

Jude E3

Speakers in the audio file: Jon Collins and Tim Mackie

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We're in a series on the New Testament Letter of Jude, or as we've been calling it, the Letter of Judah. So far, we've only read the first four verses.

Tim: Judah said, "Hey, I love you guys, and I wanted to write a biblical theology of salvation, but somehow I got wind of certain people who have started to hang out in your communities, and they're not a good influence."

Jon: Next, Jude hyperlinks these men in their community to three different types of characters in the Hebrew Bible.

Tim: These people are like the spies who rebelled in the wilderness generation. They're like the sons of God in Genesis chapter six, and they're like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jon: First, they're like the spies in the wilderness, who refuse to go into the promised land. Now, this isn't a random story Judah selects. It's a key rebellion narrative at the center of the Torah.

Tim: When they refuse to trust, that becomes this pivotal moment in the wilderness, and it's what ends up condemning the whole of the people to wander in the desert for 40 years. They faced God's judgment.

Jon: Second, Judah compares them to the sons of God, from Genesis six. That is, the rebellious spiritual beings who look on the daughters of humanity and wrongly take them as wives.—What?

Tim: These angels, because of their physical desire, didn't honor the limits God put on them. They broke the bounds of order in the cosmos, and they will face the same kind of justice before God.

Jon: Third, Jude references the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which comes from Genesis 19. It's where men attempt to sexually assault angels. Okay. These are some hard passages in the Bible to understand, so why does Jude choose these passages?

Tim: What I'm trying to lean into here is the strangeness of the Bible, and I think it's precisely the foreignness that can be a gift to us. These stories are trying to give us

language and images, and patterns for what is behind the curtain. 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: So what's the wisdom in seeing a pattern of life that spies, the fallen angels, and the men of Sodom all have in common? That's today. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Jon, hello.

Jon: We get to continue reading the Letter of Jude together.

Tim: Ah, Judah. Or Judas. I mean, we've got three options, I guess.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: We did a deep dive into the identity and background of the relatives of Jesus. They provide a context for this letter—where it emerged from. And we dove into the introduction, like, opening paragraph, and then verses three and four, just that's the main theme of the letter. Judah said, “Hey, I love you guys. And I wanted to write a biblical theology of salvation, all the cool, hyperlinked design pattern stories.”

Jon: “I was working on that.”

Tim: “But somehow, I got wind of certain people who have started to make inroads and hang out in your communities, and they're not a good influence. And they're going to distort and ruin the thing that Jesus is doing in your midst.” So he says, “I wrote the short letter instead.” So he says three things about them: that they were written about long ago, and the end result that they will face, the consequences they're going to face, that was written about long ago, too.

Jon: Their judgment.

Tim: Their judgment was written about long ago. And he's about to go into that, at length, in the main body.

Jon: How it was written about.

Tim: Yeah. He's going to bring up six biblical design patterns, or hyperlinked stories, to show what he means there. But then, he summarizes what he thinks the problem is, is first, he said they have distorted God's grace into an opportunity for just total lack of self-control, just totally given over to their desires, when it comes to money, sex, and power.

Jon: Where'd you get money, sex, and power?

Tim: Oh, definitely sex.

Jon: Yeah?

Tim: And seems like power, because they're trying to grab leadership of the community. And he's going to make that clear. So, sex and power. Oh, actually, no, money. There is a line that shows they're probably, like, trying to take financial advantage of the house churches, too. Money, sex, and power. And in so doing, they're actually denying their allegiance to the Lord Jesus. That's what he said, in verse four.

Jon: Right. Yeah. It's a pretty bold accusation.

Tim: It is.

Jon: Comes out swinging.

Tim: Comes out swinging. I mean, think, this was a Messianic Jewish renewal movement, happening from within Judaism, but happening in a really culturally diverse Greek and Roman melting pot, you know, the Roman Empire. And so, there's going to be a million ways in which early Jesus followers, and their message, and their way of life would be misunderstood. Because they had, right, it was a brand-new cocktail of ancient Jewish tradition, but something surprising and new, with the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Very counterintuitive way to live. Love your enemy, lay down your life, don't get attached to money, sex, and power. Like, that's very counterintuitive. So it was, and could be misunderstood in a lot of ways. So when he gets into the body of the letter, in verses five through 19, here's how this section is going to work: It's got four parts, in two sets of two. So he's first going to bring out three scriptural, I'm going to call them analogies, and they're all in the past tense. He's going to say, these people are like the wilderness generation, the spies who rebelled in the wilderness. They're like the sons of God, in Genesis chapter six, and they're like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. And then he's going to apply those stories to these people. And he's going to shift from the past to the present, with a little phrase that just says, "Now these

