

XVII. The OT According to Jude (2)

May 18/20/21, 2020

Jude 11-16; cp. 2 Peter 2:13b-19

Aim: To expose the actions and impacts of false teachers as well as their fore-ordained eternal destiny.

Helm: Jude 5-16 is vintage midrash. These middle verses are two sermons in written form. The first sermon extends from verses 5-10.... Now we get a second sermon from Jude; verses 11-16 are classic midrash. And fortunately for us, Jude has left behind his sermon outline for all of us to see. In this sermon, rather than selecting three large-scale events from Scripture to confirm God's judgment, Jude selects three individual *examples*. We see them in verse 11 – Cain, Balaam, and Korah.... By verses 12-13 Jude is busy applying [the biblical] texts to his own day. And with verses 14-15 he does some cutting-edge stuff by illustrating his point from what was a well-known piece of literature, in this case a book about the man named Enoch. In his conclusion the takeaway becomes obvious: God still judges the ungodly; so be like Enoch and not like these.

A. Pronouncement of Woe (Jude 11-13; cp. 2 Pe. 2:13b-17)

1. The Woe on False Teachers (11a)

¹¹*Woe to them!*

Gardner: Jude's comparison contains another set of three examples and begins with a strong condemnation in words used by Old Testament prophets and by Jesus: 'Woe to them!' Jude's readers would have taken special note here at such strong language, for this is the language of cursing, of warning of final judgment by God (e.g., Is. 3:9, 11; Jer. 23:1; cp. Mt. 11:21; 1 Cor. 9:16).

MacArthur: By exclaiming 'Woe to them!' Jude followed the example of Christ (cp. Mt. 23:13-29) and the prophets (cp. Is. 3:9, 11; 5:8-23; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; Jer. 13:27; 23:1; Ez. 13:3; 16:23; 34:2; Hos. 7:13; Zech. 11:17) in pronouncing ultimate spiritual judgment on apostates. The word translated 'woe' (*ouai*) is an interjection or emotional cry that is essentially like exclaiming, 'Alas, how horrible it will be!'

Moo: Jude's three Old Testament examples serve to back up his 'woe' pronouncement on the false teachers. The English word 'woe' is a transliteration of the Greek word *ouai*, which is, in turn, the transliteration of a Hebrew word. This word was used especially by the prophets in the Old Testament to announce the pain and distress people would experience as a result of God's judgment on them (e.g., Is. 3:11).... The 'woe oracle' often included both a reference to judgment and to the reason for the judgment. In this vein Jude mentions the judgment the false teachers will experience...and the reason for their judgment.

Helm: Jude opens his sermon in eye-catching fashion: 'Woe to them!' The words are meant to remind us of Jesus when He was lambasting the scribes and Pharisees for their unbelief. Or of John who in his Apocalypse warns of impending judgment. Jude wanted our attention, and now he has it. We are ready to hear from God's Word; so Jude quickly moves from introduction to exposition.

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2. The Condemnation of False Teachers (11bcd; cp. 2 Pe. 2:15-16)

For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

2 Peter 2:15-16 – ¹⁵Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,¹⁶but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

Gardner: The first comparison Jude made (vv. 5-7) revealed their total lack of spiritual understanding. The second comparison indicates even more clearly how evil they were.... They have followed in the behavior of the three men to which Jude now refers. Each of these actually did come under God's judgment. The lesson for Jude's audience is clear. These three – Cain, Balaam, and Korah – were judged and condemned by God; the unspiritual leaders have followed the same direction and the same end awaits them, so to whom should this audience really listen and whom should they follow?

Moo: [Jude] directly implicates the false teachers in the sinful behavior and judgment that he describes with his Old Testament examples. Cain, Balaam, and Korah thus become 'types'—people whose behavior prefigures that of their New Testament 'antitypes.' It is probably for this reason that all three verbs in the verse are in a tense that is usually past-referring.' ... Jude speaks this way because the actions of the Old Testament types were, of course, in the past. But because these people are 'types,' their actions are, in a sense, timeless. Thus, the use of the present tense in English may better capture the idea.

Benton: Jude wants to point out just how dangerous these specific false teachers are and how virulent is their error. He does so by declaring that they encapsulate all the worst possibilities of false teachers. Again, Jude uses a threesome.... We should not follow shut men; we should be lamenting the terrible end to which they are traveling. All that is worst about three famous characters from the Old Testament, Cain, Balaam, and Korah, finds expression in these particular false teachers. In explaining this, of course, Jude is implying that there are different types of false teachers of which we need to be aware. Some are like Cain; some are like Balaam; some are like Korah; some are a combination of some or all such heretics. We fall into a great trap if we think all false teachers are of the same kind. Jude identifies for us three different types of false teachers here.

a) Cain's Way (11b)

For they walked in the way of Cain...

MacArthur: Cain was the prototypical model of one who departed from God's truth (cp. Gen. 4:1-15).... The fact that Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable demands that God had previously told him what constituted a proper sacrifice. Cain knew God required a blood sacrifice, but instead of obeying he invented his own form of worship. His inappropriate offering revealed the irreverent blasphemy of his heart, as he rejected God's revelation and operated by his own self-styled instinct and pride in what he had produced. In light of their similarities, Jude could refer to proud self-willed apostates as those who 'have gone the way of Cain.' Cain was religious but disobedient.

Moo: In Jewish tradition, ... Cain became a classic example of an ungodly skeptic. The Jerusalem Targum, an Aramaic paraphrase of the Pentateuch, presents Cain as proclaiming,

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‘There is no judgment, no judge, no future life, no reward will be given to the righteous, and no judgment will be imposed on the wicked.’ Jude’s intention may therefore be to reinforce his accusation of the false teacher as being rejecters of authority and blasphemers (see vv. 8-10).

Helm: Cain the Faithless: The way of Cain is about more than violence. It is true that he is the Bible’s first murderer. But Jude selects him for a different reason. He is an example of a teacher who rejects God’s Word (cp. Gen. 4:3-7)... Before Cain became a murderer, God gave him a message. God spoke to him. God instructed him. God preached to him. God taught him what was and wasn’t acceptable behavior. The fact that Cain committed a violent act of murder tells us that in the end, Cain rejected God’s Word... By his words and his deeds Cain preached that God doesn’t mean what he says. He killed Abel because he believed that God’s word wasn’t true. There would be no destruction for the wicked, he thought... Jude preaches from the story of Cain because the problem facing his own day was teachers who did whatever they wanted with God’s Word. Like Cain, they disbelieved it. They felt free to change it. They preached something else.

Gardner: Cain’s actions were perhaps the inevitable outcome of his lack of faith (cp. Heb. 11:4). Lack of faith had led to a lack of love and caring for his brother and to great jealousy, rage and eventually murder. This would be the end of ‘these men’ with whom Jude is concerned. They too were headed the same way following ‘their own evil desires’ (v. 16).

