**Contend for the faith** Text: Jude v1-3

Years ago while living in India we were driving to town in a jeep. An evangelist was staying with us at the time and he was sitting in the back with our children. After many long trips our children had become used to listening to stories, so they asked this man to tell them a story. ‘I will tell you a Bible story’ he said. In unison they replied, ‘Not another Bible story. We know all the Bible stories’. Their missionary parents kept silent with embarrassment. Those children are now grown up and telling their own children Bible stories, but many grow up thinking they know everything there is to know about God and about Jesus after a few years in Sunday school.

It is said that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, and this is often true when it comes to the Bible. Ignorance of the Bible is widespread today, even in the church. In Africa it is said that the church is a mile wide and an inch deep; and so we hear of the church executing witches and the like. In the west we see mainline churches supporting homosexual marriage. We also see individual churches popping up with a focus on some particular doctrine or practice such that they lose sight of the gospel itself. If they themselves do not drift from the truth they become vulnerable to being led into error.

In looking at the NT letters, letters written by the apostle Paul, Peter or John, and even this letter by Jude, notice that most of them are directed at error or false teaching entering the church. We find Paul urging Timothy to ‘fight the good fight of faith’ as he confronted men who wanted to argue about anything and everything, men whose only aim was to get rich, and men who wanted to throw of all moral restraint (1Tim 6:12, 2Tim 6). Peter similarly warned the elect of God against false teachers who were ruled by the lust of the flesh, men who even denied the Lord (2Peter 2:1, 14). The used, or misused, the gospel of grace as a licence for immorality.

We will notice considerable overlap between Peter and Jude as we look at this short but powerful letter penned by Jude. It is a letter that is somewhat neglected in churches today; when was the last time you read or heard read this letter? The beautiful benediction, of course, is well known and recited. As we look at the opening words of this letter today, we will do under four subheadings: author, audience, greeting, and goal.

**1. Author**

Letters written in the first century adhere to a certain structure in which the writer first identifies himself and then identifies his audience. Jude identifies himself as Jude, or Judas, or in Hebrew ‘Judah’. Being one of Jacob’s twelve sons, Judah was a popular name- that was until a man called Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and went and hanged himself. I do not know anyone called Judas, although I have met a Ben Hur and a Hitler Singh! There was a second apostle called Judas or Thaddaeus (Luke 6:16, Mat 10:3 Acts 1:13). But there was also a Jude or Judas among the half-brothers of Jesus; James being another half-brother (Mark 6:3). These brothers did not follow Jesus until after his death and resurrection (Acts 1:14). James became an elder and leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 17:13, Gal 1:19). His prominence could be the reason Jude refers to James as his brother (v 1) - his father Joseph had long since died.

But before identifying himself as the brother of James he identifies as ‘a bondservant of Jesus Christ’ (v 1). Even though Jesus was his half-brother he knew him a Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was first and foremost a bondservant of Jesus Christ, like the apostle Peter (2Peter 1:1). It is true that Jesus called his disciples ‘friends’ (John 15:15), and as believers we are in Christ as adopted children of God, but let us remember how Jude refers to Jesus even when he was his biological half-brother. We are to call ourselves servants not brothers of Christ.

**2. Audience**

Letters are written with an audience in mind and are sent to that person or persons or church. Paul wrote to Timothy, and John to Gaius; Paul also wrote to churches. Some letters it seems were intended for circulation among churches in a region. This letter penned by Jude, like that of 2Peter, seems to be written with a wide audience in mind, and audience of all God’s elect. If you are one of the elect then this letter is for you, even if you are living two thousand years after it was written. You belong to the church that is a continuation of the NT church. Our doctrines are the same and the problems and challenges we face today are essentially the same.

With regard to the dating of writing, the parallels between this letter and that of 2Peter suggest a time around 65AD. This is significant in that the false teaching was not really Gnosticism or a denial of the Trinity that John was countering in his much later written letters. Some Gnostics revelled in immorality but not necessarily for the same reason as these earlier heretics. Church goers who are not true believers will find a way to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1John 2:16).

Jude, as we will discover, liked the number three. He describes his audience in three ways, and later greets them with three words. His audience are ‘called’, ‘sanctified’ or set apart by God the Father, and ‘preserved’ or kept by Jesus Christ (v 1). Anyone who believes in Jesus does so because they have been called by God (John 6:44). By his Spirit, God quickens our dead hearts, making us alive in Christ. Those whom he predestines he calls, and these he justifies (Rom 8:28). Charles Spurgeon, in his book, ‘Lectures to my Students’ wrote: ‘I believe in the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards. And he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I could not find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love’. How tragic that some think they are saved by their good works, and others that by their own free will they turned to God and exercised the faith necessary to be saved.

Jude assures us that we are called, that we are set apart and loved by God, and that we are preserved or kept in Jesus Christ. He does not mention the Holy Spirit, but God calls us by his Spirit, so all three persons of the Trinity are referred to in these three wonderful truths of salvation. The third of these truths, being kept in Christ or by Christ, is a great comfort is it not? It is a truth we know as the doctrine of assurance, which follows from the doctrine of election. It was a truth uppermost in the thoughts of Jesus when he prayed for his disciples saying, ‘I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me I have kept and none of them is lost, except the son of perdition’ (John 17:11, 12). No one is able to snatch us out of the hands of our all-powerful Saviour and Lord. We are saved by the grace and power of God and we stay saved or are kept by his grace and power.

Jude’s benediction that we referred to, is wonderfully comforting because he speaks of ‘Him who is able to keep you from stumbling’ (v 24). As believers we continue to live in this fallen world. We face trails and temptations almost every day. Like the disciples on the lake, we will encounter storms that threaten to drown us but, in the words of a chorus I once heard, ‘With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm, as we go sailing home’.

