

I Feel Fine

⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day--

⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

(Jud 1:4-8 ESV)

Jude 4-8

It was **Charles Spurgeon** who once said, if you preach the gospel and *someone* doesn't think you are giving a free license to sin, then you are probably not preaching the gospel. Now let me explain that. The gospel is good news of an absolutely free grace that pardons all of your sins—past, present, *and future*—apart from any act of righteousness that you personally commit. Christ is your substitute, and you receive his righteousness by faith, absolutely apart from any works. This is diametrically opposed to the thinking of the natural man.

Charles Finney, the famous revivalist of the 19th century, summarized it perfectly when he said, “If he [Christ] obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon?”¹ Finney simply could not reconcile free grace with the biblical insistence of good works. It is either one, or the other. But **if we are saved by grace, then why in the world should anyone care about being a moral, upright person?** You see? That's the rub.

¹ Finney, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976), 206.

The Apostle Paul dealt with this head-on in his letter to the Romans. First, he proclaims the gospel by saying that outward obedience to the law of circumcision is irrelevant to the circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29). Being a Jew is an act of the Spirit, not the written code. Righteousness is dependent upon something other than obedience.

Rom 3:1-8

But Paul has dealt with so many unbelievers that he knows what they are first to ask. So, in Romans 3, he begins to address some of their concerns. He says, “What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all!” (Rom 3:3-4). In other words, God is faithful, even when we are faithless.

Someone hears this and goes ballistic. He gives their “human argument” against grace in vs. 5, “If our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us?” Or, they ask it another way, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner” (vs. 7).

In other words, the flesh thinks, if I can’t do anything to make grace come my way, in fact, if more grace comes my way when I sin, then why do anything good at all? Why not sin so that grace will increase? Thus, when Paul taught the gospel, many people actually heard him say something else. Paul explains, “Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—let us to evil that Good may result” (Rom 3:8). He finishes, “Their condemnation is deserved.”

A totally different take, but with the same outcome, is being taught today. How many people (even Christians) think that the law stifles their happiness in life? And, isn’t the pursuit of happiness the reason we declared independence from Great Britain? It’s all about feeling good. Like the Beatles said, “I feel fine.” Dreamers, with self-proclaimed visions and words from God justify adultery, abandonment, gluttony, the idols of our age, and blasphemy all in the name of their personal happiness. Let us throw off the tethers of the God and his law, so that we can sing, dance, and play around our golden-calves.

With that in mind, let me turn to Jude. After the introduction of magnificent effectual, loving, keeping grace is proclaimed, Jude turns to the reason for his letter.

This is not the letter of salvation that he had hoped to encourage the people with, but rather is an appeal to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). For (vs. 4), “certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this *condemnation*, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

This language is almost identical to that of **Romans 3:8**. There we saw ungodly people perverting grace and accusing Paul of teaching, “**Do evil that good may result!**” In **Jude 4**, sinister creepers worm their way into the congregation and pervert the grace of God into sensuality and heresy. Paul says, “**Their condemnation is deserved.**” Jude says, “**They were long ago designated for this condemnation.**” In other words, **the warning comes even before anything else.** When you entertain serious thoughts that the gospel gives license to sin, especially when you teach God’s children that sin is OK because we are saved by grace and not the law, this is a damnable perversion of the truth.²

Jude says that these ungodly people were “**long ago designated for this condemnation.**” **What does he mean?** It is possible that he refers to books that were written before the foundation of the world, with the names of the elect in them. But the simplest explanation given the context is that the **Apostles (vs. 17-18)**, **Jewish Tradition (9, 14)**, and the **OT itself (5, 6, 7, 11 etc.)** all talk about a condemnation that awaits ungodly men who pervert the truth and use this as an excuse to live ungodly lives. Jude brings **all of his guns to bear** upon this destructive perversion of grace.

In what we will look at today, Jude gives **three examples from the OT**, of judgment that fell upon those who did the same things in older days. Interestingly, all three are concerned with the “sensuality” that Jude is so concerned with eliminating in the churches.

This word for sensuality is used in several lists of sins in the NT (**Mk 7:22; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:19; 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19**). A brief comment on this is necessary. Because this sin is contained in so many lists of sins, it is important to see what other sins are put on equal par with it. In Mark you have “**greed,**” “**malice,**” “**deceit,**” “**envy,**” “**slander,**” “**arrogance,**” and “**folly.**” Peter adds “**lust,**”

² “Condemnation,” is nothing short of damnation, eternity spent in hell for taking such a brilliant nugget of truth and defecating on it.

