

XVI. The OT According to Jude (1)

May 4/6/7, 2020

Jude 5-10; cp. 2 Pe. 2:4-13a

Aim: To apply the warnings of God's Old Testament judgments to modern false teachers.

Helm: 'For certain people...long ago were designated for this condemnation' (v. 4). ... with 'long ago,' Jude...asserts a connection between the *present* danger facing the church and a *past* event; he links the appalling presence of 'certain people' in the church to some prediction that envisioned their ultimate downfall.... Jude follows up his claims of fixed condemnation with verses 5-10.... Christians must 'contend for the faith' because the past proves that imposters will always be present. While we can all be encouraged in knowing that their eventual downfall is sure, nevertheless we need Jude, and especially this middle part of his letter if we are going to equip ourselves in learning how to spot them and, even more importantly, ensure that we don't become one of them.

A. Remembering Examples of Condemnation (Jude 5-7; cp. 2 Pe. 2:4, 6)

MacArthur: In this passage, Jude provided further insight into the deceivers' condemnation (v. 4b) by citing three of God's past judgments against other apostates—namely, apostate Israelites, apostate angels, and apostate Gentiles. This section closely parallels 2 Peter 2:3-10. There Peter wrote about God's judgment on fallen angels, on unbelievers through the Flood, and on the grossly wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Benton: In verses 5-7 Jude gives his first set of three...Old Testament warnings. The point of these stories is to show to us that rebellion against God can never succeed. He reminds his readers about the rebellion of the children of Israel in the wilderness (v. 5), about the rebellion of the angels (v. 6), and about the rebellious lifestyle of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). Each of these rebellions ended in the judgment of God upon those involved. Why does Jude want to remind his readers of these gruesome things? It is, of course, because of the situation which his readers face.... If we...leave the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we expose ourselves to the judgment of God! So, these Old Testament stories could not be more relevant. They underline Jude's reason for writing his letter, which is to warn the church not to follow these licentious heretics.

Moo: Jude's strategy is obvious: By denying the false teachers with traditional examples of notorious sinners, he moves his readers to reject these infiltrators and, indeed, to regard them with horror.

Benton: The main point of these verses...is that God is a God of judgment. This is not a popular doctrine. It never has been in the past and it is not now. The whole of modern liberal society revolts against the idea that we are responsible sinners, accountable for our actions to a holy God.... God will judge, and the whole of the Christian gospel is predicated upon that fact. If there is no judgment, Jesus did not need to come and die to save us, for there is nothing to be saved from. But He did come to die, and therefore we must take the warning of a coming judgment day with absolute seriousness.... To be living a life which either overtly or covertly rejects following Christ in the way of holiness is to be outside His forgiveness and so exposed to coming judgment.

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1. The People of Israel (5)

a) *Written as a Reminder (5a)*

⁵*Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it...*

Moo: Ancient writers often made their transition from the opening of a letter to its body with what is called a ‘disclosure formula.’ Jude’s ‘Though you already know all this, I want to remind you’ (v. 5) is a variation on this formula. It introduces verses 5-16 as a whole.... The word translated ‘this’ is actually a plural (*panta*, ‘all these things’), and, that being the case, it more naturally refers to what follows: ‘although you are already acquainted with the Old Testament and traditional material I am about to share...’.

Gardner: This illustration of the way the Israelites were blessed by God but then perverted His grace and acted immorally was one of which this Christian congregation would already have been well aware.... This was part of the ‘faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ (v. 3). Unlike the false leaders, Jude was not now adding to the basic gospel, but simply drawing attention to how they should apply that faith to this situation. In this day and age, even in parts of the church, many deny the historical reliability of whole sections of the Bible. But it was part and parcel of Jewish belief, and is essential to true Christian faith, that God is a God of history whose actions have been recorded in holy Scripture as a true record of His dealing with men and women through the ages.

Benton: Jude recognizes that his readers are already well aware of the basic Bible stories to which he is going to refer. In one sense he is only going to tell them what they already know. But though they know the biblical narratives, Jude is concerned that they have forgotten the true significance of these stories. It is not simply the facts they need to grasp, but the meaning. The Old Testament stories are not simply fascinating tales of antique interest (cp. Rom. 15:4).... The stories have a moral to them of which we need to take note.

MacArthur: Jude’s use of familiar Old Testament examples stemmed from a desire to remind his readers (cp. 2 Pe. 1:12) that defectors from the truth will always meet divine judgment.... As a vivid picture of redemption, the story of the Exodus was a powerful illustration of God’s love for His people, symbolized and memorialized in the Passover (Ex. 12; cp. Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 5:7). But it was also a stern reminder of divine judgment—not only on the Egyptians, but also on those Israelites who faithlessly turned away from God (1 Cor. 10:1-18). Although Jude knew that his readers were fully aware of the story—that they knew ‘all things once for all’—he used it to reveal God’s unchanging attitude toward anyone in any time or place who corrupts His Word.

b) *Saved for Destruction (5b)*

...that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Gardner: This example is the natural one with which to begin. It had been used again and again throughout the history of God’s people.... The power of the illustration, though, lies in the warning it carries. Many Israelites had experienced the exodus from Egypt and had clearly seen the power of God, yet they had begun to take the grace and mercy of God for granted. The book of Numbers vividly describes how time and again the people complained about their conditions but, more than that, the eventually denied God’s Lordship by their actions and turned to sexual sin and idolatry.

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Benton: Instead of taking the three stories in chronological sequence, Jude picks out the rebellion of Israel in the wilderness and puts it first. This is probably to draw particular attention to it in a stark way. The reason for this is that the situation of the Israelites is of special significance to professing Christians.... The Exodus is the great Old Testament redemption. God saved His people out of slavery in Egypt and was taking them to Canaan, the land of milk and honey. They had been rescued, but they had not yet arrived in the promised land. Like the people of Israel, we professing Christians live out our lives between two salvation events. We have trusted Christ, who died and rose again, but we are not yet in heaven.

Moo: A number of Greek manuscripts, in place of the word translated ‘Lord,’ have the Greek word for ‘Jesus.’ Some commentators think that this reading is original and that Jude here thinks of the preexistent Jesus as the one who delivered the people out of Egypt. They point to 1 Corinthians 10:4, where Paul identifies the ‘rock’ that followed the Israelites in the desert with Christ. Others think that ‘the Lord’ is the best reading, but identify this Lord as Christ.... We should read the ‘Lord’ and identify him as ‘Jehovah’ God.

Moo: Jude emphasizes the tragedy of this rejection by qualifying ‘delivered’ with the word ‘once for all’ (*hapax*, not translated in the NIV) and ‘destroyed’ with the word ‘afterwards’ (*deuteran*). (There is some debate about this translation, since the word *deuteran* means, literally, ‘a second time.’ ... It is simplest to think that *deuteran* following *hapax* means something like ‘in a second experienced after that first one.’) God’s deliverance of His people seemed to be decisive and final; yet God still ‘destroyed’ them because of their lack of faith.

Gardner: The word ‘later’ translates the Greek ‘second time’ (*to deuteran*). The idea of the verse may be reasonably interpreted like this: ‘the Lord who was (first) encountered delivering His people out of Egypt was next (secondly) seen to destroy those who did not believe.’