**3. Greeting**

‘Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you’ writes Jude as he greets his audience (v 2). Paul and Peter wrote, ‘Grace and peace’ (1Peter 1:2, 2Peter 1:2) while John wrote, ‘Grace, mercy, and peace’ (2John v3). We expected Jude to have three elements in his greeting! Peace is common to all these greetings because Jesus promised peace to all his disciples (John 15:27). Peace is a most precious gift that we receive for the Lord when we believe, peace with God and peace with one another. By greeting believers in this way, we remind them of this peace. Mercy and/or grace are also common to these greetings. Mercy refers to the Lord’s compassion, even pity, upon us as lost and hopeless sinners. Mercy rules out merit. None of these greetings refer to the achievements or works of fellow believers. Paul was ready give thanks to God for the life and ministry of those he wrote to, but that is all.

Love, the third element of this greeting, is unique to Jude. Even the apostle who writes, ‘God is love’ and, ‘Beloved, if God so loved us we also ought to love one another’, does not actually greet anyone with ‘love’, although he does speak of truth and love (1John 4:8, 11, 2John v3). Love, like peace, is a gift of God, something we receive in our hearts by His Spirit (1John 3:16, Gal 5:22). Jude’s greeting is that these gifts ‘be multiplied to you’. He is praying for the Lord to bless anyone who reads his letter with ever increasing knowledge of the mercy, love, and peace that is found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**4. Contend for the faith**

Jude begins his letter proper in verse 3 with, ‘Beloved’. He started out with the intention of writing ‘concerning our common salvation’. He was going to share truths of the gospel in Jesus Christ. Like most in the early church, he first heard the gospel from the apostles (v 17). Although Jude, as a half-brother of Jesus, watched Jesus grow up, saw his mighty works and heard his wonderful words, he did not believe until joining the apostles after the resurrection (Acts 1:14), at the same time as his brother James. And the things that he learned he was eager to pass on to others. He wanted to remind them of the wonderful doctrines of grace, of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He wanted to encourage them in living according to the commands of Christ. If he was in contact with the apostle Peter, as seems to have been the case, he would have been eager to share things being taught by the apostle.

But his initial intention for writing suddenly changed. Jude ‘found it necessary’ to urge them to ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’ (v 3). He must have encountered or heard of false teachers entering churches, undermining the gospel and unsettling faithful believers. If he was in Rome or any other place in the Empire he would have faced threats or persecution from pagans, but an even greater threat was posed by false teachers creeping into the church unnoticed, judging from the Jude’s urgent call to contend or strive for the faith- the Greek word sounds like the word ‘agonise’. Both Jude and the apostle Peter condemn false teachers in no uncertain terms.

Church history, including the Reformation of the sixteenth century, teaches us that the greatest threats to the church of Jesus Christ come from within. The church is threatened when the authority of the Bible is undermined, or when it is relegated to second place behind the teaching or traditions of men. When the doctrines of grace are not believed or taught, Christ’s commands are not obeyed, lives become immoral, and worship is corrupted. We continue to face the threat of liberal theology that entered the church almost two hundred years ago. We see it in churches that accept Darwinian evolution, pluralism, and progressive politics, including homosexual marriage. So let us listen to this bondservant of Jesus Christ called Jude and ‘contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints’.

**Ungodly men in the church** Text: Jude v4-10

Jude ‘found it necessary’ to write this letter urging believers in the church to ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’ because certain men were creeping into the church promoting unorthodox teaching and immoral conduct (v 3, 4). Jude’s assessment of such men is frank and uncompromising. He speaks in a way today’s liberals and post-modernists find offensive; he calls them ungodly men, ‘long ago marked out for this condemnation’ (v 4).

The apostle Paul denounced Judaizers for ‘preaching a different gospel’, and perverting the wonderful gospel of grace (Gal 1:6). They were demanding that all believers be circumcised, provoking Paul to say, ‘I could wish that they go the whole way and emasculate themselves’ (Gal 5:12 NIV). The men Jude condemns were not Judaizers but libertines or antinomians. They were turning the grace of God into a licence for immorality as they ‘denied Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Master’ (v 4 ESV). They were saying, ‘let us sin that grace may abound’, and, ‘if we are saved by grace alone and are not under the law then we are free to sin with impunity’ (Rom 6:1, 15). Such men may have been in the church at Corinth where ‘a man had his father’s wife!’ (1Cor 6:1).

When the authority of the Bible is undermined, the gospel itself is threatened. When preachers ‘reject authority’ and ‘defile the flesh’ they have departed from the gospel to preach words that have no power to change sinful hearts, or contain evil behaviour. Such preachers might be praised by men, but they are condemned by God. They think they are being modern and progressive but there is nothing new under the sun. ‘They wilfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth’, and that the earth was flooded because of wickedness, and that this present world is reserved for fire (2Peter 3:5-7). The gospel will always be offensive to those who prefer lies to the truth, and who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19).

Anyone who thinks that God will not judge ungodly people, people who fail to fear God and who disobey the commands of Christ, need to think again. Jude reminds them of the Scriptures they once knew but have since departed from in unbelief. He reminds us of the Scriptures that we might identify and reject these ‘dreamers’ and deceivers. He reminds us of three famous, or infamous, cases of divine judgment in the Bible, namely, Israel’s rebellion in the desert, angels who left their own abode, and immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah. ‘Authority not respected’ is our fourth subheading.

**1. Israel’s rebellion in the desert**

Enshrined in the history of Israel is the exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai, the forty years in the wilderness, and entry into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Every Israelite knew this history, except when they turned away from the Lord to worship idols. Every person in our society once knew this story also, but as people have turned away from the Lord to worship idols biblical ignorance has reached epidemic proportions.

This said, you may not know exactly why the people spent forty years in the desert. It was because of the rebellion led by ten of the twelve tribal leaders sent to spy out Canaan, as recorded in Numbers 13 and 14, and Deuteronomy 1. They did not believe the Lord’s promise to give them the land of Canaan. A whole generation was overtaken by an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God (Heb 3:12). As punishment for rebellion, the Lord declared that every man twenty years old and above would perish in the desert. Having saved his chosen people out of Egypt, the Lord ‘afterward destroyed those who did not believe’ (v 5). The apostle Paul similarly reminded the Corinthian church of God’s punishment of his covenant people in the desert (1Cor 10:1-5). Like Jude, he urged the church to remember this story because it is an example of God’s righteous anger and his power to punish those who harden their heart in unbelief.

