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UNLOCKING THE STRUCTURE OF JUDE

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Jude is an elegantly written argument in the form of a letter. While the original readers of the letter are unknown, the reason for this catholic epistle is well known—to warn true believers against following the teachings and practices of the ungodly [often called false teachers]. The general nature of this argument is well known and can be found in almost all commentaries and even introductory textbooks. However, the structure or development of the argument is not. And because the development of the argument is not known, the full significance of the argument cannot be appreciated. The purpose of this article is to expose the outline of Jude, so that modern readers can see fully the development of the argument against the ungodly and see the directions given to the true believers. Commentators and translators alike, usually co-mingle the attack on the ungodly with the directives to the godly. A proper structural arrangement separates these two elements, allowing readers to focus on each, at the appropriate time and place in the text.

We begin the process of unlocking the argument of the letter at v. 8. Most students of Jude separate v. 8 from the material which precedes it and attach it to the material which follows. The idea of slander in v. 8 does have a subject tie-in with the material in vv. 9 and 10. However, a structural analysis of the material in vv. 5-7 indicates that v. 8 should be attached to vv. 5-7. There are three generally overlooked keys to placing v. 8 with vv. 5-7.

V. 8 applies the material in vv. 5-7 to the false teachers. V. 5 speaks of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron [Numbers 16]; v. 6 reminds the readers/ listeners of angels who lost their place; and v. 7 calls to mind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. V. 8 then applies the evils of these examples to the ungodly at the letter's destination. However, the application appears in reverse order of their textual presentations.[1]

V. 5	Exodus generation	V. 8c	slander the glorious ones
V. 6	Fallen angels	V. 8b	reject authority
V. 7	Sodom and Gomorrah	V. 8a	defile the flesh

Thus, the material in vv. 5-8 forms a coherent block. The first part [vv. 5-7] calls the readers' attention to past indiscretions, while the second part [8] applies those past sins to the [current] false teachers.

The second key to unlocking the structure of Jude comes from Luke Timothy Johnson.[2] Johnson pointed out that there was a five-fold series of "these are the ones" that all point to the opponents. This repetition occurs in vv. 8, 10, 12, 16, and 19. Each one of these occasions is the beginning of the second part of the blocks discussed above. Each block began with examples which are then applied to the

1 See Larry Douglas Smith, "The Glories of Jude 8" *BTT* 52 (2001): 100-101. Raymond Brown hints at this interpretation, but he, like most interpreters, understood the glorious ones as angels and not as human beings. Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (N. Y., 1997), 752.

2 Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Pa., 1990), 445.

false teachers ["these are the ones," according to Johnson's translation of all five references]. This five-fold repetition illuminated by Johnson initiates each of the sections that apply the examples to the false teachers. This linguistic and stylistic evidence parallels exactly the structural analysis presented above. Many previous commentators pointed out the five-time use of "these are the ones," but none has drawn out structural implications of this pattern.

A third line of evidence unlocking the key to the structure of Jude comes from a modification of the work by E. Earle Ellis.[1] He arranged the mid-section of the book in an alternating pattern of cited and non-cited materials. The cited materials were mostly from the TANAKH/Old Testament, while he identified the non-cited materials as commentary or midrashim. The following chart summarizes his finding of cited materials in Jude.

Jude	**Source**	**Jude**	**Source**
5	Num 14.35[2]		Deut 23.4
6	Gen 6.1-4		Numbers 16
	1 En 10.4-6	15	*1 En* 1.9
7	Gen 19.4-25		*General Ap.* 2.20-22
	2 Pet 2.6,10	18	2 Pet 3.3
9	*As. Mos.*		2 Tim 3.3-4
	Zech 3.2		Acts 20.29-35
11	*Tg. Yer. I* (Gen 4.8)		

Ellis is clearly on the right track. The pattern of alternating types of material forms the heart of Jude [vv. 5-19]. Five blocks of cited material are each followed by a block of material written by Jude. Ellis called these blocks midrash/ interpretation. This terminology is perhaps too general. Rather than midrashim or interpretation, these passages should be called application. Jude specifically applied the cited passages to describe pejoratively the false teachers. Hence the terminology used here: lessons from the past and application to the false teachers. Ellis recognized the importance of this material, but failed to draw out the implications for the structure of the work.

