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“Proofs and Examples, pt. 2” Jude 11-13 Sermon

In these few verses Jude continues to give proofs and examples of the main point he made in verse 4 which is that false teachers had infiltrated the church. This was why Jude said they should contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude gives more proof here within the context of pronouncing a woe upon the intruders. After having already listed three examples of rebellion and then listing some of their characteristics, Jude pronounces a woe; *“Woe to them!”* he says in verse 11.

This pronouncement expresses the detrimental situation that these people are in, though they may seem to be enjoying certain sinful practices without any consequences. Jude says they are under a divine curse. We see this in Isaiah for example: *“For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Juda has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves”*

Jude then goes on to list another group of three. He mentions three more examples from the OT, of the kind of evil these people practice. He cites Cain, Balaam, and Korah. He says they walked in the way of Cain. In the beginning of Genesis, we learn that Cain, presented a sacrifice to God along with his brother Abel.

We are told that God did not have regard for Cain’s offering, but did have regard for Abel’s offering. Instead of repenting before God Cain got angry and he became jealous of his brother and murdered him. The apostle John says that Cain was of the evil one: *“We should not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother”* (1 Jn. 3:12)

Jude was not saying that these people were actually killing others but that they had *“walked”* in the way of Cain. The lifestyle of Cain was one of choosing evil over good. He killed Abel because Abel was righteous and therefore Cain’s evil deeds were an expression of his hatred of righteousness.

This is what these people do. In denying Jesus Christ they show that they hate righteousness like Cain did. One of the things that is similar between Cain and the people in Jude’s day was that Cain and Abel both at one point took part in similar expressions of worship to God.

But with the murder of his brother Cain showed the true state of his heart. Jude uses the past tense of the verb *“walk”* here; *“they walked in the way of Cain”* At the time of this letter they were *walking* in the way of Cain. Jude says they *“walked”* (past tense) in the way of Cain to show that their future judgment was determined, because of their hardness of heart.

In other words, Jude speaks about their ongoing rebellion in the future as certain as if it had already happened. He confirms this idea in the next example; he says, *“they abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error”*. This phrase *“abandoned themselves”* means that they were completely dedicated in body and soul to evil ways.

Like Cain was and like Balaam was. The error that Jude speaks of here in Balaam is the error of dedication to evil for the sake of financial reward. Jude says these things they do *“for the sake of gain”*, or for the sake of financial reward. Balaam’s actions are recorded in Numbers. The several oracles he spoke are recorded in chapters 23-24 of that book.

Nehemiah tells us that Balaam was hired to curse Israel but God turned the curse into a blessing. In Nehemiah 13, the leaders of Israel were reading from law of Moses and it said that no Ammonite or Moabite could enter the assembly of God, *“for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them--yet our God turned the curse into a blessing”* (Neh. 13:1-2).

Right after Balaam’s oracles in Numbers we are told that Israel began to take foreign wives to themselves and worship Baal and the other false gods of their foreign wives. Jewish tradition has it that Balaam incited Israel to do this. This idea is seen for example in the letter to the church in Pergamum in the book of Revelation; *“But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality”* (Rev. 2:14)

It was mentioned in an earlier sermon from Jude that 2 Peter has much in common with this book, using the same examples and language. Peter says this in regard to Balaam and the modern day false teachers in his day, *“they have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness”* (2 Pet. 2:16)

Therefore Christians were not to imitate the ways of Cain and Balaam, but these false teachers do just that. The last example Jude gives is the example of Korah in verse 11; *“they perished in Korah’s rebellion”*. Again Jude uses the past tense “perished” to communicate the certainty of their future judgment. Korah’s actions are recorded in Numbers 16.

Korah, in the time of Moses’ leadership, led a rebellion, made up of other Israelites, against Moses challenging his authority as the servant of the Lord. Korah was of the tribe of Levi and was therefore assigned with ministry in the tabernacle but this was not enough for Korah, he wanted the Aaronic priesthood, the high priesthood. He wanted to be exalted so he rebelled.

Because of his rebellion Korah and the other leaders of the rebellion, all that belonged to them, were swallowed up by the earth in a very swift and a very public display of God’s judgment. So too would be the fate of the false teachers in Jude’s day.

Jude then gives three specific examples, Cain, Balaam, and Korah, as proof of the kind of people these false teachers were. Then in verse 12 he launches into a flurry of vivid metaphors to further illustrate the characteristics of these people. And he does this partly by drawing from the created realms. He points to things from the earth, in the sea, the clouds in the sky and in the celestial realm where the stars are or the visible heavens.

