

Evil In Oz

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 28th, 2011 • Pastor Chris Lankford

***For certain persons have crept in unnoticed,
those who were long beforehand marked
out for this condemnation, ungodly
persons who turn the grace of our God into
licentiousness and deny our only
Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.***

~Jude 4 (NASB)

1) A Shocking Situation

- A) Jude dramatically shares a shocking revelation exposing the presence of imposters within the church (Jude 4). With foreboding, Jude assures the church that these imposters are heading for condemnation, because ultimately, they are denying “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

- B) The imposters were perverting “the faith” (Jude 3) by teaching that God’s gift of grace (unmerited mercy and love) allowed them to live according to their own passions and lusts without any penalty of judgment (Jude 4).

- C) The imposters are committing two critical errors. First, the false teaching (heresy) of Jude is an abuse of God’s Word, the Bible (dead theology). Second, because of their theological error, the behavior of the imposters was selfish and filled with lust (dead lifestyle), completely opposite of our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

2) How Does God Handle Those Who Mock Him?

- A) Jude transitions to reminders of how God has been typically working with imposters throughout redemptive history with encouraging words which preserve the honor of his readers (Jude 5a).

- B) In each of the following examples, Jude illustrates a group which enjoyed a privileged status of God's calling. From within each privileged group, heretics arise who are not spared judgment for their sin. Violating God's plan results in judgment, no matter who you are!

- C) The first privileged group is Israel, saved by God from slavery in Egypt (Jude 5b). Out of Israel, some "did not believe" and were destroyed (cf. Numbers 14). Note that "the Lord/Jesus*" both delivered and judged!

- D) The second privileged group are angels, a powerful race of heavenly beings who serve God (Jude 6). From the angels, some "abandoned their proper abode" and are being kept in "eternal bonds under darkness" for judgment (cf. Genesis 6:1-4). The judgment of darkness is only a prelude for the terrifying and fiery judgment of the "great day" of the Lord (cf. 2nd Peter 3:10).

* Early manuscripts reveal a textual variant which is split between [ὁ] κύριος, "the Lord," (NASB, NIV11, HCSB) and Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus" (ESV, NLT, NET) in Jude 5. It is easier to argue (from a textual perspective) that the more difficult reading of "Jesus" is the one from which all others deviated, especially since scribes were not known for fabricating difficult readings. I believe that "Jesus" is most likely. From Jude's perspective, it was Jesus, the I AM (John 8:58), who was present with the Israelites and operative in their deliverance from Egypt. The Apostle Paul shared a similar view inasmuch as he proclaimed that "Christ" was the Rock that accompanied the Israelites in their desert journeys and that "Christ" was the one the Israelites constantly "tested" during these times (see 1st Corinthians 10:4, 9). Thus, the reading "Jesus," though difficult, is not theologically implausible. As such, it should be accepted as the original reading. Jude draws the parallel between Jesus' agency in the past and present of God's redemptive history, and he makes his case that as judgment came on those formerly delivered, so it can come on those whom Jesus has delivered now. The Savior is also the Judge. (Collected from various sources, esp. *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, by Philip W. Comfort, pgs. 802-803; and *Jude & 2nd Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (BECNT), by Gene L. Green, pg. 65).

E) The third privileged group are the residents of Sodom & Gomorrah and the surrounding cities (Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela, cf. Genesis 14:8). From these thriving cities, virtually everyone (cf. Genesis 18:32-33) was engaged in “gross immorality” (sexual sin) and in some cases even “strange flesh” (angelic? homosexual? both? cf. Genesis 19:1-11). The judgment of Sodom & Gomorrah is an example of the eternal fiery punishment[¥] of Hell (Jude 7).

F) Jude makes the point that simply belonging to a privileged group does not mean you are authentically saved. True salvation is both receiving grace (a growing theology), and a progressively transformed life (a growing lifestyle).

G) Jude concludes that “these men” (the heretics), who are dreamers^Δ (having false spiritual visions), are in reality

[¥] There is a great deal of modern day debate regarding whether Hell is a real place of eternal separation and torment for those who did not follow Jesus Christ in their earthly lives, or if Hell is simply the annihilation of one’s soul, an eternal judgment of devastating proportions (e.g. *Love Wins* by Rob Bell which supports annihilationism, and the counterview in *Erasing Hell* by Francis Chan & Preston Sprinkle which supports an ongoing state of punishment). While the debate is genuinely difficult, and much of the New Testament’s language of fire, darkness, and gnashing teeth is almost certainly metaphorical, I still maintain that Hell is an eternal place of constant punishing death for all who do not respond to the love of Jesus Christ in their earthly lives. Hell is reserved for evil angels (e.g. Satan), false teachers (e.g. those mentioned in Jude), and all those who indulge in fleshly desires and distort the gospel for personal gain (2nd Peter 2:1, 4, 15-16). Hell was never intended for humanity, but will be the final destination for all those who reject the life of Jesus Christ (cf. Revelation 21:8). (Collected from various sources, esp. *Erasing Hell*, by Francis Chan & Preston Sprinkle, pgs. 100-108).