**2. Angels who left their own abode**

Like Peter, Jude writes of angels, who did not keep their proper place in the created order, as being ‘reserved … for the judgment of the great day’ (v 6, cf. 2Peter 2:4). Peter was warning believers of false teachers secretly bringing destructive heresies into the church, heresies that ‘denied the Lord who bought them’; these teachers also promoted the lusts of the flesh (2Peter 2:1, 14). Jude, as we see here, was also warning believers of men creeping into the church who denied Jesus as Lord and Master, and promoted sensuality.

Angels do not belong to the realm of human beings, unless sent by God for a specific purpose. So what is the story or incident that Jude is referring to here in verse 6? He is referring to the Bible, to a passage in the OT that we struggle to understand in Genesis 6; the account of Sodom and Gomorrah is just a few chapters later in Genesis 19. We understand the ‘sons of God’ in Genesis 6:2 to refer to angels (cf. Job 1:6). Angels are ‘ministering spirits’ created by God (Heb 1:14). They were not created with bodies like ours but can take on human form to communicate with men or women. But for angels to lust after women and marry them was not part of God’s design (Gen 6:2).

The reason why Jude refers to these angels who sinned is that God punished them. He reserved them in everlasting chains and in darkness for judgment on the great day (v 6, 2Peter 2:4). If God judged angels who sinned by despising divine authority, how much more will he judge human beings who sin by rejecting the authoritative word of the living God (Heb 10:31). God’s authoritative word is found in the Scriptures, and in the gospel of Jesus Christ, ‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ (v 3).

**3. Immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah**

The most widely used example of divine judgment is that of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The prophets used this example, as did Jesus and the apostles (e.g. Isa 13:19, Jer 50:40, Mat 11:24, Luke 17:29). After referring to the judgment of angels who sinned, and to the people of Noah’s day, the apostle Peter added this example: ‘And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction’ (2Peter 2:6). Jude writes of these cities, ‘They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire’ (v 7).

These two cities were on the plain of Jordan. Abraham’s nephew Lot chose to go and live on this plain and pitched his tent near Sodom (Gen 13:12). The people living in these cities had ‘given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh’ (v 7), meaning they were involved in perverted sexual practices and shameless homosexuality (Gen 19:5). The ‘certain men’ corrupting the gospel of grace and the authority of the Bible may well have been caught up in such perverted sexual practices (v 4). The men of Sodom came to Lot’s house wanting to rape his male visitors (Gen 19:5). He was ‘oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked’ (2Peter 2:7).

God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, totally and permanently destroying all people and places in these cities. Jude speaks of ‘eternal fire’, which is how Jesus refers to the destiny of the wicked: ‘Everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ (Mat 25:41). Everlasting fire and punishment is the opposite of everlasting life. Like the angels who sinned, people who sin and fail to repent are reserved for judgment on the day of the Lord, and eternity in hell. The sin of Sodom continues today. Our society and our laws might say what was happening in Sodom was not sinful but the facts of history remain- Sodom was turned to ashes; and the God who condemned Sodom is the same yesterday, today and forever.

**4. Authority not respected**

Jude reminds men and women who were called, justified, and sanctified by the grace of God, of the history of God’s dealing with those who rebel and reject God and his commands. This was not an academic exercise but a solemn warning to anyone who rejects God and his commands today. Such men were creeping into the church back then, and they continue to creep in today. Modernists started criticism of the Bible in the late nineteenth century. They started rejecting the authority of the Bible, calling it an old book that need updating on the basis of modern, rational thought, and science (evolution). Anything supernatural was explained away or denied; angels, and Satan were no longer real. Jesus was only a man, a good man and a good teacher but only man whose murder was tragic.

Modernists replaced the authority of the Bible with the authority of scholars and scientists; the Church of Rome had long since replaced the authority of the Bible with church tradition. The doctrine of the verbal, plenary, inspiration of the Bible is denied by modernists. This is why I declare this truth every time I read the Bible- the holy, inspired and infallible word of God. Modernists hate these words. When the authority of the Bible is rejected, what authority do people have to direct them in how they are to live (Shorter Catechism Q2)? All they have are natural instincts, instincts directed by a sinful nature. Even these are rejected by some as they engage in perverted behaviour.

Jude was warning believers of ungodly men who denied our only Lord and Master, and turned the grace of God into a licence for immoral living (v 4). After reminding them of the angels who lusted after the daughters of men, the men in Sodom who lusted after ‘strange flesh’, and the Israelites who rebelled in the desert, Jude says, ‘In the same way these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of dignitaries’ (v 8). Why ‘dreamers’? Maybe they believed in dreams and visions more than the words of the Bible; there is no lack of such people today. More likely however, they were out of touch with truth and reality; there is no lack of people like this either! Dreams are not reality. There are spiritual realities of course. God is a spirit. Angels are spiritual beings. Things that are not seen are as real as the things we see. ‘If these men had begun in the spirit as normal Christians, they end up in the flesh’ writes Matthew Henry.

The ‘certain men’ that Jude has in mind become ‘these dreamers’ and then simply ‘these’ in verse 10. These ungodly men ‘reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries’ or glorious ones (v 8). ‘Their fault is not in their understanding but in depraved wills and their disordered appetites and affections’ writes Henry. Their lives are marked by rebellion against human authorities and even the authority of God. They are determined to be autonomous, to live by their own rules and do what they like- ‘no one is going to tell me what to do!’ ‘To hell with you and your Bible’ they will say.