people,” and he’s going to start borrowing language and ideas from those scriptural patterns, and apply them to these people. He’s going to do it again. But now, in short little analogies, he’s just going to say they’re like Cain, they’re like Balaam, they’re like Korah. And then, he’s going to, again, apply it to these people. Shifting to the present by saying “these people”. Then he’s going to have an ancient prophecy from Enoch that’s longer. Then he’s going to apply it to these people. He’s going to have a recent prophecy from the Apostles, and then he’s going to apply it with these people. So he’s constantly moving between Scripture and applying it to these people. Prophecy and applying it to these people.

Jon: Yeah. That makes sense.

Tim: Here’s what’s so interesting. 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, actually. And then shares a lot of similarities with other Jewish literature of the period. I just want to show you a couple examples.

This was so illuminating to me. So in the Hebrew Bible, there’s a handful of passages where people have dreams. The first time this appears is when Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is having his dreams in the Book of Genesis. And then, Joseph comes along as an interpreter of it, right? And Pharaoh, famously, you know, he’s disturbed at night, he can’t sleep, and none of his courtiers or servants can interpret the dream. But Joseph comes along, and this is in Genesis chapter 41. In verse 25, Joseph starts interpreting the dream of Pharaoh. What he says is, you know—the dreams of Pharaoh, you had two different dreams, but they’re about one thing. The two dreams are one. God is revealing to Pharaoh what he is about to do. Then he starts going through the different items of the dream. And he says, “So you saw seven good-looking cows. These are, right, these are the seven cows, are seven years. The seven years of good grain, these are the seven years.” So you have the thing in the dream, and then you have to shift to interpretation with the phrase, these ones are—these things in the dream—what they are is this: This is a pattern you can find in the vision literature of the Prophets. So, Zechariah and Ezekiel. When in the Book of Zechariah, chapter one, he’s in a vision of the night, he says, and he sees a guy riding a horse. And then he sees a whole bunch more horses, four horses, in fact. And so, he asks this human-like figure standing next to him in the dream, he says, “What are these?” And then the guy standing there, talking to him, said, “These are,” and then he goes on to interpret the “so this” phrase, these ones are—it’s in Hebrew. It’s just the phrase, *’elleh*. In Greek, it’s *houtoi eisin*. This is exactly the little trigger phrase that Jude uses, at the end, to go from Scriptural

pattern to these people. And he's using exactly the language of dream or symbol interpretation, from the Hebrew Bible itself. That's step one.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So you can already see, Jude is learning how to read the Bible by paying attention to how dreams and symbolic visions are interpreted within the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Yeah. I'm following.

Tim: So, but there's another step. In the Dead Sea Scrolls—so this is a Jewish community that began life with a bunch of priests who were in the Jerusalem temple, serving there. This is—we're like 150 years before Jesus, and before—

Jon: When it started.

Tim: When this movement started. And they were so frustrated, angry, with a takeover of leadership in the Jerusalem temple, they exiled themselves from Jerusalem, and they went out to live in the desert. They took a scriptural library with them. They started a much larger movement and claimed that they were the actual Israel, and the Israel that God was using to bring about the renewal movement. A lot of similarities to John the Baptist, after their time. But one thing they took into the desert was a library. A lot of them were scriptural scrolls, but then also, a collection of material that nothing quite like this had ever been found before, in Second Temple literature, which is commentaries. Actually, it's the earliest form of Jewish commentaries, where they'll quote from a section of Scripture, and then give an interpretation.

Jon: And because at this point that was all oral tradition, because later, that will be written down, a lot.

Tim: Mhm. That's right. But at this point, these are the earliest written forms of biblical commentaries, of quote a section of Scripture and then offer some comments on it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. Super cool. And they're all in Hebrew, and they're fragmentary. And it's Dead Sea Scrolls, and it's awesome. They're called the *pesharim*, because that's the Hebrew word for interpretations or explanations, and they use this same structure. Well, there are quotes, so I'm showing you a section of the *pesher* to the prophet Habakkuk, like the Book of Habakkuk.

So they have a quotation from Habakkuk, like, chapter one, verse five, where the quotation is, "Look, traitors, and behold, be astonished and shocked, because in your time, a work is being done, which you wouldn't even believe, if it was reported." So that's the quote from Habakkuk. Then it goes on, and it starts to give the interpretation. The interpretation is about the traitors, who are with the man of the lie, who do not believe in the words of the teacher of righteousness.