“debauchery,” “drunkenness,” “orgies,” and “carousing” (1 Pet 4:3). While Paul adds to these “dissension,” “jealousy,” “sexual immorality,” (Rom 13:13); “impurity” (2 Cor 12:21); “idolatry,” “witchcraft,” “hatred,” “discord,” “fits of rage,” “selfish ambition,” “factions,” (Gal 5:19-21); with a continual “lust for more” (Eph 4:19); and capping it off with “and the like.”

These lists demonstrate that as far as the idea of sin is concerned, all of these things are equally evil. Sin is sin. Jude’s brother James says, “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” Jesus says that we are to “be perfect.” I’m not perfect, and you are not perfect. I have broken the whole law, and you have broken the whole law. And until we once more recapture a view of the law that *levels* humanity as “all” falling short of God’s glory, rather than perpetrate a view that self-righteously separates us out from those wicked “sinners,” the church will have nothing to say to a world in the grip of sin and despair. I am deeply concerned that the world primarily knows the church as a bunch of hypocrites, rather than a bunch of people who admit their own sins and confess them regularly before the Father. We need to recapture the idea of sin again, not just pick on individual sins that we don’t personally commit!

That being said, it is clear to me that what Jude has in mind is singled out because it is so seductive and pleasurable to the flesh. It leads to a host of other sins. The word he uses is translated as either *lasciviousness* or *sensuality*. It has a basic meaning of “sensual indulgence; but especially sexual immorality.”³ It carries the idea of “complete lack of moral restraint.” In some languages its equivalent is to “live like a dog,” or “act like a goat,” or “to be a rooster,” in each instance pertaining to promiscuous sexual behavior (LNL).

Jude summarizes what he has in mind in vs. 8. It seems that this sensuality is to defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. And he says that these people are dreamers, or people justify these things by proclaiming that God told them to commit them! I think of Korah who preached before the whole assembly against Moses, “You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” (Num 16:3). As if Korah and not Moses had heard from God! This is such a serious sin, I will say more about it next week.

³ Bauckham.

In order to arrive at this conclusion, Jude gives **three OT examples**—all three of which were commonly used in Jewish traditions (**Sirach 16:6-12; 3 Macc 2:4-8** and others⁴). All three relate to Jude’s three conclusions. These are some very interesting stories that I want to **look at in succession**. As we go along you will see how they all have judgment and condemnation in mind, and this serves as a warning for you. Finally, I want to get you to focus on something in vs. 5, and I want to drive home the point that these ethical sins all begin in a common source: rejecting Jesus as the only son of God. **Bad ethics comes in part from bad theology!**

Let’s look at **vs. 5**. It begins, **“I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it.”** The point is, these Christians were originally taught the **“faith once for all entrusted to the saints.”** They knew these stories and the results that came from each one. They were not left in the dark at the beginning, and in this way they are just like you. They knew the warnings, but paid no heed.

Now they are being seduced into forgetting altogether. In this way, they are not unlike many Christians today who are seduced by all kinds of **smooth-talkers who tell them just what they want to hear, and all in the name of God!** This particular seduction was *very* subtle, in part because it was taking place in the form of teaching a preaching from leaders in their own churches! They trusted their leaders, but because they were hearing a message that tickled their ears, they apparently did not think to question what they were hearing. They didn’t *want* to. **Why would they? This message was much more. . . FUN!** It hit their felt needs head on. So they listened. Then they began to accept. These messages appealed to their carnal desires. And those desires that wage war against the Spirit of God began to crowd out the Spirit’s voice, especially as it spoke through the Holy Scriptures.

The first example is one known to every Christian. The “Lord” **[JESUS]** has led the people out of Egypt. Now they are in the wilderness. And they stay there for forty years, because they refused to believe God, but instead continually disobeyed his commandments. They complained. They engaged in sexual sins. They rejected God’s authority.

⁴ See Bauckham, p. 52, Moo, p. 248. Moo makes the point (which I will make later) that these ancient sources confirm that Jude is talking about Genesis 6:1-4 in Jude 6.

