

Passages Worth the Dig

Jude 5

**“Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it,
that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt,
afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”**

I never learned to type. Oh, I can peck the keys. I have a good idea where they are, and if I am looking at them, I can find them, often quickly. But I really need to look to be able to do so. That means at times, I find my left pinkie trying to hit the “shift” button to make a capital and instead I hit the “caps lock” button. That means that my typing begins producing full capital letters. It is why last week I typed,

François RABELASI WROTE A SOMEWHAT CRUDE SATIRE

in my first draft.

If I could type without looking at the keys, I would have my eyes on the screen and when I made the mistake of hitting “caps lock” instead of “shift,” I would immediately pick up on it and not have to re-type extended text.

I started to do the math of how much time I have spent rectifying this common mistake in my typing and comparing that to just learning how to type. I have no doubt I have wasted time on the keyboard. Extended time...

But at least with computers and copy machines we have a substantial ability to keep errors to a minimum, especially if we want a copy of something. If a book is made and printed, we can buy a copy assured that as the book was run off the press, one copy is likely identical to the copy that was printed immediately before or after. Not so with history in the era before the printing press.

For thousands of years of writing, copies were made one to the next by a scribe reading one copy and trying to reproduce it onsite. Early on people figured out multiple copies of a text could be made in the same time if a panel of scribes were writing as the original text was read out loud. With this method, ten scribes could produce ten copies of a text in the time it might take one scribe to produce one copy.

Both of these methods produce obvious areas rich for errors. With the method where one reads the text out loud to scribes, the text will only be as good as the reader is

flawless. Similarly, if the hearing of one or more scribes is deficient or a scribe is distracted, then the room for errors increases. Of course, there are also times where the reader might not adequately specify a term. To use an English example, if a reader said, “The principle applies...” does the reader reference a “principle” as an idea or is the reader talking about how a “principal” might apply something?

The scribe who is reading a one copy to make a second also has particular ways errors can sneak into the finished product. The reader may read the same line twice, especially if reading and copying for long hours or in dim lighting.

Modern conveniences (lighting, glasses, etc.) help eliminate some of these problems, and when they arise in a work, we typically have erasers, white-out, or computers that can rectify the error with clarity. But in times that preceded these conveniences, edits were frequently made by writing the correct text into the margin of a document. This is the same place where one might write an explanatory note. Then 100 years later when a scribe has that text and is copying it over, that scribe is faced with trying to determine if the margin entry is a text correction or explanatory note.

Another feature of ancient copy practice is the compounding of errors. If scribe one makes five errors in transcribing a text, then when a second scribe takes that first copy with its five errors to use in making another copy, of course, those five errors are repeated. On top of that, the second scribe is likely to make her or his own errors as well.

As a result, when one looks at the thousands upon thousands of ancient Greek manuscripts for the New Testament, there are many that have traceable copy mistakes. Comparing one manuscripts to another quickly illuminates obvious problems, and the scholar charged with trying to reconstruct the original text rarely has a “problem” or issue. By God’s providence and provision, there are no areas in the Greek New Testament that most people use today that arise to theological importance in fundamental doctrines. Still there are passages where scholarship has taught us important fresh truths. That is the case with today’s passage.

The Passage

Today’s passage is the fifth verse of the small one-chapter letter “Jude.” This small page in many Bibles is the “book” of the New Testament sandwiched between Second Peter and Revelation. Likely because of its location as well as because of its various unusual content, many Christians aren’t too familiar with the book. It is a fascinating read, however, and as Scripture is an important locus of our study.

While this lesson will dig into verse five, an overall view and understanding of the book is worthy to put verse five into context.

Authorship

The author identifies himself as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (1:1). “Jude” or “Judas” (the Greek “Ioudas”) was the common Jewish name “Judah.” One clue to the commonness of the name is how the New Testament usage almost always provides a descriptor after the name to distinguish one Judah from another. For example, the gospels speak of “Judas Iscariot” (Mt. 10:4; Mk. 3:19), or the different “Judas the son of James” (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13) or yet another “Judas the Galilean” (Acts 5:37). Judas was also the name of one of Jesus’ brothers (likely the youngest or next to youngest based on the order the brothers were listed).

