

# The Forest and the Trees: A Method of Discourse Analysis and Application to the Epistle of Jude

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**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** I will never forget my delightfully frustrating first class with Dr. Arp. It was my first class in the PhD program and it was on the book of Hebrews. I came in ready to unleash my many theological questions related to the believer's security. However, as Dr. Arp carefully worked through the context, I realized that most of my questions were not what the author was intending to answer. This was initially frustrating, but ultimately freeing, as it made me appreciate the message of Hebrews in a way that my theological questions had previously obscured. Along with his great sense of humor and heart for his students, I will always remember Dr. Arp's careful attention to tracing the author's argument through the course of the entire letter and the need to understand each part in light of the whole. His influence continues to be felt in both my personal life and the classes I teach.

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**E**xegetes love microscopes. Commentaries gush over word origins, verb tenses, and prepositions. This is good; the details of the text are important. However, if the exegete fails to relate how the details of words, phrases, and clauses impact the overall message of the text, he has lost the forest for the trees. And if that type of exegesis is transferred into the pulpit, the result is often a sermon of theological tidbits without a unifying theme or application. The people hearing the message leave agreeing with the points, but failing to see how those points come together in one coherent truth that will

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powerfully impact their lives. And worse, the voice of Christ becomes muddled (cf. John 10:27) and his shepherding ministry is obstructed.

Discourse analysis (DA) seeks to rectify the common problem of interpreting words and phrases apart from their larger context. Far from jettisoning the details of the text, it relates how the details of the text work together to form one cohesive message. Prominent NT scholar George H. Guthrie defines discourse analysis this way: “a process of investigation by which one examines the form and function of all the parts and levels of a written discourse, with the aim of better understanding both the parts and the whole of that discourse.”<sup>2</sup> Both the details of the text and the overall meaning are vital to proper interpretation.

Although the promise of discourse analysis is exciting, there remains a great need for a clear method if DA is to have any lasting results. Stanley Porter, who has authored several books and articles related to DA, states,

It is probably fair to say that for discourse analysis to continue to prove viable it will need not only to continue to look at texts in productive and creative ways, but to develop explicit and accessible theoretical models.... [T]hose approaching from the outside will need to be able to grasp the particulars of the methods.<sup>3</sup>

Promise without practice will not suffice. In the same way, too many methods will also impede the progress of DA as a useful NT tool. DA practitioner and commentary author Jeffrey Reed writes, “Idiosyncratic models and terminological confusion proliferate as more linguists, as well as nonlinguists,

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<sup>2</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 255.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 34.

adopt discourse analysis as a theoretical framework to read texts.”<sup>4</sup> The abundance of proposed methods led Porter to reference the book of Judges as he quipped, ““There was no agreed upon method of discourse analysis, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.””<sup>5</sup> Clearly, DA needs a clear method in order to gain acceptance as a valuable tool in exegesis.

Moving forward, there are two key questions that DA proponents must answer according to Reed: “(1) What is it about [DA] that makes it unique with respect to traditional exegesis? (2) How can [DA] support, supplement, or advance the wealth of NT interpretation already available?”<sup>6</sup> What follows are answers to those two questions. In Part I, the foundations of what DA is will be outlined. In Part II, a clear step-by-step method will be proposed. Part III will then apply that method to the text of Jude to show how DA honors both the forest and the trees in providing a well-rounded tool for interpretation.

## I. Foundations of Discourse Analysis

The value of Discourse Analysis is its holistic approach to the text. DA endeavors to understand both the big picture and the smaller details, and the relationship between these two. Porter states, “Discourse analysis as a discipline within linguistics has emerged as a synthetic model, one designed to unite into a coherent and unifying framework various areas of linguistic investigation.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, DA encompasses a broad range of interpretive components. The field is so broad

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *JETS*, 39, no. 2 (June 1996): 224.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?: A Response to Several Attempts,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Reed, “DA as NT Hermeneutic,” 240.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, 18.

that it caused NT linguist Moises Silva to exclaim, “My anxiety, however, was only aggravated to realize in a fresh way that discourse analysis is about ... everything! It is grammar and syntax, pragmatics and lexicology, exegesis and literary criticism. In short, fertile ground for undisciplined minds.”<sup>8</sup> The broad field is legitimate cause for concern, but there are several foundational principles of DA that serve as parameters for analysis.

### *Extension of Hermeneutics*

The first foundational principle is that when rightly understood, DA is simply an extension of sound hermeneutics. Guthrie states, “I hope to demonstrate that, rather than being a superfluous, exotic criticism destined to pass as a scholarly fad, discourse analysis, when properly understood, provides a natural, logical extension of traditional exegetical means of study.”<sup>9</sup> In that sense, DA is less an innovation and more an expansion or re-emphasis of something inherent to hermeneutics: context is king.<sup>10</sup>

Words and phrases cannot be understood apart from the role they play in a larger context. The English word “board” means very little without a full sentence, but place it in the context of the statement, “You must board the plane,” and its meaning becomes clear. Discourse analysis takes that fundamental hermeneutical principle and applies it to the text as a whole. Words, phrases, verses, paragraphs, and even chapters cannot be rightly understood apart from the place in the entire discourse. Guthrie speaks to the emphasis shift when he says,

Thus, discourse analysis shifts the focus of biblical exegesis from individual words, and even passages, and places it on whole

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<sup>8</sup> Moisés Silva, “Discourse Analysis and Philippians,” *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 255.

<sup>10</sup> Porter and Reed also take the same stance in seeing DA as an expansion of hermeneutics. See Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

discourses. This does not mean that the individual words, sentences, and paragraphs are any less important than in traditional approaches to exegesis. Rather, discourse analysis moves the “text” or “discourse” from a place of ambiguity, and often obscurity, to a place of rigorous consideration and analysis.<sup>11</sup>

The discourse becomes framework from which to examine the smaller units. Context has always been important. However, context is an ambiguous term. Does it refer to the sentence, paragraph, chapter, or book? Discourse analysis keeps the focus on the whole book, reflecting a renewed explicit emphasis on one of the hallmarks of hermeneutics.