So this is all code-speak, from the community. Whoever it was that they hate and disagree with in Jerusalem, and his cronies, they call him—

Jon: The man of the lie.

Tim: The man of the lie. And they call their leader the teacher of righteousness. So this is the structure, and it goes back and forth. But then, at key moments, when it wants to identify who the traitors are, it uses the phrase, "These ones are the violators of the covenant, who don't believe." It's using that same phrase that was used in the Hebrew Bible. Like Joseph, the seven cows; these are the four horses, these are Zechariah. But now, the thing that's being interpreted is not a dream or a vision, it's Scripture. So you can follow this right through the Dead Sea Scrolls, of a pattern of Scriptural interpretation, and in the New Testament. The book of the New Testament that is most closely patterned to this same structure of, like, Scriptural section, a transition. These ones are, is the Letter of Jude. It's like it follows exactly the structure. There are little surfaces of it in Paul, but with a little bit of a different flavor. So this is another good example.

This is a specific Jewish technique of taking the words of the Prophets—and, because you believe the words of the Prophets are for the last days, for like the period of God's messianic renewal, when he brings the day of the Lord, and pours out his Spirit, and sends the Messiah—this pattern that we find in the Letter of Judah matches exactly the precise form of this pattern that we see in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which doesn't mean he was a member of the group. It just means they come from the same social circles in first-century Israel-Palestine.

Jon: For Jude to use this technique—quoting Scripture, and then applying it very directly, like that Scripture. We're talking about these guys.

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: In fact, he doesn't like, soften it, by saying, like, one way to apply this—

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: And that's kind of like a pretty common sermon technique, right? We're always trying to apply the Scripture. Let's think about this in our lives, and it could be this way. But just straight up, that's what this was talking about. It's talking about these guys.

Tim: Exactly. Yes.

Jon: That's a rhetorical technique, you're saying, that was very common in Second Temple Jewish—

Tim: Specifically, in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It's like an identity match. It's a little DNA match.

Jon: Yeah. This is just what you do. This is the way you read the Hebrew Bible, and then apply it to what's going on.

Tim: The Hebrew Bible is messianic literature written for the righteous remnant at the end of days. That's the mindset of the Dead Sea Scroll crew. That's the mindset assumed by Judah here and the communities that he's writing to.

Jon: So we're getting a little window into that culture, and that technique, being used here as Jude's talking about these false teachers.

Tim: Yeah. The other thing that's important, then, is even though the language of this letter—it's written in Greek—oh, I haven't brought this up yet. The whole thing is just an interpretation of different parts of the Bible.

Jon: Right.

Tim: The Hebrew Bible. None, precisely zero of his quotations or allusions to Scripture, come from the Greek Septuagint.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Even though he's writing in Greek—

Jon: We can know this.

Tim: Well, what's great is he's writing in Greek. So you can compare. You can go to all the passages he's looking for and look for the wording of the passages he's alluding to. And in none of them does he use the unique phrases or language found in the Greek Septuagint translation.

Jon: So he's writing in Greek, but he's doing his own translation on the fly.

Tim: He's reading the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: He's reading the Hebrew Bible, translating it into Greek.

Tim: He's translating it in his mind, writing in Greek. And actually, his—the Greek language that he uses when he's quoting is excellent, hyper-literal translations of the Hebrew into Greek.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: But once again, it shows us that this is a Hebrew-Aramaic speaking Messianic house church community he's writing to, in Greek, because they're all bi- and trilingual, in this period. And all the connections that he's making, between different passages, which we'll look at now, are all connections happening in Hebrew. Not on the level of the Greek translation. It's super cool. I'll just make that as a claim. That's my hypothesis. And let's dive in.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: That's enough preface. Should we just go for it?

Jon: Yeah

Tim: Okay. Let's go.

[Musical Break]

Tim: Okay. Verse five. Judah says, "I desire to remind you all, even though you already know all these things, once and for all."

Jon: Like, "We've talked about this, we've had the Bible studies."

Tim: Exactly. Yeah.

Jon: These guys are reading the Bible a lot together.

Tim: Yeah. They read the Bible as Messianic, communal wisdom literature.

Jon: Yeah

Tim: Totally.

Jon: They're like, none of these stories—have we not, like, sessioned before?

Tim: Yep.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the point is, “I’m not going to teach you things you don’t already know. I’m going to remind you of what you already know.”

Jon: But then the things that he ends up talking about, if you go to like anyone who grew up in Sunday school, it’d be like, what?

Tim: What?

Jon: What are you talking about?

Tim: Exactly. So that’s the whole irony. We’re getting a little window into the inside.

Jon: Just how geeky it was.