In Matthew 13:55, the people were challenging how Jesus could be special since they knew him and his family.

Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

Mark recounts the same concern of people, but places Judas in the next to last position.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. (Mk. 6:3)

Since the earliest days of examining this letter, the church saw the author as Judas, the brother of Jesus. A minority of scholars have suggested that perhaps the apostle, “Judas the son of James,” (Lk. 6:16; Acts. 1:13) was the author. This is contrary not only to church history, but it seems contrary also to the content of the short letter. Verse 17 speaks of the apostles as if they were a different group, not one that included the author.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A third possible candidate set forth by some scholars is an otherwise “unknown” Judas. That would be surprising in that this letter quickly had authority among the early church. Clement of Rome referenced the letter as early as 96 A.D. in his writing to the Corinthian church.¹ Other apostolic fathers also accepted this letter as one that was authoritative

¹ 1 Clement 20:12 uses the wording and idea found in the marvelous Jude doxology of Jude verse 25:

from very early times. For the letter to be from some unknown Jude would be very surprising considering its early acceptance and use by the church.²

Another reason in favor of the authorship by Judas, the brother of Jesus is the way the letter begins. The identifying tag, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James” is consistent with how Jesus’s brothers self-designated after believing in Jesus post-resurrection. While others referred to Judas and James as Jesus’ brothers (Matt. 13:55, Jn 7:3-10, Acts 1:14, 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19), they seemed to refer to themselves as servants of Jesus (here and Jms. 1:1). Of course, the normal referring label is whom someone had as a father, not brother.³ Yet, the important link for the author Jude was not his father, but his brother. Notably, James, the brother of Jesus, was an early leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19).

The letter didn’t include a date in the corner, as modern correspondence might. But the letter seems to date in the range of AD60-80. Jude’s letter was used by the writer of Second Peter (or vice-versa)⁴ which dates around 65, indicating problems endemic to the church in that era.

Summary of the Text

After identifying his self and the recipients, Jude greets his readers with “mercy, peace and love...in abundance” (1:2). This is a natural greeting for those who are “called” and “loved” by God as well as those “kept” by Jesus. “Abundant mercy” is at the source of the

“Jesus Christ to whom be the glory and the majesty for ever and ever. Amen.”

Clement then ends his letter to the Corinthians with,

“through whom be glory and honor, power and greatness and eternal dominion, unto Him, from the ages past and forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Clem. 65:2).

Both of these Clement verses are traceable to Jude 25:

“to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty ... now and forever. Amen.”

² Later in church history, there was minor disputing over whether Jude belonged in the New Testament. The concern, however, was not centered on who wrote the letter. Rather, the concern was the way the letter used non-biblical writings in multiple places. Ultimately, the church recognized that many Biblical writers used extra-biblical sources to communicate their biblical truths. This is clear in Paul quoting Greek poets when expounding his beliefs to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:28).

³ Simon son of Jonah, Mt. 16:17; Judas, son of Iscariot, Jn. 6:71; 13:2, are prime examples

⁴ Compare 2 Pet. 2 with Jude 4-18.

believer's relationship with and calling from God. "Abundant peace" is the fruit of one's relationship with God. Abundant love is the eternal sustenance of the relationship (see 1 Cor. 13).

Jude then informs his readers that in spite of his eagerness to write to them about the salvation they all share, he was compelled to write about other matters instead. Jude knew he must write to urge the readers to contend for the faith that was "once and for all entrusted to the saints." Jude's concern forecasts the fact that for his some of his readers, the Christian faith was morphing and losing its truth.

Faith was not to be found in new revelations. The Christian faith was fully and totally revealed ("once and for all") and then given/entrusted to the saints. There was no secret that only a select few in the church knew. There was no special revelation to come at some later date in opposition to that already manifested to the church. There is the true faith, once and for all entrusted to the saints. The recipients needed this message.

This message would speak volumes to the church in the coming centuries. This message still speaks loudly to those in the 21st century as the church constantly confronts those who teach a new revelation of the gospel message that is at odds with that entrusted to the church.

