

Jude 9-10

Example and Contrast of Opponents with Michael

Jude 9

- Jude has previously compared the opponents he is writing against with negative examples from Israel's history – namely the wayward Exodus generation, the Nephalim or “fallen angels” from Genesis 6 / 1 Enoch, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Jude's next example is a contrast between the example of Michael the archangel and the actions of the opponents.
- As with his previous example, Jude uses a source text to make his point. However, his source text for this point is not only extra-biblical but also a complete text which no longer exists. The text was known to ancient writers, notably Clement of Alexandria, as the *Assumption of Moses*. This book survives in an incomplete Latin MS that is missing the key episode that Jude alludes to here.
- The story involved a dispute over what is to happen to the body of Moses upon his death on Mt. Nebo. The text of Deuteronomy notes that Moses died and his resting place is known only to God (Deut. 34:5-6).
- The text here mirrors the language of Zechariah 3:2 – “And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you...” (ESV).
- Jude's exemplar in the citation is Michael. Michael is referenced biblically elsewhere in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation. Jude describes him here as an “archangel” – a chief angel or as Daniel will refer to him a “prince” or “ruler” depending on translation, in Daniel 10:13, 21). Michael was important because tradition held him to be the archangel (or prince or ruler angel) of *Israel*.
- One prominent commentator has suggested here that the dispute between Michael and the Devil had to do with slandering Moses as a murderer and undeserving of burial. This, however, is not the point of the example.
- The example of Michael is connected to the preceding examples in that the Exodus generation, the Nephalim, and Sodom and Gormorrah went out of their station. Michael however keeps his proper place. Even the archangel of Israel does not presume to pass judgment on the Devil in this episode but rather says, “The Lord rebuke you.” The point is not that Michael did not bring a slanderous (or blasphemous) judgment, but rather that he did not presume to pronounce judgment himself.

Jude 10

- Like verse 8, Jude 10 then explicitly ties the opponents of the letter to the preceding example (“But these people...” ESV).
- Unlike Michael who did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous or slanderous judgment, these opponents blaspheme or slander all that they do not understand. Compare with 2 Peter 2:11-12.
- The charge that someone lacked knowledge or understanding was a common charge in ancient literature to lodge against an opponent in a polemic.

- The opponents in Jude's example exhibit the same behavior as the devil himself!
- Jude's second accusation includes the comment that the opponents are like base animals, another common charge in ancient polemic. Humans were to exhibit a higher reasoning and understanding than animals.
- Jude interprets being governed by base instinct as leading to corruption, or as 2 Peter 2:12 will comment they will be destroyed.
- Jude's point is that those who are governed by base instinct gain only moral corruption for themselves.