laws of conduct which bound the ordinary man. Very well, Jude seems to say. You ask for distinctions to be made. You shall have them. In fact it is *you* who are governed by the natural life, the natural impulses. *You* are the *psuchikoi*! And so far from being filled with the Spirit, it is clear that you have not got the Spirit at all. You are apostate, or perhaps even counterfeit Christians.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments on Jude’s use of the Greek verb *apodiorizo*, “to separate”: “The verb (which is one of very rare occurrence) is held to be capable of more than one sense — *seceding, causing divisions, creating factions, making definitions or distinctions*. The most natural meaning seems to be that adopted by the Revised Version, *they who make*

separations. So Tyndale; Cranmer and the Genevan have ‘these are makers of sects,’ and Luther gives ‘makers of factions.’ It may be that they caused divisions by setting themselves up as the only enlightened Christians, and, on the ground of that enlightenment, claiming to be superior to the moral laws which bound others. The term translated ‘sensual’ has unfortunately no proper representative in English. It is ‘psychical,’ being formed from the noun *psyche*, which is rendered ‘life’ or ‘soul.’ This *psyche* is intermediate between ‘body’ and ‘spirit.’ It is in the first instance simply the bond or principle of the animal life, and in the second instance it is *embodied* life. Thus it is that in man which he has in common with the brute creation beneath him. But it becomes also more than this, expressing that in man which renders him capable of connection with God. For in the third instance it denotes the seat of feeling, desire, affection, and emotion; the center of the personal life — the self in man. The adjective itself occurs in the New Testament only in a few passages of marked importance — ... 1 Corinthians 2:14; 15:44, 46; ... James 3:15; and the present verse. Here it designates the men as men who live only for the natural self — men who make the sensuous nature, with its appetites and passions, the law of their life; *natural* or *animal* men, as the Revised Version gives it in the margin. Wickliffe renders it ‘beastly;’ Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan, ‘fleshly;’ the Rhemish, ‘sensual.’ The third clause admits of being rendered either ‘having not the spirit’ (in which the Authorized is supported by Wickliffe, Tyndale, and Cranmer), or ‘having not the Spirit’ (so the Revised Version, following the Genevan and the Rhemish). For it is in many passages difficult to decide whether the word ‘spirit’ means the Holy Spirit of God or man’s own spirit — that in him in virtue of which he can have fellowship with the Divine, and on which God specially acts; ‘that highest and noblest part of man,’ as Luther puts it, ‘which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible things, eternal things; in short... the house where faith and God’s Word are at home.’ The rendering of the Revised Version is favored by the occurrence of the term in the following verse. The Spirit of God was not in the lives or the thoughts of these men, and hence they were creators of division, and sensual. Their pretension was that they were the eminently spiritual. But in refusing the Divine Spirit they had sunk to the level of an animal life, immoral in itself, and productive of confusion to the Church.”

H. JUDE’S EXHORTATION TO THE FAITHFUL. (20-23)

20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Jude’s sevenfold exhortation to fellow believers is one of the most profound and penetrating found anywhere in Scripture. His first point is the building up of faith within ourselves. This suggests that faith must be exercised to grow. One of the great men of faith in the nineteenth century was George Mueller, who built five orphanages in Bristol, Great Britain and took care of hundreds of neglected orphans. He did this without having any personal income and without ever asking anyone for money. In an account of his work, he emphasized that in order to build up faith, one ought to begin by asking God for small things. He believed that faith would

grow in the measure in which we saw our prayers for smaller matters answered. He emphatically stated that he did not believe that God would answer if we began by asking for thousands of pound sterling. He wrote: "I do not believe it! I do not believe it! I do not believe it!" Our faith will grow with the answers. Jude's exhortation to build ourselves up in our faith seems to confirm this.

It is obvious that faith in this context is not about the basic matter of salvation, but about answers to prayer. We should not have any doubts, for instance about God's love for us and about His willingness to save us. Although assurance of salvation may also be a growing experience, that is not what Jude is referring to.

The Tyndale Commentary states: "Four injunctions follow, all in the participial form. They refer to faith, hope, love and prayer. In all probability the use of the participle is a Hebrew or Aramaic idiom and has an imperatival sense, as in catechetical sections of Romans and 1 Peter. ... This suggests that we have to do with an early code of Christian conduct, reflecting the usage of rabbinic Hebrew, and therefore likely to go back to the earliest days of the church. There is another formula in these verses, a Trinitarian one (20-21)."