^Δ The reference to “dreamers” indicates that these individuals were claiming divine revelation as the basis of their practices, either because their visions gave them a superior status in general or because the content of their visions was a rival revelation. Jude refers to them as false prophets in that they claim a prophetic basis for their practices. While dreams were and are, according to the NT, a legitimate form of divine revelation, all prophetic revelation needs testing on the basis of the whole teaching of Scripture so that the true may be separated from the false. This prevents the two equally dangerous extremes: (1) accepting all dreams and prophetic words uncritically, and (2) rejecting all dreams and prophetic words out of fear of deception. Jude accuses these people of acting on the basis of their personal revelation and engaging in three sinful activities: (1) polluting their own bodies, (2) rejecting authority, and (3) slandering celestial beings. Two of these have already appeared in the examples previously cited. Both Israel in the wilderness and the fallen angels had rejected authority; both the fallen angels and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah had polluted their own bodies. It is the third charge that leads the discussion forward to the following verse. (Collected from various sources, esp. *The Letters of 2nd Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC), by Peter H. Davids, pg. 55).

“defiling the flesh” and “rejecting authority” (Jude 8) which we can plainly see in the Egyptian, Angelic, and Sodom & Gomorrah examples of judgment (Jude 5-7).

3) Dangerous Practices From Foolish Men

- A) However, the assertion that “these men” are “revilers of angelic majesties” (lit., “blaspheming glorious ones”) leads us forward to the next verse.

- B) Jude explains what he means by “reviling angelic majesties” in the next verse, with a story about Michael the archangel (arch = first, head; angel = messenger, agent) and the devil (Satan, the accuser) from a pseudepigraphal† source (The Testament of Moses), originating from outside the Scriptures.

- C) Notably, the point of the confrontation between Michael and Satan is the archangel’s unwillingness to rebuke Satan directly (Jude 9, cf. Zechariah 3:2), deferring to Jesus rather than handling the rebuking himself. Thus, the ‘reviling of angelic majesties’ seems to be a heretical teaching which encouraged Christians to judge/rebuke/engage spiritual powers and forces personally, rather than deferring to the covering and authority of Jesus Christ (Jude 10).

† The Pseudepigrapha (Pseudo = false; epi = on, upon; grapha = writing – Pseudepigrapha = “falsely attested writings”) is a modern collection of ancient writings that are tremendously helpful for an understanding of early Judaism (ca. 250 B.C. to 200 A.D.) and Christian origins. Many of these documents were compiled or composed by Jews, while others were written by Jews and eventually expanded or rewritten by Christians. A few seem to have been composed by Christians who depended with varying degrees on pre-70 Jewish documents or oral traditions. Almost always the Pseudepigrapha are influenced by the Old Testament (OT): many supply revelations reputed to have been received by persons prominent in the OT; others are rewritten versions or expansions of biblical narratives; some are psalms that are occasionally modeled on the Davidic Psalter; and a few are compositions shaped by Jewish Wisdom Literature. Although these writings were composed long after their biblical “sources,” many of them were full of prophecies attributed to ancient biblical heroes such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Ezra, and others. They were often intentionally but incorrectly (pseudepigraphically) attributed to one of these biblical heroes. Many pseudepigraphal writings were “Apocalyptic” (see next footnote) in their perspective, particularly those quoted or referred to in the New Testament book of Jude (e.g., 1st Enoch & The Testament of Moses). (Collected from various sources, esp. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Volume 5, O-Sh), “OT Pseudepigrapha,” by James H. Charlesworth, pgs. 537-540).

D) Jude notes that this kind of behavior is both stupid (like an “unreasoning animal”) and dangerous (leading to “destruction”). Pretending to be spiritually in-tune when you are not can lead to spiritual death (Jude 10)!

4) Remember God’s Judgment & Live Differently!

A) Jude cries out “woe to them...,” (Jude 11) they (the heretics) have followed others who appeared to be spiritually in-tune, but were not. Again we receive a triad (see center example of rhetorical argument approach) of Old Testament characters which illustrate this truth.