Not surprisingly the particulars behind the false teachings are not very recognizable to the church nearly 2,000 years later, and so verses five through nineteen are not easily assimilated directly into the modern church. Still the root causes of the false teachings are worthy of examination. These same ideas have masqueraded in the church for centuries in one costume or another.

The form of heresy that Jude confronted was two- fold. Some were using the faith as a license for immorality. These folks were teaching that salvation by grace eliminates any concern over sin. The non-biblical idea that a Christian can do as dictated by personal desires and passions without concern over consequences because of forgiveness needed Jude's confrontation. In Paul's terminology, he explained that one must never sin "so grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1).

The second aspect of the heresy is its denial of Jesus Christ as the "only sovereign and Lord" (1:4). Jude was concerned about anyone diminishing the person or role of Christ. Jesus is Sovereign, meaning Jesus had power without limits, and absolute domination. He was and is "Lord" in the full sense of the word. Jude taught that using grace as a license to sin is a denial of the person and role of Jesus as our Lord.

Knowing the particular way that the heresy of lightening Jesus' Lordship was affecting the doctrine and practices of the church, Jude backed up his point by going to several examples that taught the importance of human responsibility and morality. Jude reminded his readers that God delivered his people from Egypt, but had no problem destroying those same people later for their lack of faith (1:5). Similarly, even angels who abandoned their place of authority came under God's curse (1:6). Jude set forward a third example of God's judgment over immorality. Jude reminded the readers that Sodom and Gomorrah were punished because of sexual immorality and perversion (1:7).

The false teachers that Jude wrote of were similar in the ways they would pollute their own bodies through their "license to sin" approach. The "dreamers" were not only polluting their own bodies through immorality, but they also were rejecting authority and "slandering" angelic beings by their behavior." In support of his point, Jude then referenced a current piece of fiction that circulated in the 1st century.

Called *The Testament of Moses*, this non-canonical work had the archangel Michael disputing with the devil over the body of Moses. Yet, Michael does not himself slander Satan. Instead, Michael rebukes Satan in the name of the Lord. This is an important comparison because the "dreamer heretics" were slandering those who taught truth against their heresy. Jude wanted his readers to understand how far out of line the dreamers were.

Pronouncing "woe" to the heretics, Jude then went back to the Old Testament to label their condemnation. He cited the heretics as taking "the way of Cain," rushing in to "Balaam's error" for profit, and being destroyed in "Korah's rebellion." As noted in the Old Testament, as well as Jewish writings contemporary to Jude, Cain followed a jealous heart of selfishness and greed as he murdered his brother in hatred. Balaam was also one bent on greed and personal gain, while Korah rose up in rebellion to God's appointed leaders (Num. 16).

Jude considered the heretics "blemishes" at the love feasts (meals that surrounded the Lord's Supper in the early church.) These heretics offer no "food" to others, even in the context of the Agape meals. They were "clouds without rain," "autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead," and "wild waves of the sea foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever" (1:12-13).

In more modern language, these were teachers who fed no one but themselves. They offered none of the blessings of rain upon land, merely moving as clouds. They were as worthless as dead trees that can't give fruit. Just as waves churn up the garbage in the

sea, these heretics churned up garbage and problems in the church. They had the stability and future of a shooting star that is headed to darkness.

Jude then used another writing, current to his day, to make his point. Jude referenced “Enoch, the seventh from Adam” as prophesying about these types of people. The quote Jude used comes from a book called *The Secrets of Enoch*, a pseudepigraphal work written perhaps a hundred years earlier and very popular at the time. Jude quotes the passage,

See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Again, by using this passage, Jude was not according scripture status to the Enoch book. Instead, we see Jude taking a known work and using a part of it to make a point. This would be similar to a preacher today taking an example from another sermon or book. If I were to reference the actions of Aslan with Peter or Lucy, those familiar with *The Chronicles of Narnia* would get the reference without believing I was accordingly canonical status to the writings of C.S. Lewis.

Jude using these extra-biblical writings does not mean the example is considered on a par with scripture. It is merely Jude’s recognition that God speaks truth in a number of places that can be seized for his purposes.

Jude considered the heretics grumblers and faultfinders who follow their own evil desires, boasting about themselves and flattering others for their own gain. Not a flattering picture!