### ***Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approach***

The emphasis on the relationship between discourse and parts leads to a top-down and bottom-up approach to discourse analysis. Both forest and trees are significant in DA. Porter explains,

Thus the smallest meaningful units in the language (e.g. morphemes) and their composition into increasingly larger units (e.g. words, groups of words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs or pericopes and entire discourses) must be seen in terms of both their individual parts and their formation into the whole.<sup>12</sup>

Neither the parts nor the discourse is over-emphasized. Each plays a vital role in the interpretive process. The whole cannot be understood apart from the parts, and the parts cannot be understood apart from their relationship to the whole. The result of this emphasis yields more comprehensive analysis. Porter continues,

... the distinctiveness of discourse analysis and the concern of discourse analysts is to be able to provide as comprehensive a

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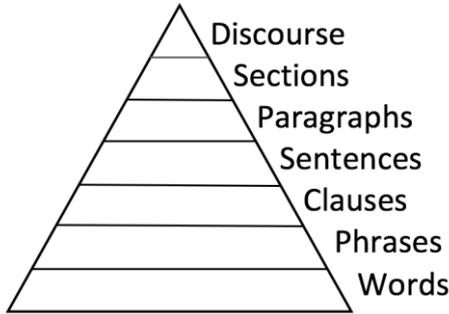
<sup>11</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 256.

<sup>12</sup> Porter, “DA and NT Studies,” 19.

description as possible of the various components of a given discourse, including its meaning and structure, and the means by which these are created and conveyed.”<sup>13</sup>

Once again, meaning, structure, and development are all in view. Other writers compare discourse analysis to understanding the parts of a story<sup>14</sup> or using both a wide-angle and telephoto lens.<sup>15</sup> In the end, there is a fuller appreciation for both the discourse and its constituents.

One final illustration proves helpful. Porter uses the analogy of a pyramid where the pinnacle represents the meaning of the entire discourse and the subsequent layers smaller units of communication.<sup>16</sup> The pyramid can be pictured as follows:<sup>16</sup>



The strength of this analogy is that it shows the interdependence of discourse meaning and discourse constituents. Without the foundational layers, there would be no discourse. At the same time, the smaller building blocks do not exist in isolation, but as part of the larger discourse. Accordingly, Porter says, “In discourse analysis one can begin

<sup>13</sup> Porter, “DA and NT Studies,” 19.

<sup>14</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 253.

<sup>15</sup> J. B. Green, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation,” *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 187-88.

<sup>16</sup> Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

<sup>16</sup> Diagram mine.

at the top (the pinnacle of the pyramid), or the bottom (the base), but one must work through all of the stages, from both directions, to provide full analysis.”<sup>17</sup> The great strength of DA is the full analysis Porter describes.

This strength also serves as a safeguard against the pitfalls of many commentaries and grammars that tend to be too narrowly focused. Many commentaries are stuck in the trees of individual words and phrases, while grammars treat language in isolation, rather than in context. Reed shows how DA is a way forward:

Discourse analysis of the New Testament should attempt to bring the grammarian and the commentator or exegete more in line with one another. Discourse analysis appraises the language of the text as a whole, keeping in perspective both the language of the text as a system and the individual message(s) of the text.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, DA’s emphasis on a top-down and bottom-up analysis of the text produces a thorough interpretive result.

### *Meaning Resides above the Sentence Level*

A correlated principle to the top-down, bottom-up approach is that discourse analysis recognizes that meaning resides above the sentence level. Just as words and phrases cannot be understood in isolation, the meaning of a discourse can only be discovered through analysis of larger portions of text. Reed calls this principle the trademark of DA.<sup>19</sup> Linguist Talmy Givón affirms, “It has become obvious to a growing number of linguists that the study of the syntax of isolated sentences, extracted, without natural context from the purposeful constructions of speakers is a methodology that has outlived its usefulness.”<sup>20</sup> Givón referred to spoken discourse, but his

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<sup>17</sup> Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

<sup>18</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Brill, 1997), 194.

<sup>19</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 191.

<sup>20</sup> Talmy Givón, “Preface,” *Syntax and Semantics. XII. Discourse and Syntax* (New York: Academic P, 1979), xiii.

statement is even more true of written discourse.<sup>21</sup> Most writers drive toward one big-picture message. Therefore, each sentence and paragraph is serving a purpose related to the central message and cannot be interpreted apart from that message. Guthrie explains,

No discourse simply consists of a collection of words or sentences, so that if you added up the semantic content of all the individual words and all the individual sentences, you could make sense of the discourse. No, words and sentences only have meaning as they are grouped appropriately and given their places in context.<sup>22</sup>

The value of this principle is clear. It protects the interpreter from over-emphasizing details of the text at the expense of the larger context. This is the all-too-common drawback of many commentaries. Guthrie adds,

Commentaries move section by section through a book, treating each section in a verse-by-verse, clause-by-clause, and sometimes word-by-word manner. Yet often there is little attempt to demonstrate how the words, clauses, and sentences in a paragraph work together to accomplish the author's goal for that paragraph in relation to the whole book or section of the book.<sup>23</sup>

Traditional exegetical commentaries tend to be helpful at explaining the trees, but fail to see the forest. In an effort to honor the particulars of the text, the particulars become distorted as they are pressed for meanings isolated from the overarching intent of the author. DA's emphasis on meaning above the sentence level keeps all words, phrases, and sentences in their appropriate context.

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<sup>21</sup> Reed, "Discourse Analysis," 191.

<sup>22</sup> Guthrie, "DA," 254.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 256–57.