Benton: First of all, he brings us back to Cain, Adam’s son who opposed his brother Abel (cp. Gen. 4). In directing our attention to Cain, Jude is telling us that false teachers have been around right from the beginning of time, so we should not be surprised they are with us today... How did it come about that Cain’s offering was rejected and Abel’s was accepted (cp. Heb. 11:4)? Because Abel offered what he offered in faith. The implication is that Cain did not have faith. He did not trust God. So that is the first thing we know about Cain: he had *no faith*... The next thing we learn about Cain [from 1 Jn. 3:11-12 is that] we should love one another and not be like Cain, who had *no love*.

Benton: If we put those things together, no faith and no love, what do we have? We have an unconverted man here. Faith and love are the great signs of spiritual life. Paul tells us that the only thing that really matters about a person is faith expressing itself through love (Gal. 5:6). Cain is not a converted man. Cain is a picture of the unconverted church leader or religious teacher. Sadly, it appears there are many such people in our religious education departments at colleges and our theology faculties at universities and in high-ranking clergy positions of establishment churches. They are leaders who have gone into these places as a career and they have come to prominence. Perhaps they are very highly educated, with many degrees after their names, but they are not saved. They have never submitted themselves to the Lord... Thus, they lead people astray. Thus, they have no love for God’s people. Thus, they take His Word and think that simply by pure intellect they can understand it, when actually they need the enlightenment of His Spirit.

b) Balaam’s Error (11c)

...and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error...

Benton: Then we come to a second type of false teacher, Balaam. He is quite a different man. You could not accuse him of being unspiritual. Here is a man with some kind of spiritual power, able to prophesy the future, able to bless and curse. We can read all about this in Numbers 22-24... A man with some strange and wonderful spiritual gift, Balaam seemed to know God and

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God spoke to him. Yet such was his desire for money that...he compromised his status. For the love of the honor Balak had promised him, he disobeyed the Lord. Yes, he did have some kind of relationship with the Lord, but compromised his whole spirituality through the love of money.

Gardner: Balaam seems at first to be a strange example as he received genuine communications from God and, at least, to begin with, stood against accepting bribes (Num. 22:1-20)... In Numbers 25 the narrative moves immediately to describing how the Israelites were seduced to worship other gods and to become involved in sexual promiscuity with the Moabites. Although Numbers 23-24 tells us nothing of Balaam's part in this seduction of Israel, we read in Numbers 31 that Balaam had urged this course of action on the Moabites (Num. 31:8, 16)... In Revelation 21:4 Jesus, writing to the church at Pergamum, refers to people who hold the same teaching as Balaam who enticed 'the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.' This, no doubt, is the example to which Jude is referring. Just as Balaam, for the sake of personal gain, wanted to see God's people destroyed and was able to lead many astray so that they were judged, so 'these men,' seeking only 'their own advantage' (v. 16), were drawing the people of God into serious sin and leading them towards the inevitable end: judgment.

MacArthur: Here Jude unmasks the fundamental motive behind the religious interests of false teachers. They do so 'for pay' (cp. Ps. 10:3; Mic. 3:11; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Pe. 2:3)... Numbers 22-24 relates the story of Balaam, with some additional references occurring in chapter 31.... As a prophet-for-hire, Balaam is a prime illustration of false teachers—those who love wealth and prestige more than faithfulness and obedience (cp. Rev. 2:14).

Moo: Balaam, the second character in Jude's list, is known in the Bible especially for his greed, an emphasis Jude picks up also by claiming that the false teachers follow the way of Balaam out of a desire for 'reward' or 'gain' (*mistbos*; cp., for a similar emphasis, 2 Pe. 2:15-16)... Jude may well be implying that the false teachers also are teaching what they are because they can make money from it.

Helm: Balaam the Self-Indulgent: Like Cain, Balaam was a teacher. [DSB Note: Cain wasn't a teacher and Balaam was a foreign prophet.] His downfall though came through a love of money and openness to sensuality. In the book of Numbers, we see Balaam, a teacher of God's people, turning against Israel and cursing them, all because a foreign king promised to pay him handsomely for it. At first Balaam fought off the temptation and refused. But later he reversed his position, advising God's people to engage in orgies and sensuality with the foreign women of Midian (cp. Num. 31:16). And he did it so that his own pockets would be lined with cash.

Benton: We read elsewhere in the Scriptures that Balaam actually told the enemies of Israel how to bring Israel down. This is indicated in Revelation 2:14.... There are many who seem to start out as sincere Christian preachers –often they are men of gifts and ability – but through the love of this world, they go off the rails. Sometimes they are men around whom miraculous things appear to happen. They are frequently men whom church-goers love to listen to and somehow, through the attention and flattery they receive, their heads are turned.... Here is a different sort of false teacher from Cain. He has amazing powers, it seems, but is calling people away from the Scriptures, away from godliness. Identify such people and reject them. This is the second type of false teacher.

c) *Korah's Rebellion (11d)*

...and perished in Korah's rebellion.

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MacArthur: Numbers 16 presents the story of Korah, a cousin of Moses. As a Levite and a Kohathite, Korah had significant duties in the tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 3:6-8; 18:3; Dt. 10:8; cp. 1 Chr. 15:2). However, when he was not chosen to be a priest, he became irate. To show his contempt, Korah enlisted Dathan and Abiram (along with 250 other men) to join him in a ‘rebellion’ against Moses’ leadership.

Benton: Korah was among the Levites appointed by Moses to help with the service of God in the tabernacle. You can read the story in Numbers 16. But despite his position, Korah was responsible for provoking rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron.... Under a cloak of standing for egalitarianism among God’s people, Korah questioned the leadership of Moses and Aaron: ‘Aren’t all the people of God holy? What are you doing telling us what God wants?’ He encouraged the Levites to complain, ‘Why can’t we be priests? Why can’t we do what you and Aaron do?’ Under this guise of egalitarianism, he provoked discontent and it would seem actually desired that leadership for himself. If Cain was unbelieving and Balaam loved money, Korah loved power and position. His rebellion was prompted by the idea that leadership among God’s people is something to which we can appoint ourselves. This is not true. It is God who chooses leaders, gifting them and anointing them. Moses responded to Korah’s challenge, not by throwing his own weight around, but by humbly assembling the people and calling God to show whom He had chosen. God intervened in judgment and the ground opened and swallowed up the rebels as they stood together opposing Moses and Aaron.

Gardner: Korah, a leader in the tribe of Levi, led a rebellion against Moses (Num. 16:1-35). Again, for Jude’s purposes, the illustration is relevant because it is an example of ungodly leaders standing up against God’s own leader and His revealed truth and rapidly receiving the judgment of God. In Numbers 16:31-35 we find that all those who had followed Korah were swallowed up and destroyed by the opening of the ground, while those involved in illegal sacrifices were consumed by fire. The picture of devastation would not be lost on Jude’s leaders.

