

BIBLICAL TRUTH SIMPLY EXPLAINED

E^XPLAINING



How to study a book of the Bible: Jude

**DAVID
PAWSON**

BIBLE TEACHER

www.davidpawson.org

This booklet is based on a talk. Originating as it does from the spoken word, its style will be found by many readers to be somewhat different from my usual written style. It is hoped that this will not detract from the substance of the biblical teaching found here.

As always, I ask the reader to compare everything I say or write with what is written in the Bible and, if at any point a conflict is found, always to rely upon the clear teaching of scripture.

David Pawson

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book of the Bible: Jude

DAVID PAWSON

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EXPLAINING

How to study a book of the Bible: Jude

Jude is a neglected letter, but an important one

The first thing to do with this letter from Jude, as with every other letter, is to read it. It is one of the shortest letters in the New Testament and one of the most important; it is also one of the most neglected.

I am going to do an unusual thing now. I am not going to give you the fruits of my study; they are in the book I have written on Jude. Rather, I'm going to take you back into my study – when I first read this little letter and first preached on it – and I'm going to share with you my thoughts as I prepared this letter for my congregation. I had not read it before. Like most Christians, I neglected it. In fact, there is hardly a verse in this little letter that anybody quotes – have you noticed that? It is all new, it is all strange to us, and some bits of it are very strange.

When I first read through a book, I don't read it only once; I read it maybe ten times and I have beside me always some blank paper and a pen, and I write down anything that occurs to me as I read it through and through and through. Here are some of the notes I made at that time. I noticed that this writer has a habit of writing in threes, fours, fives and sixes. He keeps repeating himself in different ways. For example, in one verse he appeals to Cain, to Balaam and to

Korah, and three times he is appealing to somebody in the Old Testament to draw a lesson out. Then, sometimes, he mixes his metaphors. There is one verse where there are four different metaphors. The metaphors are about clouds, trees, waves of the sea and stars. He obviously studied nature and, like his Lord before him, he could draw lessons from nature. But he would bring four different lessons from nature in the same verse. Then he spoke in fives and sixes. Here is a man who doesn't object to mixing his metaphors or repeating himself to make a point.

Jude's quotes don't all come from the Bible

The next thing I wrote down is that some of the things he quotes are not to be found in the Bible. Where in the Bible do you read about an archangel arguing with the devil about Moses' body? It's not in my Bible, so where did he get that from? And then he talks about angels being locked in dark dungeons for a very long time. Where did he get that? Then he mentions Enoch.

Now the only thing I knew about Enoch was that he went for such a long walk with God one day that God said: It's too far for you to get back home, you'd better come and live with me: 'And he walked with God and he was not.' A lovely way to go, but not very nice for the relatives. But that is all I knew about Enoch. Did you know any more? Did you know that he was the first ever prophet – to warn people about God's judgment? And he had a son called Methuselah – a strange name which means 'when he dies it will happen'. Can you imagine Methuselah going to school on the first day and the teacher asking his name – 'when I die it will happen'. That is a strange name to give a boy and yet Enoch meant him to have that name because Enoch believed firmly that on the day his son died, the judgment of God would come – and that is exactly what happened. It is why Methuselah

lived longer than everybody else – 969 years he lived. That speaks to you of the amazing patience of God. God waited nearly a thousand years before judging that generation and sure enough, on the day that Methuselah, Enoch's son, died, it began to rain and it didn't stop raining until there was a gigantic flood that wiped out a whole generation. Enoch's great-grandson was a man called Noah, and Noah was building an ark for years in the middle of the country, miles from any sea. It was all due to Enoch's prophecy, and yet Enoch is not recorded in your Bible as being a prophet and nothing of what he said is in your Bible. Yet here it is in Jude. Where did he get it from? So I made a note on my paper that I must find out the source of all his information. Of course some came from the Old Testament, but not all of it.

Then I noticed that there were hardly any 'quotable quotes' in this little letter of Jude. Have you ever heard any of it quoted in the pulpit? Or by Christians? The only two quotes I had heard were something from the beginning about defending the faith once delivered to the saints, and something from the end – 'now unto him who is able to keep you from falling' – which in years gone by was often used as a benediction at the end of a church service. Nothing in between those two did I ever hear quoted. It is a strange little letter.

Seeking answers to questions raised by Jude

So then, having written so many things that I needed to find out, I started asking some very basic questions. Number one: who was this guy Jude? Now he must have been one of two things. The letters and books of the New Testament have come to us only because their writers were prominent in the early church, either prominent because they were one of the apostles or prominent because they were a direct relative of Jesus – and that is the case here. He was Jesus' half-brother

for, after Jesus was born, Mary had at least six other children. We know the names of the four boys she had and we know that they had ‘sisters’ – so at least two – so Mary had at least six more children after she had Jesus, and one of them was called James and he wrote a letter in the New Testament not far away from this one, just a few pages earlier.

And this is James’ brother and his proper name was Judas. So why doesn’t it say ‘the letter of Judas’? Well, I think you can guess. He was not very fond of that name as it was the name of the apostle who betrayed Jesus for money. So he shortened his name, as we shorten names. We talk about Pete for Peter and Jim for James, so he was called Jude for Judas and therefore didn’t share the name that had become such a bad name in the public reputation. Why didn’t he then say that he was a brother of Jesus or, at least, a half-brother of Jesus? Well, he must have remembered with shame how Jesus’ brothers didn’t believe in him and teased him and mocked him until after the resurrection, and then things happened even to Jesus’ brothers. Actually, of the twelve apostles, at least five were Jesus’ own relatives. Did you ever realise that?

Jesus had an amazing impact, first on his own family before anyone else, and that is why so many of them were at the wedding in Cana of Galilee where Jesus did the first miracle. They were there because they were relatives, part of the larger family of Jesus. So five of the apostles were his relatives, his cousins, but none of his brothers were – not until he rose from the dead and then with shame they confessed that they had been entirely wrong. But then they had lived with him for so many years. You can understand why they didn’t believe that he was anything more than an older brother. But then they realised that they had been walking with the Son of God, and that so humbled them that none of them ever said they were Jesus’ brothers afterwards. James didn’t say it; Jude didn’t say it. They simply said they

were slaves of Jesus Christ – he bought us. Now something must have happened to those brothers for them to take such a humble attitude. So that is who wrote the letter.