### *Cohesion*

Since a biblical writer seeks to communicate one united message, his text will exhibit cohesion. Cohesion refers to how a writer unifies his work through various literary devices. Cohesion can be created in a number of different ways, including repetition of key words or concepts, hook words, inclusio, conjunctions, rhetorical questions, and the use of the vocative case. Each sentence and paragraph has a part to play in the discourse and the principle of cohesion seeks to discover what that part is. Linguist William Labov sees identifying cohesion the central task of discourse analysis.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from cohesion, communication would be nearly unintelligible. Reed states, “That there is a relationship, both semantically and grammatically, between the various parts of a text (cohesive ties), and that there is some thematic element that flows through it (information flow), results in cohesive discourse rather than a jumble of unrelated words and sentences.”<sup>25</sup> While traditional commentaries and exegetical sermons are not a jumble of unrelated statements, they can often be a collection of only loosely connected theological truths with no unifying force. In his book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell rightly points out, “Listeners quickly tire of chasing ideas and anecdotes across the theological landscape in an effort to discover where their pastor is going.”<sup>26</sup> Discourse analysis is not only valuable in interpretation; its fruit will also be seen in more coherent sermons that show how each verse relates to the central purpose of the writer.

### *Prominence*

In order to aid the reader in recognizing the cohesion of his work, the biblical writer will mark out words, phrases, and ideas as important. The highlighting of key features in

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<sup>24</sup> William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania P, 1972), 252.

<sup>25</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 205.

<sup>26</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 44.

discourse is called prominence. According to Reed, prominence involves, "... drawing the listener/reader's attention to important topics and motifs of the discourse and supporting those topics with other less prominent material."<sup>27</sup> Apart from prominence, the reader has no way of determining what details are important and what details merely support the main ideas. Missionary linguist Robert Longacre compared a lack of prominence with being handed a black sheet of paper and being told, "'This is a picture of black camels crossing black sands at midnight.'"<sup>28</sup> If nothing is prominent, or everything is prominent, the main point and key features are lost.

## Determining Prominence

Like cohesion, prominence is shown in a variety of ways. Repeated words, focusing phrases, word order, boundary markers, verb tenses, and conjunctions are all ways an author may show what is prominent in the discourse. Different authors may also show prominence in different ways. The genre of the book may also play a role in determining which literary features are prominent.

*Verbal Aspect.* One example of how prominence can be shown is through verbal aspect. The terms *background*, *foreground*, and *frontground* are often used with reference to verbal aspect. Reed serves as a good example:

Background prominence is often signalled by clauses using the aorist tense (perfective aspect). Thematic prominence may be signalled by the present and imperfect tenses (imperfective aspect), as well as sometimes the future tense... Focal

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<sup>27</sup> Reed, "DA as NT Hermeneutic," 239.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Longacre, "Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence," in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sentential Form*, ed. J. R. Wirth (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma, 1985), 83, quoted in Reed, "DA as NT Hermeneutic," 239.

prominence is signalled by the perfect and pluperfect tenses (stative aspect).<sup>29</sup>

Other writers use the language of *mainline* and *offline* to describe how aspect is used to give prominence.<sup>30</sup> Mainline describes what carries the narrative along and is usually indicated by the aorist tense. Offline material gives additional information that is not necessary to move the story along but focuses the reader's attention on significant details which help show the author's purpose. Offline material is typically shown through the imperfect and present tenses.

These categories have traditionally been applied to narrative passages, but apply to epistolary and other literature as well in similar ways. Reed points out,

The perfective aspect lends itself to general descriptions of an event, whereas the imperfective aspect suggests that the author is focusing on the particulars of an event. The stative aspect is even more accented, since the attention is laid upon an event that has resulted from other circumstances (i.e. a stative event stands at the centre of activity).<sup>31</sup>

So, in the epistles verbal aspect can help differentiate between general (or background) events and particular (or foreground) events.

*Markedness.* Another useful tool in discovering prominence is the concept of markedness. *Markedness* refers to "the concept by which a particular quality is regarded as neutral or expected, i.e., 'unmarked,' whereas an alternative, more unusual quality is considered 'marked.'"<sup>32</sup> For example, if

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<sup>29</sup> Reed, "Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, 84-85.

<sup>30</sup> See Constantine R Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*. (New York: Lang, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Reed, "Identifying Theme," 85.

<sup>32</sup> William Bright, *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (New York: Oxford U P, 1992), 2:390.

someone were to describe the afternoon meal, an unmarked expression would be, “I ate lunch.” A marked expression could be, “I devoured my lunch.” The verb “ate” is unmarked, whereas “devoured” is marked for the quality of intensity. To use another example, when linking two sentences there is a difference between *and* and *because*. Both conjunctions signal continuity, but *because* is marked for indicating a causal relationship.<sup>33</sup> Thinking through the biblical writer’s use of marked and unmarked expressions is helpful in discovering prominence.

## Domains of Prominence

Because discourse analysis encompasses all the levels of discourse from words and clauses to paragraphs and sections, it becomes necessary to identify domains of discourse. An entire paragraph may have a background function in the discourse, but within that background paragraph there may be foreground and frontground elements to show what is prominent about the background information. Reed develops the idea in the following:

Another factor to consider when analysing prominence is *the domain or extent to which a linguistic element has prominence in the discourse....* What was thematic in the previous paragraph may only be background in the next. For this reason, one must speak of the domain of prominence, that is the extent to which a linguistic element maintains its degree of prominence.... The domain of prominence in New Testament discourse may involve the phrase (e.g. headword of a prepositional phrase), clause (e.g. rheme), paragraph (e.g. verbal aspect) or the entire discourse (e.g. epistolary formulas). Thus it is possible to speak of the *background* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses, the

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed analysis of several Greek conjunctions, see Steven E Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2010), 17-57.

*theme* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses, and the *focus* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses.”<sup>34</sup>

Determining domains of prominence becomes a crucial task of discourse analysis. In order to understand the coherent purpose of the writer, the discourse analyst must be able to differentiate what is prominent to the discourse as a whole, and what is merely prominent in a sub-domain.