Helm: Korah the Rebellious: Korah was the one who led a mutinous mob against Moses. And like Cain and Balaam before him [DSB note: technically Korah’s rebellion happened before Balaam], he was a teacher. His distinguishing mark of instruction was his disdain for the Biblical notion of authority. He hated the fact that Levites could hold a place of authority over God’s people, but he could not (cp. Num. 16:1-4).... [Korah] takes God’s words at Sinai about the priesthood of all believers (Ex. 19:6) and interprets them in a way that levels any notion of authority. Like the angels of verse 6, Korah is unhappy living under the authority of another. And the judgment that came on Korah? Numbers tells us that just like his autonomous counterparts in Jude 6, Korah was swallowed alive into the earth’s grip of ‘gloomy darkness.’

Moo: Korah became the classic example of the antinomian heretic. Jude may therefore associate the false teachers with Korah because they too were refusing to listen to the duly appointed leaders of God’s people. But this may be overly specific; perhaps Jude wants to focus attention simply on the false teachers’ rebellious, antinomian attitude. In any case, he almost certainly cites Korah last (out of canonical order) because of the sudden and spectacular judgment that he and his followers experienced. Such is the fate of the false teachers also, who will be ‘destroyed’ on the Day of the Lord.

MacArthur: Tragically, the consequences of the rebellion extended beyond the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the 250 men. In the aftermath of God’s judgment, many of the Israelites—having grown sympathetic to Korah’s position—grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

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As a result, God sent a plague that killed an additional 14,700 Israelites (Num. 16:41-50). The plague's widespread devastation marked Korah's extensive influence among the people. Many of today's false teachers also have significant followings, composed of people who will share their judgment (cp. 1 Tim. 1:1-4). Yet, like Korah and his supporters, all apostate rebels will eventually experience God's wrath (cp. Mk. 3:29; Jn. 15:6; Heb. 10:26-31; Rev. 20:10-15).

Benton: There have always been such self-opinionated troublemakers among God's people and in the churches. Often, they are younger people, 'men in a hurry' to make it to what they see as 'the top' in Christian circles. They are motivated by jealousy, by a lusting after position, and a desire to be seen. They are frequently opportunists who capitalize on difficult times to undermine God's appointed leaders.... Beware of troublemakers like Korah. Identify them and reject them. '*They have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.*' Jude's words imply that such people are as good as judged already. This is an indication that although false teachers make a big impact, often they do not last for long.

d) Summary

Benton: We have people of all these different varieties around today, men like Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Jude's words imply that the false teachers whom he was confronting showed elements of every one of these in their character and ministry. Jude's three types of false teacher are probably not meant to be an exhaustive list. There are other types too. We are to test all teachers by their doctrine and their life. True Christian leadership is humble service out of devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gardner: The message of all three examples is this: compare your leaders with other godless, immoral leaders who were judged – look at what happened under Cain, Balaam, and Jorah.

Helm: [Jude] has opened God's Word and from three separate text expounded one great truth: judgment will fall on any pastor or teacher who loves freedom or money or sex or power more than fidelity to God's Word.

3. The Impact of False Teachers (12-13; cp. 2 Pe. 2:13b, 17)

¹²These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

2 Peter 2:13b, 17 – ¹³They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. ... ¹⁷These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

Benton: Jude gives a list of some of the effects produced by false teachers.... Here Jude uses a wealth of damning illustrations to shock our imaginations. He wants to set us on full alert concerning these false teachers, and the best way to do that is to bring before us six almost nightmare pictures which we shall find hard to forget. He uses two human illustrations – a bride's beauty and a shepherd's work. He follows this with four illustrations from nature – clouds, trees, waves, and stars.

Gardner: Here the emphasis is on the emptiness of all that they are and say, the perversity of their hypocrisy, and the horror of their end. Jude uses devastatingly simple pictures that all of us understand well.

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a) *Hidden Reefs (12a)*

¹²*These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear...*

Moo: The NIV ‘blemishes’ is a controversial translation; the word also means ‘(hidden) reef.’ The first translation finds some support from the parallel in 2 Peter 2:13, where, in a description of false teachers similar to the one here in Jude, Peter calls the heretics ‘blemishes’ (*spiloi*). But Jude uses a different word here, so that we should probably prefer the second rendering, ‘reef.’ If so, Jude is suggesting that the false teachers, like a hidden reef that rips the bottom out of a boat, lies in wait to bring destruction on the faithful.

MacArthur: Jude’s description of apostates as ‘hidden reefs’ graphically depicts the unseen dangers they pose. ‘Reefs’ are undersea oral formations usually located close to the shore. They are potentially harmful to ships because they can rip open the bottoms of their hulls, causing vessels to sink. Like those ‘hidden reefs,’ the apostates embedded themselves under the surface in the ‘love feasts’ of the early church, from where they tore into unsuspecting people with their lies and wickedness....

Moo: ‘Community meals’ is not a bad rendering here for *agapais*. *Agape* means, of course, ‘love,’ but the early Christians also began to apply the word to their joyful fellowship meals. These meals usually included both the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (what we might call the ‘vertical’ dimension) and the eating of a regular meal together (the ‘horizontal’ dimension). The false teachers, Jude implies, continued to participate in these regular community meals without any hesitation. By doing so they posed a real danger to other believers, who might be emboldened by their example to think that one could remain a Christian while following such a libertine lifestyle.

MacArthur: The feast was similar to a contemporary potluck dinner held on the Lord’s Day. Believers would gather to worship, hear the teaching of Scripture, celebrate Communion, and then share their common love in a meal (cp. Acts 2:42). However, the love feast eventually became so corrupted and abused, due to the defiling influence of false teachers (cp. 1 Cor. 11:17-22), that it passed from the scene.

Benton: The love feasts of the church were a combination of a fellowship meal and a communion service, where God’s people had fellowship with each other and with the Lord.... That word ‘qualm’ is better translated ‘fear’ or ‘reverence.’ They are men who boastfully see themselves an elite. Even immorality is not seen as a sin to them. Their arrogant claims about themselves leave no room for awe and thankfulness for the Lord who had given His body and blood to redeem us. The very presence of these men in such meetings is both offensive to the Lord and dangerous to the Christians.... They are ‘blemishes’ or scars, on the face of Christ’s bride.... Thank the Lord that He can heal His bride, and make us beautiful again as we repent.

Gardner: These leaders were sitting down in fellowship with the very flock they were leading astray. These love feasts were probably meals held in the early church to encourage love and care and fellowship among Christians (1 Cor. 11:20-22). They may have been related to what we call a ‘communion service’ except that they were full meals and not just a matter of taking a small portion of bread and a sip of wine. Here was a focus of what true fellowship was all about, a situation in which the leaders were to sit down with their flock, encouraging them and building them up in the faith, exhorting them to believe the truth of the gospel and to keep the law of Christ. But none of this was happening. This focal part of the Christian community’s activity was becoming just another opportunity for selfish feasting, for licentiousness, and for carousing.

