

Jude

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[0 : 00] So, today, this little structure, what we're going to look at, say, our structure for looking today, we're going to do a preface, a very short preface, we'll call it a preface, then an introduction, and then we're going to run through what's in front of you, Jude, the book of.

It's 25 verses, you'll notice. So, we're going to look at the salutation, as it's usually called in these letters, and in this, in the book of Jude, that's just two verses, and then we're going to look at the doxology, the last two verses, 24 and 25, then squeeze them between there, we're going to just run through, generally, the contents of the letter.

So, most of the focus will be on, in terms of what I think is where this book is going, where this letter is going, we'll focus on, again, salutation and doxology, as it's called there on Jude, those two verses.

This is, time flies, doesn't it? This is the first Sunday in May already. And in this month, precisely on the 16th day of May, the movie Prince Caspian will be in a theater near you.

This version's been brought to you by. That's what they say. But I hope you're, you'll be looking for that movie, your humble servant revealing his cultural attainments here.

[1 : 38] I'm sure, I just can't wait. I love the first movie, and I'm sure I'm going to love the second. Again, Prince Caspian, from the chief actor in the movie, chief person, to whom the book and the movie are named.

You will recall, he echoes, if you're familiar with the Chronicles of Narnia, Prince Caspian obviously echoes Hamlet, in that the prince lives in a kingdom wrongly ruled by his uncle.

And the uncle is a usurper, and you find out that he is a murderer of Caspian's father. This is bedtime reading for the kids. I'm not giving anything away when I remind you that Aslan, the mighty Aslan of Narnia, summons the four Pevensie children back to Narnia to straighten out the mess.

That's the way it goes. In the Narnia world, you will recall, when appropriate, the lion, Aslan, roars. Does he ever.

The lion of the tribe of Judah knows how to make himself heard. And he does, doesn't he? Let the earth hear his voice. And the earth does hear his voice and will.

[2 : 59] So today we're going to look, again, at the book of, at the letter of Jude. A book which might be called, I think most appropriately, a kind of apostolic roar.

Mostly, again, at its opening and its closing, its salutation and doxology. The overhead that we'll be looking at, that's in front of you and that we'll have on the overhead, is the NIV, not the church as usual, what we use in the pew here, the RSV.

That's interesting, isn't it? There are, now at least, it wasn't the case a few generations ago, but it's certainly now the case. There are so many translations of the Bible.

Isn't that the case? Christianity, of course, has a high doctrine of scripture, might be called, but high in its own way. This book, unlike it is for other faiths, this book did not fall out of the sky in a divine language, never to be changed in translation.

No. The Bible, in a sense, is to be translated. It's an implication of different things in scripture, I take it. You can take these from different places in scripture, but for instance, the Great Commission says, famously, Matthew's Gospel, go into all the world, Jesus tells his disciples.

[4 : 22] That strongly implies, well, you're going to have to talk to them in their own language. You're going to have to learn their language. And you'll have to take the scriptures with you and turn them into their language.

It's strongly implied in the Pentecost moment, I take it. Then all heard, as the apostles first proclaimed, that Jesus is risen and that he is Lord. They all heard in their own language the marvelous works of God.

God likes to go to different languages. The scriptures can do that. They're supposed to. And I take it most important of all to summarize, to conclude this preface.

Each Christian, maybe you'll agree or disagree that this is a good picture of it all. Each of us as a Christian is to be a kind of translation of the Bible.

You ever thought of it that way? We work at its meaning in the real world, where we really live. The word becomes flesh.

[5 : 21] That's what God means it to. It has to be that way. The word became flesh. God means you to do that too. I want this word to become flesh, where you are, where you work, where you play, where you are.

The word will become flesh. So there it is. This word made flesh, it is like a lion who roars. It has to be heard in the world, over the din of the world's noise. And this voice will be heard. We can pray.

Let me pray now that the word will be heard in our midst. Lord, you've brought us together today to hear your word. May in fact that happen.

May we hear your word. May we assent to it. May we enact it in our lives. In Christ's name, amen.

[6 : 22] It is a Christian habit or a Christian discipline to turn to what we call the word of God.

We talked about this last week. I'm going to go over some of this stuff again. The Bible, as we talked about last week, the Bible is received in the church as one book.

It is received as the canon, the rule of our faith. The world, the place outside the church, again we talked about this last week, when it is reflective about these things, receives the Bible or regards the Bible as a collection of ancient documents.

The Bible as one book is thought in the world as a kind of historical accident and nothing more. And that makes all the difference. In the church, it is the canon, the rule of faith.

It is one book. Outside of the church, the Bible is one book by historical accident. There just happen to be covers between these various ancient documents. So, if the Bible is a canon, which means again a rule, one finally believes that the Bible has one author.

[7 : 30] Some power intended its presence and its meaning and put them together, these different books in the Bible, as a coherent structure.

But again, we remember the material fact, as the philosophers would say, or what stares us in the face, is that the book, the Bible, has many authors. Today, we are going to attend to one book in the Bible, as by someone named Jude.

This calls, it seems to me, for a deepening or a furthering or a complexifying of our understanding of what we are saying when we call the Bible, in this case, the one part of it, the book of Jude, why do we call it the Word of God?

What if we call the Bible, and again, we talked about this last week, and I find it very helpful, I'm happy to repeat this. What if we call the Bible, with some theological help, let's call the Bible a divine communicative act.

