

Jude stresses the importance of striving against the false teachings of his day. He wants us to recognize the characteristics of false teachers whose lifestyles reveal that they are not following Jesus Christ but are instead following the sinful desires of their flesh.

Theologians accept that Jude was the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Jude, like the other half-brothers of Jesus, did not initially believe that Jesus was the Christ but later came to faith after the resurrection. Because the contents of this epistle parallel the second chapter of 2 Peter, theologians also believe that Jude wrote this between Peter's writing and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

³ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation” - It seems Jude's original intention was to write concerning salvation and presumably the blessings of God associated with it but circumstances caused him to change his mind.
“it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you” - Jude recognized that there was a more pressing subject to write about.
“that ye should earnestly contend [struggle; fight] for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” - The teachings on faith in Jesus Christ were being contaminated by false teachers and so Jude saw the need to encourage the saints to fight for the purity of the gospel. Jude will not describe the false teachings but instead describes the behaviors of the false teachers themselves.

⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For there are certain men crept in unawares” - Men who have infiltrated the church under the guise of being godly teachers but are in fact teaching error and false doctrine.
“who were before of old ordained to this condemnation” - Scripture had already warned of such teachers of error and false doctrine and the judgment had already been decided for such people that lead others astray from the truth of the gospel.
“ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [unbridled lust]” - These men pretend to be godly but instead have wicked hearts, using the grace of God as an excuse to pursue their lusts. God's grace is never a license to sin.
“and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” - These men, by their actions and their teaching, reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They do not obey Him because doing so would force them to deny themselves of satisfying their fleshly desires.

⁵ I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. ⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. ⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this” - Jude wants to remind his readers of certain OT examples of God judging sin. Like these OT examples, these men teaching errors and a false gospel will not escape the judgment of God.
“how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not” - Even though God brought the entire nation out of Egypt in Moses' day, many died under God's judgment for their rebellion and unbelief during their 40 years in the wilderness. They did not get a free ticket into the promised land nor a free ticket to do as they pleased.
“And the angels which kept not their first estate...he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” - Even angels are not immune to the judgment of God. This example most likely refers to Gen. 6:1-4 where angels took wives of the children of men and bore children.
“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha...are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” - God made an example of Sodom and Gomorrha by pouring down fire and brimstone upon the cities for their sins of fornication.

⁸ Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. ⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

“Likewise also these filthy dreamers” - Just like the OT examples Jude cited, these false teachers are guilty of similar sins. He calls them “filthy dreamers” because they follow the wicked imaginations of their hearts rather than obeying God.
“defile the flesh” - They have few moral constraints and so they defile their flesh through their immoral lifestyle.
“despise [reject; refuse] dominion [authority; government]” - They want the freedom to do whatever their flesh desires and so they reject any authority, human or divine, that would restrain their behavior.
“speak evil [blaspheme] of dignities [anyone worthy of glory, honor, or praise]” - These “dignities” could be anyone from a human ruler to God Himself. These men hate anyone who would exercise authority over them (including God) and so they speak evil of them.
“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses” - Jude is referring to an account recorded in a Jewish text called the “Assumption of Moses.” According to this extra-biblical text, after Moses died on Mt. Nebo after seeing the promised land but not being allowed to enter, God sent Michael the Archangel to bury Moses in a secret place. However, Satan apparently wanted the body of Moses to use for his own purposes and fought with Michael over the possession of it.
“durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” - Unlike these arrogant false teachers, Michael recognized his lack of authority over Satan. Even though he was a holy angel of God, he deferred the rebuke of Satan to the One who did have the authority: the LORD Himself.

¹⁰ But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

“But these speak evil [blaspheme] of those things which they know not” - They are incapable of understanding spiritual things and thus they blaspheme these things, either ignorantly or intentionally. When it comes to the things of God, they literally do not know what they are talking about.

“but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves” - Their understanding of spiritual things is no better than that of a brute beasts, for they take a natural (unspiritual) view of things. They follow their natural understanding and thereby defile themselves because they do not understand the things of God.

¹¹ Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

“Woe unto them!” - They are destined for the judgment of God.

“for they have gone in the way of Cain” - Cain brought the sacrifice that he wanted to bring, instead of bringing one based on faith (Heb. 11:4a *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...”*). Likewise, these false teachers follow their own preferences instead of being obedient to God in faith. When God doesn't bless them for their efforts they become jealous of those that God is blessing: **1 John 3:12** *“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”*

“and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward” - They like using their position as a “man of God” for personal gain, which was Balaam's error.

“and perished in the gainsaying of Core” - In Num. 16:1-32, 250 Jewish leaders, led by Korah, rejected Moses' God-given authority and suffered the judgment of God. These false teachers are guilty of the same sin because they “despise dominion” and “speak evil of dignities” and will suffer the same fate.

¹² These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³ Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

“These are spots [stains] in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear” - They are shameless gluttons during fellowship meals, likely positioning themselves first in line for the food. They turn a meal intended for showing love to one another into an exhibition of gluttony and selfishness.

“clouds they are without water, carried about of winds” - Jude uses illustrations of things that have the appearance of producing something useful but deliver nothing. He first describes the false teachers as “clouds without water.” Water was a precious resource in that day so the hope of rain was a welcome sight. However, these false teachers are like clouds moving from place to place as if they are going to produce rain and yet none ever comes.

“trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots” - Next is the description of a tree that ought to be producing edible fruit, but any fruit found has withered. They are also described as being without fruit because the tree is dead. In fact, it is twice dead because not only did it die in the ground, it has been pulled up by its root so that there is no hope of life in the tree. Such are these false teachers because they are not rooted in Jesus Christ and thus will never bear spiritual fruit because they are dead in their sins.

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame” - Waves of the sea look large as they come in toward shore but as they hit the beach they fizzle out to nothing but white foam. The false teachers act like they have a powerful ministry but they never produce anything of spiritual benefit, fizzling out like the white foam of the waves.

“wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” - The word for “wandering” is where we get our word “planet” because ancient astronomers noticed that some “stars” seemed to wander around in the sky rather than being fixed in place like the other stars. We now know that these “wanderers” are the planets in our solar system but the ancients could not distinguish them from real stars without the aid of telescopes. Likewise these false teachers seem to wander around, never getting anywhere or accomplishing anything spiritually and their destiny is the darkness of hell forever.