Jude then told his readers they should not be shocked that some parade themselves within the church as teachers of truth when in fact they teach damaging heresy. In fact, Jude reminded his readers that the Apostles taught that there would be scoffers who follow their own desires rather than the Spirit.

Instead of following those false teachers, Jude reminds the church to

build yourself up in the most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will prompt us to pray and empower us to pray. In that vein, Jude wants the church to follow the Spirit’s truth rather than the heresies of evil. This is our stance while we remain in God’s love awaiting the mercy that will ultimately build into our eternal life (1:20).

The readers were not just to insulate themselves from the heretical teaching; they should also implement their own acts of holiness. They were to “be merciful to those who doubt.” They should “snatch others from the fire and save them” (1:23).

Jude closes his brief letter with a doxology of praise that is among the most profound and beautiful in the Bible. Full of faith and the Spirit, Jude wrote:

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more! Amen. (1:25)

Amen indeed!

Digging Deeper

With this greater context in mind, look now at the verse for greater digging. Compare Jude 5 in the King James (1611), the New American Standard Version (1995), the New International Version (2011), and the English Standard Version (2016):

King James	New American Standard	N.I.V.	E.S.V.
I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.	Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.	Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.	Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

In the King James, New American Standard, and New International versions, the one who “saved the people” out of Egypt was “the Lord.” But in the English Standard Version it is “Jesus” who saved the people out of Egypt.⁵ The Revised Standard Version avoids the dispute over who is the Savior out of Egypt (the Lord or Jesus) by turning the personal noun into an impersonal one! The RSV reads,

⁵ In fairness to the N.I.V. and New American Standard versions, there is a footnote in the text referencing other manuscripts as saying “Jesus” rather than the “Lord” as the people’s savior from Egypt.

Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that **he** who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe (emphasis added).

What is going on here? The answer lies in the copies that were referenced in the introduction to this lesson. Understanding a bit more fully the history of manuscripts helps understand the modern difference.

The original New Testament was written in Greek; however, the parchment (animal skins) and papyrus (a reedy plant typically harvested from around the Nile) upon which the originals would have been written is not typically long lasting. Add to that the periods of church persecution when scriptures were burned by the authorities, and it is surprising that there are so many early copies of the New Testament available for research and reconstructing the original text.

Another resource for scholars in addition to the old Greek manuscripts are the old copies of early translations of the Greek into various languages. Most well-known is likely the Vulgate, Jerome's translation of the Bible into everyday Latin in the late 300's. But scholars also have important access to other early translations into languages like Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian, and more. Scholars also use early quotations of Scripture that can be found in writings of the church fathers to aid in reconstructing the original Greek text.

Importantly, it is notable that the church went 1,000 years without this being a matter of concern. In an age where most people couldn't read, books were prohibitively expensive as handmade endeavors, and the practice of faith was more centered on the teachings of the church than the study of Scripture, very little work, if any, was done trying to restore the original Greek text.

With the advent of Gutenberg's press, increased literacy, and challenges to the church via the Reformation movement, scholars began attempting to piece together a standard Greek text for the Bible. The first published Greek New Testament was 1514 (part of the "Complutensian Polyglot"). The unknown manuscripts for that edition were supplied by the Pope from the Apostolic Library in Rome. Two years later, in 1516, the second and most famous Greek New Testament was published, that of Desiderius Erasmus.

Like the Complutensian compilers, Erasmus noted that he used the oldest and most correct manuscripts. We know that these manuscripts, while old to him date at their oldest to the 12th century. Erasmus didn't even have a Greek manuscript of Revelation 22:16-21, so he made his own by translating Jerome's Latin Bible back into Greek! Erasmus continued to edit his work through five editions.

