

[Jude E2 Transcript]

[Contend for the Faith (13:20—21:50)]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We just started a series slowly walking through the short New Testament letter of Jude, or as we've been calling it, the letter of Judah, a man known to be a brother of Jesus.

Tim: The relatives of Jesus participated in the planting of new house churches, overseeing them—and the letter Jude emerges out of that network. This is one of the earliest Christian documents coming from the earliest roots of the Jesus movement.

Jon: The letter itself was an emergency letter that Jude wasn't planning on writing. In fact, Jude was working on a different letter, which he mentions. It's a letter all about our "shared rescue."

Tim: In English, it's our "common salvation," the thing that we are all connected to, and united in, and participate in.

Jon: How cool would it be to have that letter?

Tim: It would have been like an early messianic Jewish biblical theology of salvation.

Jon: And while we don't have that letter, his biblical theology of salvation leaks out into this letter.

Tim: It's on his brain. We're going to see echoes of it.

Jon: Now, the reason for this letter is to address an urgent matter. He wants to warn about dangerous people who have snuck into the larger church network, people he calls "irreverent ones."

Tim: Most other English translations are going to say "godless" or "ungodly." Somebody who doesn't think that God exists, but more importantly, doesn't have any authority over them. That's what he's facing. So this is really, then, the lead into what the whole rest of the letter is going to be about.

Jon: The thing is, Jude tells us very little about who these irreverent ones are, what they're up to, what they're teaching. Instead, Jude spends the rest of his letter

comparing them to characters and stories in the Hebrew Bible and also in other Second Temple literature.

Tim: Who they are, and what they're doing, and the reckoning they're going to have to face—it fulfills an ancient pattern written in the Scriptures. So let's learn how to read the Scriptures along with him. And it's going to take us to some very surprising and odd corners—

[Laughter]

Tim: Of the Bible.

Jon: Today, we continue reading through the letter of Judah together. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break (2:15—2:20)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hi, Jon. Hi.

Jon: Hi. Working through the letter of Judas.

Tim: The letter of Judas or Judah.

[Laughter]

Jon: That's right. We're going to call it Judah. The letter of Judah.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: *Yehuda*.

Tim: Yes. This is one of the earliest Christian documents coming from the earliest roots of the Jesus movement.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Specifically, the movement as it materialized in Jesus' hometown with his, like, family.

Tim: Yeah, family members who went back from Jerusalem—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: To Nazareth and the towns around it and the relatives of Jesus that participated in the planting of new house churches, overseeing them, starting new ones—and the letter of Jude emerges out of that network.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's so cool to imagine. I forgot to mention in the last conversation one of the best contemporary studies out there on everything to do with the letter of Jude and its background in the social circle of the relatives of Jesus. It's by a New Testament scholar and a historian—uh—Richard Bauckham. Big, fat book. And if anything in the last episode is interesting to you—

[Laughter]

Tim: And you want to follow it up in detail, Richard Bauckham's work is the place to go.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So what we're going to do now is read the introduction to the letter, and Judah is going to make clear why he's writing, and he's going to highlight the situation that's happening that compelled him to write the letter the way he did. What is that situation, and what can we know about it not just from the words in this letter, but from anything else—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In the New Testament? And then we're going to look at the shape of the argument of the letter as a whole, and we'll see how far we get.

Jon: All right.

Tim: Sounds good?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: All right. Starting from the beginning: “Ioudas, a slave of Jesus Messiah and brother of Iakob.” So that’s the author. Here’s the audience. He’s writing to “those who are loved in Father God, and who are kept for—” or “by” possibly—“Jesus Messiah—*Iesous* Messiah, as those who are called,” as called ones.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So he has three titles for the community that he’s writing to. They are those who are loved, those who are kept, and those who are called. “Loved,” “kept,” and “called.” “Mercy on you all, and peace, and may love be increased.” That’s the opening of the letter.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. So notice the triads here: Judas, slave of Jesus, brother of Jacob. That’s a little triad. Those who are loved, those who are kept, those who are called—little triad.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mercy—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Peace, and love.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it’s al—a triad of triads.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Alre—the opening line—triads are a big deal. He’s organized everything top—

Jon: Oh—

Tim: To bottom of this letter in—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Groups of—of three—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In triads that interact. Super interesting.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Just like the Hebrew Bible, actually.

[Laughter]

Tim: Just like most of the books in the Hebrew Bible is—

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: Patterns of organization of three and—anyway.