My next question was: who read it? And the answer is that we have no idea as there is no name of a place, there are no names of people. It is almost as if Jude was bending over backwards to keep his readers anonymous and not to make them ashamed in public because something bad was happening among them.

So we come to the third and most important question of all: why did he write this letter? There must have been a big reason and indeed he tells us. He said he was *eager* to write to them about the salvation they shared together, but he said he wrote to them reluctantly because he had to change his letter. Something was happening among them that made him write a different kind of letter. Correspondence corresponds! What do I mean by that? I mean that when you read a letter, it is like one side of a conversation and you have to guess what the other side is.

These wretched mobile phones! Have you sat in a train or bus and had somebody sitting next to you speaking loudly on the mobile phone and you can't hear what the other person is saying? You have to guess what it corresponds to. So let's say I am on my phone on a bus and I say, 'Hello, has it arrived? It has – congratulations. How much does it weigh? And what colour is it? And is it petrol or diesel?' Now, you see, your brain has been trying to figure out what was happening at the other end and for a moment you got it all wrong. You thought it was a baby being referred to until I asked what colour it was, then your mind went crazy. But that is what you are doing when you read a letter. Something was happening at the other end and you have to put that together and be a bit of a detective and find out what was happening at the other end that made Jude want to write a

letter to them reluctantly. The answer is a bit disturbing as he said that there were men who have secretly wormed their way into their fellowship who were going to destroy it. They had wormed their way in probably without their realising it, possibly coming in one by one, and they had come in with false teaching – and nothing destroys a church more quickly than people coming in with wrong teaching. Notice that they had not started the church, they had come in and taken it over. That is one of the marks of false teachers, that instead of doing their own work they try to take over other people's. Beware when that happens.

The first false teaching: cheap grace

These men had come in and they had two fundamental bad teachings. The first was about the grace of God. Can there be bad teaching about that? Yes, there can. And the second was about Jesus Christ himself. What were they teaching that was wrong? Well, the first thing they were teaching is what we call 'cheap grace', or even 'free grace' it has been called: the idea that God is so gracious in his attitude to us that it doesn't really matter what we are like, what we do; he loves us and will forgive us all our sin. It's cheap grace!

I have just come back from Singapore and I deliberately felt I should go there to challenge a false teaching about grace that is spreading through the world via the internet. It is also coming from Canada, but the main source of this idea of grace was in Singapore and I prayed that God would open the door for me to go and counter that teaching which I have found everywhere (in South Africa, for example) and it was destroying churches. It was teaching that grace is always there and is unconditional forgiveness and that means that there is no need for repentance; that you can be forgiven your sins without repenting of them. This teaching also claims that when you come to Christ all your *future* sins

are forgiven as well as your past. So Christians never need to confess sin – in spite of that verse in 1 John that says that if we sin and if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to go on forgiving us our sin. But that is said to be not for Christians by these teachers.

So here is a teaching that, as soon as you are saved, it doesn't matter what you do thereafter, grace will cover your sin – it is already forgiven. There is nothing more to forgive and therefore you are 'once saved, always saved' and are absolutely sure that you are going to heaven. So I went to Singapore where I was given the opportunity to speak about grace as *undeserved favour of God but **not** as unconditional forgiveness*. Now that was one thing that was being taught here in Jude's situation two thousand years ago: grace would cover all the sins, past, present and future, so that nothing could separate you from God's love by way of your sinning. That is one thing.

The second false teaching: Jesus not unique

The second thing they were teaching was that Jesus Christ is not the *only* Saviour and Lord, therefore they were questioning the uniqueness of Christ. And again, that was one other subject that I concentrated on in Singapore. I concentrated on grace and the uniqueness of Christ. But we now live in a country where comparative religion is being taught in schools and little children are being taught that there is Jesus and his religion, and Mohammed and his religion, and Confucius and his, and Buddha and his, and so, in this subject of comparative religion, which compares Jesus with other religious founders, people get the idea that all religions are much the same and that it is a matter of personal preference as to the choice. That was being taught in Jude's situation – that Jesus was not the only Saviour and Lord; he was not unique; he was one of others, one of many.

False teaching is cancer in the Body of Christ

Now these two things were deadly errors. They were cancer in the Body of Christ and cancer has a way of spreading and affecting different organs and shutting them down so that they can no longer behave as God meant them to. False teaching of this kind is a cancer in the Body of Christ and sooner or later will destroy it. The truth is nobody was ever able to destroy the church from the outside. When the church is opposed from the outside by persecution, it grows in both quality and quantity. I have travelled around the world – I go to countries where the church is growing and getting stronger and larger and yet they are under great pressure. I come back to little old England where there is very, very little pressure on the church and we are dying. If you want to find a healthy church go to a country where the church is under pressure from outside. It almost seems as if the church grows on the blood of the saints – ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.’ The more opposition there is to the church from the outside, the more quality Christians you get inside, and therefore the more the quantity will follow. But where there is indifference from outside, the church becomes complacent, comfortable.

The devil knows that, and therefore if he wants to destroy a church he has to get people into the church and destroy it from the inside by questioning the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Many, many churches, even in this country, have died because of false teaching that came in and questioned the faith once delivered to the saints which we can find in the Bible. It was written down for us. This is the whole point of studying the Bible – that is, the faith once delivered to the saints, and there is no other. Indeed, Paul says that if anybody comes in to your church and preaches another gospel, curse him – ‘let him be anathema’, which means to curse him. That is what Paul used to say when this happened.

False teachers are corrupted and are condemned

Let us go back to the Epistle of Jude. Jude says of these men who have crept in with these two major false teachings: their doom was written about long ago. So he begins the letter by pointing to two things: number one, the corruption they are bringing in to the church; and two, the condemnation that was written against them long ago. He appeals to those writings to prove his point that their doom is sealed. Please look at the chart below headed 'Jude'. There are two things that come out in the major section of the little letter (vv. 4–19): firstly their corruption; secondly, their condemnation that was written long ago.