(1) Rebellion at Kadesh Barnea in Numbers 13-14

Benton: On the way to the promised land, while they were in the wilderness, Israel rebelled against God on many occasions and brought God’s judgment upon themselves. Those who were initially rescued from slavery never arrived in the land of promise. The precise occasion of rebellion to which Jude is referring is left open. A number of occasions when the children of Israel rebelled could be in Jude’s mind. He particularly mentions unbelief, and many commentators take the line that he is referring to their failure to believe on the borders of the promised land, which is recorded for us in Numbers 13-14.... Their unbelief brought down God’s judgment and He condemned that generation to not entering the promised land, but to wander for forty years in the wilderness until a new and more trusting generation has arisen. This is a warning to us. ‘They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief’ (Heb. 3:19).

Gardner: Many commentators suggest the specific event in Israelite history to which Jude referred concerned the disbelief of the people when the spies returned to their camp in the desert from spying out the Promised Land.... In Numbers 14:11 we read of God’s judgment on that generation.... Belief and trust in God was the issue here. And that fits well with Jude’s reference to the destruction of those ‘who did not believe.’ Though the issue in Numbers 14 was disbelief, and Jude draws attention to this, that incident did not involve sexual immorality or licentiousness, nor did it *specifically* deny the covenant Lordship of God, which are both Jude’s concern here.

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Helm: The first picture is one of apostasy.... Their sin? The text says they were ‘destroyed’ because they ‘did not believe.’ In the Hebrew Scriptures we find a generation that rejected God. God saved, God spoke, God settled in their midst, but they did not believe God’s word. They were faithless again and again. They did not trust God for daily provisions; they turned from solitary worship. The example Jude may have in mind here is their decision to not enter the Promised Land (cp. Ps. 95; Num. 14).

MacArthur: Numbers 14:26-38 summarizes Israel’s rebellion and God’s response.... For Jude’s readers, Israel’s judgment was a vivid reminder of what happens to those who (whether or not they become teachers of His), having heard what God expects and witnessed what He can do, still fail to believe. The Lord will condemn and destroy all such renegades (cp. Mt. 11:20-24; Heb. 3:7-12; 10:26-31).

(2) Rebellion at Sinai in Exodus 32

Benton: However, perhaps the incident of unbelief on the border of the promised land recorded in Numbers 13-14 is not that which is uppermost in Jude’s mind in these verses. Rather, unbelief is the root of all disobedience and, with the background of verse 4 and its reference to immorality, it may be the occasion of sexual sin among the children of Israel that are in the forefront of Jude’s thought. The first great rebellion was the worshipping of the golden calf, which occurred when Moses was first up on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments.... The Hebrew word translated ‘indulge in revelry’ in Exodus 32:6, where this incident is recorded, often has sexual connotations.

(3) Rebellion at Shittim in Numbers 25

Benton: Of particular relevance, however, is the rebellion which occurred at a place called Shittim. Under the instigation of the false prophet Balaam (see Rev. 2:14), to whom Jude will later refer in verse 11, the Moabites enticed the men of Israel (cp. Num. 25:1). This may have especial bearing on the church in Jude’s mind for two reasons. The first is because the word he uses for ‘immorality’ in verse 4, in a Jewish context, would connote not only its basic meaning of irreverence and unrighteous conduct, but would point particularly in the direction of sexual sins. If Jude is particularly concerned about sexual immorality in church circles then this rebellion is of special notice. The second is that this immorality at Shittim took place in the context of religious worship of the Baal of Peor. Baal is a word meaning ‘Lord.’ In that sense, it took place in the name of the ‘Lord.’ Sometimes things can go on in churches ‘in the name of the Lord’ which are actually sinful and blasphemous.

Gardner: A real possibility here is the passage that is referred to in a number of other contexts in Scripture which also seek to draw lessons from the Israelites’ wanderings in the desert (see Num. 25).... The practice of sexual immorality in a context of the worship of other gods clearly highlights Jude’s concern over immorality but also its direct relationship to a denial of the covenant ‘Master’ and Lord. It is also important to note that this incident from Numbers is repeated through Israel’s history by way of warning against both idolatry (a denial of the only Lord) and sexual immorality (e.g., Dt. 4:2-4; Jos. 22:16-17; Ps. 78:28-31; Hos. 9:10; cp. 1 Cor. 10:6-8; Heb. 3-4).

c) Given as an Example

Benton: Professing Christians are in a parallel situation. We live between having come to Christ and having reached heaven. The cross has rescued us from sin and we are en route to our eternal

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promised land, but we have not yet entered. If we are faithful and stay with Christ throughout our lives it will show that we are true Christians. If we are faithful and follow Christ to the end, we are absolutely safe and shall certainly enter the glories and joys of heaven. But if we rebel and follow other ‘gospels’ peddled by ungodly false teachers, we shall prove that our profession of faith has never been properly rooted in Christ. If we walk out on Christ and being a godly Christian disciple, we too, like the rebellious people of Israel, shall come under judgment and never reach the promised land. The central lesson here is the necessity of ongoing faith in Christ and in God’s Word. God ‘later destroyed those who did not believe’ (v. 5). Faith is crucial. We must, with God’s help, determine to keep on believing and so obeying Christ every day. We need to think about that practically.... We must keep believing and so go on following Christ.

Moo: Jude intends this as a warning to his readers. Don’t think, because God has decisively rescued you from your sins, that you can presume on His grace and mercy.

Helm: The frightening thing about this picture of apostasy is in what it reveals. That which happened then can also occur today, to us. No one is immune. Not you and certainly not me. So, we are reminded of the importance of belief, faith, and our need to daily take God at His word.

Gardner: Judgment awaits those who do not believe and who take advantage of the grace of God.... We must not become arrogant and proud; for as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 10:12, just when we think we stand before God we may find we fall. Immoral and licentious behavior makes a mockery of God’s grace and love and will lead to His judgment just as certainly as it did for those at Baal Peor.

2. The Angels of Heaven (6; cp. 2 Pe. 2:4)

6And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

2 Peter 2:4 – 4For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Benton: For his second example of God’s judgment, Jude directs our attention to the invisible, spiritual world of the angelic beings. Jude refers to the angels often in this short letter and this may reflect the Jewish background of the letter; the Jews of the first century seemed to show much interest in apocalyptic visions and the angelic world.

a) The Angels’ Situation

MacArthur: The second example that Jude gave was that of apostate angels. The fact that these angels are not specifically identified indicates that Jude assumed his audience was already familiar with the details of their extraordinary defection. Commentators have offered three main views as to the identity of these angels. Some argue that Jude’s reference is to an episode his readers knew nothing about. But that does not fit the larger context in which, as noted above, Jude reminded his readers of things that they already knew (v. 5).

(1) Rebellion of Satan

Benton: Once again, the reference is ambiguous. These verses could refer to the original fall of the angels in following Satan in rebellion against God.

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Moo: Many older commentators thought that Jude is referring to the fall of angels that apparently occurred when Satan rebelled against God. A few Old Testament passages may refer to this event, and it has become enshrined in western Christian tradition though the splendid elaboration given the even by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*.

MacArthur: Others assert that Jude referred to the original fall of Satan (Is. 14:12-15; Ez. 28:12-17; cp. Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:7-10). That is a possible interpretation, but it fails to explain Jude's mention of 'eternal bonds,' which does not apply to the current status of Satan and demons (cp. 1 Pe. 5:8; Job 1:6-7)... Therefore, it is unlikely that Jude is referring to Satan's fall.