Jude does this to show the kind of effect these people have on the lives of God’s people. Since they were among them, they stood in a certain relationship to the others and Jude vividly shows what kind of relationship that was with the use of these colorful metaphors.

Why does Jude do it this way? He uses the rhetorical device of metaphor to give visual representations in the minds of his hearers about the invisible, spiritual danger the false teachers pose. He first says in verse 12 that they are hidden reefs at your love feasts. These love feasts were similar to our fellowship meals.

The meals were had as an expression of love between members. It is likely that these meals were consummated with the taking of communion or were in fact the communion meal itself, the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine.

The false teachers, Jude says, participated in the eating of these meals, without fear, that is to say without the fear of judgment. He equates their presence at the feasts with that of reefs or rocks under the sea. Ships on the sea that do not see the hidden rocks could be seriously damaged by them. The congregants were in danger of wrecking themselves spiritually by these people.

Jude says they are shepherds who feed themselves. This expression is probably taken from the prophet Ezekiel. In chapter 34 the Lord says to him, *“son of man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘this is what the sovereign Lord says; woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?’”*

Shepherds are to care for the flock, feeding them with God’s Word. These people only feed themselves. Next, Jude illustrates how much is expected from these people but then shows that they do not deliver as expected. In verse 12 he says they are *“waterless clouds, swept along, or carried along by the winds”*.

In an agrarian society like that of many that existed in Jude’s day, and in an area that was relatively dry, the people were completely dependent upon the rain, rain that fell from the clouds in the sky. These people, Jude writes, are like clouds in the sky that produce no rain. Instead the wind carries them along without ever producing the water the people thought they would produce.

He says they are *“fruitless trees in late autumn”* probably referring to the fact that they are like trees that produce no fruit in the summer, and even into the fall. The time of harvest is past and there is still no fruit. He says they are *“twice dead”*, not only are they fruitless trees but they are then cut down, uprooted.

This is how John the Baptist described the Jews of his day. When crowds came out to be baptized by him he said to them, *“you brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance...even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”*

In verse 13, they are *“wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame”* This metaphor illustrates the fact that these people are not only spiritually bankrupt but they actively take part in wicked deeds as well. Their evil deeds are like the foam and dirt that the raging sea waves produce. We see this in Isaiah 57:20; *“But the wicked are like the tossing sea for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt”* They do shameful things.

Having drawn from the sky above, the realm of the clouds, and from the agricultural realm and the sea Jude now takes an example from the outer heavens where stars and planets are. He says these people are *“wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever”*. Like the wild waves mentioned there is nothing fixed about their movements.

Stars were supposed to be fixed in their movements in the sky so as to provide guidance to travelers? These people restless in sin. Christians are to shine like the stars against the black sinfulness of the world. These people are instead swallowed up by gloomy darkness. Again, Jude was attempting to warn his hearers of the danger these people pose, but he did not want them to become fixated on them.

He wanted them to fix their hearts and minds on the love of God in Christ, while at the same time fully appreciating the seriousness of the threat. And so it might be good to think of examples in Scripture of Christ like righteousness.

Jude gave three examples of the opposite of Christ like righteousness; Cain, Balaam, and Korah. And he illustrated their character and the spiritual danger they posed through metaphor. We have already mentioned Jude's preference for triads, or groups of three in this letter to emphasize his point, but we see the Holy Spirit use another group of three to emphasize Christ like righteousness.

It is to their character and example we should look and ultimately to the way they manifest the righteousness and love of Christ. God spoke to Ezekiel about the destruction of Jerusalem saying, "*son of man when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness*" (Ezek. 14:14).

Noah persevered in faith and obedience to God in building the ark amidst a wicked and sinful generation; Daniel would not give into idolatry and remained faithful in worship to God during his time of exile in Babylon; and Job, the righteous sufferer, suffered tremendously, but would not curse God and continued to trust that though God slayed him yet he would still hope and would live (Job 13:15; 19:25-27)

These three are given in sharp relief in the Bible to the likes of Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Jude would have us listen to his warning about the presence of men like these but have us direct our attention to the righteousness revealed in the others who kept themselves in the love of God and whose righteousness reveals the righteousness from God, the obedience of the Sun of Righteousness Jesus Christ.