JUDE

INTRODUCTION (1-4a)

- Usual – Sender, address, Greeting
- Unusual – Didn't write about shared salvation
Did write about fighting faith
- Reason – Infiltration (secretly slipped in) = A1
Condemnation (written long ago) = A2

A. LEARNING FROM THE PAST (4-19)

1. THEIR CORRUPTION

- a. Creed (3-4)
- b. Conduct (8)
- c. Cogitation (10)
- d. Character (12-13)
- e. Conversation (16)
- f. Compulsion (19)

2. THEIR CONDEMNATION

- a. Retribution (5-7)
- b. Respect (9)
- c. Rebellion (11)
- d. Revelation (14-15)
- e. Ridicule (17-18)

B. LIVING IN THE PRESENT (20-23)

1. YOURSELVES (20-21)

- a. Edification
- b. Petition
- c. Submission
- d. Expectation

2. OTHERS (23)

- a. Wavering
- b. Wayward
- c. Wicked

C. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE (24-25)

1. THE ABLE GOD (24)

- a. To prevent you falling
- b. To present you faultless

2. THE ONLY GOD (25)

- a. His sovereignty
- b. His eternity



A. LEARNING FROM THE PAST (3-19)

1. THEIR CORRUPTION

- a. CREED (3-4)
- i. Grace – Licence for immorality
 - ii. Christ – lordship denied

- b. CONDUCT (8)
- i. Pollute own bodies
 - ii. Reject authority
 - iii. Slander Angels

- c. COGITATION (10)
- i. Don't understand, so Abuse
 - ii. Do understand, like animals

- d. CHARACTER (12-13)
- i. Fleeting clouds – drought
 - ii. Fruitless trees – death
 - iii. Foaming waves – debris.
 - iv. Falling stars – darkness

- e. CONVERSATION (16)
- i. Grumblers, faultfinders
 - ii. Follow own desires
 - iii. Boast about themselves
 - iv. Flatter for advantage

- f. COMPULSION (19)
- i. Divisive
 - ii. Follow natural instincts
 - iii. Do not have the Spirit

2. THEIR CONDEMNATION

- a. RETRIBUTION (5-7)
- i. Exodus generation
 - ii. Fallen angels
 - iii. Sodom and Gomorrah
(Scripture)

- b. RESPECT (9)
- i. Archangel Michael
 - ii. Devil
(tradition)

- c. REBELLION (11)
- i. Cain
 - ii. Balaam
 - iii. Korah
(Scripture)

- d. REVELATION (14-15)
- i. Enoch's prophecy
 - ii. Coming Judgement
(tradition)

- e. RIDICULE (17-18)
- i. Apostle's warning
 - ii. Scoffers
(Scripture)

The structure of the letter – past, present and future

Let us look at the whole letter first. When I am studying a book of the Bible, I want to see the structure, the shape of it, and I can't get any further until I see the structure and

where the writer is heading. As I read this little letter through again and again, I learned that it is in three sections. The first section is all about the past, the second section is all about the present, and the third section is all about the future – a very simple shape or structure to the letter. But then these are three different parts of our existence. We all have a past, we all have a present and we all have a future, but we have a different attitude to those three. We have to, because they are different. None of us can change the past once it has happened. Even God himself cannot change the past once it has happened. He is Almighty, he can do anything, but he cannot change the past. Hallelujah for that! Nobody can put Jesus back in the tomb. It has happened, finished, past. The one thing you can't do with the past is change it, but what you can do is learn from it and that is the whole point of studying history – finding out what has already happened.

That is why I have written a book about church history because I find that most Christians have no idea where the church has been for two thousand years – and therefore we can't learn from the mistakes or the successes. We just don't know about it. I hope you are willing to study church history. If you find that a little too difficult and scholarly, then may I recommend you get my book which is called *Where has the Body been for Two Thousand Years?* It is a simple account of what has happened to the church since Jesus' earthly ministry. We need to know that because most of the mistakes we make today have been made already by the church in the past, and we can learn from them, but we can also learn from their success.

When I gave those talks on church history originally in the church at Guildford, we finished every evening by singing hymns from that era, and I found Christian hymns from every hundred years for the last two thousand years, most of which we knew, without realising where they had

come from. It was a real exercise in Christian devotion to sing the songs about Jesus that had been written for two thousand years. It is so refreshing to do that instead of just learning the choruses of the last six months. To get the riches of devotion of Christians through centuries by singing with them is a real treat.

Well now, we learn from the past but we have to live in the present, and especially a present that has been influenced by the past. We have to live with it – we have to live with the different denominations, most of which started a long time ago. The Salvation Army came out of Methodism. General Booth was a Methodist minister. And whatever church you belong to – unless it's very recent in origin – it is inheriting traditions from the past. But you have to live with those in the present, and there wouldn't be such deep divisions within the church of Christ if we all knew where the divisions had come from and where we had inherited our traditions from.

So: learning from the past and living in the present. As for the future, we can't do anything about that except look to it. We look to the future and use our dedicated imagination to explore the future, but we are not able to change it yet until we are in it. So we have a different attitude to the past, the present and the future, and that all comes out in this little letter. The first major part of the letter is what we can learn from the past. Then he has to tackle the problem that the situation is still with them, it is still happening and they have to live with it, and how are they going to cope; what should they be doing about it? Then, finally, to lift their spirits he says: look with me to the future – lift your eyes above all this, fix your eyes on God and what he is able to do, and get your eyes off these false teachers. If your focus is too much on human beings, then you will get into trouble. Lift your eyes. When the outlook is bad, try the uplook! That means lifting your eyes to the God who was and who is and who

is to come. He is the God of the past, the present and the future, and that comes out in the third section of the letter.

Learning from the Past (4–19)

Their Corruption

So now let us turn to the first part of the letter – learning from the past. I have separated his teaching about the corruption of these men from the condemnation of these men – though, as we shall see, he has cleverly interwoven the two. But let us look at them separately. There are six things in the church that will be corrupted by the presence of false teachers. First of all, their *creed* will be corrupted; what they believe is going to change. Secondly, their *conduct* will be corrupted because what we believe affects how we behave, and if we believe the wrong thing it won't be long before we are behaving the wrong way. Thirdly – forgive my alliteration here – their *cogitations* will be corrupted; that is a word that means the way we think, the way we recognise reality, and so these men will corrupt the way we think. Fourthly, our *character* will be corrupted. Our character is the sum total of the way we have lived – ‘sow a deed and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character’ – and if things go wrong at the beginning then our characters will be corrupted. This is how the cancer spreads in the Body of Christ. It will then spread on to our *conversation*, the way we speak to each other will be affected, and finally, our *compulsion*, our motivation, will be affected – what compels us to do what we do will be changed.