(2) Intermarriage in Genesis 6:1-4

MacArthur: A third and most plausible viewpoint is that Jude referred to an extraordinary heinous infraction by some of the fallen angels... Jude 6 is a reference to the events of Genesis 6:1-4 in which certain fallen angels possessed mortal men and then cohabited with women. The egregious transgression of those demons was a clear violation of the boundaries God had set for them.

Benton: But, with the high probability that Jude particularly has in mind the idea of sexual immorality in the churches, and this as an expression of ungodliness and rebellion against God's commands, it seems that he is more likely to be referring to the strange occurrences recorded for us in Genesis 6:1-4. Angels, according to Jewish tradition, left heaven to marry and have sexual intercourse with human females and so increased the corruption of the human race in the period before the Flood. This story features prominently in *The Book of Enoch*, from which Jude later quotes in verses 14-15... This was how the account of the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-4 was universally understood (so far as our evidence goes) until the mid-second century AD.

Moo: But in Jude's day, a far more popular tradition about angels who sinned was associated with the enigmatic reference in Genesis 6:1-4 to the 'sons of God' who came down to earth and cohabited with 'the daughters of men.' Jewish interpreters had built an elaborate story on the basis of this text, identifying the 'sons of God' with angels and attributing much (or even all) evil in the world to their pernicious influence. These stories find their greatest elaboration in the intertestamental book *1 Enoch*, and since Jude quotes from this very book in verses 14-15, we are almost certainly correct in identifying this story as the one he has in mind in verse 6.

Gardner: The example which follows is based firmly in Scripture, and yet in its structure, style, and detail seem to show dependence upon a book we know as the Book of Enoch, which was written during intertestamental times, probably completed by about 200 BC... Here, Jude draws on 1 Enoch 6-19 in which 'Enoch' gives an account of how angels fell from glory through rebellion and sin. The story is based around an elaboration of a rather enigmatic text in Genesis 6:1-4... In Enoch these verses from Genesis 6 are taken to refer to angels ('the sons of God') who sinfully lusted after human women and had sex with them, resulting in the birth of the giants of old. These angels were then subject to the judgment of God who did not destroy them but has kept them 'in chains' under the earth for the final judgment day where they will be banished to eternal fire. Enoch's account elaborates on this in all sorts of far-fetched detail, giving names to the leaders of the angels and suggesting that the angles helped teach human beings about even greater depths of sin.

Gardner: It is clear that Enoch is a pseudonymous book. In other words, it was not written by Enoch himself, whose life is mentioned in Genesis 5:19-24. Indeed, this pseudonymity is one of

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several reasons why the book was never accepted as part of the canon of Scripture either in the Jewish synagogue or in the Christian church. The work was well respected, though, especially in the days in which Jude was writing.... We should note that Jude does not refer to this writing as ‘Scripture,’ nor does he begin the quotation with the normal New Testament clause: ‘it is written...’. This is at least one indication that Jude did not regard the work as inspired or part of the canon. Nevertheless, his readers may well have given it a rather superior status.... It is best to see 1 Enoch as a book that Jude was prepared to use whenever it accurately interpreted or applied *biblical* truth. He did this, it seems, because his *readers* regarded it so highly. He therefore was, in effect, using their own materials to point to their own judgment.

Gardner: In citing Enoch, Jude thereby gives the book itself no more authority than we might give, say, to Calvin, when we recognize that on a particular verse, and under the Spirit’s guidance, he has opened up the canonical Word to us. The use of a quote from Calvin becomes even more effective if we are speaking to people who regard him highly! ... In quoting this work, Jude was therefore adding weight to *his* argument, for he had found truth *in the passage quoted* from the book of Enoch.... In terms of the inspiration or otherwise of the words quoted, *in their context within Jude* they are inspired by Holy Spirit and carry the same authority therefore as any other Scripture. That does not mean, though, that all of 1 Enoch...[is] to be regarded as inspired by God’s Holy Spirit *outside* the context of Holy Scripture. The words are inspired by virtue of Jude’s use of the ideas and words because he is an author of canonical Scripture and was himself thus directed by the Holy Spirit.

Gardner: Whether Genesis 6 is talking about angels at all has long been a matter of debate. Very early Christian writers understood it in the way these intertestamental Jewish texts did, but, later, as people studied the passage more closely the majority, as today, realized that ‘sons of God’ was more likely a reference to the men who were in the world at the time. But that is not Jude’s concern here.... Jude lived in a day when such myths abounded. We could do well to learn from him, that he limits his use of such stories to make a point that is valid for all time: rebellion against God and sexual immorality lead to judgment as much for us as for angels.

b) *The Angel’s Sin (6a)*

6And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling...

MacArthur: Jude described two closely related aspects of the fallen angels’ sin. First, they ‘did not keep their own domain.’ Instead of staying in their own realm of authority given by God, they went outside it. Secondly, they ‘abandoned their proper abode.’ With Lucifer they rebelled against their created role and place in heaven (cp. Is. 14:12). When God expelled them from heaven for that rebellion (cp. Rev. 12:4, 9), some continued their downward fall to the point of taking masculine human form and cohabitating with human women to produce a generation of demon-influenced, thoroughly corrupt children (cp. Gen. 6:11-13).

Moo: These angels, Jude notes, had been entrusted by God with ‘positions of authority’ (*archon*), that is, heavenly spheres of influence and ministry. But they abandoned their ‘homes,’ their ‘proper dwelling places’ (REB), by rebelling against God. God therefore judged them.

c) *The Angels’ Sentence (6b)*

...he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

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MacArthur: That sin, recorded in the Old Testament (Gen. 6:1-4), was so severe that God placed the offending demons in chains to prevent them from committing such perversity every again.... Peter wrote that God ‘committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment’ (2 Pe. 2:4).

Moo: ‘Darkness’ is a common way of describing divine punishment in the ancient world; the Greeks used the same word Jude uses here to depict the ‘underworld,’ the place of departed saints. This language is also picked up in *1 Enoch*, as is the reference to ‘chains.’ ... Jude probably had [*1 Enoch* 10:4-6] in mind as he writes Jude 6. We can guess he knew that his readers were familiar with these traditions and that a reference to them would therefore be persuasive for them.

1 Enoch 10:4-6 – And secondly the Lord said to Raphael, ‘Bind Azazel hand and foot (and) throw him into the darkness!’ And he made a hole in the desert which was in Dudael and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he might not see the light; and in order that he might be sent into the fire on the great day of judgment.

Benton: Jude speaks of the angels being bound with ‘everlasting chains’ to await judgment (cp. Is. 24:21-22).... The mention of ‘everlasting chains’ is meant to warn us that, without true repentance, momentary sinful rebellion can have eternal consequence.

Benton: Whether Jude has in mind the original angelic fall or this understanding of Genesis 6 is not crucial to our understanding. Either way, the angels rebelled against their God-given position, disobeying the command of God. The consequence was that they brought down the judgment of God upon themselves.... It is worth noting Jude’s wordplay here. These angels did not *keep* their God-appointed positions, so now they are *kept* to face judgment. The wordplay emphasizes the appropriateness and justice of God’s judgment and at the same time warns us to *keep* to Christ ourselves.

Moo: We should note the way in which Jude suggests the equivalence of the angels’ sin and their judgment. It was because they did not ‘keep’ their assigned position that God is ‘keeping’ them in darkness. Here we find a negative counterpart to the situation of the righteous, whom God ‘keeps’ (v. 2) and who are therefore to ‘keep’ themselves in God’s love (v. 21).