In 1546, Robert Estienne, aka Robert Stephanus, used the Erasmus work as well as the Complutensian to prepare a Greek New Testament, dividing the chapters into verses for the first time. His work forms the basis of the verse divisions still used today. It was Estienne's third edition (1550) that was used by the King James translators for their 1611 Authorized Version.⁶

As archaeology and science continued to unfold from the Renaissance age into the modern scientific age, certain key figures in developing the Bible decided to seek out ancient manuscripts, using them to fine tune the Greek New Testament. Notable among these is Constantine Tischendorf (1815-1874), a professor of New Testament at the University of Leipzig. Tischendorf stumbled upon ancient manuscripts pages set aside to aid in lighting fires while at the monastery of St. Catherine's on Mount Sinai. Termed "Codex Sinaiticus," this manuscript dated from the mid-300's and was a substantial tool in developing an understanding of the original texts.⁷

Utilizing tools of comparing changes, dating manuscripts, and more, scholars have reconstructed family trees of early manuscripts. Among the scholars famous for producing ideas of these families are Brooke Foss Wescott (1825-1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1892). In 1881, these two Cambridge professors produced an edition of the New Testament, appropriately called "Wescott and Hort." This two-volume work had the text in the first volume. The second volume had an important addition. In the second volume Wescott and Hort explained the principles and rules they followed for determining which manuscripts receive which priority in determining the original text.

Wescott and Hort divided the manuscripts into four families or groups that seemed to have been produced in some way reliant on each other. Sensibly, if one area of the Christian world had a center for copying texts, errors made in one would be continued in successive copies. Similarly, if the copies were made in a different center of copying and the church, those variations in the copies in that second place would earmark them as uniquely from that region.

Wescott and Hort classified manuscripts as belonging to four groups:

⁶ The translators of the King James also made *extensive* use of earlier English translation, especially William Tyndale's of 1525. Tyndale worked from the editions of Erasmus.

⁷ The Codex Sinaiticus is abbreviated by the Hebrew letter aleph (א). It is considered in the "Alexandrian" family of manuscripts, as explained later in the text.

(1) the “Neutral text.” The leading copy of this was considered the “Codex Vaticanus” (designated in scholastic abbreviations as “B”), a 4th century text.⁸ Wescott and Hort believed the Neutral text to be the oldest grouping.

(2) The second earliest grouping they termed the “Alexandrian text,” likely stemming from ancient work in and around Alexandria. Prominent among this family is the Codex Ephraemi (abbreviated as “C”) along with the Coptic translation.

(3) The third group was called the “Western” text type. Seen as a more loosely transcribed scripture with interpretation often added into the text, this group is known prominently for Codex Bezae (“D”) as well as the old Syriac translations.

(4) the fourth and final group was called the “Syrian” text, believing it originated from Antioch of Syria in about the fourth century. It is found prominently in Codex Alexandria (“A”), as well as the Syriac translation (the Peshitta”) and the writing of the early preacher Chrysostom, who was bishop of Antioch until 398.

Beyond these groups of texts, scholars have devised certain rules to help guide the decision-making process of what the original text might have looked like. For example, if given a choice between an easy to understand reading and one that is more complicated and difficult to understand, the traditional thought is that the more difficult is more likely (barring some indication of how the error might have crept in otherwise). The reasoning is that a subsequent copier might more readily believe that someone erred in complicating matters and work to make them simpler, than that a copier opted to make a simple text more complicated.

Other scholars have produced Greek New Testaments that they believe more closely track the originals. Notable in this was the edition by German scholar Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913). While Westcott and Hort principally followed the Codex Vaticanus (“B”), Nestle used the Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲱ) as his principal source. Another German scholar, Bernhard Weiss (1827-1918) produced a Greek New Testament. Like Wescott and Hort, Weiss used the Codex Vaticanus (“B”) as his central source.

These texts continued to evolve as scholarship advanced and as new finds were made of ancient manuscripts. For example, the text by Nestle was carried on by his son who was later joined by Kurt Aland, and that Greek text, now known as “Nestle Aland” is now in its 28th edition, published in 2013. This text becomes important in the discussion of the Jude 5 passage.


⁸ Some place the Code Sinaiticus (Ⲱ) found by Tischendorf into this group, while others place it into the second grouping below (the Alexandrian text”).

In the 28th edition, Nestle Aland altered the core text of Jude 5, determining that the weight of authority places the original letter from Jude as terming “Jesus” to be the one who “saved a people out of the land of Egypt.”