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At the very point where the love and unity of the community should most clearly be seen, these leaders were disobeying God, rejecting all authority, and living by animal instincts. Is it any wonder they are regarded as ‘blemishes’?

b) *Selfish Shepherds (12b)*

...*shepherds feeding themselves...*

Benton: Teachers and leaders are the shepherds and carers of God’s people. But these false teachers are ‘*shepherds who feed only themselves.*’ Their so-called ministry is actually just manipulation for their own good. They say what people want to hear in order to get people under their power, and to take from them. Jude is probably alluding to Ezekiel 34:2-4.... The false shepherds make their own lives comfortable, while avoiding the hard graft and arduous tasks of the true shepherd.

Moo: The shepherd is the epitome of a person who selflessly watches out for others. It was therefore a natural term to apply both to the Lord (e.g., Ps. 23; cp. Jn. 10:1-18) and to the leaders of the people of God in the Old Testament (e.g., 2 Sam. 5:2) and in the New (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:2). But the false teachers were abandoning their natural responsibility to care for others, thinking only of themselves. Jude is likely alluding to Ezekiel 34:2.

Gardner: The job of a shepherd is to look after his sheep. Sheep die if they are not fed properly or looked after. These people are among the leaders of the church.... Their teachings are quite attractive and have a semblance of godliness to them. But instead of feeding the flock, they feed only themselves.... God had judged the evil leaders of His people before (cp. Ez. 34:2, 11-15), and He would do so again. Those of Jude’s day were just like those of old, and God would intervene.

MacArthur: The false teachers were guilty of ‘caring’ only ‘for themselves.’ The word ‘caring’ is from *poimainō*, ‘to shepherd,’ indicating that the apostates shepherded no one but themselves. Their only interest was self-interest and self-gratification—at the expense of anyone else.

c) *Waterless Clouds (12c)*

...*waterless clouds, swept along by winds...*

Moo: Jude’s last four descriptions of the false teachers are all drawn from the natural world—and, whether intentionally or not, from each of the four regions of their earth, according to the ancients: the air (clouds), the earth (trees), the sea (waves), and the heavens (planets).

MacArthur: ‘Clouds without water’ arrive with the mere promise of rain and then fail to deliver. Solomon said, ‘Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely’ (Prov. 25:14). Apostate teachers promise to bring the true spiritual blessing and refreshment from God, but they do not deliver on that promise. Jude likened them to clouds ‘carried along by’ the ‘winds,’ constantly portending rain but failing to produce it. The term translated ‘without water’ (*anudros*) also occurs in Matthew 12:43 in reference to the wanderings of evil spirits through dry and barren places (cp. Lk. 11:24-26). By describing false teachers in the same way that Luke describes demons, Jude reiterated the connection between the apostates and their satanic sources.

Moo: ‘Clouds without rain’ is a natural metaphor for those who do not deliver what they promise (cp. Pr. 25:14). In a similar manner, Jude suggests, the false teachers make claims for themselves and for their teaching that they do not carry through on. Moreover, they are unstable, ‘blown along by the wind.’

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Gardner: This is a vivid picture of their deception. In a climate where water is often desperately needed, the large dark clouds that sometimes blow up are eagerly anticipated. At last rain will come. The greatest frustration for the farmer who needs water to produce good crops is when the clouds come and go but there is no life-giving rain (cp. Prov. 25:14). This is the way false teachers all the way down through the ages have deceived God's people, and it happens as much today.

Benton: They promise so much, but do not deliver. The land of Palestine is hot. The need for rain to make the land thrive and produce crops is obvious.... But imagine the disappointment and frustration when those same clouds blow quickly over, and no rain falls. False teachers promise so much. Usually, their promises are shaped by the prevailing winds of worldly desires and thinking. They can often appear so relevant. But the prevailing winds of this world never bring the cloud of God's glory and grace which alone can refresh weary souls.

d) Fruitless Trees (12d)

...fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;

Benton: If the false teachers do not bring refreshment, neither do they produce the fruit God is looking for.... The fruit which God longs to see is the fruit of holy lives, lovingly devoted to the service of our Savior. But false teaching always produces false lives. Again, this should not surprise us with reference to the false teachers Jude is opposing. If their gospel is that God's grace legitimizes sin, or brings self-fulfillment, making us like 'gods,' is it any wonder if it produces not God-centered, but self-centered people?

MacArthur: Autumn is the season when farmers and gardeners expect to harvest the final crops of the year. If nothing comes, they must endure disappointment and hardship through the winter.... The phrase 'autumn trees without fruit' pictures the disappointing reality of a barren harvest.... He called them 'doubly dead'; first, they are fruitless because there is no life in them; second, they are 'uprooted,' dead at the very core. They are like trees that have come out of the ground, disconnected from the life-giving source of water and nutrients (cp. Mt. 15:13; cp. 3:10; 7:17-20; 13:6). Such people produce no life-changing fruit, neither in themselves nor in others.

Gardner: The leaders are like trees that promise to bear fruit but in fact never did. For fruit farmers, such trees are useless and simply take up valuable ground. They have to be uprooted and burnt on the fire. 'Twice dead' probably means that they were dead in the sense of having no fruit but also dead because they were then uprooted. However, in the Book of Revelation the idea of a second death relates to the final judgment (2:11; 20:6; 21:8), and it is likely that Jude has this in mind here. Such leaders will not only be uprooted and die a first time (physically), but they will be judged to eternal death as well.

Moo: A tree that is still without fruit in the autumn (or 'late autumn,' as the Greek word suggests) has not fulfilled its purpose in being. And so 'autumn trees' conveys a point similar to 'waterless clouds.' ... what does it mean for Jude...to claim that the false teachers have died, or will die, two times? ... Jude refers to the false teachers' eventual judgment. The New Testament calls eschatological judgment 'the second death' (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). So, these false teachers, Jude may be alleging, will not only die physically; they will also die spiritually and eternally.... 'Uprooted,' then, completes this picture of judgment. The whole description is reminiscent of Jesus' parable about the fig tree that did not bear fruit (Lk. 13:6-8).

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Benton: Jesus tells us to measure teachers, true or false, by the fruit they produce in their own lives and the lives of their hearers. We are to look at the effects they produce. Autumn should be the time when a tree's fruit is ripe for the picking. But the false teachers are fruitless because they are doubly dead. They are trees which are naturally barren and, anyway, they have been uprooted from the soil of Christ, who alone can make us fruitful.

e) *Wild Waves (13a)*

¹³...wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame...