Jon: Because he's been very shaped by how the Hebrew Bible works.

Tim: Yeah. Absolutely. But this is very interesting. Loved by the Father, kept, and then, this phrase for Jesus Messiah in Greek could signal, "kept by" Jesus Messiah—so you're loved in the Father, you're kept by—so kind of both the Father and the Son are partnering—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: However, the way the Greek sentence is structured, and technically, it's the case—it's a whole Greek thing.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But the form of the name Jesus—it co—it could technically also mean they are "kept for Jesus Messiah as those who are called." And the difference between those actually might make more sense as the letter goes on. But this is going to be a letter that's really focused on the—mmm—the expectation of Jesus' return—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: To come back, and set all things right, and bring ultimate reckoning and ultimate justice.

Jon: Okay. So the "kept for," it might be, "We're—we're waiting for Jesus to return."

Tim: "And we are the called ones associated with the Messiah, and God is keeping us." Either way, the idea is that he's writing to a community that calls and thinks of itself as those who are loved by the Father, kept in relationship to the Messiah, as people who are called.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So what sense does that make, to be kept, loved, and called? If you get out a concordance—this is so interesting—those words, kept, loved, and called, occur uniquely in a high density together in a specific set of poems in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And those poems are found in what is called the servant of Yahweh section, the servant of God section, in Isaiah chapters 40 to 55. Usually, we think of the suffering servant who appears here, but the suffering servant is connected to a plural group as well, called the servant or the servants. And these words are connected constantly in this poetry. So here's just a—a quick sampling. Isaiah, chapter 41, verse eight: “You, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen—” the idea of calling right there, choosing—“you are the offspring of Abraham my friend, you are the one that I took hold of—” that's the idea of kept or guarding—“from the ends of the Earth, I have called you from the remotest parts, and I have told you, ‘You are my servant—’” there's that word servant or slave—“I have chosen you. I've not rejected you.” So the only word we don't have here is love—

[Laughter]

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But we have “called,” “servant,” and “kept” or “taken hold of—”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then you have this idea of choosing, and so on. And I just have a bunch of random samples. We could go through many more texts. But this idea of the servant—ooh—who is the beloved one—so servant Jacob—this is Isaiah 44, verse two: “You are my servant, Jacob, you are my beloved one, Israel, that I've chosen.” Isaiah 42, God says, “I have called you in righteousness. I've taken you by your hand, and I'm guarding you.” So vocabulary that was used to describe the whole covenant community of Israel, like, that made the covenant with God at Mount Sinai. Throughout the history of Israel, the group of people who are actually faithful to the covenant just keeps getting smaller and smaller and smaller, like a subset. And so when you get to the book of Isaiah, all the terms used in Deuteronomy, like a people who are chosen and loved, which is the whole nation—that language gets applied to a smaller and smaller subset within Israel who, like, are the chosen, loved, and called ones on behalf of the whole nation. And then you can watch then how that language from Isaiah gets applied to Jesus in the Gospels, like in the baptism scene where the Father says to his Son, “You are the Son whom I love, with whom you—I am—I am well pleased.” And then you can see in the

New Testament it happens in Paul's letters, but it's—we're watching it happen here in Jude where that vocabulary then is getting applied to the followers of Jesus Messiah. So you can kind of follow this chain—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Through.

Jon: It seems like this is a theme study on “the chosen.”

Tim: The chosen ones.

Jon: The chosen ones.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

Jon: Or the loved ones.

Tim: Yeah, or the elect.

Jon: Or the elect.

Tim: The—

[Laughter]

Tim: Actually, “elect” is the Greek word for—uhm—

Jon: Choose?

Tim: To choose—the chosen ones.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: This idea of: God will choose a group. He chose all of Israel—“Be my Kingdom of priests.”

Tim: And he chose all Israel, which was his way of actually working towards choosing all of humanity—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which he had done on page one.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So you can start there.

Tim: Actually—

Jon: The elect is—

Tim: That's where we should start.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. "I choose all of humanity. You're my image, male and female."

Tim: That's it. Mhm.

Jon: And that's the ideal.

Tim: Yeah. That's the ideal. But then, the nations blow it. Like they—

Jon: Ah.

Tim: As it were, forfeit or reject their calling—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: As the chosen ones. And then Israel—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He makes the covenant with Israel, and then they blow it, right?

Jon: Right.

Tim: I m—so the logic of election is important there, that election is a response to a larger group—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Having received the election.