## II. A Method of Discourse Analysis

Having laid the foundation of guiding principles of discourse analysis, one must now turn to methodology. The theory must be applied to prove useful for NT exegesis. It is clear from the principles above that any method of DA must account for both the big picture and the individual parts of a text. As Porter suggested through his pyramid analogy, the process of DA must be top-down and bottom-up. In fact, because DA emphasizes the interrelatedness of parts and big picture, its method must weave back and forth between the two. This weaving between big picture and parts, or forest and trees, is the only way to ensure proper understanding of each. The forest cannot be comprehended apart from understanding the trees; and the trees cannot be understood apart from the forest. A cyclical process will keep these relationships in balance.

The proposed method that follows involves seven steps. The first step is to familiarize one’s self with the historical context and genre. Second, the book should be read in one sitting in English. Steps three through seven are adapted and expanded from a method proposed by Guthrie.<sup>35</sup> These steps involve translation, identification of boundaries, exegetical analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. The seven steps provide a comprehensive method for arriving at both the big picture of a text and how each detail plays a role in the bigger picture.

The reader will undoubtedly note that many of the steps outlined above and detailed below are not new. The reason for

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<sup>34</sup> Reed, “Identifying Theme,” 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 260.

this is that discourse analysis is not a completely new theory, but a reorienting of traditional hermeneutics to give more significance to the big picture. Guthrie agrees, stating,

How then does a general approach to discourse analysis work with a process of exegesis? I propose that the two already are integrated when each is rightly conceived. This is why much of what we have already discussed simply sounds like good, contextually-sensitive exegesis. These are not two separate processes but, rather, one process executed on various levels. Discourse analysis incorporates all of what we normally consider exegesis, and thorough exegesis presupposes aspects of discourse analysis.<sup>36</sup>

Discourse analysis expands traditional exegesis by incorporating many principles of modern linguistics that bring the exegete back to what is often forgotten: the forest. Rigorous exegesis of the trees is completely necessary, just not divorced from the forest.

### ***Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with the Historical Context and Genre***

Even before reading a text it is fundamental to understand such things as when the book is being written, who is writing, and whom is addressed. These key pieces of information will shape how the text is understood. Is it written shortly after Christ's death or after the destruction of Jerusalem? Does the writer know his recipients? Do they have a lot of shared information? Are the recipients new converts? Is the letter written during a time of persecution or stress? Many of these issues will be found in the text itself, but a general overview from a trusted source is often a good place to start.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids.: Zondervan, 1992); or Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983).

An overview of the genre is also helpful to set one's expectations as they prepare to study a passage. Reading a gospel account is different than reading an epistle. Narrative uses characters, plot, and setting to show prominence, whereas an epistle is much more straight-forward in its application. In narrative, the reader must often figure out what is significant. In an epistle, the author often explicitly tells the reader what is significant. Therefore, understanding the type of literature is a good first step in discourse analysis.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Step 2: Read the Book in One Sitting in English (Forest)***

With the setting and genre in mind, one can set out to read the book in English in one sitting. This step is obviously shorter or longer, depending on the book. If an epistle, it is a good idea to read through the book a few times. Reading straight through is recommended even with a gospel or longer epistle.<sup>39</sup> Detailed analysis is not necessary at this stage; the reader is simply trying to gain some big picture observations. Are there key words or themes repeated throughout the letter? What can be discovered about the writer or recipients? What situation is being addressed? Are there many commands or more description? Once again, one must not get bogged down in the details or problem passages but keep moving to appreciate the forest.

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<sup>38</sup> Good straightforward genre resources include J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 251ff.; Richard John Erickson, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear Out of Critical Method* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 2005), 114ff.

<sup>39</sup> Even the longer gospel accounts can typically be read in about an hour.

### ***Step 3: Translate the Book (Trees)***<sup>40</sup>

Step three is where the process begins getting down to the details. This step involves translating the book while highlighting key features that will be helpful in the next steps of analysis such as verb tenses, conjunctions, rhetorical questions, and the vocative case. Depending on the size of the book, this step could take several days or even weeks depending on other responsibilities. To accomplish this step for larger books, a pastor will likely have to plan ahead several weeks or translate one book as he is preaching through another.

In addition to highlighting key features in the text, step three is also a good place to isolate all the sentences. Many translations will translate longer Greek sentences into two or three sentences in English. Although this may be helpful for the English reader, it will hinder the process of discovering prominence. Isolating the sentences will be helpful in the next step.

### ***Step 4: Identify the Boundaries/Paragraphs (Forest)***

Once the book has been translated and propositions have been identified, the next step is to identify the paragraphs and boundary markers. To accomplish this one must look for things such as summary statements, chiasm, inclusio, repetition, and changes in subject, time, tense, or space. Genre considerations also come into play here. If the work is a letter, is there a greeting? Is there a clear division between doctrine and application? If the work is a narrative, where does one pericope end and the next begin? Are there temporal or spatial transition words? These features will be helpful in determining the big pieces of the discourse.

The domains of prominence must also be taken into consideration at this step. The interpreter must differentiate between large boundary markers and small boundary markers.

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<sup>40</sup> If there is no background in Greek or Hebrew, this step could be modified to a more careful English read-through highlighting the features listed in this section. However, some of the verb tenses, conjunctions, and propositions may not be clear in English.

This task can be difficult as the same boundary markers may be used in both instances.

Adding to the difficulty, one of the unique challenges to discourse analysis is that boundary markers are not an explicit category, but a variety of literary devices that can mark boundaries. What is a boundary marker in one place may not be in another. Therefore, the interpreter must pay careful attention to a variety of features to ensure proper identification of discourse boundaries.

### ***Step 5: Analyze Each Section/Paragraph – Prominence (Trees)***

Having identified the large boundaries of a discourse, the interpreter returns to the trees of textual analysis to identify the prominence and theme of each section. Sentence-level discourse analysis is crucial here. The works of translators Steven Runge and Stephen Levinsohn are very helpful at this stage.<sup>41</sup> Runge and Levinsohn do an excellent job of showing how NT authors use a variety of devices draw attention to prominent features at the sentence-level. Runge's chapter on the conjunctions is particularly helpful.<sup>42</sup> Rather than talking about a variety of ways conjunctions can be used (the traditional approach of most Greek grammars), he concentrates on the markedness of each conjunction and what differentiates them from one another. He then gives numerous examples showing how NT authors use conjunctions to help the reader process information. Levinsohn, likewise, speaks not to *what* things are (historical presents, conjunctions, or vocative case), but *why* certain devices are

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<sup>41</sup> See Steven Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010); and Stephen H Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000). Because these works are categorized based on how language functions and not on traditional grammatical categories like case, tense, and mood, it is best to read through these works. Once the contents are familiar, they can then be used as references.