Jude is very general about the event(s) he has in mind. He at least has the story of the **12 spies** in mind, for this is the occasion for Israel remaining outside of the Promised Land. He probably also has the story of **Balaam** (and later Phinehas and Moab in mind) and **Korah** in mind, since he talks about them in **vs. 11**.

1 Cor 10:1-9

But **1 Cor 10** actually works as a unique, inspired commentary on **Jude 5**. Paul gives a quick synopsis of everything that was involved in the unbelief. Paul says, “I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, **and the Rock was Christ**. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as types (or examples) for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day [the incident in mind here is in Numb 25, and promiscuity with Moabite women]. We must not put Christ to the text, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. These things happened to them as a type, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom **the end of the ages has come**” (**1 Cor 10:1-10**).

From this you can easily see that **sensuality was at the heart** of all of their sins. They rose up to play, they played the harlot with Moab, they grumbled because their stomachs were not being filled with food. Like so many who justify the practice today, it was all about having their felt-needs met, while their real-needs remained unfulfilled. **What is the difference?** We need food for our bodies. When we are hungry we feel that need acutely. But **man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God**. This food sustains the spirit. The physical needs are good (there is nothing wrong with a healthy appetite). But instead of reading them as signs that point us to our deeper spiritual needs in this world (it is so easy to tune out our spiritual needs isn't it, because we can't see them!), they can easily become idols that replace our love and need for Christ. I am going to return to this at the end of the sermon.

The second example is the most perplexing and fascinating. Jude talks about angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling. God has kept them in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day (vs. 6). What in the world is this talking about, and what does it have to do with these people?

Genesis 6:1-4

While older commentaries (like Gill, Henry, and even John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) think Jude is talking about the original fall of Satan, Jude is actually referring to the strange episode in Genesis 6:1-4 which took place prior to the flood. The idea is that angels (the sons of God) forsook their own proper spheres of authority (heavenly spheres of influence and ministry; cf. 1 En 15:7), came down to earth, and cohabitated with human women (the daughters of men).⁵ As strange as it sounds to modern ears, this was the near universal interpretation from the time of 1 Enoch (200 BC) through the 3rd century in the Christian church.

This interpretation has once more become the common one, at least as far as Jude is concerned, ever since the re-discovery of 1 Enoch nearly 200 years ago. 1 Enoch is a pseudepigrapha. It is believed to have been written sometime around 200 B.C. It was lost for 1,000 years, but an Ethiopic version of it was found in the 1800's. Since then, fragments of it have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was well known to the early church fathers, it is regarded as Scripture by the Christian Ethiopian church, but most importantly, Jude quotes it verbatim in vs. 14.

Because this is such a bizarre interpretation to many Christians today, I want to tell you about Augustine. Augustine was the Father who popularized the interpretation that the sons of God are godly believers from the line of Seth, while the daughters of men are ungodly women from the line of Cain. When Enoch was lost to time, the church adopted Augustine's interpretation, primarily because it makes good sense of the larger context, especially the genealogies in early Genesis. It also takes away the objection of angels having relations with human women and producing offspring. This has been the most popular interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 ever since.

⁵ In 2 Pet 2:4, deal with how angels could "marry" and have children. These are fallen angels, and while non-fallen angels do not marry (they are all males?), the point is that these angels left their positions of authority (rebelled against the commandment), and were punished. Jesus' point about marriage and angels actually fits perfectly.

Yet, there is a serious **linguistic problem** with this interpretation. **Bruce Waltke** has pointed out that it is practically impossible to read it this way, because you have to make arbitrary changes of the word “man” in verse 1 to suddenly mean “Sethite” in vs. 2, and “daughter” (or female offspring) in vs. 1 to “Cainite” in vs. 2. There is no hint in the text that this is what is going on.⁶

But Augustine is interesting for another reason. He actually talks about Enoch in the City of God. He says,

The writings of [Enoch and Noah] could not be held as authoritative either among the Jews or us, on account of their *too great antiquity*, which made it seem needful to regard them with suspicion, lest false things should be set forth instead of true...⁷ For though there is some truth in these apocryphal writings, yet they contain so many false statements, that they have no canonical authority. We cannot deny that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, *left some divine writings, for this is asserted by the Apostle Jude in his canonical epistle.*⁸

This makes Enoch among the strangest of all pseudepigrapha. For, it is clear that some of it actually records **the real words of Enoch**, seventh from Adam. Not all of it does, and additions and legends were added as the oral tradition was passed down from generation to generation. But Jude says that Enoch said some of the things in this book. And I believe him. And they are recorded in the book of 1 Enoch.