Gardner: Just as Christians are ‘kept by Jesus Christ’ (v. 1) as they ‘keep themselves in God’s love’ waiting for that final day that will bring their salvation (v. 21), so these angels are being kept by the same Lord for the same final day. The difference is that they are being ‘kept’ for condemnation on that day.

Helm: God’s fixed and final judgment will fall not only on some from among earth’s congregation, but upon those who once were part of the worshiping host of Heaven.... Some from among the angelic host failed to show proper respect for God’s created boundaries. They rejected the authority of God and embraced autonomy from God. With intended irony, going back to verse 1, the text says that they ‘did not stay [NIV, *keep*] within their own position of authority,’ and as a result they are now ‘*kept* in eternal chains under gloomy darkness’ until the great day of God’s judgment.

d) The Angels’ Example

Gardner: The point Jude is making is this: Once these angels, who of all beings had known the joy and blessings of existence with God, had rebelled, they were set on a course for the final judgment which was inevitable and inescapable.... Jude’s logic is clear and his urgency

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dynamic: *if the certainty of final judgment is true for angels who have rejected God's Lordship and have become immoral, how horrifically true it will also be for those who teach such immorality in the church of Christ.*

Helm: Jude's message for us is clear. Whenever we find ourselves succumbing to the temptations to live autonomously, to do as we please, to reject authority, to remove any notion of proper place or position, we are waging war against Heaven and are in danger of becoming subjects of judgment.

Benton: Why does Jude choose to set before us an example concerning angels? ... The answer is to be seen along these lines. The angels are very exalted beings. Some people who are very gifted and very blessed by God can fall into thinking that somehow, they are above the regulations which apply to other people. This seems...to be parallel to the attitude of the false teachers whom Jude was opposing. They may not say so outright, but there is an unconscious assumption that 'I am so blessed by God that I am beyond having to worry about God's law. I have special treatment from God. I am above having to obey like other people.' Jude's point is that if the angels are not above having to obey God's command, then neither are you! Whoever you are, whatever your spiritual abilities or intellectual powers, never think that God's law does not apply to you!

Benton: By his story of the angels Jude is warning us that...God's law stands. It stands above the world, above time, and above all earthly cultures. It even applies to the angelic beings. Why? Because God's law is the expression of the holy character of the Lord which is eternal and does not change. If God judged the angels who ignored His command, do not be so foolish as to think that morality is relative and changeable. Do not be taken in by such teaching, no matter from what source you hear it.

3. The Cities of Sin (7; cp. 2 Pe. 2:6)

⁷...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

2 Peter 2:6 – ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

a) Sodom and Gomorrah's Perversion (7a)

⁷...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire...

MacArthur: For his third illustration of past divine judgment on apostates, Jude reminded his readers about Sodom and Gomorrah. The wicked people who lived in those cities, and the cities around them, engaged in sins equally as shocking and horrific as those of the angels. Genesis 18:16-19:29 recounts the sordid details, with 19:1-11 giving particular focus to the debauched actions of their unrepentant residents.

Helm: Taken from Genesis 18-19, this picture recalls the night that Lot, Abraham's nephew, took in angelic visitors who had been sent by God to destroy those cities.... Sexual immorality is the eager companion of the affluent society (cp. Ez. 16:49-50). And according to Jude, those who gorge themselves without restraint are heading towards God's punishment.

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Gardner: The sin of Sodom of Gomorrah, and its subsequent judgment is of course another example in which sexual immorality and a denial of the covenant Lord are seen. The happenings on that fearful day are recounted in Genesis 19:1-11.... As in the previous examples, [Jude] no doubt chose this one because of the issue of Lordship and sexual immorality.

(1) Sexual Immorality

Benton: The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were in a beautiful position on a plain (Gen. 13:10).... But that did not lead the people there to be grateful to God their Creator. Rather, like our prosperous society of today, they became arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned, and fell into detestable ways.... Jude highlights the sexual immorality and perversion of these cities (cp. Gen. 19:4-5).... Homosexual acts are condemned throughout the Scriptures (Lev. 18:22; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). They were not part of the original creation which God pronounced ‘very good.’ Homosexuality is a ‘perversion’ (v. 7). It brings down the judgment of God upon people.

Moo: The striking story of God’s judgment of these cities had become almost proverbial; they are mentioned often in Jewish tradition and in the New Testament (see, e.g., Lk. 17:26-29). But Jude not only mentions God’s judgment; he also tells us why God judged the cities: because, as the NIV translates, they ‘gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.’ The charge of ‘sexual immorality’ is clear and understandable, for according to Genesis 19, the men of Sodom sought to have sexual relationships with the angels who had come to visit Lot.

MacArthur: Somewhat like the perverted angels before them, the Sodomites ‘in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh.’ They too perverted God’s intended design for them by soliciting sexual favors from His holy messengers. ‘Gross immorality’ translates a compound word (*ekporneuō*), which suggests that their homosexual behavior and attempted fornication was especially deviant from the God-ordained design for human sexuality (cp. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 9; 1 Tim. 1:9-10).

(2) Unnatural Desire

MacArthur: That they ‘went after strange flesh’ indicates that, like the apostate angels, the men of Sodom pursued creatures (angels) outside of what was proper for them.

Helm: The word for ‘unnatural desire’ is literally ‘other flesh,’ flesh different than their own. If that is the case, then the connection between verses 6 and 7 is even more extraordinary. The angels of verse 6 reject God’s authority and desire relations with humans, and in verse 7 it is the humans who find themselves on the verge of desiring bodily union with the angelic host.

Gardner: From Jude’s point of view probably two sexual issues are in mind and both indicated the heinous nature of such immorality. First, ‘strange flesh’ may well be a reference in Jude’s thinking to the fact that these men of Sodom were trying to have sex with angels, the opposite way around to the angels who were judged for wanting sex with human women! But ‘strange flesh’ probably also has in mind the homosexual activity. After all, Genesis 19 gives us no indication at all that the men of Sodom had any knowledge that these ‘foreigners’ were anything other than normal *men*.

Moo: ‘Perversion’ is the NIV rendering of a Greek phrase that, literally translated, is ‘going after other flesh’ (cp. NASB). Most commentators have thought that Jude is condemning the men of Sodom for seeking to have sex with ‘flesh other than’ the flesh of women. That is, the ‘perversion’ they were guilty of was homosexuality (cp. Rom. 1:27).... But other commentators

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think that the ‘perversion’ here is the sin of having sex with angels. There is some evidence that Jewish tradition associated in this way the sin of the angels (v. 6) and that of the men of Sodom (v. 7). And it would make a neat transition here. As angels are condemned for sex with humans, so the people of Sodom are condemned for seeking to have sex with angels. But Genesis 19 does not imply that the men of Sodom knew that it was angels they were seeking to have sex with. Nor is ‘flesh’ a natural word to apply to angels. Probably, then, the usual interpretation is correct: Jude associates God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with the homosexual practices of their inhabitants.

b) Sodom and Gomorrah’s Punishment (7b)

...serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Benton: We must take the faithful warning that there is an eternal fire for all who abuse God’s gifts and refuse to repent and seek forgiveness and transformation in Christ. There are many pictures of the nature of hell; here it is set forth as a fire. Here too, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, we are warned that the duration of hell is forever; it is ‘eternal’ fire (cp. Mt. 25:46).