Now the cancer will spread right through these six things. They are all mentioned in the letter of Jude. One after another becomes contaminated by this false teaching, and it just

goes on until it spreads and it is death to the body. He says their condemnation was written long ago, so he is going to appeal to the writings he knows from long ago. Now there are two such writings that he can appeal to. On the one hand, there is the scripture, the Old Testament – what we know as the Word of God. The other is Jewish tradition, which is not necessarily all wrong or bad, and clearly some of it Jude considers is good and true. So, in this way, the New Testament is giving attention to Jewish traditions.

Their condemnations

We notice that in the five condemnations of writing from long ago, three are from the scripture and two are from tradition. I have analysed the structure of this first section from vv. 3–19 to show you that Jude is alternating. He alternates between their corruption and their condemnation, and that is the structure. It is an amazing structure, once you realise it, once you have seen it, and then you notice that Jude alternates on the side of their condemnation: he quotes first from scripture, then from tradition, then from scripture again, then from tradition again, and finally from scripture again. This whole little letter is very carefully put together. It is astonishingly complicated in structure and yet clear. He is saying they corrupt your creed and this is what will happen to them according to scripture; they will corrupt your conduct and this is where this will lead according to tradition, and he goes through the six corruptions, and each time he says ‘and this is what happens’ as the result of that corruption, to the people who cause it. Therefore, he is referring constantly to the judgment of God.

Let us therefore go through this first section in a little more detail. The first thing to be corrupted is their *creed* – what they believe; and I told you that a false belief of these teachers was that grace is a licence for immorality. Paul had

found the same thing – ‘shall we sin that grace may abound?’ It is the same problem. If you over-emphasise grace, you open the door for sin. If you get grace wrong, then sin will come in, and then the Lordship of Christ is denied.

The example of the Exodus generation

Now he appeals to scripture and God’s judgment in three ways. First of all, the Exodus generation: two and a half million people came out of Egypt – two got into Canaan. What happened to the rest? They died in the wilderness. Why? They could have arrived in Canaan in less than a fortnight, having left Egypt. It was just fourteen days’ journey to Canaan, and they could have got in, but when they arrived at the border they sent spies in – twelve of them, one for each of their tribes – and they came back, and ten of them said it was hopeless, they could never get in. For one thing there were huge walls around their cities which made them impregnable. They said they would never be able to break down those walls, and for another thing the people of the land were all taller than they were. The Jews were little people and the people of Canaan were giants. So ten of the twelve spies said they would never get in, and the word of the Lord came and said: the Lord will carry you in on his shoulders, and on his shoulders you will look over the walls, and by his power – by shouting ‘Hallelujah’ – the walls can collapse, and forty years later they found that is what happened with Jericho. The walls were no barrier to God, and on God’s shoulders they were giants themselves. They looked down on the Canaanites.

I remember riding on my Dad’s shoulders as a little boy and I looked down on everybody. I was up there on his shoulders and I was the tallest of them all. That is what they should have felt like had they gone on believing in the God who brought them out of Egypt and drowned the Egyptian

army in the Red Sea. Had they not stopped believing, they would have been in the Promised Land in less than two weeks, and yet they wandered around in the desert for forty years. God kept them out of the Promised Land, and when they finally went in there were only two who went in of those who had originally left Egypt, and they were the two spies who had said that God would see them through – God would get them in (one was Joshua) – and that is what happened to them. In other words, those who stopped believing had to spend forty years of wasted time in the wilderness and died before they saw the Promised Land. What a lesson, written long ago, for these people who had come in with new teaching that was not the belief they started with.

The example of the fallen angels

The next was the fallen angels who came out of their estate. This is a reference to Genesis 6. Now God had made life in three layers – angels, human beings, animals – and the one thing God had forbidden was sexual intercourse between any of those three levels, whether between angels and human beings or between human beings and animals. There is clear biblical prohibition of such sex, and yet in Genesis 6 the angels came down and saw human women, had sex with them and produced a kind of funny hybrid species which the Bible calls Nephilim which is usually translated ‘giants’, but we don’t know. It was a species that God never intended – half men, half angels. In the same way, if you read Leviticus, you will see that when men have sex with animals that also is totally contrary to God’s will for them. God has clearly forbidden that. But the angels broke that, and men broke it and men are breaking it today too. So, those angels – having left their estate – we know there were two hundred of them and it was in the area round Mount Hermon that they had this illicit sex and it was then that occultism was introduced

to the human race. The angels introduced it. They had left their position and they had brought the worst side of the supernatural with them, and it was from then on that the human race started dabbling in the occult and people are still doing that today.

Those two hundred angels are imprisoned. Where did I get all this information? Not from the Bible, but from the book of Enoch actually, which is the source for something that comes up later.

The example of Sodom and Gomorrah

The third example Jude gives of their condemnation is Sodom and Gomorrah, and they weren't the only two cities; there were four cities in the Jordan Valley south of the Dead Sea and they were given over to sexual immorality, as these interfering teachers were, and look what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. They were burned up with some inflammable material in the very earth underneath them, and you know that we have records in Jewish history that the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah was still burning in Jesus' day, two thousand years later, so that anybody living in Jerusalem could just take a fifteen minute walk out into the Judean wilderness and they could look south and see the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of our Lord. This mentions the fire that goes on forever.

