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2 Peter and Jude

Session 5

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs

1) Abstract:

The provided text offers an in-depth **analysis of the Epistle of Jude**, exploring its literary characteristics and theological implications. It identifies Jude as a **mixed-type letter**, primarily advisory but with significant elements of censure, akin to ancient deliberative and epideictic oratory. The text meticulously **examines Jude's use of historical and natural examples**—such as the Exodus generation, fallen angels, Sodom, Cain, Balaam, and Korah—to warn against false teachers and emphasize the consequences of transgressing divine boundaries. Furthermore, it discusses the **complexities of textual criticism** in understanding Jude's original wording and highlights the letter's reliance on **extra-biblical texts like 1 Enoch**, demonstrating its broader literary and theological context within early Judaism and Christianity.

2) Briefing Document: Detailed Briefing Document: Jude's Letter - Themes, Ideas, and Key Facts

This briefing document reviews the main themes, important ideas, and key facts from the provided excerpts of Dr. David A. DeSilva's "2 Peter and Jude," Session 5, focusing on the biblical book of Jude.

1. Jude's Letter Type and Rhetorical Strategy

Jude's letter is identified as a "**mixed type**," primarily **advisory** with a significant **vituperative (censure) character**. DeSilva notes that while more words are dedicated to censure, it "serves the primary goal of persuading the congregation not

to be influenced by the intruder's practice and teaching, but rather to continue firmly in the path on which the apostles had set them."

- **Advisory Purpose:** Jude "urges his audience or audiences to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints by building themselves up in that faith, keeping their eyes fixed on the mercy for which they hope on the day of judgment, and helping one another stay on course."
- **Vituperative Purpose:** To "lay bare the badness of someone's character or the offensiveness of his or her action against someone," specifically the "posers that have weaseled their way into their midst."
- **Rhetorical Overlap:** There is a natural overlap between these letter types and classical rhetorical genres:
- **Deliberative Oratory:** Aims to persuade a group to adopt or avoid a course of action.
- **Epidictic Oratory:** Presents a person, attribute, or object as praiseworthy or blameworthy.
- **Conclusion:** Jude does not conclude in a typical letter format but with a **doxology**, suggesting it was likely "read aloud to the assembled congregation during a gathering for worship."

2. Core Theological Tensions and Themes

DeSilva highlights several essential themes and tensions in Jude:

- **Maintaining Boundaries of Faith:** Jude emphasizes "the edges beyond which lie non-Christian practice and the denial of Christian convictions about God, God's grace, and Christ's lordship." This highlights a tension between a "progressive impulse" (people led by God's spirit) and the "conservative essence of revealed religion committed to the faith delivered once for all."
- **Misunderstanding God's Grace:** The "interlopers radically misunderstand God's grace as license to indulge the cravings of their flesh without fear of judgment, rather than as an opportunity and empowerment to live beyond the power of the cravings of the flesh." Jude insists that God's grace sets people "on a trajectory toward blamelessness on the day of God's visitation."

- **Accountability and God's Judgment:** A central theme is God's "commitment to hold his creatures accountable to the honor and obedience that they owe him." This includes sorting out "the righteous from the wicked" and those who honor God from those who live for "their own pleasures and purposes."
- **Holiness and Love:** DeSilva concludes that for Jude, "holiness and love are not conflicting characteristics or options. They are mutually defining and reinforcing."

3. Use of Historical and Analogical Examples for Persuasion

Jude employs numerous examples from history, scripture, and nature to warn against the interlopers and underscore the certainty of God's judgment.

- **Purpose of Examples:** To "show the consequences of similar courses of action taken in the past, whether the end was good or bad, honorable or disgraceful" and to provide "grounds for considering the subject of one's speech disgraceful."
- **Old Testament and Apocryphal Examples (Jude 5-7):**
 - The Exodus Generation (Numbers 13-14):** Condemned to die in the desert because they "rejected God's promise and believed the majority report of spies and distrusted the Almighty." This stresses "the importance of continuing in obedience and faithfulness."
 - The Rebel Angels (Genesis 6:1-4, expanded by 1 Enoch):** Angels who "rebelled against God's created order and transgressed the important boundaries set for them as immortal beings stationed in the heavens to copulate with mortal human females." They are "chained and locked away in the deep caverns of the earth...for the day when God will judge all creatures." This illustrates that "Those who cross the lines God has drawn come to a bad end."
 - Sodom, Gomorrah, and Sister Cities:** Suffered "fire to be rained down upon them from the sky" due to "fornication and going after a different kind of flesh." Jude emphasizes "the grim consequences of transgressing God-ordained boundaries for life and practice."

