

The Body of Moses

The book of Jude is fascinating. It contains some very unusual material that cannot be found anywhere else in the Bible. One example of this is Jude's account of an argument between Michael the archangel and the devil:

Jude 1:9: “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed **about the body of Moses**, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”

Jude tells us that there was a time when Michael argued with the devil about the body of Moses. This raises a host of questions: what was the devil trying to do? Why did the devil want the body of Moses? What was going on? When did this happen?

Sadly, the Bible does not answer any of these questions. Many people have come up with all kinds of speculation about this verse, but that's all it is – baseless speculation. It's impossible for us to know what the devil was trying to do because the Bible doesn't tell us. It is all shrouded in mystery.

Some people have gone to apocrypha in order to find answers, but the apocrypha is not a good source of reliable material. These supposed “extra” books of the Bible are frauds and forgeries. Those who run to them as a source of truth will only find deception. It would be nice if there was a real “Assumption of Moses” manuscript, but there isn't. There are only forgeries, written in order to deceive the gullible.

So why did Jude even mention this? A fight between an archangel and the devil is a pretty riveting event – but Jude barely mentions it in passing and provides no details whatsoever. The

reason he does this is because the fight itself isn't really his point. This is the passage in context:

Jude 1:8: “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and **speak evil of dignities**.

9 **Yet** Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, **durst not bring against him a railing accusation**, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”

The whole reason Jude wrote his letter in the first place was to warn believers against certain ungodly men who had crept into the church and were causing a great deal of trouble. One of the characteristics of these men was that they spoke evil “of dignities”. Believe it or not, in this context the word “dignities” refers to *demons*. The reason we know this is because in the very next verse Jude gives us the example of Michael. When the archangel was arguing with the devil he could have really let him have it, but instead he rebuked the devil in the name of the Lord and left it at that. Jude's point is that even *Michael the archangel* would not bring a railing accusation against demons, even when he was talking to *the devil himself*. Peter makes the same point:

2 Peter 2:10: “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to **speak evil of dignities**.

11 Whereas **angels**, which are greater in power and might, **bring not railing accusation against them** before the Lord.”

In verse 11 Peter says that the angels do not bring a railing accusation against “them”, and in verse 10 we see that the word “them” refers to dignities – the exact same word that Jude used. Both Peter and Jude are warning us against bringing a “railing ac-

cusation” against demons.

The whole reason Jude gives the example of Michael arguing with Satan is to show how we should behave. When Michael confronted the devil he simply said “the Lord rebuke you”. He turned the devil over to God for rebuke.

The Bible warns us to be on our guard against demons. It tells us that the devil is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. The forces of darkness are arrayed against us and the Bible tells us to stand our ground and resist the devil.

That being said, God is the one who will judge the forces of darkness and bring an end to them; it is not our place to lecture them. If even Michael the archangel would not bring a railing accusation against them then we shouldn't either; if he delivered the devil over to God for rebuke then we should do the same. That is the point Jude was making, and that is why he brought up the body of Moses.

It would certainly be great to know what the angelic fight was all about, but we are simply not told – and the reason we are not told is because it is beside the point. Sometimes we can focus on unimportant (but fascinating) matters and miss the bigger picture.