The Bible is the Word of God because God has spoken in a great mystery. He has spoken by human speakers and human writers, speaking and writing, and our God has, if you will, caught up or supervene to authorize their speech, their writing, as counting as his speech.

[8 : 48] This is his way, if you will, of breathing the scriptures, as Paul says to Timothy. This helps, I would contend, very much. A divine communicative act clarifies or deepens a phrase like, for me, the Word of God.

The Bible is, we must never stop to remember many types of speech. We will always remember this. It is command at times. It is today's speech we're going to attend to.

It's very much a warning speech. The Bible speaks in the tone of comfort. It is in the form of parable, prophecy, preaching, argument. It comes to us as poetry, as prose.

It is sometimes in the genre of wisdom literature. It is letter or epistle and more. What a book the Bible is. In the Bible, God, the God of Israel, who is the God and Father of Jesus, if you will, enters into conversation with its readers.

Conversation has many moments, doesn't it, if it's an extended conversation. So many different tones. Hence, in terms of scripture, that's why in scripture, one would think there are so many genres, so many types of speech there.

[10 : 07] In the Bible, there is command. Oh, there is true propositions. Things like God is love is a proposition. The Bible tells stories. A man named Jesus came into the public realm and traveled

and taught.

But the word of God, or this, again, divine communicative act, is more. It, in fact, demands or invites or encourages what we talked about last week.

It encourages and demands performance. It is a script that says you must live this. You must act this out in the theater of your life.

Jesus says things like this in the scriptures, doesn't it, in the gospels. If you want to know if my doctrine is true, he says you must obey. You must act it out. The Bible, again, is the word of God, therefore is a kind of transformative conversation.

It is a fact. It contains fact, but there is always more than fact. James, the brother, a brother of our author this morning, the brother of Jude, reminds us that demons believe facts, but these facts don't help them.

[11 : 20] They are not transformative. Conversation with God, apparently Augustine says this, is very much like conversation with another person. It may be quite straightforward a conversation.

You have had some this morning already over coffee. Then sometimes conversations become perplexing. And then upon further conversation, some of the perplexity hopefully is removed. But as often happens, alas, more perplexity is created. It's like being at school. God is the most interesting one you will ever attempt to know and have conversation with.

Surely you would agree with that. Our God reveals himself in truth, doesn't he? But invites us always into more truth. After all, he does tell us things like, my ways are not your ways.

It might be a bit difficult to get to know, God says to us. My ways aren't like yours. In the wisdom literature of the Bible, it goes so far as to say that God hides things.

[12 : 23] And he asks people to seek them out. What an interesting conversation partner is God. So today we're going to read and look at the Word of God as we read an ancient document by a guy named Jude.

We're listening to the Word of God as we read Jude. And we read it both alone, don't we?

Sometimes we read the Scriptures alone.

Today we read it as the church. And we read it as it stands in the canon. So enough of that. And off we go to looking at what you've got in front of you.

The book of Jude. This is just the intro. This book begins simply enough, doesn't it? I like the way this book, this letter, I keep calling it book.

It's all short. Short, short book. Letter. Begins by saying Jude. Couldn't be a more simple start.

Jude. And then Jude identifies himself.

[13 : 25] He says that he is a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. It's interesting. This James, apparently, does not need further identification.

Which is noted by commentators of this book. Other than his status as a brother of Jude. Because Jude tells us he's his brother.

There it is. There is a significant presence in the people, in the lives of the people who receive this little missive. They know of someone named James. And that's all he's known as.

So, if you will, reading canonically, that is with the help of the other books in this one book, Jude is a book, small, but it's with other books. And the church reads it as one book, strangely.

Reading canonically, and with a measure of reasonable historical pondering from sources outside the book, the way historians do this kind of stuff, literary critics, we know that this James is a brother of Jesus.

[14 : 35] So, we just pause for a moment, and just imagine then. Imagine then, our author. Just imagine who this guy is.

For the Christian, it brings you up into silence. This guy Jude, apparently, is a brother of James. A brother of Jesus.

Family. We know Jesus had an inner circle. The twelve certainly count as an inner circle. But even more than that, we know in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, especially the first three, the synoptics, as they're called, Peter, James, not the brother of Zebedee.

Peter, James, and John were the inner circle. According to John's Gospel, the family brothers of Jesus did not believe in him.

Remember that from John's Gospel? It's a very significant thing. His family had trouble with Jesus. His mother had trouble with him at times. At times, his family thought he was beside himself. Then, of course, we find in the book of Acts, brothers of Jesus, family brothers of Jesus, believing and

leading the early church.

[15:54] In some way, at least, the letter of Jude comes from one in, I will call it, the innermost inner circle of sorts. We can say that with some confidence.

Here is a piece of writing from the innermost inner circle around Jesus. Which may mean or indicate nothing, but surely, I would think, the believer certainly thinks it may reveal much.

Look at verse 20 and 21, which is not here. Look at verse 20 and 21. We hear this James urging his readers with language like this as you look at it.

I'll run through it. Pray in the Holy Spirit, he says. Keep in the love of God and wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ. He uses language like that, doesn't he?

To bring you to eternal life. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep in the love of God and wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ. This is what you might call early forming Trinitarian God reference.

[17:07] Come right to the heart of the point. A scholar as learned and as respectable and as respectable as a man named James Witherington III thinks this language might be, I don't want to overstate his case.

This is from memory. He thinks it might be, perhaps should be, sourced in Jesus. Think what that means. Here is the language of one close to the Jesus teaching in Galilee and in Judea, very close to him.