People speak like this, and worse, because they deny the reality of hell- most like the idea of heaven! They speak evil of spiritual realities and persons, using the name of almighty God and Jesus Christ in their frequent cursing. Jude, like Peter, says that even angels do not bring a ‘reviling accusation’ against adversaries in the heavenly realms (v 9, 2Peter 2:11). In the book of Job we read about a council in heaven to which the sons of God (angels?) came, and Satan also (Job 1:6). It may have been a setting like this at which the archangel Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses.

Where did Jude get such a story? From an apocryphal book called, ‘The Assumption of Moses’? The Lord buried Moses in a place unknown to men (Deut 34:6). This may have started speculation among the Jews, which ended up in this book. Jude is not entering into the speculation but merely using this story to illustrate his point; namely, that even the archangel did not start cursing and screaming against the devil but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’!’ (v 9).

Arrogance, combined with ignorance, makes for men Jude describes as ‘brute beasts’ (v 10). ‘These speak evil of whatever they do not know’ (v 10, 2Peter 2:12). Men who have nothing to say are often the loudest and most stirring speakers. ‘Professing to be wise they became fools’ says Paul (Rom 1:22). If you tell a lie often enough, and with passion, you will get some to believe you. In time you may get many to believe you, and declare your lie to be truth. We see this so often- Islam, evolution, man-made climate change?

Men claimed to be knowledgeable, and even to speak with special knowledge (Gnostics), but they were as ignorant as animals. Ironically, todays ‘experts’ actually claim to be cousins to the chimpanzee. Modern-day deniers of biblical authority look to animals for wisdom about how to live. ‘Are monkeys monogamous’ they ask? If not they say we can also be polygamous. If they find a homosexual gorilla these men claim to right to be homosexual. Brute breasts are ruled by instincts, and so are ungodly men creeping into the church. And like brute beasts they will be trapped, often in their own words or behaviour, and destroyed.

As believers we must reject anyone who creeps into the church believing another gospel and engaging in immoral behaviour. We must reject anyone who rejects the authority of the Bible because this is where Jesus Christ is revealed as Saviour, Master and Lord. We must reject anyone who uses, or misuses, the grace of God to indulge the flesh. We must avoid being hypocrites of course, and walk in the truth of the gospel ‘once for all delivered to the saints’.

**Woe to them** Text: Jude v 11-16

Jude wanted to write to believers in the church about ‘our common salvation’, about the wonderful doctrines of grace found in the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord (v 3), but he ended up writing a very different letter. Why? Because he was concerned about ungodly men who had infiltrated the church. They were undermining the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, denying the sovereignty and lordship of Jesus and turning the grace of God into a licence to live by the lusts of the flesh. Like the apostles, he condemns these false teachers in the strongest of terms. There are false teachers in the church today, men and women who deny divine creation, who call the stories of the OT myths, who deny the virgin birth, and reject the resurrection of Jesus on the third day. There are also those who promote homosexuality, drink and drugs. How can such people be called Christians? They are, but not by us! We must hold fast to the gospel handed down to us in the pages of the Bible.

The term ‘Woe’ sounds ominous, and it is, at least in Scripture, where it is found over a hundred times. It is like pronouncing a curse on something or someone. The prophets had cause to use this term as they denounced ungodly people in Israel (Isa 5), and in Babylon (Hab 2). But it is Jesus who uses this word the most, pronouncing eight woes upon the Pharisees in one speech (Mat 23). Seven times he calls them hypocrites, and five time calls them blind or blind guides. He concluded this speech saying, ‘Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell! (Mat 23:33). The apostles and Jude echo such words when they condemn false teachers found in the NT church. ‘Woe to them!’ writes Jude.

Jude has already reminded the church of three instances of divine judgment upon sin as recorded in the OT: angels who left their proper domain and await ‘the judgment of the great day’, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who were destroyed after giving themselves to sexual perversions including homosexuality, and the people of the exodus who rebelled against Moses and against God and perished in the desert. These people sinned against God, against his revelation in the creation or his spoken commands. The false teachers were similarly rejecting the authority of God, or his appointed representatives, and would face divine judgment.

Jude obviously knew the Scriptures, as in the OT, and so must we. He was a Jew, and so were many in the church, but the OT is not just for Jews, it is for all Christians, for all believers. I have recently reminded you of the stories recounted by Jude in case you had forgotten them, especially stories from the Book of Numbers. From three examples of God’s judgment upon ancient peoples or angels, Jude turns to three examples of judgment upon individuals from ancient times, namely, Cain, Balaam and Korah. If we view verses 11-16 as a sermon, or the second part of a sermon begun in verse 5, we can identify an exposition of Scripture, an application, an illustration, and another application.

**1. An exposition of Scripture**

All sermons should, by definition, include an exposition of Scripture. Even inspired writers like Peter and Jude, and Jesus himself, teach from the Scriptures. Peter writes of prophecy as men, ‘who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’ (2Peter 1:21 NIV). If we deny the inspiration and authority of Scripture we are, of course, left with no foundation for a sermon. Jude believed the stories of Cain in Genesis 4, of Balaam in Numbers 22, and of Korah in Numbers 16, to be historical not myths. These were historical persons, men who sinned, who refused to repent, and who were judged by God.

Firstly, Cain. Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, born after his parents sinned and were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Cain the farmer brought an offering of fruit to the Lord but the Lord did not respect Cain and his offering (Gen 4:5). An offering must come from a sincere, God-fearing heart. Cain got angry, and rather than ‘doing well’ as the Lord told him, he let anger rule in his heart. That anger was directed towards his brother Abel whom he murdered in cold blood. The way of Cain is the way of self-rule and jealousy, of rejecting divine advice and authority.

Secondly, Jude refers to Balaam, describing his error or sin as greed, as lusting after money. His greed led him to reject repeated warnings from the Lord not to curse the people of God; Balak was offering him lots of money to do so. Peter reminds us that on one occasion even his own donkey warned Balaam, but still the prophet’s madness was not constrained (2Peter 2:15-16). In the end Balaam advised Balak to use Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel into sexual sin and idolatry (Num 25, 31:16). Remember what Jesus said when pronouncing ‘woes’ upon the Pharisees? Blind, blind guides! Cain was blinded by jealous anger, and Balaam by glittering gold. What was it that blinded Korah? Is there anything that is blinding you to the truth and authority of God’s word?