- **Connection to Interlopers:** Jude asserts that the interlopers exhibit "several of the same traits and practices of those historically experiencing God's condemnation."
- **Example from Extra-Biblical Tradition (Jude 9): Michael and Satan:** This story, likely from "The Assumption of Moses" (a lost work), depicts Michael the archangel disputing with Satan over "the body of Moses." Michael, despite Satan's accusations, "did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment but said rather, May the Lord rebuke you."
- **Lesson:** Michael showed "proper restraint in dealing with an angelic peer," contrasting with the interlopers who "slander glories" (angels) and "act as if one enjoyed authority over spiritual beings."
- **Further Old Testament Examples (Jude 11): The Way of Cain (Genesis 4):** Cain's failure to "master his emotions rather than yield to them." Connected to the interlopers' "commitment to gratify rather than master their passions."
- **The Error of Balaam (Numbers 22-24, 31:16):** Balaam, a prophet for hire, sought to earn money by suggesting Moabite women "seduce the Hebrew men and lead them to join in worshiping the Moabite gods." This links to the interlopers' promotion of "sensuality and with it the erasure of the boundaries of holiness" and their motive to "milk the congregation...for any profit they can."
- **The Rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16):** Korah claimed "all Israel was holy to the Lord and not Moses and Aaron especially," seeking "greater measure of authority for himself." This parallels the interlopers who "pretend to have access to God and God's permissive decrees by means of their charismatic and prophetic activity with a similar goal of setting aside the binding authority of the apostolic teaching and tradition."

4. Characteristics and Practices of the Interlopers

Jude vividly describes the interlopers, often contrasting them with the examples above:

- **"Dreaming" (Jude 8):** This "stands a very good chance...of reflecting an observable and characteristic practice of the interlopers themselves," who

"legitimized their practice and teaching by claiming, and perhaps even staging, charismatic experiences as their source."

- **"Pollute flesh" (Jude 8):** Refers to "the self-indulgence of the interlopers with clear sexual overtones."
- **"Set aside authority / denying lordship" (Jude 8):** Likely refers to "the interlopers' promotion of Christian freedom in directions that move into the territory of license and licentiousness."
- **"Slander glories" (Jude 8):** Least clear, but possibly refers to slandering angels, potentially linked to a sense of "freedom from the moral constraints of the shared Jewish and Christian tradition" or acting as if one had "authority over spiritual beings."
- **Lack of Genuine Spiritual Knowledge (Jude 10):** "Their charismatic pretensions arise from their lack of genuine spiritual knowledge."
- **Sensual Practices (Jude 10):** Their "sensual practices arise from the kind of knowledge that human beings share with animals that lack rational faculties, the knowledge that comes from cravings and instincts." Jude asserts their end is "corruption and decay."
- **Images from Nature (Jude 12-13):** These reinforce Jude's condemnation:
- **Hidden reefs in your love feasts:** Highlighting the "danger that the interlopers pose to Jude's audience," threatening "shipwreck of the faith."
- **Shepherds tending themselves:** They "neglect their duty toward their charges, looking only after their own interests and profits."
- **Waterless clouds being carried along by the wind:** They are "full of air and bluster intent on inflating their own reputation but offering nothing nourishing or helpful."
- **Trees bearing no fruit...uprooted twice dead:** They "have no roots sunk into the spiritual nourishment that God provides and are thus dead themselves, let alone capable of being life-giving for others."
- **Wild waves of the sea churning up their own shame:** Their "self-indulgent practices dredge up the mud of their own degradation."

- **Wandering stars for whom the gloom of darkness has been kept in reserve forever:** Refers both to planets (unreliable points of navigation) and the fallen angels of 1 Enoch, signifying their deviation and assured judgment.

5. Jude's Use of 1 Enoch

Jude's reliance on 1 Enoch is a significant aspect of his letter, attesting to its authority in the circles Jude inhabited.