<sup>42</sup> Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 17-57.

used. It is not enough to identify a verb is a historical present; the reason an author chooses a historical present is the key interpretive issue.<sup>43</sup>

## Diagramming

Diagramming is often helpful at this stage as well. A visual representation of the text often aids the interpreter in his ability to understand the flow of a passage.

*Block Diagram.* For larger portions of Scripture, block diagramming is a good tool. Because narrative passages are less concerned with detail and more concerned with the big picture, it is often helpful to map out dialogue and changes in scene or plot.<sup>44</sup>

*Line Diagram.* Line diagramming can be helpful in gaining an appreciation for the role each word plays in the section under analysis. To line diagram the interpreter must discover how each word is functioning. This can be painstaking, but often pays good dividends in highly detailed epistolary passages.<sup>45</sup>

## Summary Statements

After the each portion of the text has been analyzed it is helpful to craft summary statements for each paragraph/section. The summary statements will assist the interpreter in identifying how all the individual sections come together to form a cohesive discourse.

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<sup>43</sup> Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 197-214.

<sup>44</sup> For help with block diagramming, also called phrasing or semantic diagramming, see William D. Mounce, *A Graded Reader of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), xv; and George H Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 39-98.

<sup>45</sup> For help with line diagramming see Lee L. Kantenwein, *Diagrammatical Analysis* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1984); and Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 73-134.

### ***Step 6: Analyze How Each Section Fits Together – Cohesion (Forest)***

With summary statements in hand, the interpreter begins the process of formulating the single point of the discourse. Having the letter or gospel broken down into manageable summary statements should enable the interpreter to see how all the pieces come together to form a cohesive whole.

Once the overall purpose of the discourse has been identified, the interpreter must reword the summary statements to reflect the development of that purpose, using keywords both from the passage itself and the purpose statement of the discourse. This will show cohesion between the forest and the trees.

### ***Step 7: Interpret Difficult Words/Phrases/Sentences Considering the Discourse (Trees)***

The last step is to interpret difficult words, phrases, sentences, and passages by considering the entire discourse. Frequently, isolated passages cause great difficulty in interpretation because their placement in the discourse is not understood. However, a precise understanding of the overall flow and purpose of the discourse clears up many difficult interpretive issues by showing exactly what the writer is trying to accomplish through his use of a word or phrase in the big picture. Interpreting difficult passages at this late stage enables the interpreter to know precisely what questions the author is trying to answer or information he is trying to provide, thus eliminating the danger of pressing a text beyond its intent.

## **III. A Method of Discourse Analysis Applied to Jude**

For discourse analysis to continue to be viable, a clear method must be devised that fulfills the promise of its theoretical benefits. The proposed method will now be tested on the Epistle of Jude. It must be shown that discourse analysis produces superior exegetical results to traditional hermeneutics.

### ***Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with the Historical Context***

The Epistle of Jude was most likely written between AD 65 and 70.<sup>46</sup> The author is Jude, the brother of James (Jude 1) and half-brother of Jesus. The recipients are clearly believers, being identified in verse 1 as “called,” “beloved,” and “kept.” Not much is known about the occasion, provenance, or destination of the letter, other than to say that there are certainly false teachers in their midst (3).<sup>47</sup>

Because Jude is a letter, one would expect to see the typical components of a letter including greeting, purpose, main argument, exhortation, and closing benediction or doxology.<sup>48</sup> Deviations from the expected components may indicate significance.

### ***Step 2: Read the Book in One Sitting in English (Forest)***

With the broad historical context and genre in mind, it is now time to read through the letter in one sitting. Because the book is so short, this should be done a few times. Note the following forest-level observations.

### **Repeated Words/Concepts<sup>49</sup>**

Several words are repeated throughout the letter:

- *Mercy, love, and faith* open and close the letter (2; 20-23). Interestingly, these words do not occur anywhere in between the opening and closing.
- The word *ungodly* is in verse 4 and repeated four times in verse 15 (three times in Greek<sup>50</sup>).

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<sup>46</sup> D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

<sup>48</sup> Erickson, *Beginner's Guide*, 126.

<sup>49</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible*. (Anaheim; La Habra: Foundation Publications ; The Lockman Foundation, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Greek Scripture references are from Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament : Fourth revised edition edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M.*

- The concept of *disobedience* is repeated throughout the main body of the letter: “licentiousness” (4), “did not believe” (5), “abandoned” (6), “gross immorality” (7), “defile” (8), “revile” (10), and several additional descriptions in verses 16 and 19.
- The concept of *punishment* is also repeated: “condemnation” (4), “destroyed” (5), “eternal bonds” (6), “punishment of eternal fire” (7), “perished in rebellion” (11), and “execute judgment” (15).

## Themes

In addition to repeated words and concepts, several themes are evident from a preliminary reading:

- With the concepts of disobedience and punishment repeated, Jude emphasizes the theme of judgment for sin. It is Christ who is shown as judging the ungodly (5-7; 14-15).
- False converts/teachers are also a theme. The people described throughout the letter are in the midst of the believers (3).
- There is historical theme to the letter. There are at least eight explicit OT references: Egypt (5), angels (6), Sodom and Gomorrah (7), Michael (9), Cain, Balaam, and Korah (11), and Enoch (14). Once again, these also share the theme of judgment for rebellion or disobedience.

