

## 72 “ANGELS KEPT IN ETERNAL CHAINS” — JUDE

*“You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day.” Jude 6*

**Introduction:** Jude 6 is, understandably, taken to mean that angels sinned, which inevitably contributes to the “fallen angel story”. Depending on the context, the Greek word angelous can be translated as either “angels”, referring to celestial beings, or “messengers”, referring to men who had important roles in service to God. In this passage, Young’s Literal Translation (YLT) and the Literal Standard Version (LSV) translated angelous as “messengers”. However, most translators use the word “angels”, apparently unaware the passage refers to an Old Testament story. In this paper, we will seek to show that the Greek word “angelous” should have been translated as “messengers” or “ministers” in Jude 6 (and 2 Peter 2:4) and referred to men of esteemed standing, namely, Korah and his associates in Numbers 16. Korah and the other rebels, were men of high importance in the ministerial order of Israel.

### 1. “Now I desire to remind you, though you already know this...” Jude 5

**Comment:** Jude was commenting on a story familiar to his audience. We can safely assume he is referring to an Old Testament occurrence.

### 2. “...that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, ...” Jude 5

**Comment:** Jude set the time frame of the narrative he is referencing. It occurred after the Exodus from Egypt. The events concerning Korah and his co-conspirators took place during the wilderness wanderings sometime after the Exodus.

### 3. “...afterward [God] destroyed those who didn’t believe.” Jude 5

**Comment:** Jude tells us God destroyed these unfaithful ones in the past, so they were not awaiting destruction, but judgment. Jude’s commentary was regarding Korah and the rebellious faithless ones in his company—those who were disobedient to God and went down into the pit to be swallowed by the earth.

**Numbers:** “When he [Moses] had finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, along with their households, and all Korah’s men, and all their goods. They and all that they had went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them. So they perished from among the community.” Num 16:31-33

### 4. “Angels who didn’t keep their first domain, but deserted their own dwelling place...” Jude 6

**Comment:** Korah and his associates were men of stature and had special ministerial roles in Israel, but apparently also wanted the priesthood.

**A. Numbers:** “Now Korah ...took men and rebelled against Moses, along with some of the Israelites, 250 leaders of the community, chosen from the assembly, famous men. And they assembled against Moses and Aaron...” Num 16:1-3

**B. Numbers:** Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi! Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of Yahweh’s tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; and that he has brought you near, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? Do you seek the priesthood also? Therefore you and all your company have gathered together against Yahweh!” Num 16:8-11

### 5. “...He has kept in everlasting bonds in utter darkness for the judgment of the great day.” Jude 6

**Comment:** These errant ministers were swallowed alive by the earth, condemned to the grave which Peter called Tartarus, a Greek word for Sheol, to await judgment day. This judgment was imminent in Jude’s day and ended the Old Covenant in AD 70.

**Old Testament:** Many of those who sleep in the dusty ground will awake –some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence. Daniel 12:2

**New Testament:** “The coming of the Lord is at hand... the Judge is standing right at the door.” James 5:8,9

**New Testament:** “The time has come for judgment to begin.” 1 Pet. 4:17

**New Testament:** “Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me, to repay to each man according to his work.” Rev. 22:12

### 6. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them...” Jude 7

**Comment:** Not only were the main conspirators swallowed up by the earth, but 250 co-conspirators were devoured by fire, similar to the way Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

**Numbers:** “All the Israelites who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, ‘What if the earth swallows us too?’ Then a fire went out from the Lord and devoured the 250 men who offered incense.” Num 16:34-35

## 7. "[Sodom and Gomorrah] are shown as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." Jude 7

**Comment:** Sodom and Gomorrah and the Korah co-conspirators who died by fire, were examples to these false teachers who had made their way into the Christian assemblies. These false teachers, we believe, were preachers of zealotry and became combatants in the judgment of Jerusalem when the city, along with the temple, was destroyed by fire in AD 70. The zealots were not only the destroyers in the Roman and Jewish War, but also the destroyed.

**Daniel Prophecy:** "Until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction...On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys." Dan. 9:26-27

**Josephus:** "...it was because God had doomed this city to destruction, as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire..." Wars of the Jews 4.5.2

**Josephus:** "There was nothing left to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited. This is the end which Jerusalem came to ...a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind." Wars of the Jews, 7:1:1

## 8. "So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire." Jude 7

**Comment:** Here we quote verse 7 in full. At first glance it appears the ancient errant ones were indulging in sexual perversion. But a closer look at the pronouns tells us Jude was referring to the false teachers who had infiltrated first century Christian gatherings. Jude referred to the infiltrators as "these" [#3778] through-out his letter—once as "them".

"...these have given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh." Vs. 7

"...these speak evil of whatever things they don't know." Vs. 10

"Woe to them! For they went in the way of Cain." Vs 11

"These are hidden rocky reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you..." Vs 12

"About these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied..." Vs.14

"These people are grumblers and fault-finders..." Vs. 16

"It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit." Vs. 19

**Comment:** The immoral behavior of the libertine false teachers in Christian gatherings during Jude's day were "these" among the Christian assemblies and would suffer the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah and the 250 rebels of Numbers 16 in the conflagration which would define the destruction of Jerusalem in AD.70. From Josephus, we indeed know the zealots, whom we believe were the false teachers, were licentious types, using women for sport and indulging in transvestitism. (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 4.9.10)

## 9. "Angels" [angelous] refers to people as well as celestial beings, depending on the context.

A. "He [Jesus] sent messengers [angelous #32] on ahead of him." Lk 9:52

B. "This is the one [John the Baptist] about whom it is written: 'Look, I am sending my messenger [angelon #32] ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.'" Mt 11:10

C. "Was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers [angelous #32] ...?" James 2:25 ("Angelous" is a reference to the two spies who went to Jericho)

## 10. Angels do not die.

"But those who are regarded as worthy to share in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. In fact, they can no longer die, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, since they are sons of the resurrection." Lk 20:35-36

## 11. There are no sinful celestial angels. All serve and exalt God.

A. "Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all his heavenly assembly!" Ps 148:2

B. "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?" Heb 1:14

## 12. Spiritual beings are not destroyed by fire.

A. "As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the LORD's messenger went up in it while Manoah and his wife watched. They fell face down to the ground." Jud 13:20

B. "Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, 'Praised be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent forth his angel and has rescued his servants [from the fire] who trusted in him...'"

**Summary:** No extra-Biblical literature is needed to explain Jude's allusion to the "angels kept in eternal chains" and the "angels that sinned" in 2 Peter 2: 4. It is likely due to our collective ignorance of the Old Testament that the similarities of the cataclysmic Korah incident and the consequences in the Jude passage have gone unnoticed in so much Bible interpretation.

**See also Preterist Paper #65 for our understanding of the book of Jude.**