The third person of Jude’s ‘woe’ is Korah. Korah belonged to the congregation of God’s people. He was a Levite, given the duty of carrying the Ark of the Covenant. But he was not satisfied with this duty. He lusted after power and authority; he wanted to be a priest like Moses and Aaron (Num 16:10). And so he gathered some two hundred and fifty men and rebelled against Moses, the Lord’s anointed prophet, priest, and ruler. Jude reminds us of Korah’s sudden end; he perished when a huge hole opened in the earth and devoured him. Korah was blinded by a lust for power and authority, a lust which meant rejecting the authority of God. Ironically, his blindness led him to a literal place of total darkness.

**2. An application of Scripture**

Jude reminded the church of these ungodly men of the past because men like them had crept into the church. ‘They have gone the way of Cain’, been greedy for gain like Balaam, and rebelled against authority like Korah; most likely these false teachers rejected the leadership of the apostles and elders in the church. ‘Judgment will fall on any pastor or teacher who loves freedom or money or sex or power more than fidelity to God’s word’.

Jude describes these men as ‘blemishes at your love feasts’, feasting without any fear of God and concerned about no one but themselves (v 12, 2Peter 2:13). Love feasts were associated with the Lord’s Supper in the early church. The apostle Paul had to condemn greediness and drunkenness at such feasts in the church at Corinth (1Cor 11:20-22). In a second metaphor or picture of faithlessness he describes them as feeding themselves rather than the sheep. Metaphors continue pouring from the mouth of Jude like words of a poet. We could contrast his poem of faithlessness with Habakkuk’s poem of faithfulness (Hab 3:17-18). These ungodly men could only rejoice in things of the flesh, having denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a third metaphor Jude describes these men as clouds without water (v 12). Peter calls them ‘wells without water’, as well as clouds (2Peter 2:17). They promise life-giving water but never deliver because Jesus is the only life-giving water. Next, Jude calls them ‘trees without fruit’. Towards the end of last summer my fig tree suddenly produced heaps of buds. I threw a net over the tree to protect the fruit that I expected but nothing came of the fruit. The tiny figs are drying and dropping. Jesus said that you will know men, and especially teachers, by their fruit (Mat 7:16). The men Jude condemns produced no fruit, being twice dead or completely dead, and pulled up by the roots (v 12). No hungry souls would be nourished by these men, who talk about God but in truth are godless.

In his fifth metaphor Jude likens them to waves of the sea, foaming up to their own shame (v 13). Waves make a lot of noise as they crash on the rocks but all that is left is a lot of foam that soon disappears. These men boasted of liberty but were leading God’s people back into bondage to sin (2Peter 2:19). His sixth and final metaphor describing false teaches is of wandering stars, stars that give no help to navigators, stars that shine for a moment and then disappear forever into black holes in the universe. A similar end is reserved for men and women who deny the truth and authority of the Bible, and fail to walk in obedience to the commands of Christ.

**3. An illustration**

Preachers use illustrations from various courses. My commentary on Jude quotes at length from a poem by T.S. Elliot. We may find magazine or newspaper articles that illustrate biblical teaching. The apostle Paul quotes from poets a couple of times (Acts 17:28, Titus 1:12). Jude has already referred to a story about Moses from an apocryphal book (v 9). Now he refers to another apocryphal book that was popular among the Jews, the Book of Enoch (v 14). It was supposedly written by Enoch, the man who ‘walked with God; and was not, for God took him’ (Gen 5:24).

Jude does not see the Book of Enoch as the inspired word of God but the passage he refers to is consistent with the Bible. He refers to a prophecy about the Lord coming ‘with ten thousand of his saints’, or angels, ‘to execute judgment on all’ (v 14, 15), all the ungodly. The words ‘all’ and ‘ungodly’ dominate Enoch’s description of God’s judgment; all ungodly people, for all their ungodly deeds, deeds done in an ungodly way, and all harsh and ungodly words spoken against God (v 15). God sees and hears everything everyone does, including you and me, and he will judge all works and words that dishonour his glorious name.

Only a fool says there is no God (Ps 14:1), and only a fool dares to defy the power and authority of almighty God. False teachers in the church were denying the sovereignty and saving power of Christ. They were rejecting authority in the church, and the authority of God himself. They were probably saying that God loves everyone and will not judge or condemn anyone to hell. On the basis of this popular Book of Enoch, and more so on the basis of the Bible itself, Jude assures his readers that no one, especially not ungodly sinners, will escape the judgment of God.

**4. Another application**

In the final verse of our passage, the final words of Jude’s sermon, he once again attacks the creed and credibility of these libertine false teachers. They had crept into the church without any authority, and they recognised no authority in the church. They were ungodly men, marked out for condemnation, as he said back in verse 4. They are characterised as grumblers and complainers (v 16). They wanted to change everything in the church, both doctrine and practice. Like the complainers in the desert, they lusted after the leeks and garlic of Egypt. Their focus was on food and drink, on sensuality and sex, on money and prestige.

These men were great talkers, men who promised a lot but delivered little, nothing except misery and death. They flattered people in order to gain influence and power for themselves (v 16). False teachers quickly recognise the people who hold power and influence in the church and set out to influence them- they may not be the elected elders of the church. Jude’s urgent message to the church is to examine, expose, and expel false teachers, and ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’.

**Growing in faith and love** Text: Jude v 17-21

We are living in the last days with the day of the Lord fast approaching. My friend in India wrote of the many signs we are seeing that remind us of this truth. He wrote of the coronavirus pandemic striking the whole world, of locust plagues in Africa and India, of earthquakes in and around Delhi, and of cyclones. As I read his letter I heard of soldiers being killed in a fight with China. This friend writes, ‘many are driven to fear as there is no hope’. In our own country we have people whose only hope or desire is to undo or tear up the past. Anything or anyone associated with past evils, like slavery, are being targeted for destruction and removal from history.