Benton: It is not just that these teachers are failing to produce godly fruit; they are positively besmirching the church.... Whatever flotsam and jetsam, whatever rubbish, there is in the sea is dumped up onto the land. These false teachers, with all their great so-called energy and all their great claims, are throwing up rubbish onto the church. Sorrowfully, we have to say that the evangelic church in the West has been drifting from biblical Christianity and biblical standard for many years now.... The old biblical paths of being straight and plain about morality and giving ourselves to a daily quiet time and living in a way that is different from the world has been scorned as out of date.

Gardner: Nothing is more unpredictable than the great stormy seas that crash on rocky coastlines around the world.... The ferocity of the sea has become a by-word for danger. As these wild waves hit the shore, so they produce a foam generated from the pollution of the water and from the effects of the waves in breaking down the coastline. These false and evil teachers are as dangerous and as out of control as the wildest of seas. The foam produced by the waves provides a vivid picture of the cesspool produced by their shameful conduct (cp. Is. 57:20).

MacArthur: Scripture often uses 'the sea' as a symbol for those who do not know God (cp. Is. 57:20-21).... In the aftermath of a storm, the seashore is littered with debris and mire, which is neither beneficial nor life-giving. That is the graphic picture of what false teachers produce. With all their empty talk and self-serving activity, they are like 'wild waves.' In the end they are 'casting up' only 'their own shame like foam.' Their disgraceful attitudes and actions froth up to display all forms of heresy, deception immorality, irreverence, and insubordination.

Moo: Jude here is probably dependent on Isaiah 57:20.... The word 'shame' in the Greek is plural; Jude is thinking of the 'shameful deeds' committed by the false teachers.

f) *Wandering Stars (13b)*

...wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Gardner: In ancient times the planets were the stars which wandered around, as opposed to those which appeared to be fixed in space. Indeed, the word 'planet' comes from the word here meaning 'wandering' (*planao*). 'Error' (v. 11) comes from the same word. To 'wander' is to 'err.' The false teachers, then, seem like those stars which cannot be relied upon properly to guide the traveler. For these, the teachers, the blackest darkness has been reserved forever. This recalls verse 6 and the judgment on the angels who fell from grace. Indeed, in the book of Enoch, which is quoted in verse 14, the stars which go astray are linked to the fallen angels. Here, it is more likely that Jude is simply driving home again the destiny of 'these men.'

Moo: Ancient people believed that the heavens should display order and regularity. They therefore had difficulty in accounting for the planets, which seemed to 'wander' across the night sky in no discernible pattern. It is the planets to which Jude is probably referring here (in fact, the Greek verb behind 'wander,' *planao*, is the word from which we get the English 'planet')....

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Jude concludes this paragraph on the same note that he has sounded at the end of every paragraph and sub-paragraph in this section—judgment: ‘for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.’ ‘Darkness,’ along with ‘fire,’ is a popular biblical image for the judgment of God.... Jude uses his favorite word ‘keep’ here in the negative sense of ‘keep under sentence until punishment’ (see also v. 6).

MacArthur: ‘Wandering stars’ does not refer to heavenly bodies that continuously shine and have fixed orbits. Most likely the expression signifies a meteor or ‘shooting star’ that flashes across the sky in an uncontrolled moment of brilliance and then disappears forever into ‘the black darkness’ (cp. v. 6). Apostates often appear for a short time on the stage of Christianity. They promise enduring spiritual light and direction but deliver nothing but an erratic, aimless, worthless flash. The utter blackness and darkness of hell ‘has been reserved forever’ for them (cp. 2 Pe. 2:4, 9, 18).

Benton: What effect will their false teaching have on the teachers themselves? The false teachers’ destiny is finally mentioned.... It may be that Jude is thinking here of the way the sailors of the past used the stars to navigate their course. But stars which keep moving and changing their positions could only lead a mariner astray. However, perhaps Jude takes up a more dangerous analogy here. He likens the false teachers to stars followed by astrologers. People read the stars and think that in this way they can find wisdom and fortune. Perhaps Jude uses this analogy because in ancient thinking, especially the kind of thinking associated with *The Book of Enoch*, angels and stars were thought to be closely related. Perhaps it was thought that by reading the stars one could read the wisdom of the angels and these false teachers compared themselves to angels. Perhaps the false teachers preached and promoted themselves as ‘stars’ who could bring spiritual enlightenment to others. But there is only one star which brings true light and that is the Lord Jesus (Num. 24:17), who is the bright Morning Star (Rev. 22:16). To reject Him as sovereign and Lord, as the false teachers had done, means not only to be a false guide to others, but to end in the darkness of hell itself.

B. Prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14-16; cp. 2 Pe. 2:18-19)

Benton: In verses 14-16, Jude reminds them of the opening prophecy from *The Book of Enoch*.... The false teachers have thrown such aspersions on Christ and the churches have been filled with such doubts that, although the content of what Jude says here is certainly scriptural, he has felt it best to be more subtle in the way it is packaged. He is using this source to get past his readers’ defenses.

Gardner: Jude now moves on to argue that all this was prophesied beforehand. First, there was the prophecy of Enoch (vv. 14-16) and then, even more significantly, the apostles themselves had foretold the coming of such ungodly people (vv. 17-19)

1. The Prophecy (14-15)

¹⁴*It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

Benton: This is more or less a direct quotation from *The Book of Enoch* chapter 1:9.... There are a number of matters to bear in mind. Firstly, there seems a cogent argument to believe...that *The*

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Book of Enoch...would be the kind of literature preferred by the false teachers against whom Jude is writing. Therefore, to answer them in terms of their own sources makes sense. It may well be, in the light of verse 4, that the false teachers did not recognize the authority of Christ (who is the key to understanding the Scriptures), and therefore Jude seeks to first refute them on their own ground.

Moo: Jud caps his denunciation of the false teachers with a prophecy. This in itself is nothing unusual; New Testament writers often apply ancient prophecies to their own situations. But what is unusual about this prophecy is its source.... Jude takes this prophecy from *1 Enoch*.... We can understand why Jude chooses to quote this particular prophecy, for it reinforces the two key points that he has made about the false teachers. 1) They are ‘godless’ (or ‘ungodly’, v. 4; cp. also v. 18). This word occurs three times in the prophecy (cp. v. 15) and may have been what drew Jude’s attention to it in the first place. 2) The false teachers will suffer the Lord’s condemnation. Enoch’s prophecy, of course, foretells the coming of the Lord as judge.

Helm: While Enoch is a Biblical character, the quotation here is not a biblical reference. It comes from a text called 1 Enoch. What Jude is doing here is exactly what we saw him do with the Assumption of Moses (v. 9). He is pulling from the literature of his own day when it lends support, by way of illustration, to his claim. In this case 1 Enoch, and especially the portion he grabs hold of, supports his teaching that god will execute judgment against everyone who perverts His ways.