The example of Michael the Archangel

Next, your *conduct* will be corrupted because theirs is. They pollute their own bodies, they reject any authority outside themselves, and they slander the angels. And he counters that with an appeal to – not scripture, but Jewish tradition where the archangel Michael disputed with the devil over who should bury Moses. Moses, we know, died outside the Promised Land. He died within sight of it on Mount Nebo but

there is no burial mentioned and there has never been a grave discovered, so what happened to Moses' body? The answer is that an angel was sent to bury Moses, and his name was Michael, the chief angel. He came to bury Moses and found, standing over Moses' body, Satan himself. Satan said the body was his because Moses was his, and instead of rebuking him, instead of arguing with him, the chief angel of all said 'the Lord rebuke you.' He wasn't going to rebuke him; he had such respect for angels and for Moses that he didn't argue with the devil. He said: the Lord deal with you. That is the right attitude, which these false teachers didn't have.

Then comes the way they thought, their *cogitation*, and it says 'these men' – notice that he says 'these' and 'those' all the way through. '*These* are the men who are infiltrating you, *those* are the people in the past who did the same thing, and what happened to them?' Now he says 'these', whatever they don't understand, they abuse. If they can't get their mind round it, they have to mock it, and that is a very common failing in human beings. If there is something we don't understand, we abuse it, we say things against it that are silly – because we don't understand – and not only did they abuse what they didn't understand, they did understand some things but purely, like unreasoning animals going by instinct, what they did understand they understood in the wrong way – by 'animal instinct'. So their condemnation was written in the lives of three Old Testament people – Cain, Balaam and Korah. If you know your Old Testament, you know what they all did. They also rebelled against things they did not understand.

The examples of Cain, Balaam and Korah

Cain, as you know, killed his brother out of envy – the first murder in human history was motivated by envy. Balaam was the man who, for financial gain, tried to give false

prophecies about God's people, and he had to be rebuked by his donkey – incredible that an ass should humble that man and show him up as he did. I like that. I tell wives who complain to me about their husbands that the Lord can speak through asses. That usually convinces them that the Lord can speak to them through their husbands – but that is another story! Korah was in rebellion against Moses, and you know what happened to him. There was an earthquake and the earth opened up and Korah fell in, and the earth closed in again, and that was the last you saw of Korah. He rebelled against Moses' leadership. These men, with their false teaching, don't like authority; they rebel against recognised authority.

Next, their *character* – they will affect the rest of the characters because they have affected their own, and we have four vivid pictures of useless character: fleeting clouds that promise rain but never produce any; fruitless trees that look as if they are going to produce a lot of fruit and produce nothing – rootless and fruitless, dead; foaming waves. Have you ever stood in a harbour and watched the way the waves come in and bring a lot of debris, rubbish, foam and dirt? There is nothing so dirty as a sea of waves with foam coming in. Lastly, falling stars – when you see a falling star, it is ever so bright and it has gone in such a short time. This is the character of these false teachers. They appear so bright for such a short time and people follow them, and then they have gone, and so often in church history people have followed false teachers who have disappeared quickly.

I have often answered a query on the phone: what do I think of the latest thing from America? I say, 'Ask me in two years' time.' They never do, because in two years' time nobody is talking about it. I think you know what I mean here: the latest Christian craze that crosses the pond and suddenly everybody is talking about it, and 'What do you

think about this', and 'What do you think about that?' – and they ring me as if I am some sort of guru, and ask me my opinion. If only we would all deal with things like that instead of suddenly saying it is the latest thing and all the Christians are talking about it. These crazes! That is just what they are: crazes, novelties. You stick with the 'faith once delivered to the saints' and you will be alright. Don't follow the latest novelty, the latest craze. Don't get a 'pilgrimage' complex. Where is God moving? I must save up for an air ticket and go to see it. We become kind of pilgrimage crazy, a group of Christians wanting to go here, there and everywhere round the world, to find out where God is working. God is here, and he would work here if we believe him. We don't need to chase round the world to find God.

Falling stars – and that is where Jude turns to Jewish tradition again and mentions Enoch and his prophecy, which is not in the Bible unfortunately. I wish it was. Enoch prophesied against ungodly people, and that word kept coming in – four times in one sentence in Jude – what the ungodly say in their ungodly way and how they behave as ungodly people. Therefore it was Enoch who gave his little boy (born when Enoch was 65 years old) the name Methuselah – 'When you die it will happen'. What a name to saddle on a boy! Then, 969 years later, Methuselah died and on the day he died the rain came and a whole generation was blotted out. If only they had listened to Enoch, Noah's great-grandfather, they would have been ready for the flood, but nobody listened.

Their *conversation*. You can tell people you should avoid – those who come into your church and come in as grumblers, self-centred talkers, boasters and flatterers. Those are four nasty types of conversation, and sooner or later that cancer will spread. One grumbler produces another grumbler, and flattery is out of place in a Christian fellowship. Christians

don't flatter people in order to benefit from them. Their conversation gives them away, and so he then turns to their condemnation in scripture, and he says if you remember what the apostles taught, you will know this is exactly what they said would happen. Read the apostle Paul – in one of his letters to Timothy he says that in the last days people will scoff. They will listen only to preachers who tickle their ears. They will go after novelty. They won't be interested in the faith once delivered to the saints. They want to know the latest thing.

I was asked by a lady in the street, 'What's the latest word from God?' and I replied, 'Do you want the two-hour or the four-hour answer?' – and she didn't seem to have enough time so she left me. Don't be interested only in the latest bit from God or the latest idea or the latest craze, the latest 'move' of God – that is what it is called now. Focus on the faith once delivered to the saints. Hold on to that – there is a rock in it and you are much more secure.

The apostle warned us that scoffers would come in to the church – people who are sarcastic, people who make jokes about serious things, people who scoff at preachers. It is so easy, but the apostles told us it would happen and it is happening here in the fellowship to which Jude is writing.

Finally, their *compulsion*, their motivation. They are divisive, their ambition is to divide the fellowship between those who follow them and those who don't. They follow their natural instincts, they do not have the Holy Spirit! And that is the final condemnation of these men who have crept in. They have come in with false teaching, with weak character, with immoral behaviour; they have come in with all this because they don't have the Spirit and that is the last word in the first section of the letter.