Jon: Okay. So in Isaiah, when you get the smaller group—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: They're, like, on behalf of all of Israel—

Tim: Yeah.



Jon: Being elected.

Tim: Yeah, on behalf of all humanity.

Jon: On behalf—

[Laughter]

Jon: Of all humanity.

Tim: On behalf of, on behalf of.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So then God chooses a subset of that, which is the king from the line of David, in Isaiah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that's the subset now.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's an individual. And that individual represents the whole people. And then, that individual is then followed by a group called the servants.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And they are the representatives of the servant.

Jon: And so what we're seeing here is the subset—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Now being applied to—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The Jesus people.

Tim: That's it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. And because in the—the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, the idea is, God's not satisfied letting all of his people sit in disaster and exile, just like God's not satisfied letting humanity sit outside of Eden forever. He's going to do something.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so that someone who's going to do something is the servant of God in Isaiah, who then starts a group called the servants—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In Isaiah, and—

Jon: And they're loved—

Tim: They are—

Jon: By God.

Tim: Loved. They're called.

Jon: They're kept for God.

Tim: They're kept.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. So Judah's using the language of Isaiah to describe, now—

Jon: Like, the new covenant crew.

Tim: The new covenant, messianic crew. Yeah. I actually—he uses the word Messiah. “Those who are loved by the Father God, who are kept for,” or “by,” “Jesus Messiah as those who have been called.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. So it's a good example of: It's insider terminology.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Reading the letter of Jude in the New Testament is like walking into a social group —

Jon: Right.

Tim: That has insider lingo.

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: And we're watching the beginning of that informed by the Isaiah scroll.

[Musical Break (12:51—13:20)]

[Loved, Kept, and Called (0:00—13:20)]

Tim: This is so interesting. He says, “Loved ones—”

Jon: This is *agapetoi*?

Tim: Yeah, that’s right.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: “The beloved.”

Tim: Yeah. The beloved ones. “While making every diligent effort to write to you all concerning our shared rescue, I had the need to write to you all urging that you contend for the faith that was handed down once and for all to the holy ones.” So let’s pause right there. My English translation is clunky because I’m trying to mirror the flow of the Greek in—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: English. So most English translations would turn this long, run-on sentence into two separate sentences.

Jon: Oh, right.

[Laughter]

Tim: But basically, he’s saying, “I have been working on a letter.”

Jon: “Something urgent came up.”

Tim: “But then, something urgent happened—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “And I had to write this letter—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “To you.” And so he has a description of the letter he wanted to write, and then what this letter is.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. So “I’ve been diligently working on this thing,” called “a letter about our shared rescue.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or in English, it’s “our common salvation.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it’s the word—Greek word *koinonia*—[the form in Jude three is actually the adjective *koinos*]

Jon: Uh-huh. Oh—

Tim: And—

Jon: For “fellowship”?

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: But for participation—

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Like, the thing that we are all—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Connected to—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And united in, and participate in.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then our—uh—*soteria*, salvation.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So “We’ve been rescued.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that rescue is something that—

Jon: “It’s our story.”

Tim: “It’s our—”yeah, “our shared rescue.”

Jon: Shared rescue.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah, did he ever publish this?

Tim: N—

Jon: We don’t know?

Tim: No, there’s no record of it. What’s fascinating is, though, I think what we’re going to see is snippets of it in the letter to follow.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Meaning, it’s on his brain.

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: So he can’t not but write about it in some way, even though his—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Wh—he’s really doing in this letter is another thing.

Jon: Right.

Tim: We’re going to see echoes of it—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Because it’s on the brain. So that’s what he wanted to do. I mean, I wish we had that letter.

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: It would have been like an early messianic Jewish biblical theology of salvation.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Wouldn’t that’ve been cool?

Jon: Seriously.

Tim: Yeah. I wish he would’ve written—maybe he did. I don’t know. So he said, “I was working on that, but I actually had—something came up—”that he calls, “I had the—the

need, urgent need, to write to you all that you *epagonizo*.” It’s a Greek word for, like, wrestling. Uh—you can hear “agonize,” our word agonize comes from the root of the word that he uses. Mmm, except that more now refers to, like, emotional grief, doesn’t it? “I agonized over something.”

Jon: Oh, yeah. I guess so.

Tim: But—uhm—

Tim: It could also mean physical toil, right?

Tim: A—agoni—

Jon: “It was agonizing.”