He's a family guy. Did Jesus, did Jude know Trinitarian language because his brother used such language? Did Jesus author Trinitarian language in the days of his flesh?

He might have, if Jude got this kind of language from his brother Jesus, he heard him talk about this kind of language. That's a remarkable pondering.

It might be the case. He calls himself here a servant of Jesus Christ. Given a family connection or what we might more suspiciously, you know, the way we moderns are, we might say, someone who participated in a family dynamic with Jesus.

[18:33] I wonder if in this description there is implied, I think there is, I can't, I have no authority for this, but I just feel it in my bones as I ponder this.

There's a kind of implied adoration. Jude has gone from being a brother to a servant. How did that happen? He's his brother.

From brother to servant. Indicates that some drama has surely occurred in the life of this man, Jude. No, Paul says he humbled himself, speaking of Jesus.

He humbled himself and took the form, took the form of a servant. Well, Jude, likewise. Jude has done this.

Jude has believed and is performing the gospel. He was my brother. We thought he was a bit of a loony. And now I'm his servant.

[19:37] He's come to know Jesus as someone that you would serve. How did this happen? He's performing the gospel. In this regard, the letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus, doesn't it, as our elder brother.

I love that idea, Jude. So we may all be a James or a Jude. We all have a divine elder brother. As an only boy between two sisters, I find this magnificent.

My sisters aren't here, so I can say that. We have an elder brother. I've never heard this suggestion, but I, just the other day, I don't know why, maybe it's the first time ever in Christendom it's been thought.

Imagine, get this on tape. Maybe, maybe Jude wrote the letter to the Hebrews. I wonder. He says in verse 3, Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, he wanted to write to them about something, but then he went into another mode, apparently.

Something was more urgent to be addressed. I wonder, I wonder if he wrote it, but who knows? Whatever, all we know is that he wrote this short note, we'll call it.

[20:59] Jude is a theologian, isn't he? His mind is steeped in scripture. We can say that safely. Notice that verse 1, B, as they call it sometimes, he says, To those who are called.

The called are hearers. Hearing is the chief form that obedience takes in Hebraic religion, as it might be called. If you go through the Old Testament, of course, all the time, you hear this kind of language, don't you?

It's hear this. Hear that in Isaiah. Listen to me. Hear the word. Give ear. It's always that way in the Old Testament.

Listen. And if you believe, you are one who has been called. Jude is very much in that mode of the use of language and of his conceptions.

I take it Jude is probably writing to Jewish Christians. I don't know, but he probably is. Or he writes to people apparently very much at home in the Hebrew scriptures, in what we call the Old Testament.

[22 : 09] And also, he's very much at home in books outside, apparently outside, he's at home in these books, apparently, books outside the canon, what's called the Apocrypha.

We do recall that on this same point, God called to Moses out of the burning bush. To Abraham he called. He called the prophets.

You know, the prophets often say things like the word of the Lord came to me. And it usually means, doesn't it, in the scriptures, it means that this call is an effective call. When God calls, it works.

It's an effective action. So Jude continues to those who have been called who are loved by God the Father, he says.

He wants them to know this is what you know. You are loved by God the Father. The kind of thing we take for granted, I take it, when we read the Bible.

[23 : 06] Or perhaps we secretly, really at some level, doubt this. We have it in contention in our minds and hearts. After all, there's too much trouble in the world, too many unexplained things in our lives.

What kind of love is this? Well, I think that Jude answers by implication. His letter's not directly about this. But at the end, by the time we're through the whole letter, we will have a go at answering how Jude unfolds, what the love of God, of the Father is.

But for now, we just note, as we hear Jude say, that we are loved of God. And then he says, still in the salutation, kept by Jesus Christ.

First note there, it's by Jesus Christ, or in Jesus Christ, or for Jesus Christ. Which I think, I take it, will amount to the same thing in meaning.

Kept. What does he mean by kept? Things like, I take it, kept by the risen one. Kept by the one who is able to keep you. Kept by the one who keeps all things in existence.

[24 : 24] Then we hear about mercy, as he ends the salutation, mercy, peace, and love, be yours in abundance. There, verse 2. Mercy, peace, and love.

So we receive from God. We receive mercy, peace, and love. Or is it that it's always there, but realized differently by different Christians?

I don't know. Jesus says, doesn't he, in the Sermon on the Mount, the measure you give will be the measure you get. I wonder sometimes if it doesn't work like this, do we grant to each other, perhaps at times a costly mercy, grant to the other a certain space to be who they are, give them peace, and give them your concern, give them your love.

And when we do that, we carve out in ourselves a greater capacity to realize the divine mercy, peace, and love that God gives us.

Surely this mercy, peace, and love is to be received and given to others. It isn't just a passing phrase, ah, yeah, mercy, peace, and love. That's the way religious people talk. We got that. God gave us that.

[25 : 40] Thank goodness. Let's get on with the letter, Jude. No, he says, no, you've received mercy, peace, and love. Let's give mercy and peace and love to one another. What if people come to learn his exchange and say, I like being there.

Don't go there often. But I sense their peace. The peace of Christ is with the Christians. They're not anxious. Their Lord has commanded them not to be anxious.

And the apostles whose teaching they submit to say, don't be anxious. I sense peace there, just quietly. Not perfect. They have their problems. I wonder, because we give mercy, peace, and love to one another.

I hope it is the case for us all. Then, you'll notice that at verse 20 and 21 on the sheets, not in front of us overhead, mercy and love appear again at verse 20 and 21.