Living in the present (20–23)

Yourselves (20–21)

Now let us go back to the other two much shorter sections of the letter. It is still going on – not only in the day of the readers of this letter but in our day. There are false teachers in the churches today who are not willing to preach or teach the faith once delivered to the saints – in other words, the New Testament. So how do we cope with that? What do we do about it? I find here an interesting omission from the letter of Jude. He doesn't tell them to do anything about them. He doesn't say to shut them up, he doesn't say to put them out, he doesn't say to leave them alone. I would have thought that he would have told us what to do when false teachers get into your church. He didn't say to go to another church – didn't say anything. Mind you, the letter of Jude would be read aloud in the fellowship and therefore they would be warned from the scriptures and from Jewish tradition. Enough warning had been given to them in Jude. Now I wonder what those false teachers were thinking as the letter was read? I hope they were thoroughly ashamed of themselves. I hope that they repented of what they had been teaching, but my sad experience is that it is not easy for people like this to repent. If they didn't repent, I hope they left the fellowship, got out and took their false teaching with them.

Edification

But it is interesting that Jude says: I want you to be more concerned with yourselves and about the victims of these false teachers than about the false teachers themselves. Leave them to God; let God deal with them; he will do. God has noted what they are doing and he will not let them off. 'Vengeance is mine,' says the Lord, 'I will repay' – and it

almost seems as if Jude is saying leave these teachers to God, don't you try to put the situation right. But he does say: here are some things to do for yourselves when these things are happening in the church. First of all, build yourselves up in your faith. How can we do that? By studying the scripture for ourselves, by feeding on the faith once delivered to the saints.

I thank God that I have been able to help so many people in churches where they are not getting the right teaching, and where feeding on CDs and DVDs has kept their faith and built them up in the faith – edified them. The word 'edify' is the same as the word 'edifice', and you build yourself up by studying the Word of God, and I thank God for the privilege of teaching the Word so that people can build themselves up in the faith, whether they are receiving good teaching in the church or not. In fact, there are even churches that would have been closed down by the authorities but where they have been kept open by feeding the congregation on DVDs. That is just thrilling to me.

Petition

So the first concern for yourselves: build yourself up in the faith; study the Word of God for yourself; be sure that your faith is being built up, whatever else is being destroyed. That is the first thing you should do, and the second thing you should do is to pray in the Spirit. Nobody can stop you from praying. Now praying in the Spirit may be a special thing. I have a feeling that it is a reference to praying in tongues because that is especially a gift of the Spirit when you don't know how to pray yourself, when you are so perplexed and troubled by what is happening that you don't know how to express it in prayer – let the Spirit take over, let him put the words in your mouth. Pray in the Spirit and he will guide your lips to the right kind of prayer. You may not even know what you are praying about yourself, but it will be the right

kind of prayer for God and that is the major reason for that lovely gift of tongues. It is a gift to know how to pray when you don't know how to pray – when you just don't know what to pray for. Then pray in the Spirit!

Submission

The third thing is to submit, to keep yourself in God's love. Once again, these teachers will be leading people away from God's love – but you keep yourself in God's love. How do you do that? Well, Jesus told you how. He said, 'I keep my Father's commandments and I stay in his love. You keep my commandments and you will stay in my love.' That is how you keep in God's love, by being obedient and submissive to God, obeying what he tells you to do. Don't listen to human beings or do what they tell you to do. Listen to God and do what he tells you to do. That is how you keep in God's love.

Expectation

Expectation as you wait for what? – as you wait for the coming of Jesus Christ. All true Christians are eagerly waiting for Christ to reappear. He is coming back and it is one of the major motivations of the Christian life that he is coming back, and he is going to take over and, whatever misleading false teachers there have been, the true Teacher is returning and you are waiting for him. Keep your eyes fixed on that.

Others (23)

Wavering

Now that is how we are to look after ourselves when there are false teachers around. But we also should be concerned about others, those who are being affected by the teaching, and he mentions three categories of people. First of all,

those who are still wavering, who are still not sure whether to believe the new teachers or to believe the old teaching – waverers, people who are sitting on the fence but don't know which way they are going to go. Well, we are to have a special attitude to them. They are in real mental doubt, tossed around by every wind of doctrine, says Paul, and that is the effect of false teachers – they raise doubts, and people feel uncertain about it. Well, help them, love them, show mercy to them; pay special attention to them and seek to build them up in the faith once delivered to the saints. Do anything you can to help them. I know people in churches who started a Bible Study group in their home to help the waverers, to help them back into the truth.

Wayward

The second group are those who are in mortal danger. They have gone a bit further into the new teaching and they are in mortal danger and they should be snatched, 'kidnapped', seized in any way you can and brought to their senses before it is too late: 'a brand plucked from the burning.'

Wicked

Finally, there are those who have gone over to the false teaching – those who have fallen for it and who are now sharing their immoral living. Still the word 'mercy' comes in. We still need to be merciful to those who have fallen for it. It could have been us, but it was them and we should have a special sympathy for them. At the same time, you can't help somebody without the fear that you could be dragged in. There is a healthy fear in Christians, and Jude puts it in a very blunt form here. You should be afraid even of contaminated underwear. That is a very direct and practical application. They are living immoral lives and they will have contaminated even their clothes, so be fearful of

contamination yourself. It is a healthy fear. Be merciful to them but fear being contaminated yourself – very practical advice.

Looking to the future (24-25)

The able God (24)

And finally, in this very short letter, have you been surprised at how much teaching there is in it, and how much help there is in it? I certainly was when I first really studied it. But now, look to the future and look to the God of the future – and we have this amazing verse which is the verse that most Christians are more familiar with than the rest of the epistle. It is a lovely hymn of praise to God, and there are two major things about this God that we should look to. First, he is an able God – ‘to the God who is able....’ Now I want you to notice that the word is *able*; it is not the word *certain*. God is not *certain* to prevent us from falling. He is not certain to present us faultless before his throne. But he is *able to* if we are willing. That is the big ‘if’. There is no teaching in my New Testament of ‘once saved, always saved’ – far from it. But he is able to complete what he has begun in you. He is able to stop you falling. He is able to protect you. He is able to present you faultless, and that is the whole point of salvation – to be made perfect and presented faultless before his throne.