Tim: Agonizing. Uhm—Paul uses this word, the same word. It refers to the wrestling arena—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Like of the—you know, the Olympic games—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And the—think, high school wrestling team. That’s *agonizo*.

[Laughter]

Jon: For urging or for contend?

Tim: It’s the word contend.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. To stri—fight for—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Wrestle for.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Meaning, “This is an urgent situation, and something’s wrong.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “And for it to get set right, you’re going to need to get into the arena with me.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So “I am urging you to put in effort, and—”mmm—

Jon: “Get ready to wrestle.”

Tim: “Get ready to wrestle.” Yeah, “for the faith that was handed down once and for all to the holy ones.” So this is interesting. “Contend for the faith.” The faith. So what we’re looking at here is a use of the Greek word *pistis*. And it gets connected to the verb *pisteuo*, which means to trust or believe in. Like, it occurs all over the New Testament, you know? So if you are contending for the faith, we’re talking about the story about Jesus as we tell it as a thing that you put your faith in.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So you could say maybe like a body of belief or convictions. Maybe, you might say doctrine, something like that.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But then also, the idea of hearing the story of Jesus and then responding to it, not just, like, acknowledging it with your mind, but then actually living according to the teachings of Jesus, like the Sermon on the Mount—that response was also called by the word *pistis*, faith. In which case, it meant, like, loyalty or allegiance—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Showing allegiance.

Jon: Wait, so the first one was again?

Tim: Believing. What you would say—it’s—when I tell the story of Jesus—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Hey, that’s the story of Jesus—”that—

Jon: “What am I agreeing to?”

Tim: I’m agreeing to believing that the God of Israel became human in—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The person of Jesus Messiah, that he lived, he died, he raised for us, and that he’s given us his Spirit.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: I believe that.

Jon: And that's the "faith."

Tim: Yep. That's *pistis*. I believe that.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's a body of ideas or a story that I trust in.

Jon: Okay. And then, the second one is, "I am loyal to it."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "I'm actually, like—"

Tim: That's it.

Jon: "In service of it."

Tim: You got it.

Jon: "I'm following the way of it."

Tim: Yep.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It—it directs my—not just what I think about the world, but actually my decision making—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: My life choices.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So here's just a handful of other uses of the word "the faith" or the phrase "the faith" that's used in a similar way. So in Acts chapter six, Luke, throughout the story of Acts, will often pause the story and give these little summary reports about how the—how the Jesus movement was doing. And he puts it this way in Acts chapter six, verse seven. He says, "The word of God kept spreading." That meant more and more people were telling the story of—of Jesus to their friends and neighbors. "And the number of disciples continued to increase in Jerusalem. And even a great many of the priests were starting to become obedient to the faith." Isn't that interesting? So he just called it the word of God, which means the message about Jesus—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Who comes from God. And that that is spreading, because people are telling the story.



Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And as they do so, even, like, priests who were part of the establishment that executed Jesus—people were becoming obedient to “the faith.”

Jon: So you’re saying it’s interesting that there’s all of these ideas around who Jesus is, and the way of Jesus, and people who are loyal to it. And there’s a shorthand, now—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Just to refer to them.

Tim: A word. There’s one word.

Jon: The faith.

Tim: The faith. Which, for us, I think, when we think of the faith or even—think in modern, Western culture, people talk about different faiths—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Meaning, different religious traditions that have different belief systems.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Even the word belief.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: There it is. But it’s primarily referring to ideas.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: What are the ideas or the claim—truth claims—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: About reality?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Whereas, the word faith here in these examples refers not just to the ideas, but also to the way of life that it calls you to, which is this little phrase here in Acts chapter six. That’s why you can become obedient to the faith.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Paul talks about himself as “striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” Paul uses these phrases of “preaching the faith,” or being “nourished on the words of the faith,” “your most holy faith.” So my point is, it kind of shades in-between ideas and a way of life. And it’s a way of summarizing the whole package deal.

Jon: Yeah. Would this have been used by other people for other package deals?

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, I see. No, this is a uniquely early Christian terminology.

Jon: This is a uniquely early Christian terminology—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To be of the faith.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

[Musical Break (21:17—21:50)]

[The Irreverent Ones (21:50—36:43)]

Tim: So Jude says, “Something has happened that forced me to put down my little biblical theology of salvation—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “And write this short letter to you urging you to contend, struggle, on behalf of the faith, you know, the faith that was handed down—”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “Once and for all to God’s holy people.”

Jon: “This whole thing we’re doing here—saying Jesus is Lord, saying that we have this common salvation—this whole thing—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “We’re going to wrestle with that.”