Tim: Yeah. It’s a Bible nerd community. So, “I want to remind you all of stuff we’ve already gone over, and that you know already.”

Jon: And why, “Once for all?”

Tim: Ah, that links back up to the phrase, “I want you to struggle on behalf of the faith that was handed down, once for all.” That was up in verse three.

Jon: Okay. “Once for all” in English means we’re done talking about this, or we’re done dealing with this. It’s finished.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is that the idea here?

Tim: Yep. It's a way of registering that what God did in history, in the story of Jesus, was a unique revelation of God's plan for all of history in the cosmos. And then, when you learned that, that has a once-for-all kind of effect on your life. There's like, before you hear the story of Jesus, and then there's after, and it's never the same after. And I think that's what he's signaling here.

"Even though you know these things once for all, I need to remind you again of what you already learned when you got the once-and-for-all faith teaching." I think that's what he means.

Jon: Okay. I guess I'm just realizing I never use the phrase once for all.

Tim: Oh.

Jon: What's another way you would say that?

Tim: What God did in and through Jesus was a one-time-in-history event that actually was for all of history, before and after.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: You learned that at one time—that in your own life was a once-for-all, that effect—

Jon: One-time event—it affects your whole life.

Tim: It affects your whole life.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Thanks. Thank you. You know what? I've never said it out loud to myself in that way. That's what was in my mind, but I've never used those words to say it until you asked me the question. So thank you for asking the question. This is why I love talking with you. So, "Even though you already know all this, in that once-for-all kind of way, let me remind you." First of all, first Scriptural pattern. "The Lord, after having rescued a people out of Egypt—" The first rescue story.

Jon: The salvation story.

Tim: "Remember that following that, or after that, he ruined—" This might probably be an annoyingly literal translation. "He ruined those who did not trust him." So he's referring here to after he rescued them out of Egypt—when did God ruin—and here, he's signaling a key word here. It's the Greek word, *apollumi*, but that's his translation of the Hebrew word, *hishrit* or *mashrit*. It's used uniquely in the stories about the rebellion of the spies in Numbers chapters 13 and 14. And then also, "those who did not trust"—that language is uniquely brought out of the story of the spies, in Numbers chapter 13 and 14.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Because rescuing people out of Egypt, that's just the whole first half of Exodus. But this ruining or destroying those who didn't trust is unique vocabulary from the rebellion of the spies.

Jon: And the rebellion of the spies is kind of a central rebellion, right?

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: In all the wilderness wanderings.

Tim: Yeah. Of the seven rebellion stories in Numbers, it's the middle one.

Jon: It's the middle one.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's also the longest one.

Jon: It's a very central pivot rebellion story. Why is he bringing up a rebellion story? Because I guess—is he bringing up the rebellion story just to say these guys are rebels?

Tim: He wants to say, these people who are hanging out in your church community, that are distorting God's grace into immorality, they were written about long ago.

Jon: They're like the spies that wouldn't go into the land—

Tim: And trust God. He's likening them to the people that were rescued out of Egypt, but then they didn't trust. And they faced God's judgment. What he calls ruination or destruction.

Jon: There's a lot of stories of not trusting. The spy story—it's put in the center for a reason. Tell me, like, why is it such a pivotal, crucial rebellion story?

Tim: Yes. It's the twelve tribal leaders of the people who are being sent as the nucleus of the seed of Abraham, the new humanity, to go back into the garden, a garden land. And that's what Moses says. He says, "Go look, and when you see the fruit of the garden, that it is good, take from it and bring some back, so we can all see it."

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: So that story is full of Garden of Eden echoes. And then those leaders who went through the Exodus and walked through the sea on dry land... When they refused to trust, that becomes this pivotal moment in the wilderness. And it's what ends up condemning the whole of the people to wander in the desert for forty years.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that generation, to die off. So it's the pivotal rebellion of the saved people in the Torah.

Jon: Hm. Okay.

Tim: Mhm. It's a big deal.

Next Scriptural pattern: "Also, angels, who did not keep to their own realm of ruling, but after abandoning their own place of residence, he, that is, God, has kept them with perpetual bonds, under gloomy darkness, for judgment of the great day."

Jon: Yeah. So what is he talking about here?

Tim: Okay. He is talking about a story that is found in the Hebrew Scriptures in four verses of Genesis, chapter six.

Jon: This story is not in Genesis chapter six.

Tim: But he's retelling the version of that story. Not as the version found in the Hebrew Bible, but the version uniquely in the vocabulary. And ideas are drawn from the parallel version of that story, found in Second Temple Jewish work called First Enoch, that he's about to quote from in a couple of paragraphs. In verse 14, he's going to quote from that scroll, but he's already showing that he is a studious reader of the Enoch literature.