Just to lighten things a bit: my wife is a great believer and her faith in a sense is simpler than mine – I have read too much. But there is one thing that I teach that brings my wife really to the edge of unbelief, and that is when I tell her that one day her husband will be perfect. Now for some reason she finds this difficult to believe. She actually said to me,

‘If I based my faith on experience, I can’t believe that. But I will try to base my faith on the Word of God.’ God is able to do it but that doesn’t mean he will do it. We need to be willing to be made perfect. Of course, I have to believe that my wife will one day be perfect, but that is much easier for me to believe than for her to believe the other way. But that is why he saved you. He wants to make you perfect and he will not be content with anything less than that. He is able to present you faultless before the throne of his majesty and that is what he wants to do. That is why your salvation is not complete yet. Neither is mine. I am on the Way of Salvation but I won’t be fully saved until I am perfect because he wants to make a brand new universe – a new heaven and a new Earth – but he will put in it only people who are perfect. The last few pages of your Bible make that quite clear. Nothing unclean will be allowed in, nothing impure, nothing imperfect will spoil that world for him or for other people or for themselves. It is a perfect place for perfect people and *salvation is being made faultless.*

There is both a negative and a positive here. The negative side is that he is able to prevent you from falling and the positive side is that he is able to present you faultless. The ability of God to do those two things nobody else has. It is his ability that is mentioned here. You see, not only is he able to keep you – that is only one side of the story. The other side is ‘Keep yourselves in the love of God.’ There are two sides to being kept. He has one part to play and we have the other. He is able to keep, but we need to be willing to be kept. We need to go on trusting, and you won’t be kept unless you keep yourselves in his love.

Now that is the truth of the whole of the New Testament. Do you know that there are over eighty warnings in the New Testament against losing your salvation? Over eighty! God could not have made it clearer. That is why Paul, towards

the end of his life, says, 'He is able to keep that which I have committed to him', but at the same time he says, 'I have kept the faith.' You see the two sides? They go together all the way through. Yes, none can pluck them out of his hand, but we can jump out of his hand – because those who are kept in his hand, he says, are his sheep, "who hear my voice and who follow me.' If we go on believing he is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless. He is able to do that.

So that is his ability, and then we turn from that to his sovereignty, his authority.

The only God (25)

He is the only God – that word 'wise' somehow crept in there. It does not say he is the only *wise* God as if there were a lot of *foolish* ones. It doesn't mean that. He is the only God, and to him belong all majesty, all dominion, all power. Alongside his sovereignty is his eternity. He was, is, and always will be – always there. Look to this God; take your eyes off the false teaching. Take your eyes off those who are misleading and destroying the church of Christ from the inside. Fix your eyes on him who has the ability and the authority to see you through to perfection. Amen.

Do you know what 'amen' means? It means 'certainly, surely, absolutely'. It is not a 'kind of' amen – it is not that at all. It is the strongest affirmative in the Greek language and Jesus constantly used it. He would say 'verily, verily' – 'truly, truly'. What he actually said was 'amen, amen' – certainly this is true.

We are almost at the end. Having gone through all this in preparation in my study, the last thing I do then is to re-translate the letter into my own language and I do it by writing out the letter in black and leaving plenty of space between, and then writing my own translation or paraphrase in red in between the lines. Then I know I have understood

it. When you can translate a part of the Bible into your own language, you have understood what it means. So I am going to finish by writing the whole letter – in my paraphrase, which is what I read to the people I taught this letter to.

This letter is from Judas, though I prefer to be called Jude, one of the bought slaves of King Jesus and a brother of James, whom you all know. I am addressing all those over there who have heard and responded to the call of God our Father, enjoy the love of his family and have so far been kept safe by your relationship with his Son Jesus. May you experience more and more of his undeserved mercy, inward peace and loving care.

My dear friends, I had fully intended to write an encouraging note about the wonderful salvation you and I share but I now find I must send you a solemn warning and appeal to you to fight on for the old faith which was first given to the believers once and for all.

I have heard that certain men, who shall be nameless, have sneaked in to your fellowship; they are not in touch with God, their sentence of doom was pronounced and recorded ages ago.

They distort the amazing grace of our gospel into an excuse for blatant immorality and indecent behaviour. They deny that the Messiah Jesus is the only true Head and Lord of all.

Now I want to remind you of some facts you are already familiar with, which warn us not to trifle with God. Remember that he brought a whole nation out of slavery in Egypt, yet destroyed most of them because they would not go on trusting him. Nor were his angels any more exempt than his people; when some of them deserted their proper place and function, he took them into custody and is keeping them in the lowest and darkest dungeon until their trial on

the great day of judgement. Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah glutted themselves with debauchery, hankering after forbidden pleasures, just as the angels had done; their fate, in the fire that burned for so long, is a sober omen for us all.

In spite of such examples from the past, these interlopers abuse their own bodies, despise the authority of the Lord and deride the angels in glory. In contrast, when the archangel Michael argued with the devil about the disposal of Moses' body, he did not presume to condemn him for slander directly but simply said: 'The Lord is the one to reproach you!' Yet these men among you don't hesitate to malign what they don't understand; and the little they do understand is based on natural instinct rather than supernatural inspiration, as if they were animals without reason.

Woe betide them! They walk in the same way Cain went. They plunge into Balaam's blunder, for the same profit motive. Sharing the rebellious attitude of Korah, they will come to the same ruin. They think they are shepherds but they're not interested in feeding the sheep, only themselves.

They are like clouds driven away by the wind before they drop any rain; like uprooted trees in the autumn, with neither leaves nor fruit, dead as dead; like crashing, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their shameful behaviour; like shooting stars, destined to disappear down a 'black hole' forever.

It was about such as these that Enoch, in only the seventh generation after Adam, made a prophetic announcement: 'Look out! The Lord is coming with hordes of angels to carry out his sentence on all the godless people for their godless deeds which they have done and all the godless words they have spoken, against God himself and his godly people.'

These infiltrators are discontented grumblers, always complaining, pursuing their own ambitions. Full of big talk, they even use flattery to gain their ends.

But you, my dear friends, need to remember the sombre predictions of the apostles themselves. They said that as history enters its final stages there will be those who are contemptuous of godliness, while they pursue and practise the very opposite. The result will be splits among you, initiated by those who follow their fleshly impulses, strangers to the Holy Spirit.