Tim: Yep. Exactly.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: Yep. And why? Wh—so what’s the crisis and who’s behind it? Well, then, he has verse four of the letter. It says, “Because certain people have crept in.” It’s literally the word for, like, sneak. Like, think of a—like a burglar sneaking in.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So “Certain people have snuck in to our communities—”and he has three descriptions of them, three who clauses. He says, “First of all, these are people who were long ago written about regarding this judgment.” Oh. Okay.

[Laughter]

Tim: So these are people who are going to have to face a stern reckoning for whatever it is they’re doing. And actually, who they are, and what they’re doing, and the reckoning they’re going to have to face—like, “Read it all in Hebrew Scriptures.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “It was written about long ago.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So these are people in our present who are actually living—the way they’re living and talking fulfills an ancient pattern written in the Scriptures. It’s very cryptic—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Terminology.

Jon: Long ago written—

Tim: Long ago written—

Jon: Referring to—

Tim: Referring to the S—

Jon: The Hebrew Bible.

Tim: The Scriptures.

Jon: Now, they're in a class of people—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: We're familiar with these crew.

Tim: We know all about this crew.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Who they are is familiar from the Scriptures.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah, and—and what they are headed for, if they don't change.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "They are irreverent ones." This is my translation. Most other English translations are going to say godless—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Or ungodly.

Jon: Godless. I've seen that a lot.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. So NIV has ungodly—ungodly—"ungodly" New American Standard. Whew, just "ungodly" right across. What about King James? "Ungodly." Well, there you go. So it's the Greek word *asebes*. *Asebes*. So *A* means the opposite of something.

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And *sebes* comes from the Greek word "*sebeia*," which means about honoring or giving worship or honor to someone who's your superior, usually, the gods. So: someone who is anti-honoring God. So "ungodly—"that's just—that's a weird word in English.

[Laughter]

Tim: Ungodly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It became familiar to me in the—the first kind of social Christian circle I became a part of in my early twenties. So it kind of became familiarized to me. But now—

Jon: To refer to people who are wicked?

Tim: Well—

Jon: Or to just—

Tim: Basically somebody who doesn't—uhm—think that God exists or has—but more importantly, doesn't have any authority over them—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Or wisdom to—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Offer them that I should do what they say.

Jon: Okay. And that's what this word is referring to?

Tim: That's what this word means. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "I don't care about God as my authority or as someone who wants to give me wisdom. I ignore that." That's what Judah calls these people.

[Laughter]

Tim: So "irreverent," what—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: What do you think?

Jon: Yeah. I like that.

Tim: Irreverent—

Jon: Well, because also, in common English, ungodly is also used more—

[Laughter]

Jon: Uh—more casually—

Tim: Oh—

Jon: To refer to just, like, an absurd—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Amount of something.

Tim: A—an ungodly amount of—

[Laughter]

Tim: X.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: Like, so there's this like—

Tim: Like overdone.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Too much.

Jon: Too much.

Tim: Oh, yeah. That's not what this means.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So irreverent, I think in English, captures the idea of: There's a general sense that you should be respectful in certain situations. Like, if you go to a funeral—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It would be irreverent to, like, get drunk at the reception and start telling tales about the person who passed away that are, like, dishonorable.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Like, that was so irreverent.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We all know, when you go to a funeral, you honor the memory of the person. So I think that's what I'm trying to capture—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Is this shared idea that everybody knows that God or the gods exist, and that you should adapt how you live because of that fact to honor them. And these are people who don't live that way. And he goes on, and he describes two ways that they dishonor God. So "They have altered the grace of our God into a lack of restraint."

[Laughter]

Tim: So—yeah, that's my translation. So—two things: They have altered the grace of God.

Jon: Altered the grace of God, meaning?

Tim: God's given them a gift. God's given them a grace gift. It's very generous.

Jon: Which is: Now, you can be part of the family of Jesus. The way God looks at you is the way God looks at Jesus.

Tim: Yes, the grace gift is shorthand for God becoming one with a humanity dying and destroying itself outside of Eden in the person of Jesus, dying with us and for us, and then raising our Messiah from the dead on our behalf—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uh—as a signal forward of the new creation and eternal life.

Jon: And uniting us into him.

Tim: Into him.

Jon: That's the grace gift.