Jon: Yeah. So this is a story from Enoch.

Tim: Mhm. But it's, well, it's a story that's from the Hebrew Bible. But what he's using is Enoch's version of that story.

Jon: Okay. Okay. Should we start, then, with the story from the Hebrew Bible?

Tim: Sure.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Sure. Yes. So there—it's a story about the sons of Elohim, the sons of God, which is a phrase that occurs half a dozen times in the Hebrew Bible. It only ever refers to spiritual beings. Otherwise known as *mal'akhim* in Hebrew, or angels. And what we're told is that they saw the daughters of Adam—the sons of Elohim saw the daughters of Adam, that they were good. And they took from them wives and married whomever they chose.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's the story. Then God's not down for that. So he responds. We don't have to talk about that, necessarily. But then, what we're told is that—oh, dear reader, in Genesis six, verse four, "You should know that in the days when the sons of Elohim did that to the daughters of Adam, there were the nephilim in the land, in those days. And they were men of the name, men of great renown. They were *gibborim*, violent warriors. And they were around, just that time, and also long after."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: There you go.

Jon: There you go. And this is the story leading up to the flood.

Tim: This is the story trying to explain the spreading of violence in the land that began with Cain, increased with Lamech.

Jon: Why did it get so bad that God had to just wipe everything clean?

Tim: And now you've got these violent warrior gods. So it doesn't say explicitly that the nephilim are the children born to the sons of God and daughters of Adam. But I think the literary design and the context is making it a very—

Jon: Angels come, they take the women. And by the way, now, we've got these, like, mutant giants.

Tim: Half divine, half human figures.

Jon: Okay. These are the nephilim.

Tim: Who are the nephilim, who are the giant, warrior kings of your ancient time. And every reference we have to that story in Second Temple literature, Jewish literature before Jesus and after, understood that the nephilim, and interpreted the nephilim, to be the offspring of the union between angels and humans.

Jon: Okay. Alright. So that's a story in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis six.

Tim: You got it.

Jon: There's a lot of details in here.

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: That are not in Genesis six. That comes from Enoch.

Tim: It comes from the Enoch retelling of the story. So when we're talking about the Enoch literature, the earliest manuscripts we have of it come from the third and second centuries BC. The Dead Sea School community, super Tanakh, Hebrew Bible nerds, they were also Enoch nerds. They were really into the Enoch texts, and the story begins with a group of the sons of Elohim. It also gives them an additional name called the watchers, the ones who are awake in Heaven, watching. And that comes from Daniel. That's a term used for angels in Daniel, the watchers.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And it's a whole long story. They look on the daughters of Adam and they want them. And the chief angel, whose name is Shemihazah—all the angels get names. All the sons of God get names in the Enoch story.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And he gets 20 other angels, one of whom is named Azazel, or Asahel.

Jon: Oh, from Numbers. Or from Leviticus.

Tim: From the Day of Atonement in Leviticus.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, which is like the thing you send the scapegoat out to.

Jon: The thing.

Tim: Ah. Whatever it is, out there. You're sending it out there. Which was interpreted to be a spiritual being. And so, they all agree, together, to go down. They descend in First Enoch, chapters six through eight. They have offspring. Those offspring are the giants. Then, there's a whole section about how the sons of God, after they've produced the giants with human women, start revealing heavenly secrets to humans, like magic, metallurgy—how to make iron for swords—to give to the giants. So they all kill each other. They give the humans minerals and pigments so that women can make makeup and make themselves more attractive, to attract more of the sons of God. And they spread violence on the land. So what happens is, God hears the outcry of the blood, just like Abel's blood. And God sees what's happening, and he declares that he's going to bring the great flood. Then there's this additional bit where God takes the worst of the worst of these watchers, these sons of God, and he commissions different of the archangels. So he commissions Raphael, who's the name of a good angel, to go to the rebel sons of God—they're called the watchers—and to bind different of these chief rebel angels. So this is from chapter ten, verse four, "To bind Asahel—" That's Azazel, bad angels—"To bind Asahel hand and foot, and cast him into darkness. Let him dwell there for a long time, and on the great day of judgment, he'll be led away to the burning fire." I mean, it's exactly the section that Judah is quoting from, right there.

Jon: Right. Okay.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: So these guys were so bad that God was like, "I'm going to just contain you."