This change happened for several reasons. For one, it is very understandable why an ancient copier might change “Jesus” to “Lord.” After all, the Old Testament account of the Exodus speaks of YHWH (translated as “Lord” in the Greek Old Testament) delivering the people. Nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that Jesus does. It is more difficult to understand why an ancient transcriber would think it right to change “Lord” to “Jesus.” As for the actual error in transcribing a copy, that physical reading is an easy mistake to make.⁹

But more importantly, the manuscripts themselves indicate more reliably that Jude originally wrote “Jesus,” rather than “Lord.” Among the notable manuscripts mentioned above, Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) writes Jude as saying “Lord.” But Codex Vaticanus (“B”) **and** Codex Ephraemi (“C”) both have “Jesus.” Similarly, but not precisely, the “Bodmer Papyrus (“p⁷²”), which dates even earlier than the Codexes (late 3rd early/early 4th century) has the “God Christ,” a clear reference to Jesus.

Among the early translations that reference Jude 5 as “Jesus” are the Coptic (dating from the 3rd to the 7th centuries) as well as the Latin Vulgate (4th to 5th century) and sixth century Ethiopian version. The early church Fathers Origen (in 253/254), Didymus (c. 295), Jerome (420), and Cyril (444) all read the passage as “Jesus.”



Eberhard Nestle



Kurt Aland

By the second century, copyists were using abbreviations in their manuscripts, especially for references to God and Jesus. Knowing that helps understand how a scholar might believe someone had wrongly put “Jesus” where it should have said “Lord,” thus thinking it okay to make the “sensible” correction.

The Greek word for “Lord” is “κύριος” while the word for “Jesus” is “Ἰησοῦς.” Those words may seem hard to confuse, but the abbreviations were commonly using the first and last capital letters of each. In the second and third century script that would look like:

ΚΣ

“Lord”

ΙΣ

“Jesus”

⁹ For a good discussion of the internal and external arguments, see Bartholoma, Philipp, “Did Jesus Save the People out of Egypt? A Re-Examination of a Textual Problem in Jude 5,” *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 50, (2008), at 143ff.

The most recent Greek New Testament has been compiled and produced by Tyndale House at Cambridge, England. The scholars behind that Greek text re-examined all the manuscript evidence from the ground up and also arrived at the conclusion that “Jesus” is the right reading.

So What?

Understanding that Jude’s original likely said “Jesus” rather than “the Lord,” might not seem to make a huge profound difference. In theology it certainly doesn’t. Both statements are true. But knowing that Jude wrote Jesus can make a difference in our lives, if we consider it a bit.

Jude/Judas was a younger brother of Jesus. Technically he was a half-brother, with Mary as mother and Joseph as his birth father whereas Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus spent his first 30 years as a carpenter. He performed and fulfilled his ministry in the last three years of his life. During this time, his brothers were not apostles or even disciples. Jesus was the oldest, and his brothers and sisters were scoffers. As Jesus said,

A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household (Mt. 13:57).

Jesus was in the midst of heavy ministry when, according to Mark, his family tried to intervene and remove him of his Messianic complex.

...the crowd gathered again, so that they [Jesus and his disciples] could not even eat. And when his [Jesus’] family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.” (Mt. 13:57).

The brothers were not a part of the family witnessing Jesus’ crucifixion. Doubtlessly, their brother’s death was a tragedy that unfolded leaving them without an older brother, but that was about it.

Then the resurrection – Jesus was raised in power. His body was real; he could be touched and held. He could eat. No one who knew him could dispute that he was restored to life once they saw him. Jesus’ brothers were among the first to do a 180 degree turn and find faith where once was humor if not mockery. Judas, James, and others would give up their trades and their small-town life and spend the rest of their days bearing testimony that Jesus wasn’t their brother. Jesus was the Lord God himself, made flesh and come among people.

Jude began his letter noting himself the “servant” of Jesus, both Jude and his brother James. Jesus was part of the Lord that brought Israel out of Egypt. One can read the Old Testament stories of YHWH working among Israel, of Israel being instructed to worship YHWH and YHWH alone. On reading that one can be assured that one is reading of Jesus and called to worship Jesus.

Reading this original point by Jude is inspiring to me. No one who is deeply studying the Bible should every doubt the divinity of Jesus. Scripture makes it clear: Jesus is Lord and God, to the glory of God the Father! In the final words of his half-brother Jude,

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)