Tim: The grace gift of God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "And they are "distorting—"would be also a good English word. When you—uhm—alter something, you can alter it in a positive direction.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: And that's what—actually, this word can be used to change something for the better or for the worse.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's neutral. The verb is neutral.

Jon: All right.

Tim: So they are al—so altering the grace of God that they're turning it into its opposite. And what they are turning it into is what's called a lack of restraint. It's the Greek word—uh—*aselgeia*, which—it's actually—we don't have a good word for this. Here, I'll just show you some examples of it. This is what they're turning God's grace into.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Paul in Romans 13—he's inviting the Roman Christians. He says, "Let us live decently as if it's the daytime, not in partying and getting drunk, not in sexual immorality, or *aselgeia*."

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So *selgeia* means order—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And—uhm—self-control.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: So *aselgeia* is a lack of any sense of order or self-control. And here, it's associated with, just, promiscuous sex, getting drunk, and partying.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And actually, that's what all the examples mean—

[Laughter]



Tim: In the New Testament.

Jon: So it's always related to this lack of restraint around how you—uhm—deal with—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Alcohol and sex.

Tim: Yeah. Yep. Yep.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Physical appetites.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yep. That's right. So what does this mean that there's a group of people who are altering the grace gift of God and distorting it into a license to party and do whatever you want?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's the issue happening. There's—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: People who are joining our church, and they're living this way.

Jon: Yeah. And my imagination could fill in the gaps, like, what that might look like.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. Okay. So this is really interesting because Paul the Apostle faced a similar problem in a number of the churches he planted. And he talks about this in his letters. So in the book of Romans, he actually mentions it three times. He talks about ways that he's being misunderstood. So in Romans chapter three, he says that he and his, like, church planning associates are being slandered by other people who claim that Paul says, "Hey, let's do evil so that good may come out of it."

Jon: Mmm. Yeah. "We got the grace gift. We didn't do anything—"

Tim: "We didn't deserve it. We were doing evil."

Jon: "We were doing evil, and we got it."

Tim: "And God gave us the grace gift of Jesus. So—"

Jon: "Okay. Do more evil."

Tim: Let's—we could keep doing evil, and God would keep doing good, and—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Right? And Paul's just like, "Oh my gosh."

[Laughter]

Tim: "That is such a fundamental misunderstanding of what I'm trying to say." And it makes him ticked off. So it's a little moment he says there in Romans three. You can see him countering that in the opening of Romans chapter six, where he says, "What—what should we say, then? Should we continue sinning so that God's grace might increase?" So the more humanity was violent and self-destructive, the more God showed grace. So "Wow, I guess if our sin makes God super generous, what—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You can see—you can see the misunderstanding.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Here—here's how Peter describes it two times in his letters. This is in First Peter chapter two, verse 16: "Live as if you are liberated, free people."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And he's writing to people who are both enslaved and to free. But if you are a member of God's family and live in the community of the Messiah, we are all free when we gather. "But be careful not to use your freedom as a covering, you know, for evil."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In the second letter of Peter, he's talking about teachers who promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves to depravity, that is, to their corrupted desires. So this was a problem in early Christianity. It's actually—I think it's been a problem, actually—

[Laughter]

Tim: In—

Jon: People finding an excuse to just do what they want to do.

Tim: Yeah. In the first century, sexual integrity really didn't have much to do with your belief or allegiance to the Greek or Roman gods. Like, the Greek or Roman gods don't really care about—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: What you do sexually.

[Laughter]

Tim: What they care about is that you honor them publicly through sacrifices and offerings and prayers. But what does that have to do with your sexual desire? That's like—the gods are just as sexually, like—

[Laughter]

Jon: Promiscuous.

Tim: Promiscuous—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: As humans are.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so it was a uniquely Jewish and then messianic Jewish Christian conviction that, actually, sexual behavior is completely woven together with our confession of—of God as creator—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Of our bodies, and that what we do with our bodies matters.

Jon: I see. You're saying that's more unique.

Tim: That was the unique thing—

Jon: That's the unique thing.

Tim: In the first century. Yes.

Jon: The people coming in and saying, "Hey, let's just party and have sex."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That was kind of just a common idea.

Tim: That's common, and—uhm—"Cool, I'll worship Jesus Messiah. He's the creator of all, and great. You say he's the chief deity of all other deities and the king of the universe? Sweet. I'll come to these meals, and bring my offerings, but what does that have to do with Friday nights when I go down to the Apollo temple and get drunk with my friends and we have sex with the cult prostitutes there?" Like, "What—how—what's the connection? I don't see it."