The same keys that unlock vv. 5-8 also unlock the rest of the middle portion of the letter. The central portion of the letter [vv. 5-19] consists of a series of blocks in which examples are given and then applied to the ungodly. Structuring the mid-section of the letter in this way, we find that the entire letter falls neatly into nine parts. The parts divide neatly into a stereotypical, chiastic pattern [A B C B' A']. Translators should recognize this pattern as they present the text to the public. We begin by separating the letter's introduction and benediction. The A and A' in the chiastic formula represent vv. 1-2 and vv. 24-25 respectively. The purpose statement begins the argument and the concluding statement ends it, represented

1 E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Tubingen, 1978), 221-236, but especially 221-223.

2 Ellis cites here an incorrect reference which has tremendous implications. Those who follow this reference place v. 8 with v. 9 and the following material. However, Numbers 16 seems to better fit the context of Jude. Jude argues that the false teachers, whoever they are, are rebellious, slandering the true leaders, and thinking of themselves as equal to, or better than, the church leadership. This fits the context of Numbers 16 much better than does the often cited Numbers 14. The circumstances of the rebellion in ch. 16 fits the nature of Jude better than the lack of commitment identified in ch. 14. The consequences of the aborted entry in ch. 14 do not seem to fit the destruction promised to the false teachers in Jude. The destruction of Numbers 16 does.

by B and B' in the formula and comprising vv. 3-4 and 21-22 respectively. Many translations combine vv. 20-23 with 25, while some go as far as v. 17. This structure isolates in its own paragraph, the author's directions to the readers. Making this change allows the reader to see clearly through the condemnation of the ungodly the author's positive directives to the readers. This elevates the status of the work from one of mere denunciation. In between the purpose and directives [vv. 5-19], we find five blocks of material, each beginning with a lesson from history and then applying that lesson to the false teachers. The outline, thus described and presented in a chiastic formula, is as follows:

A] 1-2 Introduction to the letter
  B] 3-4 Purpose of the letter—Contend for the faith
    C] The character of the ungodly
      5-8 Block 1—Negative examples followed
        5-7 Lessons from history: Part 1
          Three negative lessons followed
        8 Application to the false teachers
      9-10 Block 2—Positive example not followed
        9 A lesson from history: Part 2
          One positive lesson not followed
        10 Application to the false teachers
      11-13 Block 3—More negative examples followed
        11 Lessons from history: Part 3
          Three negative lessons followed
        12-13 Application to the false teachers
      14-16 Block 4—Enoch's predicating fulfilled
        14-15 Lessons from history: Part 4
          Enoch predicted the present problem
        16 Application to the false teachers
      17-19 Block 5—Apostles' prediction fulfilled
        17-18 Lessons from history: Part 5
          The apostles predicted the present problem
        19 Application to the false teachers
    B'] 20-23 Conclusions—Building godly character
C'] 24-25 Benediction to the letter—Doxology

Suggestions for translators

In order to implement the above structural changes, I would suggest a number of changes in the way translators present the book to the public, as well as some translation alternatives that reflect better the structural significance of the book. My main structural change would be the presentation of the book in nine paragraphs, each corresponding to the division noted in the outline above. Study and annotated editing would give similar titles to the respective, scriptural units.

Another suggestion for structural change involves the use of "bullets" in vv. 20-23. In contemporary writing, main points are often identified by such devices. The major positive points of the letter ["the ways of contending for the faith"] should be so identified, structurally highlighting their importance for the godly.

For example the first two of the directives could be presented as follows [according to the RSV]:

*Build yourselves up on your most holy faith.

*Pray in the Holy Spirit.

The next five directives would then follow the same format.

The five blocks describing the ungodly need some alternate translations that would better reflect the structure. I will probably prefer a freer translation than most, but these suggestions could certainly be incorporated in more literal translations.