In the Greek text the last part of v. 20 reads: "praying in the Holy Spirit." This suggests that the building up of faith is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in making our faith in Christ grow.

Paul also emphasizes that we need the help of the Holy Spirit in order to pray. We read: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."³⁰

The phrase "Keep yourselves in God's love" indicates that it is our responsibility to remain in the protecting circle of God's love. This does not refer to a place but to a relationship. It does not mean that God ceases to love us if we do not meet certain conditions, but we will not experience the love of God unless we pledge and practice obedience to His will. The father of the prodigal son did not cease to love his wayward boy, but the boy did not experience that love when he left his father's house. God's love is unconditional, but our experience of it isn't!

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "Thirdly, they must remain within the sphere of God's love. It was his love which first drew them to himself (v. 1), but as the false teachers have shown, it is possible to turn one's back on the love of God. They must cultivate that love relationship with him. It is interesting that in verse 1 he addresses them as men who have been found by the love of God, and in the next verse he prays that divine love, along with God's mercy and peace, may fill them; but here he urges them to fulfill their side of the covenant love with God. The emphasis is here placed upon their contribution to that relationship, whether or not *God's love* means 'God's love for them' or 'their love for God.' The language recalls Jesus' words, 'I have loved you; abide in my love' (Jn. 15:10 RSV). It was by flagrant disobedience that the false teachers had fallen out of love with him, and thus, inevitably, with men as well."

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "The soul's one asylum and retreat is the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The act of grace which calls us to the Christian life introduces us to the knowledge of that love, and brings us within its pavilion. The sum of all subsequent Christian duty is to be true to it; the sum of all Christian wisdom is to suffer nothing to turn us away from it. But our continuance within it demands that we persevere in building up the structure of a holy life on the foundation of the faith given us; that we nourish and strengthen that life by prayer, and that we keep the eye of expectation on the future. The Christian life, too, is necessarily a

³⁰ Rom. 8:26

progressive life. Growth is its security against decay, and its protection against temptation. And the prayer that nourishes and strengthens is prayer in the Holy Ghost — prayer prompted by him, *directed* in its subjects and its frames by him, interpreted in its deep and unutterable longings by him. ‘So great is the sloth and coldness of our carnal nature,’ says Calvin, ‘that no one can pray as he ought unless moved by the Spirit of God; even as we are so prone to distrust and fear that no one dare call God ‘Father’ save by the dictation of the same Spirit. Hence comes the desire, hence the earnestness and vehemence, hence the activity, hence the confidence of obtaining, hence, finally, those unutterable groanings of which St. Paul speaks. Therefore not without cause does Jude teach them that none can pray as he ought save by the guidance of the Spirit.’ The judicial decisions of the future are committed to the Son of man. The hope of mercy in the day of his coming is one of the gifts of the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit. That hope is the light which brightens the believer’s path in the darkened present, and makes him proof against the seductions of sin and error. The *expectation* of that mercy is the inspiration of his courage; it is the call from beyond the stars which makes it easy for him to hold by the love and truth of God, and bid away whatever would tempt him to depart from these.”

The word “mercy” contains a suggestion of human guilt and of God’s grace in dealing with it. Our sin ought to incur God’s wrath and punishment, but because of His love, He deals with our sin in terms of substitution. Someone else has paid our fine, has taken the capital punishment in our stead. This mercy is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who became the scapegoat who carried away the sins of the world, which included ours.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary states: “Although they were to build themselves up, and to pray in the Holy Spirit, and keep themselves in the love of God, yet this building, praying, and keeping, cannot merit heaven; for, after all their diligence, earnestness, self-denial, watching, obedience, etc., they must look for the *mercy* of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring them to *eternal life*.”

V. 22 reads literally in Greek: “And of some have compassion, making a difference.” “Making a difference” is the rendering of the Greek verb *diakrino*, which literally means “to separate,” or “to discriminate.” Jude used the same verb earlier in v. 9, that reads: “But even the archangel Michael, when he was *disputing* with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”

According to *The Tyndale Commentary*, there are some serious problems of interpretation in this verse and the following. *The Commentary* states: “Unfortunately, although the general drift of these verses is clear, the text has been preserved indifferent forms, and it is no longer possible to be certain which is the original.”