Jon: So this is the crew saying that?

Tim: This is the crew saying that, and they are beginning to influence others.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. That's the second thing that he says about them. And then, the third thing he says is, "by distorting the grace of God, they are denying our only master and Lord, Jesus Messiah. They may not say it, but by their lack of restraint, they are denying our only master and Lord. So there's two words here, master and Lord. One is *kurios*, Lord, which is the standard title for Jesus in all the New Testament literature, the Lord.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The Lord. It's the word used in Greek-speaking Jewish culture to talk about the divine name, Yahweh.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Mhm. So *kurios*, Lord, was the way Greek Jews—

Jon: Translated Yahweh.

Tim: Mentioned the divine name, because they didn't pronounce Yahweh when they read the Scriptures, but they would say *kurios*, and that has deep roots—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In Jewish tradition. But Judah has another title here, the word master. And it's the Greek word—uhm—*despos* [the form is actually *despotes*, which Tim says later].

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's actually a term that Jesus used regularly in his parables. Whenever Jesus talks about, like, a household manager or the—the ruler of a household—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He's using this word, *oikodespotes*, which means the—the—

Jon: Household—

Tim: Ruler—

Jon: Master.

Tim: Ruler of a house.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. But this word, *despotes*, used as a title for Jesus, appears precisely two times in the New Testament to describe Jesus. And it's right here, and then in the letter that is connected to Judah in Second Peter in a passage that's almost identical to —

Jon: Right.

Tim: This one that we're reading here. Otherwise, in early Christianity, Jesus was called *kurios* hundreds of times—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In the New Testament.

Jon: So this is rare—

Tim: This is very rare.

Jon: To call him—

Tim: *Des*—uh—

Jon: *Despotes*?

Tim *Despotes*. And lo and behold, this is the term that was used in the last episode—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: By the relatives of Jesus who were talked about in second and third century early Christian historical sources. The unique group of the relatives of Jesus who had a honored status in the first couple generations—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of Christianity, they were called the *desposunoi*, those who were belonging to the *despotes*, that is—so a unique word for Jesus.

Jon: Hmm. And it's unique word for their crew.

Tim: It's a unique word for their crew. So Judah calls him by both terms. He's both the *despotes*—like, "He's my relative, but he's also my master."

Jon: Huh.

Tim: “I grew up with this guy.”

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: And—but he’s my master.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. He’s—

Jon: I get that, because they had this identity of “We grew up with this guy. He’s part of our household in a unique way.”

Tim: Yeah. Exactly.

Jon: And so we kind of have this unique name—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That we use.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. It’s cool.

Tim: It is super cool. So that’s why he wrote the letter. “I was going to write a biblical theology of salvation—”

Jon: “But I heard about these guys.”

Tim: “I heard about this crew.” And this is really, then, the lead into what the whole rest of the letter is going to be about.

[Musical Break (36:20—36:43)]

[The Literary Design of the Letter (36:43—44:41)]

Tim: So the introduction is like, “Here’s me—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Here’s you. Grace, mercy, and peace.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Then he said, “Beloved ones, here’s what I wanted to write, but now here’s what I had to write. And I need you to contend, struggle, for the faith handed down to the holy ones because certain people have crept in. Here’s three things about them. Who they are, what they’re like, and the judgment they’re going to face, was written about long ago. They’re irreverent. They distort God’s generosity. Therefore, they deny the master.” Those are the three things. Those three ideas are going to get unpacked in detail in what follows. So verse four is the lead-in to all of the body of the letter, verses five through 19—long, complex—this is where all the hyperlinking Hebrew Bible awesomeness comes into play. But then he’s going to come back in verse 20 and use the same word he used at the beginning of verse three, “the beloved ones.” And the only positive challenges—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: He gives to these churches are in verses 20 to 23, which is a whole bunch of really cool invitations he makes to build yourselves on the faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, keep waiting for the return of Jesus. It’s really cool. But—and this seems to be the follow-up to this phrase “struggling for the faith.” And the positive “struggling for the faith” gets filled out in verses 20 to 23.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Then he comes back and does that little doxology at the very end there.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the letter actually has a fairly simple overall, kind of, like, argument structure. When you’re just reading it through, it can be easy to get lost because here’s what he does in the body of the letter: He sets two little triads in front of you, two paragraphs, where he gives you three biblical, like, patterns or analogies. He links together the rebellion of the spies in the wilderness, that story from the Torah, he link—

Jon: Is that Numbers?