Benton: Secondly, we have to say that the contents of this particular quotation from *The Book of Enoch* can be reconstructed as a pastiche of verses from the canonical Old Testament Scriptures. Without any distortion of the basic intention of the passages, Moses’ prayer for Israel in Deuteronomy 33:2-4 together with the words of Isaiah 66:15-16 and Malachi 3:13 virtually cover the whole text. So, in a sense, Jude can justify his quotation as Scripture. Thirdly, ... although we may not have realized it, there is recorded in Scripture a prediction of the judgment of ungodliness by Enoch. Putting all this together gives complete legitimacy to Jude’s use of the quotation without having to believe that Jude regarded *The Book of Enoch* as Scripture.... Matthew Henry’s commentary sums it up succinctly. There we read, ‘This prophecy of Enoch, we have no mention made of in any other part or place of the Scriptures, yet now it is Scripture! In one sense, that indeed is the end of the argument.

MacArthur: Even though this prophecy is not recorded in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit inspired Jude (cp. 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pe. 1:20-21) to use it because it was familiar, historically valid, and supported his overall thesis. Jude extracted the quote from the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch*, with which his first-century readers were well acquainted. The book was part of the written history and tradition of the Jewish people, and rabbinical allusions to it were not uncommon.

Gardner: Jude does not necessarily understand this prophecy to be ‘inspired’ in the way we accept Holy Scripture as inspired. Rather, Jude is concerned to pick up on the predictive element of what Enoch said. The concept of ‘prophecy’ used in this way is not unknown in Scripture. The apostle Paul referred to a Cretan as ‘one of their own prophets’ and then proceeded to quote him, adapting the message to make his own particular point (Titus 1:12). Jude adapts Enoch, drawing on the prophecy: i) that God would return with His angels to judge; and ii) that all ungodly sinners will be convicted. The repetition of the words ‘all’ and ‘ungodly’ is noticeable

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here.... Jude’s readers had a high regard for the Book of Enoch and so this citation adds evidence to the truth of Jude’s message.

a) *The Prophet (14a)*

¹⁴*It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying...*

MacArthur: ‘These men’ refers to the apostates whom Jude pictured in the previous section—the false visionaries, the flouters of spiritual authority, the revilers, the brute beasts who behave by carnal instinct, the hidden reefs, the waterless clouds, the dead and uprooted trees, the wild sea waves and the wandering stars headed for eternal blackness.

Moo: The combination of this extraordinary commendation from God (Gen. 5:24; cp. Heb. 11:5) and the almost complete silence of Scripture about him made Enoch a fascinating character to the Jews. We therefore find a number of legends about him in the intertestamental literature; at least two books of apocalyptic visions, written during this period are attributed to him. It is one of these books, *1 Enoch* (actually a compilation of several distinct literary units), that Jude quotes from. This book was popular in Jude’s day, and both he (cp. v. 6) and Peter (1 Pe. 3:19-20; 2 Pe. 2:4) allude to it.... Enoch was considered to be ‘the seventh from Adam’; the genealogical list goes Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch (Gen. 5:1-24).

MacArthur: Enoch stood ‘in the seventh generation from Adam’ (Gen. 5:4-24). He was a hero to the Jewish people because, like the prophet Elijah later (2 Kgs. 2:11-12), he went to heaven without dying.

Benton: Jude describes Enoch as ‘*the seventh from Adam.*’ He is the seventh from Adam in the genealogical lists, such as 1 Chronicles 1:1-3, if we include both Adam and Enoch in our counting.... It is meant to remind Jude’s readers that the false teachers attached some kind of mystical significance to such numbering. Jude is then implying, ‘If these false teachers attach such significance to this man Enoch, then they ought to listen to what their material says that he prophesied about ungodliness.’ Terrible judgment awaits all ungodliness. This is Jude’s reason for using this quotation.

Benton: Since the beginning of time, since the days of Enoch, just the seventh from Adam, God endorsed holiness as the way to live. Enoch’s holy life was so endorsed by God that he did not see death, but was taken immediately to heaven. Indeed, we do have a prediction of judgment on ungodliness by Enoch in Scripture, quite apart from *The Book of Enoch*. Enoch named his son Methuselah. The name Methuselah can be translated to mean something like ‘Man of the sending forth.’ The Puritan commentator Matthew Poole has it as, ‘He dies, and the sending forth.’ If we take the figures concerning life-spans literally in the early chapters of Genesis, we find that the year Methuselah died was the year God sent forth judgment on ungodliness in the Flood. In the name of his son, Enoch had predicted judgment on sinful ways.... When Methuselah died, God ‘sent forth’ the judgment of the flood. The very fact that Enoch gave his son this name implies that he carried a deep conviction about the approach of God’s wrath and makes it extremely likely that he would indeed have preached this to his generation. Though Jude quotes from *The Book of Enoch*, in a sense he does not have to. He can quite legitimately, in the light of Scripture, speak of Enoch prophesying judgment on the ungodly.

b) *The Judgment (14b-15)*

Helm: Enoch clues us into the idea that these false teachers were circulating in their own church sermons – that God is a God of love and not wrath; that God would never condemn anyone; that

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no person or behavior can really be called ungodly; that unconditional love must mean that God places no demands on His children; that entering into a relationship with Christ doesn't require any meaningful life change.

Moo: The subject of Enoch's prophecy is a common theme in Jewish apocalyptic writers: the coming of God to judge the wicked. The text Jude quotes is *1 Enoch* 1:9.

(1) Certain Judgment (14b)

"...Behold, the Lord comes..."

Benton: The Lord is pictured, in many Scriptures, as already on His way to judge. When we look at history through the spectacles of Scripture, we see that God has poured out His judgments again and again through history. Judgment is something He is continually involved in.... Judgment Day is certain. It is on God's calendar. He is on His way and will not change His mind.

Gardner: *First, it is Christ who will judge.* Jude adapts Enoch 1:9 to emphasize the role of Jesus Christ in this judgment. Instead of God being the one who will come, as in Enoch, for Jude it is 'the Lord,' that is, Jesus Christ. The judgment of these evil people is therefore to be made final with the return of the Lord Jesus.... Here, Jude uses the fact of Christ's return to remind the congregation that false teachers will eventually face the same judgment that 'everyone' will face. Their end, their condemnation, has been decreed in advance. It is a somber warning, but one the modern church would do well to heed as we are all too ready to tolerate all sorts of unbiblical teachers. To tolerate falsehood in the church is to acquiesce in it, so we too need to hear the warning inherent in knowing Christ will return.

MacArthur: The first certainty is that 'the Lord' will come (cp. Dan. 7:13; Lk. 12:40; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Th. 3:13). The aorist tense of the verb translated 'came' suggests Enoch's vision was so startling and convincing that he spoke as if the judgment had already occurred. The certainty of Christ's return was under attack from the false teachers, and Jude's reminder reinforced the apostle Peter's earlier teaching on this matter (cp. 2 Pe. 3:1-10).

(2) Angelic Judgment (14c)

...with ten thousands of his holy ones...