I took the opportunity to watch a movie about William Wilberforce called, ‘Amazing Grace’. Slavery was not stopped by violent protest or revolution but by a man of God working within the democratic political system. I deliberately refer to a democratic political system because not all political systems are democratic. We must be thankful for our democracy and for true Christians like Wilberforce. We must pray and work to maintain our democracy, and above all engage in evangelism and pray for revival in the church.

Reminders of slavery might be torn down but what about reminders of sin? It is sin, the sin of economic greed that led to slavery and to many other evils that continue in our society. If we really want to get rid of racial discrimination, gender discrimination, or religious discrimination, not to mention the evils of abortion and euthanasia, we must go back further than the last three centuries. We must go back to the very beginning, to Adam and Eve and the entry of sin into human hearts. We can then move forward, not denying sin and its effects, but seeing how sin was conquered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the evils of the world today can be conquered in and through the cross of Christ. In the kingdom which he inaugurated there is no sin and hence no evil. Have you entered this kingdom? If you repent of your sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will receive the Holy Spirit, the mark of belonging to Christ and his kingdom.

I said ‘inaugurated’ because Christ’s kingdom has not yet come in its fullness. The church is the body of Christ here on earth. Being on earth it is attacked by Satan and impacted by sin. The church will prevail because the Lord has assured us it will (Mat 16:18), but we in the church are called by God to be diligent in keeping the faith and building up the church, lest we find ourselves out of both. The church came under attack from the time it was established by the apostles of Jesus Christ. Judaizers followed the apostle Paul demanding all believers be circumcised in the flesh according to the Law of Moses, law that was fulfilled and superseded in the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul struggled to make known and understood the doctrines of grace, as did all the apostles. Sinful hearts are proud hearts, hearts which cling to at least an element of works in salvation. Proud hearts are selfish hearts, and selfishness leads to division. Selfish hearts are also sensual, focussed on the flesh rather than the spirit.

Jude helps us identify false teachers in the church on the basis of these characteristics. After reminding us of God’s judgment of ungodly men and angels in the past, Jude turns towards believers in the church with teaching about how they must ‘earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ (v 3). He addresses them as ‘Beloved’ (v 17, 20). He firstly calls upon them to remember words spoken by the apostles, and secondly to keep on growing in the faith. His words are, of course, applicable for believers today, to us as we continue in this faith taught in the Bible and applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We are not looking for new revelation or new teaching in the church today. The only new revelation we await is the second coming of Jesus, his coming in judgment upon this sick and sinful world.

**1. Beloved, remember apostolic teaching**

False teachers in the church do not defer to apostolic teaching but to teachers and scholars who are like them. They are more likely to quote a professor than a prophet or apostle. Jude urged fellow believers to ‘remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (v 17). Words are important. It is words that are recorded in the Bible. We must read and seek to understand the message being communicated through these words. It is not our task to guess at what the apostles might have meant, and certainly not to be critical of what they write. All Scripture is inspired by God- verbally inspired: ‘Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’ (2Peter 1:21).

In particular, Jude wants us to remember what the apostles said about false teachers in the church, that there would be mockers or scoffers in the last time (v 18). Who said this? The apostle Paul warned the church at Ephesus of ‘savage wolves… not sparing the flock’ (Acts 20:29), of ‘men speaking lies in hypocrisy… forbidding to marry’ and dictating what can and cannot be eaten (1Tim 4:1, 2Tim 3:1). The apostle Peter warned of ‘scoffers in the last days’ (2Peter 3:3). So do not be surprised when false teachers show up and start leading the congregation astray.

Knowing that false teachers may infiltrate the church, what can believers do? They must firstly identify such men or women. Jude gives us four markers to look for. Firstly, they are mockers or scoffers. They breeze into the church advocating change to make the gospel acceptable to modern men and women. ‘Society has changed, and the church must change if it is to remain relevant’ they say. In doing this they will ridicule old teaching and old ways. While the church must always be examining itself and reforming, mockery and ridicule have no place in that reform, certainly not mockery of the word of God. My ears prick up when I hear someone speak of the prophets, of Moses or David, not knowing all that we do about Christ, and even more so when they speak of the apostles as not knowing science or medicine; some say Jesus was not dead but in a coma when he was buried.

Secondly, these apostates, ‘walk according to their own ungodly lusts’ (v 18). Jude, like Peter, notes that false teachers live by the lusts of the flesh (2Peter 2:13-14). If they are not greedy for money, they are greedy for food or sex; they are sensual, as Jude says in verse 19. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, taught that human beings are ruled by the desires of the flesh or natural instincts. Many agree with him, including some teachers in the church. False teachers give no place for spiritual things, to matters of the soul. They show no concern for spiritual things because, as Jude says in his next point, they do not have the Spirit (v 19).

The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of every true believer. The Holy Spirit touches our sinful hearts leading us to confess our sin and believe in Jesus. He then abides in our heart as our counsellor or comforter. ‘If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ’ (Rom 8:9 NIV). This is not taught in many churches today, certainly not in those teaching a second baptism, and the importance of speaking in tongues. Members who speak in tongues and receive a second baptism often join a ‘special group’ in the church.

Jude’s fourth marker of these men is that they cause divisions in the church (v 19). He does not specify the nature of these divisions, and it does not really matter because the teaching of the apostles is for unity in the church (Gal 3:28). False teachers divide in order to rule. They divide on the basis of ethnicity, of gender, or of age, just like politicians. They also divide on the basis of personalities; ‘I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas’ (1Cor 1:12). Or they divide on the basis of ‘special knowledge’ like the Gnostics. Those with ‘special knowledge’ might cast the commands of Christ aside as they indulge the flesh, or they might become legalists, forbidding members to marry or eat certain foods (Col 2:16, 1Tim 4:3). Because ungodly people continue to show up to teach in the church, we must continue to check leaders, and even members, according to the criteria given here by Jude.

