

Twisted Scripture

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Date: 29 June 2025

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[0 : 00] But here is Jude verse 11 and down through verse number 17.! Jude 11 through verse 17.

Woe to them, for they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perish in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear.

Shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted. Wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

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

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loudmouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. One more verse?

[1 : 23] Yes, please. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for preserving it for us.

Thank you for our brother, Dan. Please bless him and Jenny, he and Jenny, and their family.

Father, it's our privilege to have your word and to be able to read it.

We're grateful that we can have it in multiple translations so that we can get help in our study and in our efforts to understand what you have to say to us.

Lord Jesus, we are grateful that you are the center, the focal point of all of Scripture, and that it is all pointing to you.

Thank you for leaving your place in heaven and coming to this place so contrary to you because of our filth and our sin.

[2 : 28] Thank you for going to the cross, laying down your life. Thank you for being our good shepherd. God, the Spirit, we also adore you.

And we recognize that you are in the triune God, one. We recognize that you are one in love and one in power and one in glory with the Father and the Son.

And so as we turn our attention now to your word, we ask that you would open it to us, illumine our minds to understand it.

Help us to take in the things that we see here. We ask that you would bless this time for your glory and for our good.

In Jesus' name, amen. Culture rewards confidence and charisma.

[3 : 39] You don't even need to tell the truth to become a thought leader, an author, a podcast host, or an influencer. Just speak loudly or eloquently or often enough.

And today, maybe more than ever, it seems like everything, everyone has something to say.

Politicians rise and politicians fall because of words.

Headlines are transformed into clickbait because of words. Relationships are built and broken because of words. And that helps us understand that not every voice should be trusted.

Some of the loudest and most persuasive voices are also the most dangerous. If only these problems were out there.

You know? If only these problems were out there. But sadly, God's people are not immune from the threat of confident, charismatic, controlling voices.

[4 : 52] And many of us have felt the sting of division and destruction caused by words. While the recurring themes in this middle portion of the letter may seem boring to us, we need this repetition.

Here's why. We need to remember what's at stake. We need to remember what's at stake when we let charm replace character.

And when we prize style over substance. And when we are tempted by twisted scripture. A quick summary of the book so far.

Jude intended to write about the gospel. Verse number three. But he pivots to an appeal to the church. An appeal to contend for the faith.

Why? Because certain people had crept into the church unnoticed. That doesn't mean the church ignored them during the time of fellowship after the worship gathering.

[6 : 02] It means the church doesn't realize the danger that they pose. It's hard to tell. But all is not well.

Why are these people dangerous? Well, these wolves wearing wool preach a perverted gospel. A gospel which does not require holiness but actually promotes ungodliness.

The church is threatened. In this case, not by persecution but by persuasion. Verses 8 and 10.

Rather than relying on scripture, these people take direction from their own dreams. They claim knowledge of heavenly matters and authority over demonic powers.

But their understanding of these things is no better, no greater than that of animals. Since these people pose such a threat to the church, it is no wonder that Jude says, verse number 11, woe to them.

[7 : 17] Woe to them. No, if I say woe to you. This is the opposite of what we would normally do at our worship gathering.

Instead of saying, the Lord bless you. Jude echoes a long prophetic tradition by declaring God's judgment on these people.

Woe to you is how God says, I'm not going to take it. Enough is enough.

Why use such strong language here? Well, notice the three Old Testament examples of who these creepers are like.

Verse 11. Woe to them. For they walked in the way of Cain. And abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error.

[8 : 27] And perished in Korah's rebellion. These people who crept in are like Cain. We remember that Cain killed his brother.

Likely motivated by jealousy. But those in the church are not guilty of murder. And I think it's awfully trite to say that they are guilty of murdering souls.

So, listen to God's conversation with Cain in Genesis chapter 4. And let's see if we can discern something here of how these people are like Cain.

This is Genesis chapter 4. And I'm going to start at verse number 6. The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen?

If you do not do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

[9 : 31] Its desire is for you. But you must rule over it. What do you notice?

God warned Cain about the danger that was lurking, ready to pounce.

The danger of giving in to sinful desires. But even though he was warned by God himself, Cain chose ungodliness.

These people are like Cain. We met Balaam a few weeks ago in 2 Peter. He's the guy who carries on that sort of peculiar conversation with the donkey.

And he's not even Shrek. Perhaps these people are like traveling preachers. And like Balaam, they are misusing God's gifts for personal gain.