Tim: Contain them. That's right. Yep. That's right. And he tells Michael to go bind another chief angel, Shemichaza, who was the angel that got all the others to go do this thing with human women in the first place. And the same thing, he's bound in the deep valleys of the Earth for 70 generations, until the day of judgment. This is exactly the language Judah's drawing on. And he's saying, these guys, these people who are in your community, are not only like the people who were rescued out of Egypt—

Jon: Who rebelled.

Tim: And then rebelled. They are also like these angels—

Jon: Yeesh.

Tim: Who didn't honor the limits God put on them—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because of their desire, physical desire, broke the bounds of order in the cosmos, and they will face the same kind of justice before God. That's what he's comparing them to.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. You've drawn my attention to what's happening in Genesis six before. There's two rebellions going on. There's the human rebellion.

Tim: Yes. Right. Right.

Jon: And there's a spiritual rebellion.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And the human rebellion starts with Adam and Eve, and continues with the Cain.

Tim: Ah. Under the influence of a spiritual being.

Jon: That's true.

Tim: Asking, enticing them to see what is good, that is not proper for them to have at the moment, and then to take it for themselves.

Jon: Yeah, okay.

Tim: It's a spiritual being influencing humans to see what is good—to take and eat. And then, Genesis six is the exact inverse. It's spiritual beings looking on human women as the fruit that are good, that they shouldn't have to take. So the human rebellion and the spiritual rebellion are also mirror images of each other.

Jon: And the human rebellion is bad. It ends with, you know, Cain kills his brother. Cain builds a city. The city has this distorted, violent culture. This is humanity, breaking bad. But now, in Genesis six, you get this little story, and it seems like what the Enoch scroll does is it just goes, "Here's another layer of how bad this got."

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Like, the corruption that it created within human culture was—got so deep, and so inverted. Yeah.

Tim: That's it. That's exactly right.

Jon: So it seems like it was on the mind that a lot of human corruption was because of the influence of spiritual beings.

Tim: Influence of spiritual beings. Yes. Yes.

Jon: Crossing boundaries and just creating a mess.

Tim: Yep. That's right.

Jon: Like, that was a big deal.

Tim: It was a big deal. And Judah belongs to a group of, again, Messianic Jewish Jesus communities that take that for granted. And they take that for granted because it's right there, in the Hebrew Bible. Like, it's right there in Genesis one through eleven. It's trying to tell us that. The flood story, the rebellion of the sons of God, was foundational for these Jewish communities' understanding of the world. Because they looked out at the Roman empire, at the occupying Roman forces, led by, you know, a guy over in Rome, who says he's the incarnation of a God. The Caesars.

Jon: Oh, is he literally saying that?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Oh my gosh.

Tim: The son of God. They could go down the road and see an inscription that calls the Roman Caesar a son of God. So it was an exact match to what they were reading in their Bibles, which is about rebel human kings who are violent and oppressive, who are human divine offspring.

Jon: Or so they say.

Tim: Well, totally. That's right. And that's what the version of this story in Genesis six, and its expansion in the Enoch is saying exactly that. The Genesis version is actually a satire, as it were. It's saying what these human kings claim for themselves, as this, like honor, that, "I'm half human, half God," is actually a mutant distortion of what God intended for humans and spiritual beings. And it's a sign of what's wrong with the world. That's flipping the propaganda. And the Enoch literature is just developing that. But this was a big part of the early Jewish community's view of Heaven and Earth as intersection.

Jon: There's also a true belief amongst these communities that there are spiritual forces. Like, whatever actually happened—

Tim: That they're merged. That's right.

Jon: What that means, that there was giants. What that means, that there was intermixing.

Tim: Yeah. It was a way for them to talk about how humans, who are made as an image of God, could become such a distorted, nightmare version of what God made us for. And Genesis three was a part of that explanation story, and so was Genesis six. And so was the story of Babylon, in Genesis 11, which is a whole other—

Jon: Kind of like a climactic moment of both, in a way.

Tim: Exactly. Yeah. It's about an illegitimate joining of Earth and Heaven through humans, and their king that wants to build Earth up to Heaven. It's actually the opposite of Genesis six, which is about rebel angels trying to build a link down to Earth. Genesis

11 is about rebel humans trying to build a link up to Heaven. So what's interesting, then, is that Judah has one more little Scriptural pattern. It's just like the people who came out of Egypt, but rebelled. It's just like the angels who didn't keep to the limits God placed on them. And it's just like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

[Musical Break]

Tim: So here, going to Genesis 19, he says, "Who, in a similar manner to those angels—" He is linking the two.

Jon: Right.