The reason I bring Enoch up here (**it will also come up next week**) is that there is a section in Enoch that describes the judgment of the chief angels. It reads, “**And secondly the Lord said to Raphael, ‘Bind Azazel hand and foot and throw him into the darkness!’** And he made a hole in the desert which was in Dudael and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he might not see the light; and in order that he might be sent into the fire on the **great day of judgment**. (1 En 10:4-6). Another section says, “My eyes saw how they made... **iron chains** of immeasurable weight. And I asked the angel of peace... ‘For whom are these chains being prepared?’ And he said to me; ‘These are

⁶ Waltke, *Genesis*, p. 116.

⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, xviii. 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xv. 23.

prepared for **the hosts of Azazel**, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete **condemnation**” (1 En 54:3-5).⁹

Given that this was the only interpretation around the time of Jude, and given how **Jude 6** fits perfectly into the interpretation of **Genesis 6:1-4**, I believe it is almost certain that this is what Jude is in fact referring to.¹⁰ When we come to **2 Peter 2:4**, **I will have more to say about this**.

For now, I want you to see why Jude brings this story up. Because in the strangeness of the example, **it is easy to lose the real point**. It relates to the false teachers who have infiltrated the church. It has to do with the position of authority, and the sensuality that will become even more evident in the last example. **Verse 6** says that these angels did not “stay within” (Lit. “keep”) their own position of authority. Remember how **vs. 8** talks about “**rejecting authority**.”

“**Keep**” (*tereō*) is a favorite word of Jude. He uses it five times. In verse 1 we see that God keeps his called ones for/to Christ. This is God’s sovereign act of grace. Yet, the responsibility is still there, so that in **vs. 21** you are to “**keep yourselves in the love of God**.” We are to *keep* our position in God’s love, even as God *keeps* us safe for salvation at the Last Day.

This is now contrasted with the angels (and by extension and relevance, the heretics). “**Since the angels have not kept their position, the lord now keeps them chained**.”¹¹ Or to put it another way, “**Those who would not guard their own positions of authority end up guarded in a place of darkness**.”¹²

To throw off God given position of authority, is to throw off the authority of God himself. It is a casting off from kingdom of God, and setting sail for a city of man. And **this is a word most needed in our day**. For, we have an epidemic of self-proclaimed Christians who care not a single iota about the lordship of Christ. In some circles, we are even told that we can accept Christ as Savior, but not necessarily as Lord. In others, we learn that to do the first is to be a carnal Christian,

⁹ Taking their cue from Enoch, I could multiply these references in the ancient Jewish and early Christian literature. Cf. Davids, *Jude*, p. 50.

¹⁰ If this is true, and if Scripture is utterly reliable, then it follows that this is in fact the real interpretation for Genesis 6:1-4.

¹¹ Bauckham, p. 53.

¹² Davids, p. 50.

yet *still a Christian*. To teach that you can reject the authority of God and still be a Christian, is to teach the very thing that Jude warns against here. It is to not keep your own position of authority. It is to “**deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord**” (vs. 4).¹³

The point should strike you quickly and stop you fast in your tracks. God once destroyed the entire world with a flood, he took the angels and locked them up in a gloomy dungeon for them to await the Great Day of Judgment. He has *already* judged them, while their final sentence awaits final execution. If God did that to them, for rejecting their own position of authority, he will do the same to those today. God does not change!

Genesis 19

This is displayed most dramatically in a story that makes one of the most vivid impressions on the mind of anyone who reads it or hears it. It is the story of **Sodom and Gomorrah**. The point is about judgment, but judgment for something. **Jude 7** says, “**Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.**”

There is a relationship that Sodom has with both the angels and the Jews in the wilderness: Indulging in sexual immorality. In Israel, they engaged in relations with pagan idol worshippers. In Genesis 6, it was angels abandoning the natural order to be with human women. In Sodom, it is men seeking to have relations with men, and possibly also angels.¹⁴

What a terrible perversion this was. When we read the account in Genesis 19 we see that two angels, appearing as men, come to Lot’s house. There, the men of the city seek to be with them. Lot does the unthinkable, and asks them to rape his daughters rather than commit this abomination. But the men of that city will have none of it. Theirs is a doubly heinous crime: Homosexuality (defiling the flesh) with angels (blaspheming the glorious ones, **which is a theme I will look at more next week**).