[10 : 37] This guy named Korah, he led a rebellion against God's chosen leaders. He stirred up a division among God's people.

And at Moses' request, God's judgment came in the form of something new. The ground opened up underneath all of this division and swallowed them alive.

I think it's fascinating that his reference, Jude's reference to Korah here, it doesn't even talk about the rebellion.

It just talks about the judgment. They perished in Korah's rebellion. It may be hard to tell, but all is not well.

In addition to linking these people to three notorious Old Testament rebels, Jude offers us four vivid images.

[11 : 45] Look at verse 12. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts as they feast with you without fear.

Shepherds feeding themselves. Waterless clouds swept along by winds. Not only are these notorious, are these people like those notorious Old Testament rebels, they are also dangerous hypocrites.

Hidden reefs. We might think of sandbars. That's probably more familiar for us. You go to the lake sometimes, you're in the middle of the lake, and suddenly you see a buoy bobbing in the lake. What is that buoy for there in the middle of the lake? Well, it's marking a spot that has low water. You don't want to drive your boat through that. There's a hidden sandbar there.

Jude has something like that in mind here. Think about wading at the beach and stepping on a jagged rock. These people have no fear.

[13 : 09] In other words, they have no conscience about acting like they are part of the church, gathering with the church for worship, participating in the church's activities and events and the Lord's Supper with no fear, no qualms, no conscience.

They are just pretending. And they are skilled at pretense. They have postured themselves into positions of authority.

They are shepherds, Jude says. But rather than caring for the flock, they are self-centered, using their positions of authority to gain advantage.

Jude's not done. right in the middle of verse 12. These are waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. Now we expect clouds to produce refreshing rain. But like waterless clouds, these people make big spiritual promises about God's best for your life.

[14 : 42] And when God doesn't come through, their hearers will become jaded. Similarly, these people are like fruitless trees, like an apple orchard that produces no apples.

It's as though the trees are dead. And so you chop down the trees to make room for other trees.

And now these trees are twice dead. There is no hope for fruit to ever be produced on them.

These people have no self-control. They are like wild waves of the sea. And they eventually cause disorder and confusion wherever they go.

And the inevitable result of their crashing and foaming is more ungodliness. We read about this in Isaiah 57. Finally, these people are like wandering stars.

Perhaps you would look up to them for direction, for guidance, to try to position yourself. Where am I? Where do I need to be heading? Nothing. But their instability makes them unreliable guides.

[16 : 07] It may be hard to tell, but all is not well. You need to follow the fruit.

just like the rebellious angels in verse 6. You can draw a line there. These people are doomed to a terrifying judgment described as the gloom of utter darkness.

Because of their rebellion and because of the threat they pose to the church, Jude declares their consequences. But he does it in a really interesting way.

Look at your Bible in verse number 14. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way.

and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Do you remember Enoch? He's way back at the beginning of Scripture.

[17 : 33] We don't have any record in Scripture that Enoch wrote anything. And I think it's sort of interesting. We don't actually have any record that Enoch said anything either.

So, what does Jude mean that Enoch prophesied? Jude is quoting from a well-known piece of ancient literature called First Enoch.

First Enoch is not Scripture, but Jude's audience would have recognized this writing. Formally, formally, writings like this are called pseudepigrapha.

That is, writings that are in the voice of someone, attributed to someone, but not actually written by them. Imagine, if you will, collecting stories and quotes and wisdom from your grandfather's life, and then compiling all of these writings into a book, a volume.

For me, it would be called First Marlin. That's my grandfather's name on my dad's side. The book, perhaps, sounds like him. It's in his voice.

[18 : 53] It has his wit and his wisdom, his character in it, but it was not written by him. Jude does not endorse all of First Enoch.

He is simply using a familiar source to make a point. It's how we might quote from a well-known poem or movie or song. But there's something else interesting that Jude does.

When he quotes Enoch, he swaps the word he for Lord. Look there in verse 14. In the original quote, it says, Behold, he comes with 10,000.

Jude wants to make this point. the one whose authority these creepers are denying is the one who will judge them.

It's the Lord Jesus who is coming in judgment for the ungodly. Did you notice that point there in those verses I read?

[20 : 01] Did you see a repeated word a repeated word? The Lord Jesus will return to judge the ungodly because of their ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way and for all the ungodly things they have spoken against him.

Jude's point is their ungodliness. ungodliness. These are not just occasional mistakes. These are not just slip-ups.

Jude describes people who are settled in their rebellion against Jesus. And Jesus will judge and convict them.