The pivotal places to examine are the introductory phrases to both the lessons from history and the applications. In blocks 1 and 5, the term for remembrance is found. The intent of its use and its nature as an inclusio should be more pronounced. Suggestions for these verses are:

v. 5 Remember, because you were taught all these things ...
v. 17 Remember, beloved ...

When the role of remembering is highlighted, the force of the term carries over to the other three blocks of material. As used in blocks 2 and 4, I would suggest the following translations:

v. 9 Remember the archangel Michael. When ...
v. 14 Remember Enoch's prediction for the ungodly. In the seventh ...

The middle elements of the chiasm continues the idea of remembrance, but the opening words change the emphasis from remembering to focus on God's condemnation of the ungodly. Many translations still retain the archaic term "woe." This recognizes the connection with the woe prophecies of the Israelite prophets, but its meaning is largely lost on today's readers. Let me suggest the following alternate translation:

v. 11 Remember, the ungodly are cursed. For they walk ...

Even more important to bringing out the structure of Jude's attack on the ungodly, would be their clear identification in the application sections. Each of these sections begins with the use of "these are the ones" [following Johnson's translation noted above]. Scholars are in near universal agreement that the term in all five applications [vv. 8, 10, 12, 16, 19] refers to the ungodly church members who had "secretly" joined the fellowship. I would, therefore, propose the following as an appropriate translation: "your ungodly members." This translation would reflect the known facts: the people described as ungodly are members of the church [or churches] addressed. The phrases that introduce the application sections would then begin:

v. 8 In the same way your ungodly members in ...
v. 10 On the other hand, your ungodly members revile ...
v. 12 Your ungodly members are blemishes ...
v. 16 Your ungodly members are grumblers ...
v. 19 Your ungodly people set up divisions ...

Conclusions

The advantages in using this structure and the suggested translations are two-fold. By isolating and emphasizing the positive message of vv. 20-23, the negative tone of the letter will be reduced and the positive directives will receive more attention, as seems to be the author's desire. Second, readers see the nature of the ungodly more clearly. In blocks 1 and 3, the ungodly follow negative examples, as if they did not remember those examples. In block 2, a positive example was not remembered. In blocks 4 and 5, the readers are reminded that such ungodly people were predicted long ago. Such are the chief advantages to restructuring the book.

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KEY TERMS IN PAUL'S LETTERS THAT SHAPE THEOLOGY

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The traditional understanding of Paul's writings among Protestants since the Reformation is that Paul represents salvation by grace while Judaism represents salvation by works of the law. Romans and Galatians are traditionally read from this perspective, and Paul's letters are understood as teaching the timeless message that individual salvation comes from faith alone. In keeping with this understanding of Paul's theology, the Judaizer today is the person who tries to earn salvation by doing good deeds. A classic study of Romans from this perspective is Anders Nygren's 1949 *Commentary on Romans*.

Over the past twenty-five years or so, however, a new approach to Paul has been gaining acceptance. James Dunn, who credits E. P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Pa.: Fortress, 1977) with the beginning of the paradigm shift in Pauline studies, writes:

> Sanders' basic claim is not so much that Paul has been misunderstood as that the picture of Judaism drawn from Paul's writings is historically false, not simply inaccurate in part but fundamentally mistaken. What is usually taken to be the Jewish alternative to Paul's gospel would have been hardly recognized as an expression of Judaism by Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. Sanders notes that Jewish scholars and experts in early Judaism have for long enough been registering a protest at this point, contrasting rabbinic Judaism as they understand it with the parody of Judaism which Paul seems to have rejected.[1]

In his commentary on Romans, John Ziesler similarly credits Sanders as the key figure in this shift in understanding Paul's writings. Ziesler's words are worth reading in entirety:

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1 J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 65 (1983): 97. It must be noted that there are scholars who disagree considerably with Sanders' analysis of the rabbinic sources. See, for example, Jacob Neusner, "Mr. Sanders' Pharisees—and Mine: A Response to E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 73-95, and Martin Hengel and R. Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism,' Jesus, and the Pharisees. Review article of *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, and *Judaism: Practice and Belief* by E. P. Sanders," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46.1 (1995): 1-70.