## Situational Context

As stated in the historical background, it is clear from the text that the author is Jude (1). It is also clear that his audience is comprised of believers (1-3). Jude also alerts the reader to the purpose of his letter. He had originally intended to write to the recipients about their shared salvation, but had to modify his

purpose because of the false teachers' infiltration (3-4). The false teachers are then characterized as sharing many similar features to disobedient and judged OT unbelievers, including a contempt for God (4; 8) and desire to upset his people (16; 19).

### **Other Significant Observations**

The Epistle is clearly a letter. It contains many of the traditional components of a letter: a greeting (1-2), an occasion (3-4), an explanation of the problem faced (4-16), an exhortation in light of the problem faced (17-23), and a doxology (24-25). There do not appear to be any significant deviations from a typical letter.

#### ***Step 3: Translate the Book (Trees)***

After translating the book and highlighting the verbs, conjunctions, and vocatives, this author identified the following 16 sentences with main thoughts indicated:

Proposition 1. Verses 1-2: Mercy and peace to you.

Proposition 2. Verse 3: I had necessity to write to you.

Proposition 3. Verse 4: For some men have sneaked in

Proposition 4. Verse 5-7: I am desiring to remind you.

Proposition 5. Verse 8: These defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme glory.

Proposition 6. Verse 9: Michael said, "The LORD rebuke you."

Proposition 7. Verse 10: These know yet blaspheme and do not understand.

Proposition 8. Verse 11: Woe to them.

Proposition 9. Verses 12-13: These are [5 metaphors].

Proposition 10. Verses 14-15: Enoch prophesied.

Proposition 11. Verse 16: These are fault-finding grumblers and they speak boastfully.

Proposition 12. Verses 17-18: But you let the words be remembered.

Proposition 13. Verse 19: These are dividers, worldly, and ungodly goers.

Proposition 14. Verses 20-21: But you keep yourselves in the love of God.

Proposition 15. Verses 22-23: Have mercy, save, and have mercy with fear.

Proposition 16. Verses 24-25: Glory, majesty, power, and authority to the able One.

#### ***Step 4: Identify the Boundaries/Paragraphs (Forest)***

Now that the propositions have been identified it is time to determine boundary markers. In Jude, the boundary markers are clear. The main sections are:

- I. Opening (1-2)
- II. Main Body (3-23)
  - a. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)
  - b. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)
  - c. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)
- III. Doxology (24-25)

The opening in verses 1-2 is clear. The sender and recipients are identified and greeted.<sup>51</sup> The use of the vocative address in verse 3 marks a transition. The occasion and purpose of the letter are then explained. Jude expresses his need to write (3) and gives the reason (4) with the use of the conjunction γάρ. The occasion and purpose also mark the transition into the main body of the letter. Verse 5 begins with the transitional formula, “I want to remind you...”<sup>52</sup> and verses 5-16 deal with the opponents, moving back and forth between OT examples and the present oppressors. The use of the vocative in verses 17 and 20 clearly mark out those propositions as forming the exhortation.<sup>53</sup> The doxology<sup>54</sup> in verses 24-25 is also clearly defined.

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<sup>51</sup> Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the NT Text*, 230-31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>53</sup> There is some scholarly discussion about whether verses 17-19 should be considered with the previous section or starting the exhortation. The use of the vocative and imperative lead this writer to include it with the exhortation, even though the structure of the exhortation is similar to verses 5-16, with both a scriptural reference and reference to the opponents

## *Step 5: Analyze Each Section/Paragraph – Prominence (Trees)*

### **I. Opening (1-2)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of these opening verses is the desire for mercy and love to be multiplied to the recipients. This idea is expressed with the optative mood of *πληθυνθείη* as a wish or blessing.<sup>55</sup>

*Prominence.* As an opening, this is not the most prominent part of the whole letter, but there are prominent features of the opening itself. Jude highlights his standing as a slave of Jesus Christ by fronting *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. He also gives prominence to the identity of his recipients with two perfect participles: *ἠγαπημένοις* and *τετηρημένοις*. The most important thing about his readers is that they are beloved by the Father and protected by Jesus Christ.

*Summary Statement:* May mercy and grace be multiplied to the beloved of God and protected by Christ's called ones.

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as “these.” For more thoughts on this structure, see Carroll Osburn, “Discourse Analysis and Jewish Apocalyptic in the Epistle of Jude,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black et al. (Nashville.: Broadman, 1992), 287ff.; Jason Johnston, “The Multichiasmic Structure of Jude and Its Contribution to the Purpose of the Epistle” (Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2008); Paul Robert Snyder, “A Comparison of Discourse Analyses of 2 Peter and Jude” (Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2014). For an opposing viewpoint, see Clinton W. Bergman, “A Structural and Exegetical Analysis of Jude” (Baptist Bible Graduate School of Theology, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the NT Text*, 237.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas J Köstenberger, Benjamin L Merkle, and Robert L Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2016), 207; and Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament: with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 481-82.

## **IIa. Main Body: Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of verses 3-4 is Jude's necessity to write to his readers. He gives the reason for the necessity in verse 4: some men have snuck into their midst.

*Prominence.* The use of the vocative Ἀγαπητοί draws the readers' attention and connects back to their designation in the greeting. Regarding Jude's necessity to write, he includes his eagerness to write about their common salvation and an exhortation to contend for the faith. Jude gives significance to "once-delivered" aspect of the faith by fronting the description.

When Jude moves on to the reason for his writing in verse 4, he uses three participles to highlight characteristics of the opponents. They have been written about for judgment (προγεγραμμένοι); they are perverting the grace of God (μετατιθέντες); and they are denying Jesus Christ (ἀρνούμενοι). The first of the participles is given prominence, as it is in the perfect tense. These men are destined for judgment. The following two participles underscore the reason for their judgment: what they do and to whom they do it. The identification of Jesus Christ as the only master and Lord is fronted to emphasize the heinousness of their perversion.

*Summary Statement:* Jude has a great need to write because men have sneaked in who are destined for judgment because of their perversion of grace and denial of Christ.

## **IIb. Main Body: Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of 5-16 is twofold. Jude reminds his readers of how Christ has dealt with his opponents in the past and how his readers' opponents resemble the ungodly that Christ has dealt with in the past.