- **Direct Reference (Jude 6):** The story of the rebel angels is "known more from 1 Enoch's expansion of Genesis 6:1 to 4 than from the scriptural story itself."
- **Direct Quotation (Jude 14-15):** Jude directly quotes 1 Enoch 1:9-10: "It was also about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied saying see the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."
- **Importance of 1 Enoch:** The book "grew in stages over the course of at least two centuries," indicating "an ongoing and steady stream of influence and awareness." Its presence among the Dead Sea Scrolls (except for "Parables of Enoch") further attests to its importance for sectarian Jewish communities.
- **Merging Horizons:** By quoting Enoch in the past tense ("the Lord came") and linking it to the interlopers ("these"), Jude "merges the horizons of Enoch's past and the audience's present," implying that the fate of the ungodly in history is also the certain fate of the interlopers.

6. Textual Criticism and its Implications for Jude

DeSilva dedicates a significant aside to the discipline of textual criticism, highlighting the complexities of discerning the original wording of New Testament texts.

- **Lack of Originals:** "We do not possess the first-century original autographs of any of the writings of the New Testament." Instead, we have "thousands of New Testament manuscripts that represent copies of copies of copies."

- **Textual Variants:** Differences in wording across manuscripts are common, "rarely in ways that significantly affect meaning, but sometimes in ways that do."
- **Accidental Mistakes:** Spelling errors, confusing similar letters, skipping or duplicating words/phrases (e.g., due to homoeoteleuton or homoeoarkton), misconstruing spoken text.
- **Intentional Changes:** Harmonizing passages, improving grammar/style, correcting perceived errors, or making "theologically motivated omissions, changes, or insertions."
- **Methods of Textual Criticism:** The process of "reconstruction of the most likely original wording" involves:
- **Weight of Early Manuscripts:** Prioritizing texts from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, papyri).
- **Shorter Readings:** Often preferred because scribes tended to expand texts.
- **More Troublesome Readings:** Preferred because scribes tended to smooth out difficulties.
- **Wider Geographical Attestation:** Readings appearing in manuscripts from diverse regions (e.g., Egypt, Palestine, Greece) are given greater weight.
- **Case Study: Jude 5:** DeSilva illustrates these complexities with Jude 5, which presents two principal questions:
- **Use of "Hapax" (Once for all):** Does it describe the audience's reception of Christian knowledge or contrast the Exodus generation's initial deliverance with their later failure? The "stronger reading" connects it to the addressee's "enlightenment in the faith."
- **Who Delivered Israel from Egypt?** Variants include "the Lord," "Jesus," or "God Christ."
- "Jesus" has "strong support" from early manuscripts and translations, suggesting it was "widespread in the late second, early third century" and is a "more troublesome reading" (making it potentially original).

- However, Jude doesn't use "Jesus" elsewhere in the letter apart from "Christ," suggesting it could be a scribe's intrusion to clarify "Lord."
- **Conclusion on Jude 5:** "It is ultimately not possible to be sure." DeSilva stresses that "the uncertainty of the textual witness...should lead us to remain tentative in any theological conclusions we might draw based upon the context of Jude 5." This highlights the importance of understanding "the complexities of the task of textual criticism that stands behind the text that we read."

3) Study Guide:

Jude's Letter: A Study Guide

I. Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences, drawing upon the provided source material.

1. What primary and secondary letter types characterize Jude's epistle, and what specific goals do they serve?
2. How do the letter types employed by Jude overlap with classical rhetorical genres, and what implications does this have for analyzing Jude's strategy?
3. Explain the main theme Jude announces regarding God's grace, contrasting it with the interlopers' misunderstanding.
4. In what ways does Jude use historical examples as a persuasive device? Provide one instance from the text.
5. Describe the story of the Exodus generation as presented in Jude 5, focusing on their transgression and God's response.
6. According to the expanded story in 1 Enoch, what specific transgressions did the rebel angels commit, and what were their consequences?

7. How does Jude characterize the interlopers' activities in verse 8, particularly concerning their "dreaming" and "slandering glories"?
8. Explain the significance of Michael's dispute with Satan over the body of Moses in Jude 9, and what it suggests about the interlopers' behavior.
9. What is textual criticism, and what are some common reasons for variations (textual variants) in New Testament manuscripts?
10. How does Jude's use of images from nature and industry (verses 12-13) contribute to his condemnation of the interlopers? Provide two examples.

