

A Key-Word Study of Jude

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An Assignment for a Graduate Course in Hermeneutics

I have selected the key words listed below from Jude that seem necessary for further study to properly interpret this book. The first words are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation and a word listed behind “or” is the King James Version of the Holy Bible. The numbers behind the words are the Strong numbers from the KJV. The King James Version (KJV) has a totally different interpretation of verse 22 so that the word “doubting” does not appear but I have listed the Strong’s number for that word.

Selected key words: beloved (27), appealing or exhort (3870), contend earnestly (1864), bond servant (1401), the called or sanctified (37), way (3598) of Cain (2535), error (4106) Balaam (903), rebellion (485) of Korah (2879), hidden reefs or spots (4694), love feasts (26), doubly (1364) dead (599), black (2217) darkness (4655), grumblers or murmurers (1113), speak arrogantly (5246), flattering people or having men’s persons (4383) in admiration (2296), last (2078) time (5550), mockers (1703), devoid of Spirit (4151), mercy (1656), fire (4442), doubting (1252), mercy with fear or save (4982) with fear (5401).

First Assignment: Pick one of these words of this study. Search the immediate context for other uses of the word or words with similar contrasting meanings. Think through the meaning of the word, in view of the immediate context, and write a paragraph on its contribution to Jude’s overall message. This is the synchronic approach.

This letter from Jude is sent to warn the church of those who would infiltrate the church for the purpose of damaging its mission. It seems that a key word to describe these people is “doubly dead” so I have chosen it as the key word to use for further study. Words describing these people that are similar but with contrasting meanings include: marked out for condemnation, ungodly persons, deny Jesus Christ, defile the flesh, reject authority, revile angelic majesties, revile things, unreasoning animals, way of Cain, error of Balaam, rebellion of Korah, hidden reefs or spots, clouds without water, carried along by the winds, autumn trees without fruit, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame, wandering stars, grumblers, speak arrogantly, flattering people, mockers, cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of Spirit.

The words “doubly dead” relate to all the words at the end of verse 12: *“These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted;”*. Stating that the trees are autumn trees means that the season is such for the fruit to appear. Since the trees are without fruit (once dead) and uprooted (second dead), the total meaning is that they are indeed doubly dead. Considering the words doubly dead and the above words that have similar but contrasting descriptions of these people, it seems that Jude is describing people who are spiritually dead and destined for the final death as he states in 13b: *“for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever”* and as Revelation describes this final death as a second death:

Rev 2:11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Rev 20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Rev 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

It is unlikely that this letter was written after the writing of the book of Revelation so it is unlikely that Jude would know about the above Revelation verses. However the correlation of Scripture is a valid application for the purpose of this article. In the mind of God whatever has been ordained has already happened and so these people threatening the church are spiritually dead since they have not been born again and they are destined for the second death. Therefore they indeed are doubly dead. In verses 18-19 Jude reminds the readers that they have already been warned about the appearance of such people. They then are exhorted to keep themselves in God's love and wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to give them eternal life (verse 21). They then should have no fear of these people thwarting God's purpose for the church but only trust God and continue in their work for Him. Here I would insert the following:

Rom 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Second Assignment: Do a study of the use of the word thorough time (diachronic approach). List every time the word occurs in the NT and study these occurrences to get an idea of the range of the word's nuances. Use "Expository Dictionary of NT Words" by W. E. Vine and "New International Dictionary of NT Theology" by C. Brown.

I chose two words for my key word because both words are required for the full meaning. The two words chosen appear in the following verses throughout the New Testament:

Doubly: Mark 14:30; 72; Luke 18:12; Phil 4:16; 1 Thess 2:18; Jude 12.

Dead: Matt 8:32; 9:24; 22:24, 27; 26:35;

Mark 5:35, 39; 9:26; 12:19, 20, 21, 22;

Luke 8:42, 52, 53; 16:22; 20:28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36;

John 4:47, 49; 6:49, 50, 58; 8:21, 24, 52, 53; 11: 14, 16, 25, 26, 32, 37, 50, 51; 12:24, 33; 18:32; 19:7; 21:23;

Acts 7:4, 9:37; 21:13; 25:11;

Rom 5:6, 7;, 8, 15; 6:2, 7, 8, 9, 10; 7:2, 3, 6, 9; 8:13, 34; 14:7, 8, 9, 15;

1 Cor 8:11; 9:15; 15:3, 22, 31, 32, 36;

2 Cor 5:14, 15; 6:9;

Gal 2:19, 21;

Phil 1:21; Col 2:20; 3: 3;

1 Thess 4:14; 5:10;

Heb 7:8; 9:27; 10:28; 11:4, 13, 21, 37;

Jude 12;

Rev 3:2; 8:9, 11: 9:6; 14:13; 16:3.

The word “doubly” in all of its NT usage means “twice” or “once and again”. Thus the translation of the Greek word “dis” is undoubtedly properly chosen as “doubly” or it could equally well been translated as “twice”. Saying that the people were once and again dead is even fitting with the meaning in application to these people but using such would be awkward in the context of verse 12:

Jude 1:12 “... *autumn trees without fruit, **once and again dead, uprooted;***

These people are dead spiritually in their current state and they will suffer the second death later so “once and again” dead would be correct spiritually.

The word “dead” appears in many NT verses as indicated above. That Greek word, “apothneesko” is variably translated in its various grammatical forms as: perished, dead, die, dying, died, death, and dieth. In all of its NT uses in the Gospels it means physical death. However in some other NT books it refers to a spiritual death such as that all people are born spiritually dead and so require a second birth:

1Cor 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

In other NT verses the word means the death of our sin nature that remains even after our spiritual birth:

1Cor 15:31 I protest, brethren, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Rom 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

In other NT verses the word refers to a death of our sin nature that is an accomplished fact:

Col 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Third Assignment: Write a study of the word’s range of meaning and its precise nuance in the context of Jude.