*Prominence.* The main idea is accomplished by an alternating pattern of OT examples (mainly aorist tense indicatives) and present description of the opponents (all present tense indicatives). Prominence is given to the present description of the opponents against the background of how

people like them have been dealt with in the past. There is repetition of the word οὔτοι to begin each sentence that deals with the present character of the opponents (vv. 8, 10, 12, 16). The alternating pattern is represented in the list below:

- Verses 5-7: The Lord *destroyed* unbelievers in Egypt and *has kept* rebellious angels for judgment, just as he *exposed* Sodom and Gomorrah for punishment.
  - Note: The three verbs from this section will be repeated throughout the rest of this section.
- Verse 8: “These” not only defile the flesh, but also reject authority and blaspheme the majestic one.
  - The μὲν-δέ; construction highlights the rejection and blaspheming.
- Verse 9: Michael does not dare rebuke Satan, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”
  - The use of ἀλλά; emphasizes Michael’s appropriate response to Satan against a worse alternative.
- Verse 10: “These” not only blaspheme, but are destroyed.
  - Another μὲν-δέ; construction is used to emphasize the outcome of their blaspheming: their destruction. This also repeats the first verb of verse 5. The present opponents are destroyed just as the Lord’s enemies were destroyed in Egypt.
- Verse 11: Woe is pronounced on the opponents because they are following the pattern of Cain, Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah.
- Verses 12-13: “These” are described using five metaphors: hidden reefs, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, wild waves, and wandering stars.
  - The final description of “these” opponents is that the deep gloom of eternal darkness has been kept for them. This repeats the same verb used in verse 6.

- Verses 14-15: Enoch prophesied against judgment and exposure against similar people in the past.
  - The verb ἐλέγξει echoes the idea of πρόκεινται of verse 7. Both share the idea of exposure for shameful deeds.
- Verse 16: “These” are described as grumblers and pompous talkers.

The alternating structure with prominence given to the present-day opponents reminds the readers that Christ will deal with people like the ones they are facing. The inclusion of the verses about Michael also caution the readers not to take matters into their own hands when dealing with their opponents, but leave them to Christ.

*Summary Statement:* Remember Christ will deal with “these” opponents.

### **IIc. Main Body: Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of the exhortation given to Jude’s readers is also twofold: specific and general.<sup>56</sup> There are two things they must do right away due to their circumstances, and three things they need to do in general whenever they encounter certain situations. Instead of pronouncing judgment on their opponents, Jude’s readers should allow Christ’s words to be remembered and keep themselves in the love of God. These two specific commands are then followed by three general commands.

*Prominence.* Jude draws the readers’ attention with the use of the vocative once again, echoing their description from the opening of the letter as “beloved.” The first specific exhortation to the readers mirrors the previous alternating structure. They

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<sup>56</sup> Specific commands are typically expressed with the aorist tense, while general, way-of-life commands are expressed with the present tense. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 719ff.; and Constantine R Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament* (New York: P. Lang, 2009), 79ff.

are told to remember what the apostle of Christ spoke about the certainty of ungodly ones in the last days. It is significant here that Jude does not name which apostle said those words. By doing this he emphasizes that Christ is the ultimate source of the prophecy. Following the exhortation to remember, “these” are described once again as divisive, worldly, and not having the Spirit. Prominence is once again given to the present description.

The second specific command is to keep themselves in the love of God by building themselves up in the faith, praying in the Spirit, and looking forward to the mercy of Christ. The word “keep” also echoes their description in the opening as those kept by Christ. Mercy is also a repeat of something from the opening of the letter. The readers are not to judge and condemn their opponents, but remember that they too were undeserving of eternal life.

The general commands deal with how Jude’s readers should interact with those who have been influenced by the opponents. In addition to showing mercy on the doubters, they are to recognize the destructive nature of their opponents and seek to save others from fire and have mercy with fear.

The use of the vocative address gives prominence to the aorist tense commands of remember and keep yourselves in the love of God. These are the two things Jude’s readers must do.

*Summary Statement:* Remember the words of Christ, keep yourselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

### **III. Doxology (24-25)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of the doxology is that the Father should receive glory, majesty, power, and authority.

*Prominence.* Prominence in the doxology is given to the description of the Father as the one who is able to protect and cause to stand. The participle φυλάξαι echoes the idea of the participle τετηρημένοις from the opening as well. The readers are protected by Christ and have as a Savior one able to protect.

*Summary Statement:* Praise God for His protection through Christ.

## ***Step 6: Analyze How Each Section Fits Together – Cohesion (Forest)***

### **Initial Summary Statements**

I. Opening (1-2): May mercy and grace be multiplied to the beloved of God and protected by Christ called ones.

II. Main Body:

- a. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4): Jude has a great need to write because men have sneaked in who are destined for judgment because of their perversion of grace and their denial of Christ.
- b. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16): Remember Christ will deal with “these” opponents.
- c. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23): Remember the words of Christ, keep yourselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

III: Doxology (24-25): Praise God for His protection through Christ.

### **Synthesis of Summary Statements**

The initial summary statements already exhibit a good amount of cohesion. The letter begins and ends by referring to God’s protection of the believer. Christ is central to the letter as well appearing in every summary statement. Remembering is also a key component of the letter. Synthesizing these components into one “big-picture” statement for the letter of Jude results in the following:

When faced with people that deny Christ, those beloved by God and protected by Christ must remember that Christ deals with his enemies, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

The synthesis of the letter of Jude condenses the main thrust of the work into one sentence, picking up components that run throughout the discourse.

### ***Step 7: Interpret Difficult Words/Phrases/Sentences in Light of the Discourse (Trees)***

This final stage allows the interpreter to work back through the discourse with the “big picture” in mind. Each section can now be analyzed taking the full discourse into account.