As for you my dear friends, reinforce yourselves by becoming more mature in your faith, praying regularly in the way the Spirit leads you. Stay within the boundaries God lovingly set for you as you patiently wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and the everlasting life he will bring in new bodies.

Deal gently with those who are wavering between you and the interlopers. Do anything you can to rescue those who have already gone over to them, as you would snatch a child from a burning house. You must even feel compassion for the villains themselves but alongside that keep a healthy fear of being contaminated by them, even by their stained clothing.

Now let us praise the One who is able to keep you from slipping into all this and enable you to stand before his glorious throne blameless and jubilant. To the only God who can save us and bring us to glory belong radiance, majesty, all power and dominion, before all time, all through history and for evermore. Absolutely true!



ABOUT DAVID PAWSON

A speaker and author with uncompromising faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures, David brings clarity and a message of urgency to Christians to uncover hidden treasures in God's Word.

Born in England in 1930, David began his career with a degree in Agriculture from Durham University. When God intervened and called him to become a Minister, he completed an MA in Theology at Cambridge University and served as a Chaplain in the Royal Air Force for three years. He moved on to pastor several churches, including the Millmead Centre in Guildford, which became a model for many UK church leaders. In 1979, the Lord led him into an international ministry. His current itinerant ministry is predominantly to church leaders. David and his wife Enid currently reside in the county of Hampshire in the UK.

Over the years, he has written a large number of books, booklets, and daily reading notes. His extensive and very accessible overviews of the books of the Bible have been published and recorded in *Unlocking the Bible*. Millions of copies of his teachings have been distributed in more than 120 countries, providing a solid biblical foundation.

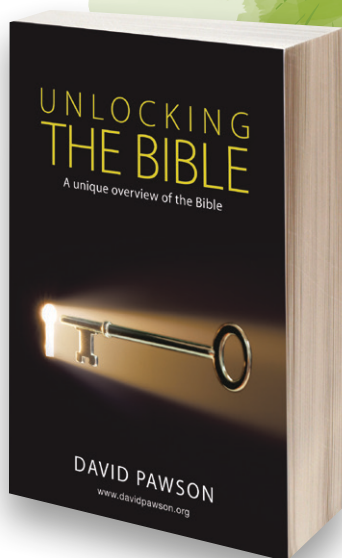
He is reputed to be the "most influential Western preacher in China" through the broadcast of his best-selling *Unlocking the Bible* series into every Chinese province by Good TV. In the UK, David's teachings are often broadcast on Revelation TV.

Countless believers worldwide have also benefited from his generous decision in 2011 to make available his extensive audio video teaching library free of charge at **www.davidpawson.org** and we have recently uploaded all of David's video to a dedicated channel on **www.youtube.com**



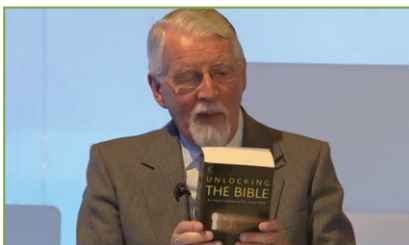
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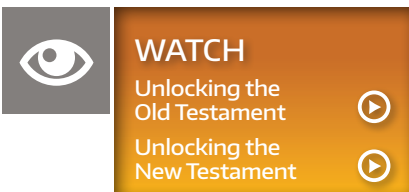


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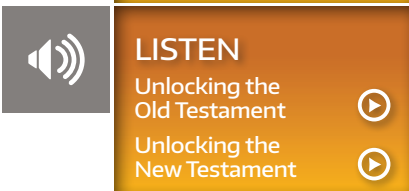
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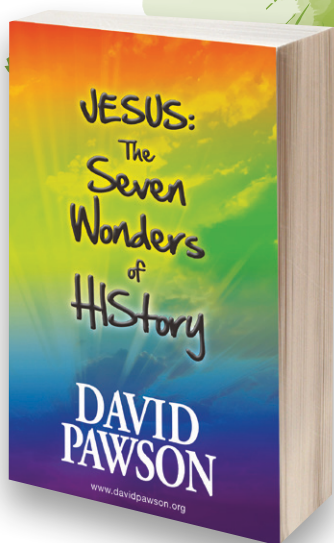
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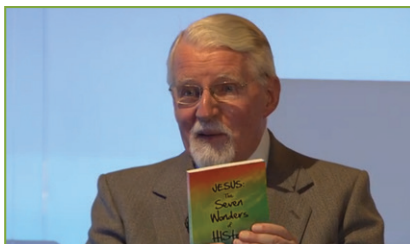


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David Pawson's vision is that his teaching library should be made available to as many people groups as possible around the world, in their own languages, for the lowest possible cost whilst maintaining the highest possible quality.

In 2011 the Trust started the work of transcribing and translating David's Teaching Library into other languages. Including Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian as well as many other international languages most recently we have started translating into Arabic, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesian, Tamil, German and Polish and there is much more to do.

The aim of the Trust is to provide free Bible teaching to the global church. David and the Trust have chosen not to build and invest in an organisation, nor to continually make requests to the general public or other sponsors for financial support. The Trust has no full-time workers and all of the Trustees support the work on a voluntary basis whilst performing professional roles in the marketplace.

Every time we meet we seek earnestly to pray that God will direct us and supply our needs and the resources required to faithfully spread His Word.

If you have been personally blessed by David's teachings and wish to support the ongoing work of his ministry we would very much appreciate both your prayer support and any donations, no matter how large or small. Please only give if you can afford to do so. Any support will be received with genuine gratitude and will be used only for the work of distributing David's teachings.

If you have been blessed through these booklets and are able to help support us please click below.

Donations will be used to fund the production of new teaching media including translations and to support the free distribution of Davids teachings.

Davids Teaching Trust is managed and supported by a small number of volunteers. Please only give if you are able.

DONATE



Thank you and may the Lord bless you

THE EXPLAINING SERIES



— David Pawson has a worldwide teaching ministry, particularly for church leaders. He is known to many through Christian broadcasting and is the author of numerous books.

Each book in the *Explaining* series examines an important aspect of the Christian faith and is written in a way that presents the message of the Bible clearly and simply. In this book David Pawson suggests ways of studying a book of the Bible, taking the Letter of Jude as an example.