MacArthur: They will finally be sentenced to ‘the punishment of eternal fire,’ the burning hell of horrific torment, where punishment lasts forever (Mt. 3:12; 13:42, 50; 25:41; cp. Ps. 91:7; Pr. 5:5; 9:17-18; 15:24; Is. 33:14; Mt. 5:29; 8:12; 10:28; 25:46). It is God’s final, permanent judgment on the unregenerate, especially on those who scorn His truth or defect from it (cp. Rev. 19:20).

Moo: Writers contemporary to Jude saw in the topography of the area, with its sulfurous odors, smoke, and terribly desolate appearance, continuing evidence of this awful judgment of God on sin. This is one of the reasons why Jude uses the present tense here at the end of the verse, for the cities ‘serve as an example of those who follow the punishment of eternal fire.’ This may also be the reason why Jude does not follow the canonical order in the three examples he lists. Had he done so, we would have expected the angels’ sin to come first (Gen. 6), Sodom and Gomorrah second (Gen. 19), and the desert generation third (Num. 14). But by following the order he does, Jude achieves a crescendo in punishment—from physical death (v. 5), to binding in darkness (v. 6), to the ‘punishment of eternal fire.’

Gardner: The area where Sodom and Gomorrah had once existed at the south end of the Dead Sea was still, even in Jude’s day, an area of smoking sulfur. These cities, therefore, ‘are shown as an example.’ The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was so devastating and horrific, and still visible so many centuries later, that the two cities became a by-word for judgment, even as they are today.

c) Sodom and Gomorrah’s Example

Benton: Advocates of the ‘gay’ lobby within the church have been heard to argue that the sexual sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were not the central reason why God judged the cities. Rather, they say, it was more for their lack of concern for the poor and the needed that God destroyed them (Ez. 16:46, 49-50). But...here, in Jude, we are told quite plainly that sexual immorality and perversion were the reason for God’s judgment. This ought to be enough for the modern church to take heed and be warned about seeking to legitimize such practices under the name of Christ.

Benton: We are not saved *by* our holiness. We are saved by the wonderful free grace of God. But we are saved *for* holiness, and if holiness is not our aim, and if we fail to make strides

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towards holiness, then these are marks that we are not saved.... Someone may object, ‘I thought that once I was a Christian Christ would keep me safe to heaven! So why does God’s Word have to contain such notices of danger?’ The answer is that Christ does keep His people. But one of the ways He uses to keep us is through giving us warnings, and the chief sign that we are His people is that we take His Word and His warnings seriously. The Lord Jesus is the Friend of sinners. He will forgive and never turn away any who come to Him. But we must come to Him sincerely, not only willing to be forgiven, but willing to seek to be obedient his commands.

4. Summary

Gardner: In verses 5-7, Jude has listed three obvious examples of God’s judgment on people who had rejected the Lord God’s authority and had indulged in various forms of sexual depravity. The fact that all three groups had indulged in sexual immorality of a different sort suggests that Jude was not actually singling out particular sexual activity as especially worthy of judgment, so much as sexual immorality generally.... Jude demonstrated by these examples that a varied of sexual immorality to be found in Scripture all ended in fearful judgment, and that such activity was directly linked to a denial of the covenant Lord.

MacArthur: This powerful passage, with its three dramatic illustrations of apostasy, is a sobering reminder of the ultimate fate that awaits those who defect from the faith. As such, it provides a fitting motivation for believers as they continue to contend for the faith. And it also serves as a solemn warning to anyone who knows the truth but, for whatever reason, is inclined to walk away from the gospel (Heb. 6:4-8). After all, if Jude’s admonition is ignored, the consequences are terrifying.

B. Applying the Examples of Condemnation (Jude 8-10; cp. 2 Pe. 2:9-13a)

1. The False Teachers Described (8; cp. 2 Pe. 2:9-10)

a) *Their Characterization (8a)*

⁸*Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams...*

(1) These Dreamers

Benton: ‘These men’ (cp. vv. 8, 12, 16, 19) ... are the false teachers who have slipped into the churches during Jude’s day and who are causing havoc by teaching very wrong things about the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God. Because of their error, ungodly behavior and immorality threaten the churches. Jude writes to thwart ‘these men.’ The actual Greek word he uses is *houtoi*, which is just the masculine form of ‘these’ and usually means ‘these men.’ Its repetition could be construed as quite scathing.

MacArthur: The wicked behavior of ‘these men’ often derives from their ‘dreaming,’ a term Jude uses to identify the apostates as phony visionaries.... False teachers often claim dreams as the authoritative, divine source for their ‘new truths,’ which are really just lies and distortions. Such claims allow apostates to substitute their own counterfeit authority for God’s true scriptural authority.

Moo: The verb he uses here [for ‘dreamers’] (*enypniazomai*) often refers to the visions that prophets receive, as it does in its only other New Testament occurrence: ‘Your old men will dream dreams’ (Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 2:28). The same verb is used in the Greek translation of

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the Old Testament to refer to the visions that false prophets claimed to received (e.g., Dt. 13:2. 4. 6). Apparently, then, the false teachers based their immoral behavior on revelatory visions that they claimed to have received.

Gardner: They are ‘dreamers’ in the sense that they are like ‘false prophets.’ That is, false teachers and prophets used to claim that they had been given their teachings or their authority from God through a dream (cp. Jer. 23:35-32).

(2) In Like Manner

MacArthur: ‘In the same way’ is an important transition, further unlocking the significance of the previous passage. Apostates typically exhibit ungodly character traits, just like the apostate Israelites, the fallen angels, and the debauched population of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Moo: Jude does not focus in his application on the judgment of the false teachers, but on their sin. ‘In the very same way’ suggests that the false teachers are committing the same kinds of sins as did the Israelites (v. 5), the angels (v. 6), and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). Jude does not necessarily mean that the sins are identical.... All that Jude implies is that there is a general similarity between the sins.

Benton: Jude continues to underline to us that false teachers are following the same path that brought down God’s judgment on those particular characters that he has already mentioned. In verse 8 he says, ‘*in the very same way...*’ (the same way, you see, as the children of Israel, the cities of the plain, and those rebellious angels – in the very same way), ‘*...these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings.*’ This is a rerun of things that have happened before. Christians are not to be taken in by the same old trap. So, he is warning, ‘Keep away from these things. When you come across false teaching and ungodliness, identify it and get away from it. Never follow it, no matter how tempting it seems.’

b) Their Character (8b; cp. 2 Pe. 2:9-10)

...defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

2 Peter 2:9-10 – *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,*

Benton: The false teachers are marked by three things, polluting their bodies, rejecting authority, and slandering celestial beings.

Moo: The parallels between these three sins and those of the Old Testament sinners Jude has listed are generally clear. The angels and the Sodomites ‘polluted flesh’ by their sexual perversions; the desert generation, the angels, and the Sodomites all ‘rejected authority’ by refusing to follow the Lord’s directives; and the Sodomites ‘blasphemed glories’ by treating with disrespect the angels who had come to visit Lot.

(3) Their Immorality

...defile the flesh...