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. Jude's letter is of the "mixed type." Its primary type is advisory, urging the audience to contend for the faith and dissuading them from the interlopers' influence. Its secondary type is vituperative or censure, laying bare the bad character of the interlopers to persuade the congregation not to be swayed by them.
2. Jude's advisory letter type overlaps with deliberative oratory, which aims to persuade a group toward or against a course of action. His vituperative letter type overlaps with epideictic oratory, which presents someone as blameworthy. This overlap suggests that classical rhetorical theory on invention can aid in analyzing Jude's persuasive strategies.
3. Jude announces that God's grace is intended to set people on a trajectory toward blamelessness on the day of judgment, enabling them to live beyond the cravings of the flesh. The interlopers, however, radically misunderstand God's grace as a license to indulge their fleshly desires without fear of judgment.
4. Jude uses historical examples to show the consequences of past actions (good or bad) and to compare or censure figures. For instance, he brings the examples of the Exodus generation, rebel angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah to bear on the interlopers, asserting that they exhibit similar traits and practices that provoke God's condemnation.
5. The Exodus generation, despite being miraculously delivered from Egypt and provided for by God, distrusted God at the threshold of the Promised Land,

believing the majority report of the spies over Joshua and Caleb. In response to this affront to God's power and kindness, God condemned them to die in the desert, preventing them from entering the land.

6. According to 1 Enoch, the rebel angels transgressed God's created order by copulating with human females, producing giants who wreaked havoc. They also taught humankind harmful and forbidden arts like mining metals (leading to greed and weapons) and cosmetics, contributing to chaos on earth.
7. In verse 8, Jude asserts that the interlopers "go about dreaming," suggesting they legitimize their teaching through claimed or staged charismatic experiences, perhaps even using a verb associated with false prophets from Deuteronomy. They also "pollute flesh" (self-indulgence with sexual overtones) and "slander glories" (likely referring to angels, possibly indicating a disregard for traditional moral constraints or boasting authority over spiritual beings).
8. Michael, the archangel, when disputing with Satan over Moses' body, showed proper restraint by not rebuking Satan on his own authority but said, "May the Lord rebuke you." This counterexample highlights the interlopers' lack of restraint and presumption in "slandering glories," implying they act as if they have authority over spiritual beings.
9. Textual criticism is the careful and critical reconstruction of the most likely original wording of ancient texts, like the New Testament, given that no original autographs survive. Textual variants, or differences in wording among manuscripts, arise from accidental mistakes by scribes (e.g., spelling errors, skipped words) or intentional changes (e.g., harmonizing passages, improving grammar, theological motivations).
10. Jude uses vivid images from nature and industry to paint a derogatory picture of the interlopers. For example, he calls them "waterless clouds being carried along by the wind," signifying their boastful but unhelpful nature, offering no spiritual nourishment. He also refers to them as "trees bearing no fruit even in the late fall, uprooted, twice dead," illustrating their spiritual barrenness and inability to provide life for others because they lack roots in God's provision.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss how Jude's letter, despite its brevity, effectively employs elements of classical rhetoric and various letter types to achieve its persuasive goals. Analyze the interplay between Jude's advisory and vituperative elements and their connection to deliberative and epideictic oratory.
2. Examine Jude's use of historical and para-scriptural examples (Exodus generation, rebel angels, Sodom, Cain, Balaam, Korah) as a central argumentative strategy. How do these examples function to expose the interlopers' character and practices, and what theological points do they emphasize regarding God's judgment and human transgression?
3. Analyze the concept of "boundaries" in Jude's letter. How does Jude accuse the interlopers of transgressing God-ordained boundaries (e.g., through their understanding of grace, their "slandering glories," and their licentiousness), and what consequences does he foresee for such transgressions based on his examples?
4. Discuss the role and significance of 1 Enoch in Jude's argument. How does Jude integrate material from 1 Enoch, particularly the Book of the Watchers and Enoch's prophecy, to reinforce his warnings against the interlopers and the certainty of God's judgment? Consider the implications of Jude's use of this "parabiblical" text.
5. Explore the tension between "Christian freedom" and "licentiousness" as presented in Jude's letter. How does Jude critique the interlopers' understanding of grace as license, and how does this contrast with Jude's vision of a Christian life characterized by "holiness" and "love" within "apostolic tradition"?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Advisory Letter:** A type of letter where the author recommends a course of action or dissuades recipients from another. Jude's letter is primarily advisory.
- **Apostolic Character/Tradition:** The authoritative nature of the Christian faith and practice, based on the teachings and actions of the apostles, which Christians are exhorted to uphold.