Tim: Yep. He links that story with the rebellion of the sons of God, the spiritual beings.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh, Genesis six?

Tim: Who come down to the daughters of Adam—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In Genesis six. And then he links that to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then he goes on to say, “That’s what these people coming into your churches are like.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Then he links them to three more patterns. He says these people are like Cain, they’re like Balaam, and they’re like—uh—Korah from the—the wilderness stories.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then he says a little paragraph of: “That’s—here’s how—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “These people are like them.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So these are sort of like his Hebrew Bible—

Jon: Yeah, design patterns.

Tim: “They were written about long ago” design patterns. And this section is so cool because it’s a window into how Judah reads his Bible. W—actually, what he says is, “You already know all this.” That’s what he says at the—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Beginning of this paragraph, is, “Even though you already know all this—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Let me just remind you—”



[Laughter]

Tim: And then he starts doing all this hyperlinking. In verse 14, he shifts from Hebrew Bible, and he quotes two prophecies—one is ancient, one is more recent. The ancient one he quotes is from the book of Enoch—prophecy of—from Enoch. So we'll talk all about that. Then he quotes a recent prophecy, which is from the Apostles. And by that, I mean, I think he means the founding generation of, like, the Jerusalem-based people to whom Jesus appeared. Maybe he means the 12 we—we—and we'll talk about that when we get to that quotation.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then he says, like, "They were talking about these people who have come into our midst." So that's essentially the structure of the letter. And this middle section here, these little paragraphs he writes, are the fruit of somebody who's read the Hebrew Scriptures in a particular way.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: What's that way?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And what that way is is what we've been trying to put language to—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: About hyperlinking and design patterns—

Jon: Right, meditation literature.

Tim: And the Hebrew Bible is Jewish meditation literature. And when you read it that way, all of a sudden, it—like, a lot of things start clicking together.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But then, he also is using a wider library of Jewish literature as a part of his toolkit for making sense of the Hebrew Scriptures and of their current situation.

Jon: And so we'll talk about that. "What's—"

Tim: Yep.

Jon: "The value of that?"

Tim: You got it. So the letter of Jude slash Judah is a very special window not just into a church community network from the first century connected to the relatives of Jesus—that's awesome enough—but it also is a great little window into how they read their Scriptures and then connected it to Jesus. And that's a thing that we've been after for a long time—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: At the BibleProject—right—our mission to read the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. That's how Judah read the Hebrew Scriptures. So let's—uhm—learn how to read the Scriptures along with him. And it's going to take us to some very surprising and odd corners—

[Laughter]

Tim: Of the Bible. But—uh—that is our mission, should we choose to accept it.

[Musical Break (42:02—42:05)]

Jon: Thanks for listening to BibleProject podcast. Next week, we're going to look at how Jude references three rebellion stories in the Hebrew Bible and applies those stories to the people in his community. Where does he get this technique from?

Tim: This way of moving between past Scripture and then seeing patterns and then applying it to these people—this is actually a really specific Jewish teaching technique that has unique roots in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jon: BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit, and we exist to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. And everything that we create is free because it's been paid for by generous people just like you. Thank you so much for being a part of this with us.

Brooke: Hi, my name is Brooke, and I'm from Vancouver, Canada.

DJ: Hey, my name is DJ Mikey L. V., and I'm from Brooklyn, New York. I first heard about the BibleProject through their Hebrew series. I use the BibleProject to understand

and contextualize the Gospel, and the Torah, and the things of the Bible that make things hard for me to understand.

Brooke: I first heard about BibleProject in the early years of Facebook when they posted their Holy Spirit video. I use the BibleProject for education and for inspiration for storytelling and animation.

DJ: My favorite thing about the BibleProject is how they make very complex ideas more palatable.

Brooke: And how they use beautiful visuals for storytelling and animation.

DJ: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. BibleProject is a nonprofit funded by people like me.

Brooke: By people like me. Find free videos, articles, podcasts, classes, and more on the BibleProject app—

DJ and Brooke: And at BibleProject.com.

Mike: Hello, my name is Mike Fleming, and I'm on the Marketing team, where I help the story of the Bible reach as many eyes, ears, and hearts as I can. I've been working at BibleProject for four years, and one of my favorite parts of working here is that I get to experience the Bible for a living, which is so cool. There's a whole team of us that make the podcast come to life every week. For a full list of everyone who's involved, check out the show credits at the end of the episode wherever you stream the podcast and on our website.