Benton: Secondly and interestingly, Jude tells us that when the Lord comes, He brings a judgment by angels. The Lord is the Judge, but the angels are used by the Lord as His instruments. The angels who assisted God to give His law at Sinai will also accompany God in judging the lawbreakers. How poignant it is that these false teachers who have been slandering celestial beings (v. 8) are going to be judged by celestial beings! The very ones they have arrogantly abused are the ones who are coming with God to judge the world and to judge them. Of course, this teaching of angelic judgment is not just found in Jude, it is taught throughout the New Testament (cp. Mt. 13:41; 2 Th. 1:7-8; Rev. 16:1-4, 8, 10, 12, 17).

Gardner: *Second, Christ will return 'with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones.'* That angels will accompany Christ's return was taught by Christ Himself and also picks up on a number of Old Testament prophecies (cp. Mt. 25:31; Dan. 7:10; Dt. 33:2).... There is a great double irony here in Jude: the very law the teachers so despised was put into effect through the angels whose authority they slandered (v. 8), and it is these very angels, so despised by the false teachers, who will be present at their judgment.

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MacArthur: Second, the Lord will not come alone. While He alone is the final judge, He will be accompanied by ‘many thousands of His holy ones.’ ... The emphasis on judgment here seems to favor viewing the ‘holy ones’ as angels, since angels appear in other judgment contexts in the New Testament (Mt. 24:31; 25:31; Mk. 8:38; 2 Th. 1:7).

(3) Universal Judgment (15a)

¹⁵...to execute judgment on all and to convict all...

Benton: Thirdly, he tells us that it is a judgment on all.... There is a tendency in some people to think that ‘Yes, perhaps God will judge, but not me. Somehow, I will be the exception.’ ... They are fooling themselves. Certainly, these false teachers whom Jude is opposing set themselves up as being an elite group. ‘Oh well, God might judge others,’ they may well have thought, ‘but we are above that.’ ‘No,’ says Jude, ‘the Lord is coming to judge everyone.’

Gardner: *Third, everyone will be judged.* Perhaps the false teachers were claiming there was to be no judgment or at the very least they and their followers would not have to worry about this. This is the teaching of many church leaders today. It has always been one of the more unpalatable parts of biblical teaching that God will return to judge. Human beings have never liked the thought that someone stands above and beyond them and that they will have to answer to that person one day, but that is how God has dealt with us. He made us to be responsible human beings and revealed Himself to us as a God who comes to us in love and with promise of blessing if we worship Him and obey His covenant. But He will also hold us responsible if we reject His covenant, rebel against Him and despise His Law, and His teaching.

MacArthur: Third, the Lord will come with a definite purpose, ‘to execute judgment upon’ many deserving recipients.... The verb translated ‘to convict’ (*elegchō*) means ‘to expose,’ ‘rebuke,’ or ‘prove guilty,’ which includes showing someone his error and culpability. When the Lord returns, the sins of the ungodly will be exposed and the verdict rendered accordingly.

(4) Spiritual Judgment (15b)

...the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Benton: It is, fourthly, a judgment for ungodliness. The root of all moral failure ultimately goes back to a breakdown in our spiritual relationship with God. Notice how in verse 15 the word ‘ungodly’ keeps popping up all the time.... He repeats it, four times in our translation, three times in the Greek.... To be ungodly is to live without God.... Judgment is falling on ungodly people whether they are respectable, whether they are outwardly religious, or whether they are wanton. The only safety is in Christ. But it is likely that Jude also focuses on this passage from *The Book of Enoch* and on this word ‘ungodliness’ because, in their inflated views of their spiritual status, rejecting Jesus Christ as the only Sovereign and Lord and substituting their own teaching for his, perhaps the false teachers saw themselves as in some sense being ‘gods.’ Yet this is, by definition, ungodly.

Gardner: *Fourth, conviction awaits the ungodly.* The word ‘ungodly’ occurs four times in verse 15. We have already seen in verse 4 how the word is used to summarize the evil of the wicked infiltrators. It will be repeated one last time in verse 18. Here the repetition is deliberate.... It is in verse 16 that the specifics of at least some of their ungodliness is spelled out. But much of it has already been noted in verse 4, 8, 12-13, etc. The word summarizes these people and their

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behavior. These are people who are disobeying the will of God and whose actions reveal a rejection of God’s authority.

MacArthur: Enoch’s fourfold use of ‘ungodly’ (*asebēs*, ‘godlessness,’ or ‘impiety’) to describe the apostates (cp. 2 Pe. 2:5-6; 3:7) identifies their basic sinful attitude; they refused to have a proper reverence for God. All such reprobates—like the immoral, irreverent, and blasphemous false teachers—are storing up divine wrath and punishments for themselves in the day of judgement.... Their punishment comes because of their ungodly actions and their ungodly speech; both their works and their words betray the wickedness of their hearts.

Helm: Did you notice that he used [‘ungodly’] four times? According to 1 Enoch, people are said to be ungodly, some behaviors are said to be ungodly, and, most striking one of all, such ungodliness done by the ungodly can be carried out in ungodly ways!

Moo: In Jude’s quotation of the prophecy, he goes out of his way to stress the ‘ungodly’ character of these people. Indeed, the use of the word three times in one clause in verse 15 creates an almost awkward reading: ‘to convict all the *ungodly* of all the *ungodly* acts that they have done in an *ungodly* way.’ We certainly do not have to guess Jude’s point!

Moo: Not only are these people judged for acting in an ungodly way; they have also sinned against God in speech. Jude may be alluding to another part of *1 Enoch* at this point, perhaps 27:2: ‘This accursed valley is for those accursed forever, here will gather together all (those) accursed ones, those who speak with their mouth unbecoming words against the Lord and utter hard words concerning his glory.’ The fact that a reference to sins of speech was probably not in the original text Jude quoted suggests that the idea was an important one for Jude. Presumably he added it because the false teachers were erring especially in this way (see vv. 8 and 10).

(5) Truthful Judgment (15a)

¹⁵ ...to execute judgment on all and to convict all...

Benton: Not only it is a certain judgment by angels, and a judgment on all for ungodliness, it is a judgment in truth. Notice, in verse 15, it is ‘to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly.’ He convicts them as well as judging them. When the Lord comes, all the truth will be exposed. Everything will be open; every deception will be unraveled and seen for what it is. And not only every deception, but every self-deception, will be unraveled. One of the greatest problems with us sinners is that we are self-deceived. We suppress the truth (Rom 1:18).... But God’s judgment enlightens us to the truth about ourselves. Every pretense and every hidden motive, including those which we have hidden from ourselves, will come to the surface so that when God condemns, all who are condemned, without exception, will hang their heads and know that God is right to condemn them. They will be convicted. They will acknowledge that God is right. So, it is a judgment in truth.