MacArthur: ‘Flesh’ (*sarx*) refers here to the physical body, not the essence of depravity. Had Jude intended the latter, he would have used *sarkinos*, as Paul did in Romans 7:14. The word translated ‘defile’ is from the verb *miainō*, which means to dye or stain something, such as

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clothing or glass. In addition, it can mean ‘to pollute,’ ‘to contaminate,’ ‘to soil,’ or ‘to corrupt.’ When linked with *sarx*, the reference is to moral and physical defilement, or sexual sin. Apostate teachers are inevitably immoral, even if their immorality is not publicly known. After all, they have no ability to restrain their lusts, and they are generally characterized as those who live in the passion of lust because they do not know God (cp. 1 Th. 4:5).

Benton: Sexual immorality is seen by Scripture as spiritual pollution (cp. 1 Cor. 6:19)... All three examples of judgment which Jude has quoted in verses 5-7 followed some form of sexual immorality. ‘These men are following the same road, and it ends in the same place,’ Jude is warning his hearers.

Moo: By using the phrase ‘pollute flesh’ for the false teachers’ immorality, Jude associates them clearly with the Sodomites, who went after ‘other flesh.’ Whether this means that the false teachers were guilty, as were the Sodomites, of homosexuality is not, however, clear. Jude may mean simply that the false teachers, like the Sodomites, were guilty of sexual immorality.

Gardner: Jude’s point here is simple. In the same way as those of history were polluted by sexual sin, so these people have polluted their own bodies by sexual sin, giving it an aura of having come as a message from God. Sexual pollution of bodies we have seen in each of the three examples, but Jude moves on.

(4) Their Insubordination

...reject authority...

Benton: False teachers generally reject the authority of others. They sweep aside any ideas of coming under the discipline of local churches and their leaders. They see themselves as above such things, ignoring the authority of soundly appointed elders.... Such people would have no problem in setting aside the authority of Jesus in the light of their own revelations.

MacArthur: Since apostate teachers love their immorality, it follows that they ‘reject authority.’ ‘Reject’ is from the verb *atheteō*, which refers to destroying something established, such as existing authority. The word rendered ‘authority’ (*kyriotēs*) is related to the more familiar term *kyrios* (‘lord’). Because they demand to rule their own lives, apostates refuse to submit to Christ’s lordship over them (cp. v. 4).

Moo: The word ‘authority’ here (*kyriotēs*) comes from the same root as the word ‘Lord’ (*kyrios*), and Jude has already told us that the false teachers ‘deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord (*kyrios*)’ (v. 4). Almost certainly, then, Jude means that the false teachers throw off the Lordship of Christ and/or of God.

Gardner: Again, each example has shown clearly how such sexual sin has denied the only Lord and Master, rejecting the authority of the covenant Lord.

(5) Their Irreverence

...and blaspheme the glorious ones.

Benton: Thirdly, Jude sees the false teachers as slandering celestial beings. From the immediate context of verse 9 it would seem that Jude understands the term ‘*celestial beings*’ used here to include evil spirits.... This idea of slandering angelic beings is unique to the false teaching combated in Jude and 2 Peter (cp. 2 Pe. 2:10). This fact indicates that Jude is confronting a specific and actual case of false teaching, rather than just false teaching generally.

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MacArthur: ‘Revile’ is from *blasphēmeō*, ‘to slander’ or ‘to speak evil of,’ especially to speak profanely of sacred matters, including God Himself. The false teachers were not just irreverent in some mild sense; they were blasphemers, and specifically of ‘angelic majesties.’ The NAS translates the single Greek word *doxa* (‘glory’) as ‘angelic majesties.’ Although it is possible to interpret the word as a reference to God’s majesty, the translation ‘angelic majesties’ is best in light of the parallel passage in Peter’s epistle (2 Pe. 2:10). In his letter, Peter used the same word to identify angels as the objects of such blasphemy.

Moo: As the NIV rendering rightly suggests, ‘glories’ here are ‘celestial beings,’ in a word, angels (note NASB, ‘angelic majesties’).... The word ‘blaspheme’ can also be translated ‘revile,’ ‘belittle.’ It suggests a disparaging attitude and is often applied to speech or behavior that fails to give God or His representatives their due. One can thus ‘blaspheme’ the Holy Spirit by attributing Christ’s miraculous signs to the devil (Lk. 12:10, ‘blaspheme’ the gospel by claiming it endorses sin (Rom. 3:8), or ‘blaspheme’ God by failing to live up to His law (Rom. 2:24).

Moo: Since the Old Testament and Jewish tradition gave angels an important role in the judgment, it may be that the false teachers, by downplaying judgment to come, were, in effect, disparaging angels. Or the false teachers, by rejecting the authority of God and His law, may have indirectly been attacking angels as well, who were thought to be the mediators and guardians of the law (see Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19-20).

Gardner: This is a little less clear in all three examples. In the last example of Sodom and Gomorrah Jude is, no doubt, referring to the fact that these men were prepared to rape angelic beings (even if they did not know that is who they were). The middle example of the angels fits well with Jude’s point, as the angels themselves refused to keep the position given to them by God. But the first example of the wilderness generation does not immediately seem to relate to celestial beings.... The most likely explanation here is one that will not immediately be apparent to us, but was probably seen quite quickly by his readers. In Acts 7:38 and 53, Stephen, the martyr, accused his assailants of not obeying the law of Moses which was given and put into effect by angels. The same point is made in Hebrews 2:2. In Galatians 3:19, the apostle Paul also talked of the role the angels had in putting the law into effect. In early Jewish writings more was said of this role, but it is clear from the Biblical evidence that the angels were entrusted with upholding in the world the moral order that was describes in the law of Moses. Thus, Jude’s first example also fits with his saying that these false teachers ‘slander celestial beings.’ He is simply saying that those who brought the word of God’s message and law are being slandered as that message and law are deliberately broken. Jude has said they ‘deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.’ Now, in a different way, he points out the same truth – they have slandered the ones who are the messengers of the Sovereign Lord by their refusal to listen or to obey the message.

2. The Archangel’s Example (9; cp. 2 Pe. 2:11)

9But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

2 Peter 2:11 – ¹¹whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

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a) *Biblical Use of Extra-Biblical Sources*

Benton: There is nothing unusual about biblical writers referring to literature which is not in our Bibles.... [For example,] the Book of the Wards of the LORD (Num. 21:14) is not in our Bible, but Moses quotes from it.... Paul says in Acts 20:35, ‘...remembering the words the Lord Himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”’ Now, you can look through the Gospels and there is nowhere where the Lord Jesus actual said those words, and Paul appears to be quoting what was well known but not actually recorded in the Gospels. We find Paul doing something similar in Acts 17:28. Speaking on the Mars Hill in Athens to the philosophers, this time he quotes a Greek poet.... Paul is using the words of a pagan poet to illustrate his point.