Those verses that were referred to earlier as Trinitarian in form. They're obviously mercy and love. These things are on Jude's mind. Verse 3, at verse 3, he says, but you, dear friends, not at verse 3.

[26 : 56] At verse 3, notice that we're called dear friends at verse 3 on your sheet. He likes to call us dear friends. I think that's a sharing of mercy and peace and love.

You're not just a friend, you're a dear friend. Someone important to me. Someone I'd like to give good things to. But at verse 20 and 21, again, but you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

There it is. These are great themes in Jude. This faith, love, mercy and peace. Jude thinks in good future tense terms, doesn't he?

The fancy word for that is, do you like the big theological words? Eschatological. If you don't like that word, you've got to get the idea in your head because the New Testament thrives on this way of presenting things to us.

[28 : 02] It's a future tense world. Now, Jude says, God's love keeps. Now, he says, pray in the Holy Spirit.

Prayer, I think Jude means us to understand pray in the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a participation in God's conversation about us. The Holy Spirit is always dealing with you.

He's talking to the Son and the Father about you. You pray in the Holy Spirit. You begin to pray in that conversation. But then, in the future, then, mercy will come when Jesus Christ brings us to eternal life.

the fulfillment of mercy will come. Therefore, we may live in a waiting patience. There it is. Waiting patience. There's a lot in this letter just to ponder.

And now, there's the end of the salutation. I think that's a rich salutation. That's a good start to this little letter. And now, just a brief tour through the main body of Jude's letter.

[29 : 09] You want to have the handout in front of you. You'll notice at verse 4, we notice, first of all, that it is a letter addressed to the church. That's important to note, I think.

After all, this letter has a bit of a severe tone to it at times. It might be called a kind of judgment ode, a litany of warning. It exemplifies and validates theme preaching, I would think.

I would think Jude rehearses moments in Scripture, sometimes outside of Scripture, where judgment is revealed. So again, just very quickly, at verse 5, Jude talks about judgment in the desert for some after the people of Israel had experienced salvation out of Egypt.

Then in verse 6, he speaks very provocatively and interestingly, it seems to me, about judgment coming for angels who, he says, left their positions of authority.

He seems to know about these things. And, of course, famously, at verse 7, he speaks about judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah. Verses 8, 9, and 10 are interesting.

[30 : 27] They're some of the strangest or most intriguing in the New Testament. For some in the church who are embarrassed by a blunt supernaturalism, I think these verses are a real problem and are sometimes dismissed as crude myth.

Well, Chesterton said that orthodoxy is exciting and unbelief is boring. I think that's the case. I must confess, I simply love this picture of Michael, the archangel, disputing over the body of Moses with the evil one.

I take it, I want these verses to mean, in the discussions that you can tell me if I'm off base here, I think they warrant the cultivation of what is often called a mythopoeic imagination.

This Michael, I just love the thought of him. Churches are called after him, aren't they? Saint Michael and all angels. I'm sure people in this room have been to churches so named.

He is, in the scriptures, he's revealed to be a warrior angel. He does tough work on heaven's behalf. He is an archangel. How would one recognize this status?

[31 : 44] I take it when we get to heaven, we'll know. That's an angel. Oh, that's an archangel. There'll be a difference. All the company of heaven.

It's complicated up there, apparently. There. Not up there. He is, or may be, fierce in holiness, but he's meek in wisdom, Jude tells us.

He does not dare, you notice there, Jude says, to slander or accuse the evil one, but calls on his creator for such work. The Lord rebuke you.

Verse 9. Michael, the archangel, the warrior angel, to the evil one, the Lord rebuke you. I won't, but the Lord rebuke you, as they disputed about the body of Moses, which we're all familiar with, of course.

That comes in a book apparently called The Assumption of Moses. It's apocryphal Jewish writing, but a Jew knows it and incorporates information from it, you might call it information, into his letter.

[32 : 49] Then, starting at verse 11, we have three more judgment themes. Jude lays it on very thickly. They're briefly mentioned. He mentions, you'll notice there, Cain.

Cain, that scandalous figure in Genesis. Balaam in Numbers. Korah's rebellion from the book of Numbers.

It's almost as if Jude is saying to the people he's writing to, don't blink. Don't blink when you read the Bible. These stories, these narratives teach and we are meant to learn.

You think, maybe he'd stop now. But he doesn't. He doesn't. Verses 12 and 13, have a look at them. He calls them shepherds feeding only themselves.

Clouds without rain. Autumn trees without fruit. Verse 14, waves of the sea foaming up shame. And then he calls them wandering stars.

[33 : 56] These people he needs to speak harshly about. They are reserved, these wandering stars, for blackest darkness. Wow.

Verses 14 through 16 then tell us that their judgment will happen and this judgment is anticipated by Enoch, the seventh from Adam who prophesied about all of these things.

There you go. It's pretty heavy stuff of Jude. Salutation is rich.

and then there's this this light of judgment as he goes through scripture and other things other than scripture and talks about judgment.

It's very sobering. One of the good things about, it seems to me, one of the good things about what's called rather tediously now, but what's good about post-modernism is that it has brought back into our thinking and brought back into focus and shown, very much shown how important is the thing called rhetoric.

[35 : 23] Post-modernists talk a lot about rhetoric. They go to extremes about it. They tend to think all discourse is finally rhetoric. All discourse attempts to convince you of something.

All rhetoric has in it power. or wants to express power of some kind. If in our minds rhetoric equals just words or empty words, then this appears troubling.