- **Codex Alexandrinus:** A 5th-century AD complete or near-complete Bible manuscript, significant for textual criticism.
- **Codex Sinaiticus:** A 4th-century AD complete or near-complete Bible manuscript, highly important for textual criticism.
- **Codex Vaticanus:** A 4th-century AD complete or near-complete Bible manuscript, crucial for textual criticism.
- **Deliberative Oratory:** A genre of classical rhetoric employed to persuade an audience to adopt or reject a particular course of action in response to a situation.
- **Doxology:** A liturgical expression of praise to God, often found at the end of New Testament letters like Jude.
- **Epidictic Oratory:** A broader genre of classical rhetoric often defined as praising or censuring a person, attribute, or object, presenting it as honorable or shameful.
- **Exodus Generation:** The generation of Hebrews delivered from Egyptian slavery who, despite God's provision, failed to trust Him at the threshold of the Promised Land and were condemned to die in the desert.
- **1 Enoch (First Enoch):** A collection of ancient Jewish apocalyptic texts, considered "parabiblical," from which Jude draws significant material, particularly the Book of the Watchers and Enoch's prophecy.
- **Hapax:** A Greek adverb meaning "once for all" or "decisively," whose placement in Jude 5 is a point of textual critical debate, referring either to the audience's knowledge or the Exodus deliverance.
- **Interlopers:** False teachers or individuals who have "weaseled their way" into the congregation, promoting practices and teachings contrary to the apostolic tradition, against whom Jude warns his audience.
- **Mixed Type (Letter):** A letter that combines elements of more than one letter type, as Jude's letter combines advisory and vituperative elements.
- **Papyrus 72 (P72):** An early 3rd or early 4th-century papyrus copy of portions of the New Testament, including Jude, providing important textual witness.

- **Rebel Angels:** Angels mentioned in Genesis 6:1-4 (expanded upon in 1 Enoch) who transgressed God's created order by cohabiting with human females, leading to their punishment in chains.
- **Slandering Glories:** A phrase used by Jude to describe the interlopers' behavior, likely referring to their disrespect or claims of authority over angelic beings.
- **Son of Man:** A significant end-time figure in the Parables of Enoch (a section of 1 Enoch) who will have a role in God's judgment; Jesus' preferred self-designation.
- **Textual Criticism:** The academic discipline dedicated to carefully reconstructing the most likely original wording of ancient texts, like the New Testament, by sifting through variations in manuscripts.
- **Textual Variants:** Differences in wording found across the many surviving manuscripts of a given text, resulting from accidental or intentional changes by scribes.
- **Vituperative Letter/Letter of Censure:** A type of letter in which one exposes the bad character or offensive actions of someone. Jude's letter includes this as a secondary type.
- **Wandering Stars:** An image used by Jude to describe the interlopers, referencing both planets that move irregularly and the fallen angels of 1 Enoch who deviated from God's order.

4) FAQs:

1. What kind of letter is Jude, and what are its primary goals?

Jude's letter is a "mixed type," primarily advisory but also vituperative (censure). Its main goal is to urge the audience to contend for the faith by building themselves up, focusing on divine mercy, and helping each other stay on course. Simultaneously, it aims to dissuade them from the harmful influence of "posers" or interlopers. The letter dedicates more words to censuring these individuals, but this serves the

broader purpose of guiding the congregation away from their practices and teachings. The letter's style also overlaps with classical rhetoric, particularly deliberative (persuading action/inaction) and epideictic (praising/blaming) oratory.

2. How does Jude emphasize the importance of established Christian teaching and tradition?

Jude repeatedly underscores that the material he presents is not new but rather an integral part of the heritage and instruction his audience has already embraced. He reminds them of the "faith once delivered to the saints," emphasizing the decisive and sufficient nature of their grounding in apostolic preaching. This highlights a tension between progressive spiritual impulses and the conservative essence of revealed religion, committed to maintaining the boundaries of Christian practice and conviction as defined by canonical scriptures and apostolic tradition.

3. How does Jude use historical examples to make his case against the interlopers?

Jude uses historical examples from biblical and para-biblical sources to frame the actions, attitudes, and probable end of the interlopers. He provides examples of the Exodus generation's rebellion (Numbers 13-14), the rebel angels (Genesis 6:1-4, expanded in 1 Enoch), and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). These examples illustrate actions and attitudes that provoked God's condemnation, creating a framework for his audience to understand the interlopers' behavior and its consequences. He also introduces the example of Michael the archangel disputing with Satan (Jude 9) to contrast with the interlopers' audacity. Jude uses these historical narratives not just to recount sacred history but to cast an interpretive light on the present situation and help his hearers connect the lessons of the past to their current challenges.