Benton: So, other books, other sources, are sometimes quoted in the Bible. This may be for a number of different reasons. It may of course, be because there are true things which are recorded in other books which are not in the Bible.... The Christian is never to be afraid of anything that is true. God is the God of all truth. On the other hand, sometimes a biblical writer may want to quote from other sources for other reasons. It is likely for example, that when Paul repeatedly uses the phrase, ‘Everything is permissible for me,’ in 1 Corinthians, he is quoting from the teaching of those he is opposing, in order to address their arguments. He does not agree with their teaching, but he is quoting from it. So, biblical writers may quote from sources outside Scripture, and they may do so for different reasons.

b) *Nature of Extra-Biblical Sources*

Benton: *The Assumption of Moses* and the *Book of Enoch* seem to have been well known in certain Jewish circles during the early Christian centuries. People converted out of Judaism would have been familiar with them.... Besides being enormously preoccupied with celestial beings, we find that they have a very different tone and message from even the more apocalyptic books of Scripture, like Daniel and Revelation. There is little sign of the grace and mercy of God in these books. They appear to focus on the works of individuals as the source of their righteousness, rather than God’s love and salvation as a gift. This being the case, it seems unlikely that Jude is quoting from these books because he fully approves of them. We may quote from a well-known hymn, or from *Pilgrim’s Progress*, in a sermon, because part of them may encapsulate the scriptural point we are trying to make. They are not the Bible, but we fully approve of them because they are scriptural. Jude’s use of these inter-testamental books is unlikely to be in this vein.... With these gospel notes so clearly missing from *The Book of Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses*, it seems most unlikely that Jude views these books as full of truth and total allies of Christian faith.

c) *Jude’s Understanding of Extra-Biblical Sources*

Moo: We, of course, have no way of knowing exactly what Jude thought about this story. He certainly gives no indication that the book from which he quotes had canonical status. But did he think that the story about Michael and Satan was true, that it really happened? Or was he simply quoting a story well known to his readers to illustrate a point?

Moo: Jude may have viewed this story as a popular ‘legend’ with which both he and his readers were familiar and which he could use to illustrate his point. To use an analogy, he may be doing what the modern preacher does when he says to illustrate the new world in which Christians live, ‘as Dorothy said to Toto, “I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore!”’ The preacher is not assuming that *The Wizard of Oz* is an authoritative source or even that the story it tells is true. It is a fictional work that serves, at this point, to illustrate a truth. Could Jude regard the story

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about Michael and the devil in a similar way? It is entirely possible. His readers evidently held apocalyptic literature like *The Assumption/The Testament of Moses* in high regard, and it would be entirely natural for him to appeal to a story that they knew well.

Moo: A second option, then, is to assume that Jude believes that this incident really did take place. This does not mean, however, that Jude thinks that the book from which the story is taken is canonical or even totally accurate. It would mean only that Jude believes that this story is true.... We must, I think, at this point, fall back on our belief in the inspiration of the Bible. Jude wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God, who led him to this particular passage—and kept him from citing other texts that did not contain true stories.

d) *Jude's Use of Extra-Biblical Sources*

Benton: It seems much more reasonable to see Jude's quotations from these books in terms of his quoting from sources which the false teachers would have made use of in trying to further their claims. These strange books were familiar to the Jewish hearers.... They were claiming for themselves experiences similar to those associated with this inter-testamental literature. *The Assumption of Moses* purports to give a revelation of the history of the Jews addressed to Joshua, Moses' successor. *The Book of Enoch* depicts Enoch as traveling in the spiritual realm and having conversations with angels. The false teachers were using these supposed revelations and journeyings in the spirit to bolster their corrupt teaching. 'These kinds of experiences happen,' they would have said. 'Look at the experiences of Enoch from these books which you know so well. Look at how the writer of *The Assumption of Moses* witnessed the angelic confrontation between Michael and Satan. Similar experiences have happened to us. Hidden truth has been revealed to us.'

Benton: But Jude, it seems, sees here an opportunity to strike back at the heretics on their own ground, for whereas they are purveying immorality on the basis of their angelic revelations, *The Book of Enoch*, and *The Assumption of Moses* stands for righteousness. They may do so rather legalistically, but nevertheless they do so. 'How can they claim to follow in the footsteps of Enoch, or in the footsteps of the writer of *The Assumption of Moses*, when they are peddling immorality and rejection of authority?' Jude is asking. He thus uses this material to show that the case made by the false teachers does not hold together.... He does not have to approve of these books to use them in his argument. This then, it seems, is a fair way of understanding Jude's use of this literature. It makes sense and at the same time does not in any way impugn the canon of Scripture.

e) *The Extra-Biblical Quotation (9)*

⁹*But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."*

Benton: Here in verse 9, we have yet another of Jude's threesomes. It is the trio of Michael, Moses, and the devil who are referred to from the inter-testamental literature. This is a difficult story to understand but the central thrust is clear. These false teachers are arrogant, rebellious, and abusive; if these people were really spiritual, they would not have the attitude that they have, or use the language they do.

Moo: The word 'archangel,' used only one other time in the New Testament (1 Th. 4:16), refers to the highest rank of angel, as Jews developed these ranks in the intertestamental period.

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Michael, mentioned three times in the Old Testament (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1) and once elsewhere in the New Testament (Rev. 12:7), is always included in this group and often made the most important within this highest rank. The problem is that we do not find anywhere in the Old Testament or in extant Jewish literature the story that Jude refers to here. However, several early Christian fathers tell us about a book that they were familiar with that contained the story. It is variously called *The Assumption of Moses* or *The Testament of Moses*. One of the bases of the story Jude quotes is apparently the vision of Zechariah (cp. Zech. 3:1-2).

(1) Its Subject

Benton: What is being referred to here is the idea that God buried Moses' body in a secret place (cp. Dt. 34:5-6)... It is thought that the writer of *The Assumption of Moses*, with claimed insight into the angelic realm, embroidered the scriptural facts. He imagined, perhaps reasonably, that Satan wanted the site of Moses' grave to be known because he knew that if it was known, it would become a snare to the people. It would draw Israel to hold that place in great reverence and cause it to become a center of idolatry. The tale therefore explains that the archangel Michael contended with Satan over this. But the point is this: Jude says that the writer of *The Assumption of Moses* explains that, as the archangel contended with the devil, he did not use abusive words even against Satan, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.' If the writer of this literature on which the false teachers partially base their own experiences directs us to the fact that the archangel acknowledged the authority of the Lord, how can these men claim to be spiritual? If *The Assumption of Moses* directs us away from abusiveness even towards the devil, how can these profane men be looked upon as superior or wise? Even their own sources contradict them.

Gardner: The story to which Jude now refers comes from a Jewish elaboration upon the Biblical passages which speak of the death and burial of Moses and of the archangel Michael who defends God's people in both the Old Testament and New.... We only have a late Latin version of the *Testament of Moses*, but Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other early Christian teachers and writers seem to have had a complete and longer writing, probably in Hebrew or Aramaic, from which they believe Jude drew the story he used here.... The original story was clearly based on Scripture, but included other details. Moses died before entering the Promised Land. God used the archangel Michael to bury Moses in some unknown place. Satan, however, with his usual malice and antagonism towards God's people, accused Moses of being a dreadful sinner for murdering an Egyptian and therefore sought to deny Moses a proper burial. This slanderous accusation was made before Michael who, instead of rebuking Satan himself, responded by saying to Satan: 'The Lord rebuke you!' When Satan finally left, Michael took the body and buried it in a place that no one knows.

Gardner: Jude refers to an argument between the archangel Michael, and the devil over the burial of the body of Moses. Even with all his power and even as the protector of God's people with right on his side, the archangel Michael would not take the law into his own hands as 'these men' were doing – ignoring bits they didn't like and no doubt playing on that which suited them.... Even Michael, having won the battle with Satan, left that being in the hands of the Lord God to pronounce judgment rather than himself judge a celestial being. Using words from Zechariah 3:1-2, Michael said, 'The LORD rebuke you.'