But properly understood, it's not. There's surely a place for rhetoric. Say Jude had spoken otherwise, then we hear him speaking here.

Say he had said something like this. Certain paradigms of apostolic understanding are now being presented by some lacking in warranted character formation consistent with the received teaching. That's the way some people would talk. Jude doesn't want to talk that way. I think he could have spoken that way. He knows how to produce a rather calm prose, but he doesn't talk like that.

[36 : 28] No, he prefers, again, there are teachers in the church teaching error, and he says they're clouds without rain. They are trees without fruit.

They are twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up shame. He says they are wandering stars. Why does he talk this way?

There apparently is a place for this kind of talk. It is apparently just staying with the way it unfolds in this little epistle. This is the rhetoric of boundary keeping.

We are doing this in the Anglican Church right now. There is a rhetoric of boundary keeping, and it is meant to be memorable. Does that rhetorical speech sometimes when it is effective you remember it?

Who can forget Martin Luther King's thunder? He needed the thunder. So did Churchill need the thunder at times.

[37 : 27] It asserts importance. This issue must be addressed. It is urgent, says the rhetoric. It seems to me very important, I take it that it is very important to see that it is addressed to church leaders.

Apparently it is not addressed specifically here at least to the offending parties. I would think that is very important. He speaks here to church leaders. This little treatise contains something quite subtle, I think.

It is sort of hidden here. Did Jude plan it here for our discovery? I think he did. Let's not forget this wonderful Michael, St. Michael the warrior, the holy glorious archangel.

Remember Jude says that he refused to use, I will call it just severe speech in the presence of the evil one. The angel refused severe speech.

He deferred to his Lord. He said the Lord rebuke you. This is a focus, a topic that I take it Jude has thought about. Look at verse 15.

[38 : 40] It observes that one thing to be brought to judgment is harsh words that ungodly sinners have spoken about our creator.

Isn't that interesting? Harsh words hurled at God are going to be judged, Jude says. He's thought a lot about where speech is, where it goes, how it's used.

To harsh speech, to slander, to mere accusation, I take it Jude is saying to us, you must say no to that. Or we must learn to say no.

We've all sinned in this area for sure. But to what you might call true naming we are called. More, we should say to this performance we are called.

We need to perform beautiful Christian speech. Knowing ethical propositions about this subject is good, but so what?

[39 : 43] On the day of judgment, Jude's elder brother tells us, on the day of judgment, we will give an account for every idle word we have spoken. Jesus says that in the Gospels.

Something to look forward to. Every word we've spoken. Do we believe what our Lord says?

Jonathan Edwards said the day of judgment is going to be a very long day.

Don't think of judgment, oh, here's what you are. No, everything is going to be brought up. God honors you so much that he's not going to treat you casually.

It's rich stuff, our faith. Then, verses 22 and 23, as we head towards, time runs out here today.

Verse 22 and 23, as we go through the middle part of this letter, as I say, urges concern for those drawn away by this bad teaching. Be merciful, verse 22, be merciful to those who doubt.

[40 : 54] People who are getting caught up in bad teaching, be merciful to them. Now, finally, on to Jude's famous, I think we can call it famous. If there's one thing known, usually, about this epistle, this little note, it is the doxology.

The last two verses. Aren't these beautiful? Let me just read it. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. What an ending is here. We asked earlier, what is the love by which we are loved by God the Father, as Jude says?

Does Jude, does the Bible and the canon helping with Jude, tell us something about God's love?

Well, God is able, looking at this doxology, God is able, Jude says, to keep you from falling.

Why falling there, I wonder? I take it this is a falling away from salvation. God is able to keep you from falling.

[42 : 40] take it, the teaching office of the church, and we're all called, this is a Protestant doctrine, all of us at different times occupy teaching office.

The teaching office of the church is apparently not made passive or indifferent by her understanding of election or God's effective call, as we talked about earlier.

we must urge one another to be vigilant about what draws us away, about falling away from salvation. God is able to keep us from falling away.

Many things there are which draw away, don't we know it? So, love is able, love is able, love is involving, it wants to be with us and active.

Jude knew his brother or came to know his brother as God's love drawing near, didn't he?

Concrete, particular love, personal love.

[43 : 48] So, gospel proclamation, as I struggle to understand it, gospel rhetoric takes the particular form of speech about Jesus.

gospel rhetoric is always about Jesus, speech about him. God's love takes this particular form of beauty.

This is a rhetorical beauty that draws people to Jesus, the desire of the nations. It does not, if you will, sublimely overwhelm us, but takes this form.

You know how gentle the gospel is. It takes the form of speech. Some people say, well, if your religion is true, why doesn't God just show up? Why doesn't he just overwhelm me with a sublimity?

Well, it doesn't. Jesus is the beauty of God, the measured particular beauty of God in our midst, which is proclaimed by the church.

[44 : 57] It does not overwhelm us with a mere sublimity. hence, the canon, for instance, includes a little note from the brother of Jesus, named his brother Jude.

This is part of the beauty of the gospel, part of the beauty of the canon, this little letter from Jude. The doxology continues, he, this God, in fact, this Jesus, may present you without fault in his presence, this beautiful presence of God.

What is this, we can ask, this is a very modern philosophical question, what is this space, this place where we are faultlessly present?

That's a good question, it seems to me. It is the space of peace. God will give us a place of peace in his presence.