Helm: By using this well-known piece of literature Jude not only supports his conviction that the Lord will execute judgment, but he provides, by way of example, a positive model for God’s people to emulate. Be like Enoch, not like Cain or Balaam, or Korah. Like us, Enoch lived in an ungodly day; yet he had such character that people described him as walking with God. And remember, although Enoch lived in an ungodly hour, there came a time when he was delivered from it, and he no longer was found on earth. Where did this righteous man go? He went into the presence of the living God where he now dwells happily forevermore. Here is encouragement for us to remain faithful.

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2. The False Teachers (16; cp. 2 Pe. 2:18-19)

¹⁶*These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.*

2 Peter 2:18-19 – ¹⁸For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

Gardner: There is a contrast between godly men and women and those whom Jude confronts. This is made clear as Jude continues to talk of their ungodliness.... For those who are aware of the problem it is this lack of godliness which will help identify wolves who appear in sheep's clothing (cp. Mt. 7:20).... Deceit is not always easy to see through. Subtle changes of doctrine in, say, turning the grace of God into a license for immorality, may not always be obviously wrong if careful arguments are brought to bear for the changes. However, true leaders of Christ's church should be marked out by godliness of character and their godly actions.... It is easy to understand immorality as ungodly behavior. We see the more spectacular sins and readily recognize that sort of ungodly behavior, but Jude is here helping us learn to recognize evil people not through the obvious and big sins of life, but through what many might consider rather trivia.

Benton: There is a list of five identification marks on these false teachers.

a) Grumblers and Malcontents (16a)

¹⁶*These are grumblers, malcontents...*

Benton: The false teachers are those who are constantly backbiting against those who preach the truth, like Israel against Moses. How do they first get a hearing for their false teaching? They do so by being fault-finders. They search out, and focus on, the things that are lacking in a church. No assembly of God's people is perfect this side of glory. Our worship could be improved; our fellowship could go deeper; the leaders would be the first to acknowledge that they were better at their work.

Benton: But these men, when they have found fault, like to whisper about it to others and grumble. They speak, not to God in prayer, but to fellow Christians in murmuring. They stir up discontent.

MacArthur: 'Grumblers' occurs only here in the New Testament and is the same term the Septuagint uses to describe Israel's murmurings against God (Ex. 16:7-19; Num. 14:27-29; cp. Jn. 6:41; 1 Cor. 10:10). Like the ancient Israelites (Ps. 106:24-25; 107:11; Zech. 7:11), they grumbled against the truth and murmured against God's holy law. The apostates were also 'finding fault' or complaining about God's holy purpose and plan. The word translated 'finding fault' (*mempsimoiros*) means 'to blame,' and describes one who is perpetually discontent and dissatisfied.

Gardner: 'Grumblers and fault-finders' are so commonly found in churches that it hardly seems worth mentioning in such a serious discussion as Jude is having. Nevertheless, Jude has already mentioned in verse 5 how warnings should be taken from the wilderness generation of the Israelites. Their greatest sin, referred to many times through the Old Testament, was the sin of grumbling against the Lord and His servant Moses.... They grumbled at not having enough food. Indeed, there were ten major occasions when the Israelites were judged for their 'grumbling.'

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The Greek word used here is also the word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the LXX). Drawing yet again on the Old Testament for lessons for today's church, Jude reminds true people of faith and trust, that good and godly leaders do not grumble and find fault with God's way forward and His rule for life.

Moo: Jude continues this focus on sins of speech in his application of the prophecy to the false teachers in verse 16... They are, Jude says, 'grumblers and faultfinders.' Who are they grumbling against and finding fault with? Church leaders, some say. But the biblical background of the term 'grumbler' suggests that these false teachers are directing their complaints against God Himself. The word used here often occurs in Old Testament passages that depict Israelites 'grumbling' against God for bringing the people out of Egypt into the inhospitable desert (see, e.g., Ex. 16:7-12; 18:3; Num. 14:27-29; 17:5, 10). The false teachers, perhaps, are complaining about the restrictions that God's law has placed on their 'freedom' to behave as they want.

b) Hedonists (16b)

...following their own sinful desires...

Benton: In doing this, they have an agenda in view. They grumble to others with the implication that 'We would do things better. We have the answer.' And so, they gain a hearing for their heresy, and what they have in mind is to gain power for themselves in the church. They do not want to be servants; they want to be masters. They do not see the church as first and foremost Christ's church. They see it as something they can use for their own gratification.

Moo: Jude's second description of the false teachers in verse 16 picks up the reference to their 'ungodly acts' from the Enoch prophecy. 'They follow their own evil desires.' These evil desires encompass both the false teachers' sexual lust and greed (see vv. 8, 10-11).

MacArthur: In a self-centered manner, the false teachers were at odds with God because they were 'following after their own lusts' (cp. vv. 4, 7; 2 Pe. 2:10, 18; 3:3).

c) Boasters (16c)

...they are loud-mouthed boasters...

Benton: Their sermons are full of stories about themselves. They boast of the many conversions; they boast of the number of baptisms; they tell us all about the number of healings through their ministry.... Boasting is always a sign of a false teacher. When Paul confronted such men in his second letter to the Corinthians, the only things he would mention of himself were not his successes, but his weaknesses and sufferings.

Moo: Jude's third accusation against the false teachers here is that 'they boast about themselves.' But this rendering is open to question. A more literal translation of the Greek is, 'and their mouth speaks haughty [or bombastic] things.' This haughty speech could, of course, have taken the form of boasting. But the context suggests the idea of arrogant speech or even toward God.

MacArthur: The apostates were so dominated by self that they spoke 'arrogantly,' or as the NKJV renders the expression, they used 'great swelling words.' They pompously puffed themselves up with an elaborate, sophisticated religious vocabulary that had an external spiritual tone and attractiveness but was void of divine truth and substance.

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d) Flatterers (16d)

...showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Benton: Not only do they boast, they flatter. Now we must not mix up flattery with encouragement. They are not motivated by a desire to build others up; they are just finding pleasantries to manipulate people. They say things simply to twist people around their little finger and get them going in their direction.... They are doing this *‘for their own advantage.’*

MacArthur: The apostates were good at telling people what they wanted to hear (cp. 2 Tim. 4:3-4), cleverly manipulating others for their own gain. They certainly did not care about proclaiming God’s truth for the edification of their hearers.

Moo: Jude’s final criticism returns to the issue of the false teachers’ greed, which he has briefly alluded to in verse 11. He employs here a biblical idiom that denotes partiality or favoritism. The Greek literally means ‘wondering at the face.’ It reflects the Greek translation of a Hebrew idiom, ‘lifting, or having regard for, the face,’ that occurs in the Old Testament to refer to partiality (see Gen. 19:21; Lev. 19:15; Dt. 10:17; Pr. 24:23; Amos 5:12). James uses a similar expression (see James 2:1). Perhaps the false teachers were currying favor with the rich while ignoring the poor. Perhaps they, like many of their ancient compatriots, were teaching only the rich because only they could pay well.

For next time: Read Jude 17-25.