The chosen key word – actually two words to obtain the correct meaning – can mean either physical or spiritual death as noted above. The emphasis in the context of the letter however

undoubtedly means that the people who have invaded the church are spiritually dead and destined for the second death at the end times. This letter portrays a contrast between the people of God and the people of Satan. The people of Satan are attempting to destroy the function of the church by introducing false doctrines and Jude is warning the people to be wise and to maintain the function of the true Gospel in the fellowship of believers.

The contrast between the two people is very clear when we examine some of the key words used in this letter describing the people of God: the called, beloved in God the Father, kept for Jesus Christ, beloved, the saints, and possessors of most holy faith (verse 20). The first three key words for God's children are especially important as they are described as the people whom God has called to Himself, they are beloved in God the Father, they are kept for Jesus Christ (meaning that they will persevere in this world and they will be glorified at the second coming of Jesus Christ), they are beloved to Jude because of their relationship to the Father, they are saints (Biblically, all Christians are saints because we possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ in our account and not because of our own actions), and they are possessors of the most holy faith. It is very important that we understand that faith is a gift of God and not something people develop themselves so these people have been given a measure of faith by God:

Rom 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Not only does God give us the holy faith but Jesus is perfecting it in us:

Heb 12:2 "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

These few key words about the recipients of this letter then clearly define them as children of God. The contrast with the many key words describing the invaders of the church then serves to clearly distinguish the two sets of people.

This letter is very appropriate for us today. Note how Jude says in verse 4 that these invaders crept into the group without being determined when they entered. This invasion is perhaps impossible for us to detect at the time because we cannot see the heart of any other person and even Satan can, at least temporarily, deceive the children of God:

2Cor 11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

However such an invasion was foreknown by God (verse 4) and certainly no surprise to Him!

Verse four also clearly states what these people are attempting to do within the body of Christ. They turn the grace of God into licentiousness (Strong number 766) and deny the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. The word "licentious" means lacking moral discipline or sexual restraint or having no regard for accepted rules or standards. The NAS translates the Greek word as "sensuality" rather than licentiousness in its use in 2 Cor 12:21. Since these people are turning the grace of God into licentiousness, it seems logical that these people are teaching that there is no need to obey God's commands since they have received His grace. In other words, it seems that

they are antinomians saying essentially that grace will abound even more if they continue to sin! Paul has already addressed the horrible error of such an attitude:

Rom 6:1 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?"

Rom 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

Stating that they deny the only Master and Lord Jesus Christ seems even more evidence that they are denying that they have to obey the commands of Jesus even though Jesus clearly stated such as an outworking of true conversion:

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

To help the Christians understand the actions of these people in the context of the working of the kingdom of God, Jude reminds them of God's actions against such people and even angels in the past (Jude 5-7). The comparisons Jude makes with past actions and with these people are especially vivid: the time of the Exodus, the fallen angels and the actions of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The first example concerns Israel when those people experienced the great mercy of God at the Exodus. The people saw and heard the revelation at Sinai, received God's provision and protection in the wilderness, and yet they did not believe God and so were destroyed. In this example Jude is warning against rebellion and unbelief that the people of God should already understand from their history. The second example concerns the fallen angels who had been assigned particular places of residence (oiketerion) and assignments (arche). Since these angels rebelled against God, He has kept them in bonds for their final destination on Judgment Day. Jude is warning them that no creatures are exempt from judgment from God because of their rebellion. The third example of judgment relates to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah whose inhabitants indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh (sarkos heteras), meaning flesh contrary to the ways that God had ordained and could include men with men, women with women and even angels with humans as perhaps stated in Gen 6:2. Jude then concludes these examples by stating that these false teachers were also defiling the flesh, rejecting the authority of God, and reviling angelic majesties (verse 8). Thus Jude is very specific in stating how these false teachers were opposite in actions to that expected by God's children. Jude in verse 9 then states that the false teachers did not even learn from the example of the actions of the angel Michael who referred any slanderous accusation against the devil to God. Certainly the false teachers should have learned from this history a proper respect for heavenly powers.

Jude then gives three examples of the actions of these false teachers so that the children of God would better understand and be able to discern their apostasy. The first example is to say that these false teachers have gone the way of Cain, which is a way to say that they have taken the moral path of Cain whose religion was of works rather than of faith (Heb 11:4). Jude is then saying that these false teachers have manufactured a false gospel. The second example is that they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam who led God's people into false religion and immorality (Num 31:16-19). The context indicates that these false teachers were being led by their love of worldly rewards rather than for any love of Jesus. The third example is that they

perished in the rebellion of Korah (Num 31:16-19). In using the aorist tense Jude is saying that their fate is already established because of their rebellion against authority.

Jude is thus very clear in saying that the false teachers should have learned by the history of the Jewish nation and then he gives examples of former sinful actions so that the audience to whom Jude is writing could easily identify the actions of the false teachers. Thus nobody has an excuse. The false teachers are condemned by their actions that are copies of previous sins against God and God's children have been given the information needed to discern the evil actions of these invaders of God's church.

Since it seems that there are no new sins under the sun, the false teachers and the church members in 2009 need to also learn from this short letter. The churches have continued to be invaded by false teachers since the advent of the church and such will continue until the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we all heed this short letter and practice church discipline as taught by our Lord (Matt 18:15-17). This letter is a clear warning to churches of any time that all need to be discerning concerning the invasion of our local body of believers by those who are "double-dead".