Jesus is our peace with God, mercy and peace. God will give you a place of peace in his presence. Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

[46 : 17] How abundant? God is going to place you mercifully with great joy, peacefully in his presence. What a gift the gospel is.

This peace is not the absence of strife, again. I take it this peace is not nirvana. It's not that kind of peace.

It is a peace with great, verse 24, a peace in which there is great joy. Joy, the serious business of heaven, C.S.

Lewis called it. glorious, the presence here is glorious presence. I think we can call it with John Bentley Hart, God's infinite beauty is there and it's then on display when we're in its presence. It begins there, if you will, to unfold its eternal beauty for us. This presence is an infinite presence. presence. It isn't to be a bit philosophical.

[47 : 28] It's not a totality. It's an infinity. There's a difference. You can't exhaust God. He's infinite. You'll just start to get to know him when he presents you in his presence with great joy, in peace.

And then you'll spend eternity exploring that infinity. It's not a totality. It's an infinity. Verse 24, we might call verse 24 doxology confessing.

Verse 25 is doxology praising in song, isn't it? Verse 25 does sing a kind of meaning or the apprehension of meaning.

These are the words that will justify us in using language like our God is infinite beauty. To the only God our Savior, verse 25, to that God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. What words? God invites us to enter into a conversation about himself at this point and to learn language like this which is about him.

[48 : 52] God deconstructs all deconstruction. All irony is swallowed up in fullness. This is the ultimate reality. This is God.

This mystery, it says, this mystery is before all ages. Notice how it ends. Before all ages and now and forevermore.

this is unthinkable presence, therefore, in glory. Glory, majesty, power, and authority as we race to our conclusion here.

Glory, majesty, power, and authority, says verse 25. What our culture doubts? This goes to show you how laid in the day it is in our world.

This is a, perhaps this is post-modernism in a sense at its best. our culture doubts that it is conceivable or possible to combine what verse 24 asserts with what verse 25 asserts.

[49 : 56] These things are inevitably, Derrida and Richard Rorty and others whose ideas seep through our whole culture, they would say, you know what these words are?

They're the deceptions of power. that's all they are. They don't find these words beautiful and ravishing. This is just a community's attempt at gaining power.

They deconstruct it. Now, you're after power over me. These things, they will oppress and destroy us, Aniche would say.

Away with this doxology. Bad. Get it out of the schools. Get God out of the schools. Get the churches as private as we can make them.

Don't let them out into the public world. They're too dangerous out there. Don't let them talk this way. One philosopher, I forget his name now, we need to be liberated, he says.

[51 : 03] We need to be liberated from any holy transcendence. We have to get rid of this, our culture is now telling us.

We read it a bit casually, maybe. This is our glory, this is our hope. But our culture, increasingly, it's becoming so, unbelief is getting clearer about itself.

This is bad, people are telling us. they just don't want this. The gospel witness, therefore, must be, I really am drawing to a close, the gospel witness must be, therefore, a kind of martyr's rhetoric, which will receive rejection in many forms.

Even when we talk this language to our culture, to unbelief as it gets more and more clear about itself, it will say, you as a witness to that, I want to reject you.

How severe the rejection is going to get, we don't know. But it wants to reject that. It may just be, have you ever experienced the little quiet, what Jim Houston would call the little white martyrdom, no blood is shed, the little white martyrdom, no blood shed, of a sneer?

[52 : 28] Is that your hope Afe? Get away from, back. I don't like you. Our culture doesn't like this.

Nevertheless, this doxology witnesses that this is not the rhetoric of manipulation. It is not the rhetoric of violence.

It is not the rhetoric of deception. But Jesus, the brother of Jude, is God's infinite beauty and in him, this whole letter tells us in a subtle kind of way, he is God's infinite peace that can give you peace. He can put you into a world, into a renewed creation, where there is no more violence, no more manipulation, no more coercive power.

we have to witness that the Trinity is perfect peace. The Creator is perfect peace. He'll bring us the perfect peace.

[53 : 39] It's a fallen world where power and manipulation, where language has become merely the rhetoric of I want power. The Gospel answers modernity's unbelief.

creating a good place for us in the presence of the infinite beauty is what Jesus has come to do.

Creating for us a good place in the presence of the infinite beauty is what Jesus has come to do.

This is glory, this is majesty, this is power, this is authority, this is the beauty of peace. Jude's tone must not be denied.

Therefore, at the end of the day, we can't deny it. We won't apologize for it. This beauty, this peace, hates sin and is going to judge it. This is a message that the church needs to hear.

So witnesses Jude and the full canon. I take it that in our best moments, which are rare, we wouldn't want it otherwise. We wouldn't want a God who somehow looks over sin, doesn't deal with it.

[54 : 50] He has to. There it is. There's a lovely sentence from a good Christian theologian I want to end with.

It seems to me it brings out, he's not talking about Jude. He's talking about the power of rhetoric and how it changes.

He talks about, this is from a Christian theologian, a believer. He talks about, quote, rhetorical excess that reconstitutes historical practice and understanding.

I think that's a profound sentence. There is a rhetorical excess he's talking about that reconstitutes historical practice and understanding.

By which, I think if he was here today, he'd say, yes, if you're taking Jude seriously, in these last two verses, this strange little note to us, he's saying to you that that rhetorical thing I've given you, this doxology you call it, is God's gift to you.

[56 : 06] This is his, God's conversation with us. God has given us this rhetorical excess and says, that will change the way you live and it will change your understanding about yourself.