This is a sobering thought. notice how their ungodliness centers around their speech.

Verse 16. These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires.

[21 : 17] they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

They are dissatisfied, envious, and entitled. Their discontent simmers beneath the surface and then leaks out through words of grumbling.

They are harsh, critical fault-finders, quick to spot the weaknesses of others and to call them out, malcontents.

They flatter and they manipulate, showing favoritism in order to gain influence and win people over to their way of thinking.

Culture rewards confidence and charisma. And sadly, to her own peril, the church often rewards this too.

[22 : 29] Speaking loudly, confidently, and regularly is often sufficient to become a thought leader, an author, a podcast host, an influencer.

influencer. Now, maybe you hear this list and you feel a little exposed. Maybe you're realizing that your mouth is telling on your heart, because we remember that Jesus said, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Here is the good news of the gospel. Jesus doesn't just expose the darkness in our hearts. He is the light that we desperately need.

Jesus said this in John chapter 12, I have come into the world as light, so whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

this. Don't settle into your rebellion like those who crept into the church. Don't live another hour with the terrifying judgment of God hanging over your head.

[23 : 51] Come to Jesus. He is the light of the world. And Paul promises that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

follower of Jesus. Notice Jude's exhortation beginning in verse 17. But you must remember beloved the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord willing, we will look at these verses in more detail next week because they actually begin the next paragraph.

But they also provide a helpful conclusion for verses 11 through 16. while these people may have crept into the church unnoticed, God is not surprised by them.

He is not surprised by their ungodly behavior or their corrupting influence. And so in addition to contending without being contentions, since God knows that all is not well, we should also contend without being anxious.

[25 : 34] Remember, Jude writes, the apostles predicted that these people would infiltrate the church. And Jesus himself said in Matthew chapter 7, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

you will recognize them by their fruits. So mindful of God's calling, mindful of God's loving, mindful of God's keeping, let's heed God's warnings.

Let's first repent of any logs in our own eyes. that would be a good idea, wouldn't it? To repent of any logs that are in our own eyes.

To do this, we could ask questions like, where do I over promise? Like a waterless cloud?

Who isn't receiving refreshment from me? Who should be receiving refreshment? refreshment? Am I recognizable by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life?

[26 : 56] How am I like a crashing wave, a source of disorder and confusion, rather than a conduit of the gentle, calming presence of the Lord Jesus?

is my life marked by consistency and integrity? Do friends and family and neighbors and coworkers, whether they know Jesus or not, do they see me, do they recognize me as someone who has been with Jesus?

Someone who can be a reliable spiritual guide? am I that type of a humble, trustworthy person of influence in the people who are around me?

As we repent of our sin, and we clear the logs out of our own eyes, then and only then, we are ready to engage with the community of believers in saying, we're not going to take it.

what are we not going to take? We are not going to take charm over character. We are not going to prize style over substance.

[28 : 21] We are not going to settle for eloquence without truth or conviction without holiness. We are not going to be tempted by twisted scripture, by God's grace.

As those loved and chosen and kept by God, we can recognize the hidden danger and resist the destructive teaching of self-centered shepherds.

We can choose to follow imperfect, ordinary, faithful leaders who commit to the character of Jesus and submit themselves to the truth of his word.

We are kept, my brothers and sisters. We are kept as we humbly learn and wisely discern hypocritical, fault-finding, arrogant, narcissistic leaders.

It may be hard to tell, but all is not well. And so we follow the fruit. Let's respond with repentance, with faith, and with obedience, not because we are clever or capable or especially spiritual, but because we are confident that our God is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

[29 : 59] Let's pray. Good Father, it is our privilege to find ourselves under the preaching of your word.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for answering our prayer and giving us some measure of clarity and understanding of this text. Would you also, in your kindness to us, continue to do war against the sinful desires of the flesh that still linger and lurk in our hearts?

Guard us from twisted scripture. scripture. Give us humility such that we continue to learn.

Grant us wisdom such that we are able to discern. Help us to understand when is an appropriate time to say, that's it, enough is enough.

We are not going to tolerate this type of leadership among us. grace. And Father, would you also help us to have the grace, grace that we so desperately need in this world that is so polemic.

[31 : 24] Grant us the grace that we need to disagree over the little things that really don't matter all that much. Father, we ask that you would help us as we commit to being faithful in contending without being contentious and also contending without being anxious because we remember that we are kept.

We ask these things in Jesus' name and for his glory and our good. Amen.