¹³ Moo, p. 244.

¹⁴ It is possible that part of the sin was their desire to have sex with angels. But this is not the prime sin, because we do not have any indication that the men of Sodom actually knew that Lot’s visitors were angels. We do know that they thought they were men.

But again, we get wrapped up in the sin, and forget that it is given as an example! God destroyed these cities with “eternal fire.” This was a judgment that served as a living prophecy of the Great Judgment to come, when God will destroy all wickedness with fire. Amazingly, from that day until this, the region south of the Dead Sea where these cities were once located in a lush, garden-like place, is still utterly waste and dead. You, like **Josephus** and **Philo**, can go there today and see “vestiges of the divine fire” (Josephus, *BJ* 4.483), “tokens of the indescribable disaster—ruins, cinders, brimstone, smoke, and murky flames which continue to rise from the ground as from a fire still smoldering beneath” (Philo, *Mos* 2:56).¹⁵ Yet, unbelievers think that the deadness of the place proves that no one ever lived there. They refuse to admit the judgment that occurred!

In these three examples, then, you can see sensuality embodied in the defilement of the flesh, rejection of authority, and the blasphemy of the glorious ones. This, in a word, is antinomianism, lawlessness taught by heretics, lawlessness which was first practiced by fallen angels (called in the literature “Watchers”).

These are ethical things. God commands his people to **act** certain ways and he expects that they will do it. In fact, he commands all people to obey the moral law, and all will be judged by it (**Rom 2:12**). And the Scripture says, “**It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified**” (13).

And this leads me to my final point. **Ethical obedience must first be built upon proper theology and beliefs.** Most people today do not understand this at all. They think we should just teach about how to behave, as if this is the sum total of the Christian message. But Paul’s point in Romans is that to do the law, you have to be perfect. And the only way you are going to get that kind of a status is through Christ.

In **Jude 5** there is a very interesting **textual variant** that I want to now talk about. I have left this until now, in hopes of helping you see how important Christ is to any biblical message, including this one today. I do not want to build much of what I

¹⁵ Bauckham notes 1 Enoch 67:4-13; Origen *c. Cels.* 5:52 which suggest that the hot springs and sulfurous nature of the Dead Sea region resulted from the fact that the prison of the fallen angels was located beneath it. P. 55.

believe upon textual variants, but I do want to finish this sermon by looking at this one. **It is perhaps the most interesting variation I have ever come across in the NT.**

Of course, you know that the NT was copied over and over, meticulously, by scribes whose entire job it was to get the copy correct. Nevertheless, from time to time, they made scribal errors. Sometimes these were accidental. A rare number of times, these were intentional, because the scribe just couldn't believe what was written or he wanted to clarify something he thought was confusing. Fortunately, we have so many early manuscripts of every verse of the NT, that it is usually possible to get back to the original autograph without much difficulty.

In **vs. 5**, the main textual problem surrounds the word “**lord**” (*kurios*). Most English translations say, “**I want to remind you... that the Lord, who saved a people... afterward destroyed those who did not believe.**” But you will note that the ESV has a different reading. It reads, “**Jesus**” (*Iesous*) rather than “**Lord.**” Now, this is a rather significant difference.

It is nothing shocking or confusing to think that the Lord saved the Jews in the exodus, that the Lord destroyed those who did not believe, that the Lord bound up the angels in eternal chains. But it perhaps very shocking to say that *Jesus* did this!

I don't want to get very technical with you about this, but suffice it to say that scholars realize that the best manuscript evidence has “**weighty attestation**” supporting “**Jesus.**”¹⁶ **Bruce Metzger** says that “**Critical principles seem to require the adoption of ‘Iesous, which is the best attested reading among Greek and versional witnesses.**” Yet, even in the *UBS Greek NT*, the committee chose “**Lord**” rather than Christ because, “**the majority of the Committee was of the opinion that the reading [Jesus] was difficult to the point of impossibility.**”¹⁷

¹⁶ Bruce Metzger, “A TEXTUAL COMMENTARY ON THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, 2nd ed.”, p. 657. See A B 33 81 322 323 424 665 1241 1739 1881 2298 2344 vg cop Origen Cyril Jerome Bede; ὁ Ἰησοῦς 88 915.