What you really believe about your future will really shape how you live today. I am going to stand in the presence of a glorious presence, without fault and with great joy.

That's my future, what's yours? And I give to this God the confession that he is all glorious, all majesty, all power rightly belongs to him, a power which never manipulates, which is true and brings about peace.

This God has all the authority and it's all given to me through Jesus Christ and it's going to go on forever, before all ages, now and forevermore. Is that rhetorical excess or not?

That's total rhetorical excess, but it's true, it's God's way of talking, to us today. I love this God, this divine communicative act, God talking to you and I today, he says, I am going to give you this.

[57 : 23] Only God could talk like that. But this is his gift to us in conversation today. That's your future. Therefore, in this book, it's, I should have started by reading it, I realized, this guy says, guard this gospel, guard it.

If you've got bad teaching in your midst, do something about it. Guard it. This rhetoric is there to tell us how important that is.

Because God in his conversation says, that's what I'm giving you. So don't let anybody take that away from you. Guard it, my people, my community. Watch your boundaries, watch your borders, watch out for clouds without rain, trees that are supposed to be bearing fruit but aren't, water, wavy waters that are just foaming up shame.

What a rhetoric. It's important, he says. Get, come to grips with this stuff. That's God in conversation with us as your humble servant looks at the book of Jude today.

Excuse me for being a bit long, but that, obviously, this has reference with what we've been going through in this community for a long while now.

[58 : 37] How do reasonably, in gospel truth, even in gospel peace, talk about these big issues? But it has reference for all of life, I'm sure. I take it.

What a rhetorical excess. I love it. Maybe we should all, at some point, memorize the doxologies from Jude, the brother of James, and the brother of Jesus.

The brother. Imagine if someone said today, I'm the brother of Stephen Harper. I'll tell you, well, okay, that's not a great one.

I'll tell you what's really going on in Canada. This guy knew Jesus. Did they play games together, their little boys? They go to synagogue together, then he didn't believe, then he became his servant.

Ah, good stuff. I'll pray. Lord, thank you for our brother Jude. And we thank you that with Jude we have a mutual elder brother Jesus, who is putting us now and in the future into the presence Father, which is glorious, and where we'll begin a fullness of life that we can only now believe in by faith, but we do believe and we start to live in it now with great joy.

[60 : 00] give us the wisdom Lord, the hard won wisdom to think these things through as a community as we should. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So, please, get right to it.

Don't be shy. Where did I go off the tracks? Tom, where did I go off the tracks? You always have that lawyerly look about you. Well, I see a problem here, Your Honor.

Could you differentiate in relative to the issue of peace between the peace that we seek and we find for our hope versus the peace that other religions speak about, such as Pluto, where they're seeking peace, too.

Is it just another video or is there a real difference? May I ask, is the intent of your question or would a reasonable implication of your question be, how in the world are we going to talk about these things in a pluralist culture, reasonably?

[61 : 31] Yes, because peace is, in that place, it's deep. Yeah, yeah. all we need to do is die and go to the next level. But soon all of them, all of them arrive at the level of peace.

Well, one answer, it's not, I'm sure it's not, thanks for that question, one answer that you might attempt with a certain kind of conversation partner, obviously, is, is your world really consistent about the issue of peace.

If we Christians believe that the Trinity is an ocean depth, a tsunami wave of never ending peace, and this peace brings the creation to a perfect peace.

The mystery of iniquity now is what creates violence and manipulations of all kinds. So we think our witness about peace is consistent.

We can ask our conversation partners if their understanding of peace is really consistent. A lot of this rhetoric about infinite beauty and rhetorical excess is, I've learned this from a chap named John Bentley Hart, who argues very convincingly that modernity's materialism, which, when it's consistent, believes that all things begin with violence, violent struggle, that it has to inevitably lead to, amongst other things, say a fascist politics all the time.

[63 : 13] It has to. The world view, in fact, exalts conflict and violence. Whereas Christianity consistently and convincingly exalts peace reasonably and shows it to be a reasonable thing to believe that Christianity will give peace.

Anyway, that's not much of an answer. It's a bit abstract. Thank you, Tom. Well, that's a good question, though. Yes, sir. Yes, yes, yes, it has a subjective pull to it, certainly.

Not in our situation. It gives us the hope of a public peace, though, doesn't it, when the Lord returns. Peace as opposed to a round from God.

Yes, yes. Yes, yes. Yes, yes. Yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, I wonder if this was used in early Christians, like really early, like the near 50s, 60s, 70s.

Is this how Jewish Christians, a lot of them knew Jesus? These are the very words they used to say goodbye to one another or how they were in worship.

[64 : 48] I mean, most Christians would say that this book is one of their least favorite books in the Bible. Because at one reading, you have an unbelieving friend who says, I get to know the Bible, I've never read it.

Which I do? Oh, go read Jude. Read there about an angel fighting with the evil one over a body and you hear about rebellion and Cain and Sodom and Gomorrah and it's just, ah, mayhem.

The Bible is a crazy book. But it has its teaching moment in the canon. This is a very sobering thing, isn't it?

But it's got glory in it. It's bracketed by glory. For me? Yeah, yes. Going back to what you said about judgment, and by the way, well, this was great.

I'm one of those people that never took to this series before, but let me tell you a change on that.

How can we discern that these bad things are going on in churches without making a judgment about the very boundaries that you described?

[66 : 04] He describes the behaviors. He doesn't attach them to a particular person. So in a sense, they're given for our guidance. But, you know, if somebody in our Sunday school started preaching that the resurrection was a metaphor or a myth of some kind, would we not judge that person unfit to teach her?