Tim: They also indulged in illicit sex by going after another category of flesh. They, that is, the towns Sodom and Gomorrah, are on display, as an example, a pattern. It's actually the Greek word paradigm, *paradeigma*.

Jon: Is it really?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: "Of undergoing the justice of the fire of the age."

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. So I remember when we talked through Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were showing me this connection to Genesis six. Because—Sodom and Gomorrah, it's easy to just think of that story as, "Oh, there was a city with so much sexual corruption that God had to just destroy it." But when you get to the story, like what's actually happening, is men who are trying to rape angels, right?

Tim: Yeah. Who have come to take up residence, to seek hospitality in ancient and modern Eastern cultures. Hosting strangers, hospitality, is like one of the highest social values. And instead of hosting them and honoring them, the men of the city come and want to gang rape these visitors in the town square.

Jon: And they happen to be angels.

Tim: And they're angels. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So I have a whole bunch of charts here in the notes, but if you read the story of Genesis six, which is the beginning of the flood story, and you read the Sodom story all next to each other, in your mind, in Hebrew, there's a like a crazy, off the charts amount of verbatim hyperlinks, between them. The main highlight is the theme of illegitimate sexual joining of heavenly beings and earthly beings. That's a unique thing. Only in these two stories in the Hebrew Bible, Sodom and Gomorrah and Genesis chapter six. And they are both showing depictions of what happens when human communities, under the influence of something even more cosmic, become so distorted in their understandings of reality, and of their own bodies, that we engage in, like, really terrible, destructive sexual behavior. And that's a pattern in history, that the biblical authors want us to notice, pay attention to. And that's the kind of behavior that he's watching—that Judah is watching these people engage in—in these house church communities, which is why he stopped writing his biblical theology of salvation. But every one of these stories, the rebellion of the spies, the Sodom story, is a salvation story about Israel saved out of Egypt. Noah and his family saved out of the flood. Lot and his daughters saved out of Sodom and Gomorrah. But he's highlighted, instead, the judgment aspect of it, and kind of brought those themes together. This is Jude's first little hyperlink biblical theology of judgment.

So here's what he does. He's quickly, then, going to apply it to these people, and we'll just take in how he applies it. First, in verse eight, to see how he makes the application. So verse eight, he says, "In a similar manner, even these people who are inspired by dreams, that is, like visions." So that's actually significant. Whoever these people are, they're claiming some kind of divine revelation that they had through dreams and visions. And now, lots of people claim they had a dream from God. This was a problem in the Hebrew Bible. In Jeremiah's day, in Jerusalem, he was confronting prophets who said they were inspired by Yahweh, the God of Israel, and they had a dream and a vision. And that's the idea of what's going on here. But then Judah says, "Look at how they behave. They, in one moment, are polluting the flesh—" Which is Leviticus-style terminology for sexual immorality.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "Then they are rejecting the Lord's authority, and they are slandering the glorious one." So, polluting the flesh. He's referring to sexual immorality.

Jon: Okay. All right.

Tim: He's using the language of Leviticus 18 and 20. Rejecting the Lord's authority is very similar to what he said earlier, where they're denying the master, the Lord Jesus. He said that, up in verse four.

Jon: Like his teachings.

Tim: Yeah. Love your neighbor. Truth-telling. Honoring the covenant of marriage. Not having sex with someone you're not married to. These are sort of like sexual basics, from early Christian communities, and they're rejecting the Lord's authority to tell them how to live, how to live wisely, towards the good. And then also, they slander the glorious ones, that is, spiritual beings. And we're going to have to take that up in the next conversation. What on earth does that mean?

Jon: To slander the spiritual beings?

Tim: What does it mean to slander angels?

Jon: Yeah. Sounds like that's insider language. That there's something in their community that means something important.

Tim: It is. Yeah. We'll talk about it. So—but notice how sexual immorality connects back up to the sons of God, daughters of men's story, the second story, and then, the Sodom and Gomorrah. Rejecting the Lord's authority is connected to both the rebellion of the spies and to the rebel sons of God. In both cases, it's rejecting God as their wise authority who has given them limits.

And then, slandering the glorious ones, then, would be connected to the Sodom and Gomorrah story, the men of Sodom, who want to dishonor and gang rape the angels.

Jon: The angelic guests.

Tim: Yeah. So the three descriptions of these people are directly drawn from those three Scriptural patterns he has above.

Jon: What—why should we care?

Tim: Oh, okay.

Jon: You hear of Christian cults all the time. And one way they go bad—well, the ways they go bad are: money, sex, and power. And there's often some pretty bad, corrupt,

kind of sexual practices that are really abuse of power, often. And then even in what you would call just normal Christianity, I suppose, you have leaders who are falling prey to these things. So I guess, in one sense, it's like, nothing new under the sun.