**3. Beloved, keep on growing in the faith**

Despite some Christian’s view of themselves and their ministry, there is no gift or office in the church designated ‘policeman of the faith’! While it is important to remember that ungodly men and women will infiltrate the church in these last days, and to know how to identify such people, Jude reminds us that we must also keep watch on our own lives. I once heard about a man who thought it his duty to reprimand people in the church whenever they stepped out of line. One day someone spoke to him about stepping out of line, and he left the church! If we keep a watch on our own life no one will have cause to correct us, not even the Lord.

Jude calls us to be building ourselves up or to growing in the faith (v 20). Policemen and soldiers have to keep fit if they are to apprehend enemies. They have to undergo strict training, increasing in knowledge and fitness; as believers we must do the same. We must keep spiritually fit if we are to defend ourselves against attacks of Satan. Satan may attack us personally, but he also attacks through false teachers in the church. Jude gives us a lesson of four points with regard to keeping fit in the faith. All of us are concerned about our diet and our physical fitness, but are we concerned about our spiritual diet and spiritual fitness?

From the day we are born again of the Spirit until the day we die, spiritual growth continues- or it should! ‘Build yourselves up in your most holy faith’ says Jude (v 20). In India many houses have weldmesh rods sticking out the roof. One day I asked why the house was never finished. I was told that when the house is finished the owner will have to pay tax! No matter how long it is since you first believed, you are still growing as a believer- or should be!

‘Faith comes from God and is toward God’. Growth in faith involves growth in knowledge of the object of your faith, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; all of whom are referred to by Jude in this passage. I hope no one of thinks they know all there is to know about God! Growth in the faith also means growth in conduct, such that we conform more and more to the likeness of Christ. Do not make your neighbour or fellow believer your measure- Christ is your measure. Spiritual growth means becoming more and more like Christ. Paul speaks of his desire ‘to know Him’, to know Jesus and ‘being conformed to his death’ (Phil 3:10). ‘I am not perfected’ he said, and nor are we. Is your greatest desire to know more of Christ and become like him, or is it to know more of this world and be like someone famous? Let us focus on growing up into Christ who is the head’, today and every day (Eph 4:15).

Secondly, we must pray in the Holy Spirit (v 20, Eph 6:18). Prayer is essential to Christian growth. ‘Read your Bible, pray every day’ is part of a chorus the children know. Ask them what the next line is! Praying in the Holy Spirit means praying according to the word and the will of God. By all means pray the Lord’s Prayer but go on confessing specific sins and making specific requests. The Spirit helps us when we feel weak and find it difficult to pray (Rom 8:26). You do not need a human mediator, but you do need a heavenly mediator, and you have one in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thirdly, ‘keep yourselves in the love of God’ (v 21). The apostle John tells us that God is love. He tells us that we see God’s love in him sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us (1John 4:10). Keeping ourselves means never forgetting that we owe our life, our eternal life, to Him. We have the sacrament to help us remember, so do not neglect this memorial meal. Keeping ourselves in the love of God means remembering that, ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord’ (Rom 8:39).

Finally, we wait, with assurance, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing he will bring salvation and eternal life as his gift for all whom he has called, and kept in the faith handed down to us in the Scriptures, to all who have endured to the end (v 21). He will reward you if you have ‘contended earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ to the end.

**Duties and doxology** Text: Jude v 22-25

Jude set out to write to believers about ‘our common salvation’ (v 3). But he felt compelled to first warn them about false teachers, ungodly men creeping into the church, undermining the doctrines of grace and the way of living based on these truths. In assuring them of God’s condemnation of such men, he reminded them of past judgments upon angels, upon cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon the people God brought out of Egypt. Teaching that denies salvation from sin in the precious blood of Christ and perverts the grace of God into sensuality must be condemned. Make no mistake, the Lord will execute judgment on ungodly people, people who live ungodly lives even if, and especially if, they are in the church. ‘For the time has come for judgment to begin in the house of God; and if it begins with us first what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel?’ (1Peter 4:17).

As Jude comes to the end of this letter he returns to his original purpose of writing about our common salvation (v 3). He does so in an outburst of praise that we call a doxology. His doxology is one of the best known in the Bible, and certainly the best known portion of this letter. It not only contains words of exalted praise towards God but words of blessed assurance and hope for us as believers as we press on to the end, the salvation of our souls.

But before we come to this doxology we find a closing word about the duties of ‘beloved’ believers. Jude told us to remember what the apostles said about mockers and sensual people coming into the church, and how we must keep ourselves in the love of God through prayer and other means of grace, and must focus on the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord. As we do so we will reach out to those around us, not only those who are lost, without God and without hope in this world, but to those being led astray by false teaching, by the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life (1John 2:16).

**1. Duties**

In my sermon on the previous verses of Jude I said that there is no gift or office in the church called ‘policeman’. Jude is writing to believers, reminding us to watch out for false teachers, and to build ourselves up in our most holy faith (v 20). That said, we do have elected elders in the church, under-shepherds to feed and lead the flock of God, and protect us from ‘savage wolves’ (Acts 20:28, 29). And that said, I might also revisit what I said about policemen. Policemen have the duty of apprehending law breakers, but along with firemen and paramedics they also have the duty of saving lives, of rescuing us from burning homes, floodwaters or other dangers.

Members in the church may be led astray, as we have said, and we who are strong are duty bound to help them as we are able. We do so humbly and with mercy, listening to the words of the apostle Paul, ‘Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall’ (1Cor 10:12, cf. Gal 6:1-3). Paul says this while reminding us, as Jude does, of various rebellions against Moses (and Christ) in the desert, ‘examples for our instruction’ (1Cor 10:11). Jude writes of three types of people entering dangerous waters, as it were - ‘backsliding’ is the theological term. It is important to discern the type of backsliding we are dealing with, although not always easy to do so. Of course, no help should be offered until we have sought the Lord’s help in prayer (Eph 6:18).