¹⁷ The only grammatical point they make is that everywhere else in Jude “*Iesous*” is always accompanied with “*Christos*.” Tony Jackson pointed out to me that Jude may have referred to Christ as “Jesus” only in vs. 5 because this is the only time he refers to the pre-existent Lord, Jesus prior to his being anointed the Christ (Messiah) during the incarnation. To call him Christ in the OT would be improper.

It seems to me that the main reason scholars give for not going with “Jesus” is that it just seems too hard to believe that Jude would talk about the pre-existent Christ like that! In other words, their theology just doesn’t fit the text.

Perhaps even more interesting to me than **Jude 5** is **1 Cor 10:1-9**. I have already referred you to this passage, in that Paul basically has an expanded version of Jude 5. Here is the fascinating part. 1 Cor 10:9, you have the exact same variant as **Jude 5**. And again, many English translations (NAS, ASV, RSV, NIV) do the exact same thing here that they do in Jude 5. They say, “**Let us not tempt the Lord, as some of them were doing.**” Yet, this variant is almost certainly to be read Jesus (USB gives it a *B* rating, meaning “almost certain), it is much less doubtful than Jude 5, which is why many more translations go with “Jesus” here (YLT, ESV, KJV, NKJ, NRS, NLT, VUL), than in Jude 5. Metzger comments on this variant saying, “**The difficulty of explaining how the ancient Israelites in the wilderness could have tempted Christ prompted some copyists to substitute either the ambiguous “lord” or the unobjectionable “God.”**”¹⁸

Again, while all of this is fascinating, here is the point. In **1 Cor 10**, the chief sin in view is idolatry. Specifically, they were fed with *Christ* in the wilderness (**10:4**), yet they became idolators because they put *Christ* (that is, Jesus Christ) to the test (**10:9**). And we are not to be like them. As you have seen already, the list of sins in this passage are identical to Jude 5 and they also summarize a lot of what was going on in Genesis 6 and 19. In other words, this chapter helps us interpret Jude!

I find it just a bit scary when we want to substitute “Lord” for “Jesus,” especially in view of Paul’s warning of idolatry. **If Jesus in the OT doesn’t fit out theology, and it even leads us to very probably change words in the Scripture because of it, isn’t there a bit of a problem?** This has apparently been going on for thousands of years. But I also wonder, could this not be a subtle way of moving Jesus off to the periphery? Is it possible that unconsciously, we are adopting the world’s view of Jesus, that he isn’t really God and couldn’t possibly be there in the OT stories?¹⁹

¹⁸ Metzger, 493. This is the exact opposite view as the one taken by Bauckham, who says that it is easier to see “Jesus” as coming from “Lord,” to work out the ambiguity of “Lord.” I think that’s poppycock.

¹⁹ To be fair, some of the commentaries that adopt the “lord” reading will admit that Jude may in fact have Jesus in mind. For instance, David’s admits, “Jude may well understand this term (Lord) as referring to Jesus; at the least he intends it to be an analogy to Jesus as “Sovereign and Lord” in the previous verse” (p. 48).

Most Christians today think that Muslims and Jews worship the same God (nevermind that many also think the same of Buddhists [which are atheists] and Hindus and Mormons [which are polytheists]. We now live squarely in a time that one famous theologian calls “[Christless Christianity](#).” And we are seeing the fruits in almost every area of Christian influence, from worship to daily living to involvement in the world, Christians are losing their moorings.

These teachings of licentiousness and sensuality, **do they not stem first and foremost from an exchanging of Christ for idols?** That is what idolatry is, exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like man, birds, animals, and reptiles ([Rom 1:23](#)). And so I implore you friends, do not fall prey to cunning, smooth-talking people who claim to be Christians yet tell you that indulging your sinful passions in worship, family, job, or life is just fine with God. Such is an evil teaching, and God has already shown you that he judges such things in the end.

Much more fundamentally, are you trusting in Jesus, as your only hope of righteousness? Are you seeing and savoring more of him today than you were yesterday? Or are you satisfied to exchange Jesus for Lord, and perhaps one day the creator God for the god within yourself? Do not be fooled, but trust and obey; and God will keep you from the day of judgment.