#### **I. Opening (1-2)**

The initial observations about the prominence of the believer’s beloved and protected status is corroborated by the repetition of these key identifiers throughout the discourse. Jude’s identification of himself as a slave of Jesus Christ is also noteworthy. He is not like the ones who deny their master and Lord (4), reject His authority and blaspheme His majesty (8).

#### **IIa. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)**

The occasion once again highlights the believer’s special status as beloved. The prominence of the unbeliever’s having been written about (προγεγραμμένοι) is corroborated through the numerous OT references throughout the remainder of the letter. Their disobedience is not new and will be dealt with by Christ. The unbeliever’s perversion of grace into licentiousness and denial of their master and Lord is also echoed throughout the main body of the discourse.

#### **IIb. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)**

Jude’s portrait of the present opponents against the backdrop of their OT counterparts is masterful. He describes the decisive way Christ has dealt with his enemies in the past and highlights the way the present opponents are behaving in the same way as those who were judged and destroyed. Jude does not overtly state the fate of the present-day opponents, but leaves it to the readers to draw their own conclusions. He essentially asks the reader the rhetorical question, “If this is how Christ has dealt with his enemies in the past, what will become of those exhibiting these same traits today?”

The point of this section is that the believer does not need to worry about executing judgment of those that deny Christ. In fact, like Michael, they should not dare to pronounce judgment, but leave that in the hands of their Lord (9). Christ's judgment of unbelievers is also a comfort to the believer. They indeed see that they have been shown mercy and love (1-2). They also need not fear judgment as they are and always will be protected (1; 24).

### **IIc. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)**

The recipients having been freed from the need to combat their opponents, Jude now exhorts them to remember the words of Christ, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy. These commands flesh out what Jude had in mind when he told them to contend for the faith in verse 3. Contending for the faith does not mean fighting or judging those that deny Christ. Instead, contending for the faith is three-fold. First, it involves remembering Christ's words. Second, it means keeping one's self in the love of God by building one's self up in the faith, praying in the Spirit, and looking forward to Christ's mercy. And third, it means showing that same mercy to those under the influence of those that deny Christ.

An appreciation for the entire discourse allows the reader to see what Jude has in mind when he exhorts him to contend for the faith. Without considering the entire discourse, many may think contending for the faith involves battling and fighting for the truth or even battling with those that deny Christ. Although these ideas are not necessarily unbiblical, it is clear from the context that this is not what Jude has in mind.

### **III. Doxology (24-25)**

Often referred to as a benediction, the last verse of Jude is actually a doxology. A benediction pronounces a blessing on the reader, whereas a doxology ascribes praise to God. It is fitting that Jude should end his letter by reminding his readers once again of the blessedness of the God who protects them without stumbling and will cause them to stand before his

glory. They need not fear their opponents, for they are protected. They need not fear their own stumbling, for they are bolstered. They may focus their attention on praising God's work through Christ and showing His mercy to others.

### **Possible Sermon Outlines for Jude**

With a comprehensive understanding of the book as a whole and how each part is functioning, it is now possible to suggest several different sermon outlines for Jude. There is an outline presented for the whole letter, as well as a 4-part sermon series. Within the series, there are recommended cross references to alert the hearer to the cohesion of the discourse.

**Big Picture Idea for Jude:** When faced with people that deny Christ, those beloved by God and protected by Christ must remember that Christ deals with his enemies, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

#### *Single Sermon for the Whole Book*

Title: Live for Christ, Even When Others Don't

When faced with people who deny Christ:

1. Treasure your identity as beloved of God and protected by Christ (1-2; 24-25)
2. Remember Christ will deal decisively with his enemies (3-16)
3. Keep yourself in the love of God and show mercy (17-23)

#### *4-Part Sermon Series*

##### **Message 1: Jude 1-4**

Title: How to Deal with Christ's Enemies

1. Recognize there will always be enemies of Christ amidst his people (3-4; cf. 17-19)
2. Delight that Christ's enemies cannot affect your beloved and protected status (1-2; cf. 24-25)
3. Contend for the faith which extols the grace of God and mercy of Christ (3-4; cf. 20-23)

## **Message 2: Jude 5-16**

Title: What Will Happen to Those that Deny Christ?

1. Remember how Christ has dealt with his enemies throughout history (5-7; 9; 11; 14-15)
2. Consider what will become of those who presently resist Christ (8; 10; 12-13; 16)
3. Resist the urge to take matters into your own hands and respond rightly (9; cf. 17-23)

## **Message 3: Jude 17-23**

Title: Living for Christ amid Ungodliness

1. Don't be surprised by ungodliness (17-19; cf. 5-16)
2. Keep yourself in the love of God (20-21) by
  - a. Strengthening yourself in the faith (Past)
  - b. Praying in the Spirit (Present)
  - c. Looking forward to Christ's gift of eternal life (future)
3. Mercifully save as many as you can (22-23)

## **Message 4: Jude 24-25**

Title: A Life of Praise in Trying Times

1. Praise God for his protecting and sustaining care (24; cf. 1-2)
2. Praise God for his accomplishments through Christ (25a)
3. Eagerly anticipate praising God for all eternity (25b)

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the two key questions raised by Reed in the introduction, if discourse analysis is going to continue, it must be shown (1) how it is unique; and (2) how it can advance NT interpretation. Discourse analysis is unique because it irrevocably binds the forest and the trees. One cannot be examined apart from the other. Traditional exegesis has tended to emphasize the trees above the forest. It is rare to find a commentary that does an adequate job explaining how

individual passages are functioning within the discourse. When tree sermons are preached apart from the forest, it becomes difficult for the believer to hear the voice of his Shepherd as the passage is robbed of its intended meaning.

Discourse analysis can advance the field of NT interpretation by presenting a full-orbed method of exegesis that always considers both the forest and the trees. The method proposed in this paper accomplishes this by alternating between big picture and smaller details. This cyclical process ensures that the relationship between forest and trees is always in view. The big picture is never lost; and the details of smaller passages are understood within big picture. Thus, a more precise and powerful interpretation is found resulting in more precise and powerful sermons where the voice of Christ can be clearly heard and applied.