Firstly, there are believers who fall victim to doubt (v 22). Listening to false teachers will lead to doubt, but ultimately it is Satan who sows the seeds of doubt and he can attack at any time. A minister shared how on one occasion he was overcome with doubt as he stepped into the pulpit; he found himself asking if he was about to preach was true. Young people or young believers are most vulnerable to doubts because they are bombarded by all sorts of messages as they make decisions about what to believe and how to live. Doubters must be treated with compassion, with loving words spoken at the right time (v 22, Eph 4:15). Being compassionate means being ready to listen, being patient and humble in dealing with doubts as they are expressed.

Secondly, there are people who have to be ‘snatched from the fire’ as Jude says (v 23, cf. Zech 3:2). They are in imminent danger losing their life, be it physical or spiritual. Some years ago a young man hiking in the Himalayas was trapped in a rock fall. His arm was pinned under a heavy rock which he couldn’t move. After some time he realised his food and water would run out, and with no sign of help arriving, he would perish. So he took his pocket knife and cut off his arm, thereby rescuing himself. Jesus spoke of something similar when he said, ‘If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into hell’ (Mat 5:30). When it comes to life and death, even in, and especially in the spiritual realm, drastic measures need to be adopted. ‘Snatch others from the fire and save them’ (v 23).

A child getting into bad company school was taken out by her parents and sent to another school. If a child has books or materials they should not be viewing explain the dangers and remove the offending material. Adult believers must be similarly warned of the dangers of pornography or drugs, and urged to get rid of such things. Years ago I was walking around Amsterdam and suddenly found myself in the red-light district; I turned around and got out as quickly as I could. Anyone listening to door-knockers from a sect must stop listening to such people. These days you will find lots of false teachers on the internet, so take care. If a brother or sister is in a burning house snatch them out before they perish.

Thirdly, when someone is deep into immorality we must take care not to get burned ourselves. Jude writes of hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (v 23 NIV). ‘The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak’ said Jesus (Mat 26:41). He was not referring weakness in relation to immorality but the flesh is weak when it comes to food, drink or sex. We teach young people not to touch drugs but do we teach them to keep sex for marriage? One commentator writes of the city where he lives as having ‘temptations of the flesh all around’; it was Chicago not Amsterdam! He writes of William Gladstone, a Christian prime minister of England confessing to being caught unawares by the secret sin of pornographic reading. Gladstone also started a mercy work among prostitutes but in seeking to rescues prostitutes put himself in danger of being stained himself. In rescuing someone we must be careful not to be dragged in and drowned ourselves. Paul says that in seeking to restore a man overtaken by a sin ‘consider yourself lest you also be tempted’ (Gal 6:1). Jesus advises taking one or two believers with you (Mat 18:16).

Prayer and discernment must be exercised in rescuing members of the church who are backsliding for whatever reason. Every effort must be made to save them from the fires of hell, yet some are so hardened, so gripped by Satan, we are forced to wait for the merciful and powerful hand of the Lord to recuse them- or not. Jesus once said to his disciples, ‘This kind [of demon] does not go out except by prayer’ (Mat 17:21). Never forget that the Lord took away the filthy garment of our sin, and clothed us with his robe of righteousness. ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes’ (Zech 3:4). The apostle Paul said, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief’ (1Tim 1:15).

**2. Doxology**

Although warning us about ungodly men entering the church with another gospel, and ungodly conduct, Jude’s final words are of assurance, and giving praise and glory to God our Saviour. The apostle Paul, while dealing with the tragic situation of disobedient Israel, burst into a doxology: ‘O the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out’ (Rom 11:33). Jude begins his doxology, ‘Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling’ (v 24). God is powerful to keep us every step of the way on our spiritual journey no matter how rough or tough the going gets. John Bunyan pictures this journey in his book ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’. The word ‘stumbling’ is better than ‘falling’ in translating verse 24 because it presumes we are moving along the path.

Jude previously spoke of us keeping ourselves in the love of God; now it is the Lord keeping us. When we see obstacles we must take care to avoid them; we do so in the strength the Lord gives us. Sometimes the obstacles are hidden or huge, but God knows every trial and temptation we will face and is able to keep us from stumbling (Prov 4:12, 24:16, Ps 37:24) and make the way of escape (1Cor 10:13).

Our journey, the journey called ‘life’, has a purpose and it has an end. God is preparing us for the day we will enter his presence, the presence of his glory (v 24). No unclean thing can enter the presence of the Lord. Only animals without blemish were acceptable for sacrifice in the temple; this is the background of the word ‘faultless’ or ‘blameless’ here in verse 24. Being cleansed in the blood of Christ and clothed in his righteousness, we will be welcomed with great joy into the presence of the Lord. There was joy in heaven when we repented and believed (Luke 15:7), and there will be even greater joy and rejoicing when we finish our journey and enter the presence of the Lord for eternity.

The focus will not be on us of course, but on the Lord and his glory, upon our great God and Saviour, on the Father and the Son seated upon the throne in heaven (v 25). We will join the assembly of saints from all generations, from all nations, tribes and languages, praising Him who sits on the throne. George Whitefield spoke of this assembly in heaven: ‘Hark! Methinks I hear them chanting their everlasting hallelujahs and spending an eternal day in echoing triumphant songs of joy. And do you long, my brethren, to join this heavenly choir?’

When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey the crowds shouted, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest’ (Mat 21:9). Jesus was going to die on the cross, going to die in our place for our sin. After rising from the dead, he returned to heaven and the glory he had with the Father in the beginning. In heaven we will sing, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing’ (Rev 5:12).

Jude gives us similar words with which to praise the only God our Saviour today and every day as we wait to be ushered into his presence for eternity: ‘To him be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen’ (v 25). God’s power and authority are seen in the world he created for us to live in, a world that is now fallen and cannot bear the full revelation of God’s glory. Only in a new heaven and new earth will the glory of the Lord shine forth in its fullness, and only when we receive our new, heavenly bodies will we be able to gaze on this glory. Paul writes of the ‘King of kings and Lord of lords dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen’ (1Tim 6:16).