B) The murderer Cain (Genesis 4), the greedy Balaam (Deuteronomy 23:4; Numbers 31:16), and rebellious Korah (Numbers 16) all illustrate God’s judgment against imposters who appeared spiritual, but were dangerously “doubly dead” and destined for Hell (Jude 12-13).

C) The “love feasts” (Greek, “agape”) were the gatherings of the church (potlucks?), and seemed to be a specific location where the imposters would boldly prey upon the vulnerability of a trusting church family (Jude 12).

D) In another pseudepigraphal[†] reference, Jude makes a direct quote from an “apocalyptic”[‡] text popular in early Christianity (1st Enoch). Apocalypticism is evident in Jude’s writing, as he looks forward to the coming of the Lord!

[‡] There are different representative aspects to the word “Apocalyptic” (ἀποκαλύπτω, to bring to light, disclose, reveal). First, “apocalypticism” represents a worldview which seeks to look beyond the mundane political and social realities of the day, and instead focus on and emphasize a new world which is coming. Apocalypticism is profoundly realistic about human limitations and shortcomings, while engaging a human longing for a radically different future which will not come through human achievement, but through the advent of God’s Sovereign rulership on earth. Secondly, “apocalyptic literature” is a “genre” (like poetry, prose, or narrative) which is marked by sections of writing within a narrative framework (e.g. within a book of the Bible) in which revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being (e.g. an angel) to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. (Summarized from *The Apocalyptic Literature*, *Interpreting Biblical Texts (IBT)*, by Stephen L. Cook, pgs. 22-26).

- E) Clearly, Jude views the present state of the heretics as temporary, destined for divine judgment to be carried out against the “ungodly” (Jude 14-15). Note how many times the “ungodly” (one who violated a proper relation to God, irreverent, impious) are mentioned in the scathing judgment of Jude 15.
- F) These imposters within the church are exposed by Jude as “grumblers,” blaming others for their faults. A mark of an imposter within the church is a person who is full of blame and criticism, but does not own or positively change the culture and environment of the church themselves.
- G) The imposters within the church are exposed by Jude as following their own urges as though they were needs. A mark of an imposter within the church is a person who does not take personal responsibility for sinful behavior, but justifies their sin with excuses for indulging lusts.
- H) The imposters within the church are exposed by Jude as complimenting others for the benefit of their ‘political position.’ A mark of an imposter within the church is a person who arrogantly controls others with flattery and kind words, in order to have political clout (Jude 16).
- I) But God’s beloved followers are to remember the words of Jesus Christ, which were delivered through the apostles to the church (Jude 17).
- J) Jude seems to be able to sense that identifying every single heresy within the church is an almost impossible task. Rather than mastering the teachings of the imposters, Jude calls on God’s people to master the teaching of Jesus Christ (Scripture), in order to be able to immediately identify the evil of imposters within the church family (Jude 17-18).

Rhetorical Triads In Jude's Anti-Heretical Epistle

Rather than attack God's enemies with a full-frontal assault, Jude "layers" his observations with two sets of "triads," a common rhetorical method designed to eloquently and convincingly state your position without "giving away" your primary ideas until the very end of your argument. Structurally, it looks something like this...

Rhetorical Triad #1

Introduction A

I'm reminding you of things you already know...
(Jude 5a)

<u>Argument #A1</u>	<u>Argument #A2</u>	<u>Argument #A3</u>
Remember the deliverance out of Egypt?	Remember the Genesis Angels?	Remember Sodom and Gomorrah?

(Jude 5b)

(Jude 6)

(Jude 7)

Subsequently destroyed!

Eternal bonds, awaiting eternal judgment!

Judgment of eternal fire (Hell)!



Summary Statement A

These men are dreamers who defile the flesh, reject authority and revile God's divine rulership (Jude 8).



Apocalyptic Story Illustrating Jesus' Authority #A
Michael the archangel argues with Satan over Moses' body. The Lord will judge (Jude 9)!

Rhetorical Triad #2

Introduction B

Woe to them!
(Jude 11a)

<u>Argument #B1</u>	<u>Argument #B2</u>	<u>Argument #B3</u>
They have gone the way of Cain!	They have rushed into the error of Balaam!	They have perished in Korah's rebellion!

(Jude 11b)

(Jude 11c)

(Jude 11d)

(Judged by God)

(Judged by God)

(Judged by God)



Summary Statement B

These men are hidden reefs at love feasts, selfish men, aimless clouds without water, dead trees with no fruit, impressive waves which result in sin, shooting stars headed for darkness (Jude 12-13).



Apocalyptic Story Illustrating Jesus' Authority #B
The "Day of the Lord" is coming (apocalyptic literature). The Lord will judge (Jude 14-15)!