4. What is the significance of the "Book of the Watchers" (1 Enoch) in Jude's letter?

Jude draws directly from the "Book of the Watchers," an early section of 1 Enoch, as an authoritative pronouncement of God's judgment. He references the story of the rebel angels who left their proper dwelling and are kept in chains of darkness (Jude 6), a detail elaborated in 1 Enoch. He further refers to the interlopers as "wandering stars for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 13), directly quoting or alluding to passages in 1 Enoch that describe the punishment of fallen stars/angels. This demonstrates Jude's reliance on para-biblical texts, particularly 1

Enoch, which was a significant and influential work in some Jewish circles during the Second Temple period, to reinforce his warnings about God's certain judgment.

5. What are some of the natural and industrial images Jude uses to describe the interlopers?

Jude uses a barrage of unflattering images from nature and industry to further depict the interlopers and their destructive influence. These include:

- **Hidden reefs:** Highlighting the danger they pose, threatening to shipwreck the faith of congregation members.
- **Shepherds tending themselves:** Illustrating their self-interest and neglect of their duty to the flock, similar to Ezekiel's critique of Israel's shepherds.
- **Waterless clouds being carried along by the wind:** Suggesting they are full of bluster and empty promises, offering no spiritual nourishment or help, akin to Proverbs 25:14.
- **Trees bearing no fruit even in the late fall, uprooted twice dead:** Emphasizing their barrenness and lack of spiritual vitality, unable to provide life for others.
- **Wild waves of the sea churning up their own shame:** Comparing their self-indulgent practices to the restless, muddy sea in Isaiah 57:20, revealing their degradation.
- **Wandering stars:** Referring to planets that move irregularly, serving as an image for unreliable guides, and alluding back to the fallen angels of 1 Enoch destined for darkness.

6. What theological issues arise from the textual variations in Jude 5 concerning who led the Hebrews out of Egypt?

Jude 5 presents a textual challenge regarding who is credited with leading the Hebrews out of Egypt. Early manuscripts offer different readings: "the Lord" (Codex Sinaiticus), "Jesus" (Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, and early translations), or "God Christ" (Papyrus 72). The reading "Jesus" is notably strong, suggesting that some early scribes ascribed a pre-incarnate role to Jesus in the Exodus. This aligns with other New Testament passages (like Hebrews and Paul in 1 Corinthians 10) that speak of Christ's agency in earlier salvation history. However, Jude does not typically

use "Jesus" outside the "Christ" title elsewhere, making it a "troublesome reading" (a reading scribes might try to "fix"). The ambiguity means that definitive theological conclusions based solely on this verse should remain tentative.

7. What is textual criticism, and why is it important for studying New Testament writings like Jude?

Textual criticism is the careful and critical reconstruction of the most likely original wording of a text, especially when dealing with ancient manuscripts that contain variations. It is crucial for New Testament study because no original autographs exist; instead, we have thousands of copies of copies with various "textual variants." These variations can be accidental (spelling errors, skipped words, misreadings) or intentional (harmonizing passages, improving grammar, theological changes). Textual critics weigh factors like manuscript age (prioritizing earlier ones like Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus), reading length (shorter often preferred), troublesome readings (scribes tend to smooth difficulties), and geographical attestation to determine the most probable original wording. This discipline acknowledges the complexities and occasional uncertainties in recovering the exact words of the original authors.

8. What fundamental tension does Jude address regarding Christian freedom and divine boundaries?

Jude addresses the tension between Christian freedom and divinely drawn boundaries. He warns against a radical misunderstanding of God's grace as "license to indulge the cravings of their flesh without fear of judgment." This contrasts with his insistence that grace is intended to set people on a trajectory toward blamelessness and mercy on the Day of Judgment. The interlopers are accused of "setting aside authority" and "slandering glories," implying they promote a licentious interpretation of Christian freedom, perhaps even claiming authority over spiritual beings due to their own perceived spiritual knowledge. Jude emphasizes that while Christians have freedom, there are "edges beyond which lie non-Christian practice and the denial of Christian convictions." He warns that neglecting apostolic tradition and divinely established guardrails can lead to self-degradation and a state "less than human," driven by natural cravings, ultimately resulting in "corruption and decay." This underscores the New Testament theme that holiness and love are mutually defining, not conflicting, characteristics.