MacArthur: As God's most powerful angel and the protector of God's people (cp. Dan. 10:13-21; 12:1), Michael did not demonstrate irreverence 'when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses. Michael knew that God could grant him power over Satan (cp. Rev.

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12:7-9), yet he also understood that he was not to act beyond God’s prescribed limits. Out of respect for Satan’s status and power as the highest created being, Michael “did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment’ as if he possessed sovereign dominion over him. In fact, he did nothing more than utter the words, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ Michael’s response anticipated the example of the Angel of the Lord in Zechariah 3:2.... When Michael contended for the body of Moses, he did just what the Angel of the Lord did. His appeal to the Lord as sovereign apparently ended the dispute with Satan. Interestingly, this is the only place Scripture mentions the incident (cp. Dt. 34:5-6).... Because God did not want anyone to preserve Moses’ body and venerate it, He gave Michael the responsibility of burying it where no one—including Satan—could find it. False teachers exercise no such restraint but pretend to have personal power over Satan and angelic beings.

(2) Its Meaning

Benton: The main point is clear. It has to do with authority. The false teachers are those who ‘reject authority.’ This legitimizes their polluting their bodies with immorality and expresses itself in their slandering celestial beings (v. 8). Their idea of experiencing the full grace of God was to be lifted to a status where we are freed from all authority and obligation. This shows itself too in the doctrinal aberration of denying Jesus Christ as our only Sovereign and Lord (v. 4). But here Jude is showing that such an idea was never held by godly people, not even the writer of *The Assumption of Moses*. Here Jude mentions not just angels but the archangel Michael. There is an authority structure even among the angels. He goes on to quote how even the archangel answered Satan, not in terms of his own authority, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ Even the archangel acknowledges the authority of the Lord. And of course, having used the title ‘Lord’ for Jesus Christ in verse 4, it is plain whom Jude regards as the Lord. The conclusion is that the radical rejection of authority, even the authority of Christ, perpetrated by the false teachers finds no foundation in this inter-testamental literature.

Helm: Jude...illustrates and applies his point from the contemporary literature of his own day. Drawing upon a well-known piece of apocryphal literature, *The Assumption of Moses*, Jude presses home his point. Did you see how this illustration contrasts ‘these people’ (v. 8) with the archangel Michael? Michael was unlike them in every respect. He did not dare to presume or step outside of his rightful appointed place.

Moo: The connection with verse 8, through the idea of ‘slander,’ is clear. Presumably, Jude’s point is that the false teachers are so presumptuous as to do what even Michael, the archangel, refused to do: rebuke, without the Lord’s authority and backing, Satan or his associates. For Michael did not himself rebuke Satan; he called on the Lord to do so. The false teachers, however. Disparage evil angels on their own authority.

3. The False Teacher’s Destruction (10; cp. 2 Pe. 2:12-13a)

¹⁰*But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.*

2 Peter 2:12-13a – ¹²But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.

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a) *Lacking Understanding (10a)*

¹⁰*But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand...*

Gardner: His repeated use of ‘these men (vv. 12, 14, 16, 19) picks up on ‘these dreamers’ of verse 8. They ‘slander’ anything they do not understand. Instead of being the highlight spiritual people they think they are, they actually have no spiritual understanding.

Benton: These false teachers are not wise in rejecting the authority of the Lord, as they claim. Actually, they are spiritually ignorant.... True spirituality is not to do with mere talk, or experiences. It is to do with pleasing God by Christlike character and submissive obedience. We are free in Christ – free not to sin, free to serve. These men are spiritual dunces.

MacArthur: Their behavior evidenced their incredible ignorance and presumption.

b) *Lacking Reason (10b)*

...and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Benton: They claim to be wise, but in fact they are ignorant. They claim to be men with enlightened minds, but actually they behave more like animals. They are dominated by fleshly appetites. In their sexual immorality, they are like horses or dogs in heat, unable to control their desire. Such behavior will bring down the judgment of God and destroy them, just as Jude has explained in verse 5-7.

MacArthur: The term translated ‘unreasoning’ (*alogos*) literally means ‘without a word.’ That is, the apostates were like dumb animals who cannot speak reasonably because they cannot reason. No matter how highly educated apostate teachers are, how profoundly philosophical they think their teaching is, or how many mystical visions and insights they claim to have had, they are still like brute animals.

Moo: They understand...’by instinct, like unreasoning animals.’ As the parallel in 2 Peter 2:12 suggests, Jude is here describing the false teachers’ sexual excesses. Rather than following the ‘reason’ of God’s word, they are at the level of pure instinct—like animals, with no moral compass or sense of right and wrong. No wonder they are ‘destroyed’ by these things.

Benton: Chapter 86 of *The Book of Enoch* speaks of a star falling from heaven and being transformed into bulls, who then impregnate other animals. This again fits so well here with Jude’s description. If the false teachers did see themselves as some kind of angelic beings for whom immorality was legitimate, they may well have based their teaching on such a passage. But Jude, in verse 19, is turning the tables on them, and proclaiming that all they are is ‘unreasoning animals.’

c) *Learnings*

Gardner: In verse 19, Jude reaches the climax of his devastating criticism of these so-called ‘spiritual’ people by again saying that they follow natural instincts and ‘do not have the Spirit.’ Here is the key to the problem. These men do not possess the Holy Spirit. They may claim to follow Christ but they do not possess the all-important marker of the true Christian, the Holy Spirit. Thus, they were completely unable to discern God’s way and His truth (cp. 1 Cor. 2:14).... Only the Holy Spirit actually knows the thoughts of God (v. 11), so if we want to claim to know the thoughts of God or spiritual matters that come from God, then we must have the Spirit, and we receive the Spirit through faith in Christ.

Jude – Lesson 16

Moo: [Jude's readers] would have been familiar with the tradition that singled out these (and similar incidents as warning examples about the dangers of sin. They would have known that the people who committed these sins suffered condemnation, that they had 'no share in the world to come' (cp. the *Mishnah*). Jude's putting of the false teachers into this same paradigm would therefore have considerable rhetorical effect. By associating them with established groups of notorious sinners, Jude adds emotional strength to his condemnation. It is similar to our labeling a political opponent as a 'Benedict Arnold' or accusing a particularly dictatorial boss of being a 'little Hitler.'

Benton: This has parallels in our own day. So many so-called radical Christian groups and strutting TV evangelists have fallen into immorality. They say they want people's souls, but actually they are after people's bodies. So many of the so-called 'word-faith' teachers claim to have had visions and talked to angels and met the Lord themselves. But when it comes to it in their ministry, what are they after? They are after your money. They press you to fill the collection plate. What a low, base thing! It may come wrapped up in all sorts of spiritual claims and supernatural stories, but actually it is just the old covetousness. It claims to be spiritual, but deep down it is motivated by the flesh. 'I want your money.' Identify such people and reject them.

Helm: An angelic encounter over the body of Moses is possible. But whether Jude chose it because it is factual or merely illustrative, the point of his intended use cannot be missed. With the angelic tug of war, Jude has given us an example of whom to emulate. We are to be like Michael. Follow his example, and you will keep yourself straight. You will steer clear of apostasy. You will live under authority. You will guard yourself against all temptations toward immorality. Follow the way of Michael, and in doing so you will not only be equipped to spot the present-day embodiment of ancient archetypes who were designated for condemnation but will ensure that you don't become one of them yourself.

For next time: Read Jude 11-16.