The main problem is the verb *diakrino*, which, as we saw above, can be rendered in different ways, according to the context in which it is used. Quoting one particular Bible scholar, *The Tyndale Commentary* states: “He thinks that the two senses in which *diakrinomai* could be taken (*i.e.* ‘to be judged’ or ‘to doubt’: there is a third possibility ‘those who dispute’) account for the origin of the three clause version of the text. This is possible, but not only flies in the face of the majority of MSS attestation but forgets the strong liking Jude has for triads. Accordingly, I think [that is the author of *The Tyndale Commentary*] that the RV, RSV and NIV are right in sticking to three clauses, not two.”

The Commentary goes into some minute details in the Greek text, which are too technical to be of any devotional value. Suffice it therefore to state that there are different ways in which the text can be interpreted.

Jude gives a threefold recommendation regarding our attitude toward those who have fallen away from the truth. The first is toward “those who doubt.” As we saw above, the Greek verb *diakrinoménous*, “making a difference” is problematic.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments: “The general meaning of this exhortation is supposed to be, ‘Ye are not to deal alike with all those who have been seduced by false teachers; ye are to make a difference between those who have been led away by weakness and imprudence, and those who, in the pride and arrogance of their hearts, and their unwillingness to submit to wholesome discipline, have separated themselves from the church, and become its inveterate enemies.’ Instead of ... and of some have compassion, making a difference, many MSS., versions, and fathers have, and some rebuke, after having judged them; or, rebuke those that differ; or, some that are wavering convince; or whatever else the reader pleases: for this and the following verse are all confusion, both in the MSS. and versions; and it is extremely difficult to know what was the original text. Our own is as likely as any.”

The Greek text of v. 23 reads literally: “And save others out of the fire; pulling them with fear, hating the garment spotted by the flesh.” *The Tyndale Commentary* comments: “Jude’s readers are invited to show *mercy, mixed with fear*, (reading *eleate* with the vast majority of good MSS) *hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh*. That is to say, they are to have pity upon even the most abandoned heretic, but to exercise great care while getting alongside him lest they themselves become defiled. They are to retain their hatred of sin even as they love the sinner. 2 Corinthians 7:1 provides something of a parallel. The *fear* may be fear of being influenced by these heretics: more probably it is fear of God, knowing that he will judge.

What does he mean by *the clothing stained by corrupted flesh*? *Chitōn* means the inner garment, worn next to the skin. The idea seems to be that they are so corrupt that their very clothes are defiled. This is, of course, a hyperbole, but one with plenty of scriptural background; indeed instructions are given in Leviticus 13:47-52 that the garment worn by a leper should be burnt because it is unclean. Isaiah 64:6 says, ‘All of us have become like on who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags,’ while Jude’s favorite passage in Zechariah continues, ‘Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then he said to Joshua, ‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.’” (Zc. 3:3f.). The Christian worker has the wonderful offer of a change of raiment for the defiled, a robe of righteousness for the man clothed in filthy rags (*cf.* Is. 61:10), and he must proffer it in love and mercy.”

What Jude seems to be saying is that sin is contagious. We must be aware of the fact that, even after our conversion, our sinful nature has not died. As Luther used to say: “We think we drowned the old self, but the beast can swim!” We are supposed to treat it as dead, but that does not mean that it is not kicking. It is not our own righteousness that will keep us straight; it is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Jude will emphasize this even more in the last verses of his epistle. Sin is like leprosy and leprosy is contagious.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on Jude’s advice to snatch some from the fire and stay away from others for fear of contagion: “The clause seems to be added in order to give greater emphasis to the need of ‘fear’ in dealing with men of the kind in question. Not only are their impurities to be zealously avoided, but all the accessories of these impurities — everything, in short, that is in any way connected with them. If this is the case, then this last is the most dangerous and hopeless of the three classes mentioned. They are those ‘on whom profound pity is all that we dare bestow, and that in fear and trembling, lest by contact with them we may be brought within the influence of the deadly contamination that clings to all their surroundings.’ ...

Only the *pity* which is to be shown them is not mere feeling, but a compassion which implies some active, though anxious interest in their rescue.”

The Tyndale Commentary comments on Jude’s use of the word “flesh”: “Jude uses *sarx*, *the flesh*, in precisely the same way as Paul; it means human nature made by God and for God, but which has fallen grievously out of harmony with God, and become an active agency of evil. This principle of evil must be resolutely opposed and rejected, just as, in baptism, the candidate disrobed entirely in order to receive a new garment when he emerged from the water to the new life. Compromise with evil will inevitably lead to defeat.”