Tim: Nothing new under the sun. He's naming the same things.

Jon: But man, there's such an exaggerated sense of like, how cosmic it is. The angels, they're being contained in this gloomy torment, and like, this is really shaping his imagination in a way that I don't—it feels uncomfortable to me. And I'm trying to understand that.

Tim: Okay, yeah. Let's just name what he's describing are patterns of human behavior that are as old as human beings. Right?

Jon: Right.

Tim: Right. Like, grabbing of power, in a way that hurts ourselves and other people. Sexual abuse is wrapped up in all that. And then, he's going to name, later in the letter, that these people are also trying to flatter people in the community for financial gain. So nothing new under the sun.

But the set of glasses that he has on—to talk about the gravity and importance, and why this is such a big deal—are right from the Hebrew Bible. And from the hyperlinking stories, following the hyperlinking design of the stories themselves in Hebrew. That's the set of glasses he and his readers have on. And it's so foreign to us, because we don't see the world that way. And I think the question is, what wisdom is there for us?

Jon: Right.

Tim: In learning to pay attention to these stories, and what they're trying to tell us about the kind of world we live in, and about human nature. And that, maybe the foreignness that we are feeling just speaks to how much we don't share his vision of reality. Judas, I mean.

Jon: Someone abusing their power for money or for sex. I don't start to think about this cosmic—

Tim: The sons of God.

Jon: The sons of God, yeah. Merging with—

Tim: But do you think about the snake? Does the story of the snake come into your mind? And do you think?

Jon: Maybe not enough.

Tim: The stories are trying to give us language and images and patterns for what is behind the curtain of human behavior. So when I hear a story about, you know, a ministry leader, who was, like, skimming money out of the account, and was sleeping with whoever, I think a mind like Judas would be to imagine, like, at some point, they believed a lie. They listened to the snake.

Jon: They merged with that lie.

Tim: The voice in their head telling them that they can't trust God to give them what God said he would in time. They start taking what's good in their eyes to meet needs that will never be met that way. And, right? I mean, I think that's what it means.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And you're right. I don't immediately go to Genesis six.

Jon: No, right.

Tim: When I think of—but man, I—you know, the world's a crazy place.

Jon: Genesis six seems to be talking more specifically to the people with a lot of power, you know? Our political leaders. But it's brought up here in reference to—there's these, just, guys in your community, who are a problem. And so, I want you to think about the cosmic distortion that happened in Genesis six, when angels crossed a boundary, took women, created some sort of hybrid craziness that's created violence on the land. And you mentioned that, in Genesis six, it says the nephilim were there during that day and also after.

Tim: Yeah. And the last of them are mentioned in Deuteronomy, the last of these guys, called the last of the rephaim—another name, the rephaim. And then, you want to know who kills the last one in the Bible?

Jon: Is it David?

Tim: It's David. Goliath is the last one that you're told that.

Jon: Oh, really?

Tim: Yeah. He's the last of the rephaim, which is a synonym for the nephilim. So, of course, it's the Messianic David, who kills the last one.

Jon: Kills the last one, but their kind of influence still pervades, right?

Tim: Yeah. But then, he's chased around by another king-giant.

Jon: Saul.

Tim: Yeah. Who—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Is head and shoulders above them all, who becomes a Goliath-like leader, through his moral choices. So the legacy of the nephilim lives on in abuse of leaders. And that's a pattern the biblical authors want us to see. It's a pattern that Jude is bringing up to interpret abusive leaders who have come into some churches that he's closely connected to. And this is how we make sense of it. Yeah. You know, I think what I'm trying to lean into here is the strangeness of the Bible, and not avoid it. And not avoid a book of the Bible that just seems all weirdo, and let's lean in. Like, what's the wisdom here? And I think it's precisely the foreignness of this that can be a gift to us, because it can speak to us with a voice, you know, that's not our own.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We're up through verse eight. Verse nine is—whoo—whole other rabbit hole.

Jon: Wait, wait, nine is—

Tim: You thought we were done talking about weird stuff about angels. It's actually about to get weirder. Did you think that was possible? That it could get weirder? Because it's going to get weirder.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: Alright. Until next time.

Jon: Thanks for listening to BibleProject podcast. Next week, we'll unpack a strange critique that Jude makes of the corrupt church members.

Tim: They slander the glorious ones. Glorious ones, as we're going to see, is a way of referring to heavenly spiritual beings—angels. These people criticize them, think they're better than them. So why? What is going on here?

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