Yes, well, I think so. So, there's something about judgment here that I don't get. He describes the behaviors that need to be judged in our own lives and in congregations and so on without attaching them to particular people.

people. Yes, yes. But if we have to deal with those, as in verse 16, grumblers, fault finders, you know, follow their evil desires and so on, if we have to deal with them, is our personal judgment of them not involved?

Yeah, yeah. That's, well, yes, one answer that I would give, and maybe it's inadequate for what you want here, but this is where Jude, as part of the canon, at least begins to help me.

We don't just have Jude about the faith. Jude is in the canon and it shows us how the Bible is to be unfolded.

[67 : 34] He goes to, he raises a theme, goes to different passages. So we see that that's one way that we're supposed to be interacting with the Bible. So, and therefore, this helping us and in light of the whole canon, we see that the church just does the job of discipline.

And sometimes it seems local and sometimes it seems other than local and sometimes it seems centuries long in its task. I mean, it's not an overstatement to say, correct me if I'm wrong, you historians of doctrine, but for about three or four centuries, the church wasn't totally clear about what to say precisely about Jesus at its outer reaches of confession.

There was a massive, most leaders in the church apparently in the second, third century, Yaroslav Pelikan and other great authorities on this speak to this, were what were called Aryans.

But finally, the church got around to saying, that's not true. And she got around to the true confession that Jesus is God from God. light from light, very God of very God, begotten, not made. That's not just empty poetry, that's a rhetoric of excess to exclude other kinds of language that you might use about Jesus. Like Jesus comes from God exclusively as the highest and most magnificent one in eternity that God created.

[69 : 03] And the church said, finally, no, he's not created. He is eternal. God from God, light from God, light from light.

That language, finally, that rhetorical excess, excludes any language which talks about Jesus in magnificent high terms, but states clearly or implies that he's a creature.

He is the second person of the infinite trinity. So there's, at that level, it might take a long time. Why that should be, I don't know.

Even at the level of, say, harsh speech, at the more, maybe concrete level. Like you're always, you come to Learners Exchange, there's always somebody who's always letting loose with harsh speech.

How do we discipline that person? Somebody who knows them takes them aside. And you've got to be very patient. Speaking of Yersle Pelican, he's wonderful. He says about Luther, said Luther could coo like a nursemaid and curse like a marine sergeant.

[70 : 12] But I take it Luther took responsibility for his speech. When he cursed like a marine sergeant, he thought it was necessary. When he called our late monarch, Henry VIII, the king of lies, for instance, I'm still offended.

He used to use really strong language, but he thought it was necessary. Our Lord, think how he spoke to the Pharisees. Or how John the Baptist was addressed, people.

You snakes. You vipers. So you just, boy, it's an interesting topic. Jude, Jude obviously gets, why Jude and James both have this talk in common?

The tongue is a fire stuff. Maybe in the family of Jesus, they had a lot of big fights. a lot of nasty, yes, sir. By the issue of peace, Jesus said, my peace I have given to you.

I think our peace only comes from Jesus in that we as human beings, I actually find peace that he's given to us. And back in verse one, we're kept by Jesus Christ.

[71 : 22] Yes. We just passed Ascension Day and Pentecost is next Sunday. And Jesus was teaching for three years.

And the disciples were in two years. And all through the whole process right up to the death of actually he was kept by they were kept by but they always kept falling away. and there were always men way up and they were always left. And then up into Pentecost four days after the Ascension Jesus kept showing himself to the disciples.

And then he ascended sorry the Ascension four days of the Ascension. and then he ascended and then then was Pentecost and he gave us the Holy Spirit which is keeping us.

Jesus keeping us. The Holy Spirit keeping us. So now we still fall away so it's still Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit that keeps us and it gives us peace.

[72 : 51] So we do strive but it's always a gift. The gift of peace or the gift of God's love comes to us from Jesus.

And in our day, they've actually peace or the people. So I think peace only comes to Jesus.

We cannot strive to his peace. peace. Yes. And yes, the first question, that's a practice, we have to end now, but we all have, we're increasingly, if we don't know, we're all going to have friends.

I have two friends right now in my life, acquaintances who are Buddhists. And they travel to Asia, go to temples, they're studying it, they want to practice it.

They would claim that Buddhism has delivered to them a peace that they haven't had in any kind of Western experience. So that, so I would, I know you would too, brother.

[74 : 01] Our peace is essentially eschatological. It has been achieved for us by Jesus. We get around, we don't talk about ourselves and our experience nearly as much as Buddhists do.

And a certain kind of a last pious Christian. They're obsessed about their experience, all the time. Our peace is in the future, in the mystery of Jesus.

That's how I would start talking to a Buddhist, for instance. In the mystery of his person is the peace of the cosmos and my peace too. Now I think it takes the form of patience.

Peace is mostly for us patient waiting. It isn't a psychological serenity all the time. peace. For some Christians it rarely is. Maybe because of their family background or something to do with their genetic makeup or their chemistry.

And they hear talk about peace and it becomes an oppression to them. They think there's some kind of theology you can plug into which will act like Prozac, which will make me a serene person.

[75 : 05] That's an oppression to those people. First off, it's in the future, your peace. in the world you shall have tribulation. Jesus promised it.

You will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. I think that goes to the heart of it. Bill knows more about these things than me. I mean, he's not talking today.

Oh, thank you people. Thank you.