I. DOXOLOGY (24-25)

24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude’s closing benediction is one of the richest endings of any New Testament epistle. It speaks about the dangers that lure to draw us away from the path of righteousness and about the protecting power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Barnes’ Notes comments: “This ascription to one who was able to keep them from falling is made in view of the facts adverted to in the Epistle—the dangers of being led away by the arts and the example of these teachers of error.”

The Greek verb for “falling” is *aptaistos*, which may refer to stumbling like a horse. The word, again, is unique for Jude and is nowhere else found in Scripture.

If we consider ourselves to be able to keep standing in temptation, like Peter did when Jesus warned him about his upcoming denial, we are on very dangerous ground. Perseverance in the faith is not a matter of human character, but of divine protection. Satan uses our fear of death to lure us into sin. The author of Hebrews states that only Christ can free us from the fear of death and its consequences. We read: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”³¹

In the context of the theme of false teaching, Jude’s warning must be taken to alert us of the danger of leaving the way of the truth about God and Jesus Christ. Moral failure is always the result of a lack of knowing and experiencing God’s holiness. God said to the Israelites: “You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.”³² That would be an impossible requirement, if it were not for the fact that God also said: “I the Lord am holy — I who make you holy.”³³

The Greek verb, rendered “able” is *dunamai*, which refers to “power.” Paul uses the word in the verse: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us ...”³⁴

³¹ Heb. 2:14, 15

³² Lev. 20:26

³³ Lev. 21:8

³⁴ Eph. 3:20

It is hard for us to imagine that God would find no fault or blemish in us when we stand before His glory. According to Paul's definition of sin, we fall short of the glory of God. But since "the Lamb of God" has carried away our sin, we will stand before God's glory in glory. God's demand of holiness will be met in us, because He imputes His own holiness on us.

The fruit of this will be "exceeding joy." It will be a joy that makes us dance and leap. That is what the unborn John the Baptist did when he heard the voice of the mother of Jesus greeting his mother. We read that Elisabeth said to Mary: "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb *leaped for joy*."³⁵ Malachi caught some of this exuberance when, writing about the Second Coming, he said: "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall."³⁶

But the topic of the last verses of this epistle is not our joyous experience of glory, but the glory of God.

There is some confusion about the Greek in this verse. The text in The Interlinear Greek New Testament reads: "To the only [wise] God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord [be] our glory [and] majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ages and ages for ever and ever."

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord (a phrase wrongly omitted by the AV) may refer either to the fact that it is through Christ that God saves man, or to the fact that glory can only properly be given to God through Jesus (*cf.* 1 Pet. 4:11). The former is preferable, for although there is a sense in which Jesus was 'the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world' (Rev. 13:8), there seems to be no ground for saying that glory was given to God only through Christ *before all ages, pro pantos tou aiōnos*, another phrase which the AV curiously omits. His meaning is, surely, that the ascription of *glory, majesty, power and authority* belong to God: it is a statement of fact, not a prayer (as in AV, RSV, NEB) that these things may be ascribed to the Almighty. They do belong to him through the eternal achievement of the incarnate Jesus. They always have done. They do now. They always will – hence the certainty of the final 'Amen.'

Amen regularly closes doxologies (*cf.* Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 1 Pet. 4:11), and sets a seal on this confident attribution of glory to the One to whom it belongs – the God who is able!

Of the four words here used to denote God's greatness, *doxa* means splendor, *glory*, like the radiance of light; *megalōsunē* denotes kingly *majesty*. It comes in the doxology in 1 Chronicles 29:11, and is twice used (in both cases of God) in the New Testament outside this passage (Heb. 1:3; 8:1). *Kratos, power*, suggest the control which God has over the world; it is his world, and reposes in his might hands; while *exousia, authority*, expresses his total sovereignty. God's eternal radiance was crystallized in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14; Heb. 1:3); so was his majesty, his control, in the Lordship of Jesus; so was his authority over men, nature and the demonic. Such is our God, such are his eternal qualities, unveiled in Christ. To him we must come one day, and must render our account. He himself will bring us thither if we let him, and will present us faultless before his presence. To him belongs to glory, and the majesty, and the power and the authority for ever! *Amen.*"

³⁵ Luke 1:44

³⁶ Mal. 4:2