

THE BOOK OF JUDE

(Lesson Five)

“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” **Jude 1:12, 13**

INTRODUCTION: In the previous message on verse 11, we looked at three more examples of apostasy from the Old Testament age. The first was the self-righteousness of Cain. The second was the greed or covetousness of Balaam, and the third was the rebellion against constituted authority in the rebellion of Korah. Each of these individuals had been exposed to the truth set forth in God’s revealed will. Each wilfully rejected and turned away from the truth, became apostates, and perished under the curse of God. Today, in verses 12 and 13, Jude continues to describe the characteristics of the apostates who have departed from the Christian faith. In the previous verses Jude has helped to identify the apostates by the use of Old Testament examples, now he continues to do so only he shifts to the poetic use of metaphors.

II. JUDE’S ARGUMENT (Heretics Described) verses 4-19.

6. Five Descriptive Metaphors - verses 12, 13.

In describing these apostates, Jude has now covered the whole creation of conscious beings, from the angels, mankind, and the brute beasts or animals. Jude goes on to portray the objects of his wrath in a series of colorful and cutting metaphors. These word-pictures correspond to the four regions of the physical world. They are clouds in the air, trees on the earth, waves in the sea, and stars in the heavens or sky. Jude thus pulls principles from the entire realm of nature to denounce these apostates, and the tone of his anger against them is ever increasing as he enlarges upon his subject.

There is a place for anger in the ministry of Christ. As Jesus became angry at those who had turned the temple worship into a den of thieves, so Jude was angry at those who were destroying the peace and purity of the fellowship among the churches. He alludes to five natural phenomena which provide vivid pictures of the true nature of apostasy.

a. First, Filthy Spots - “*spots in your feasts of charity* (love feasts).” - The picture of selfishness.

The first picture is that of staining or disrupting the fellowship in the church.

(1) The “love feasts”

The love feasts were fellowship meals which were celebrated in the services on the Lord’s Day. Each person or family brought what food they could. This

meant that the wealthy brought plenty and the poor brought little or nothing. Many of the believers were slaves and could bring nothing at all. It provided a time when the believers could share the warmth of their hearts and grow in fellowship together in the form of love, joy, concern and sharing. It was a time like that described in the song, *“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.”*

The fellowship of believers is spiritual. It is not a social fellowship based upon natural feelings and interests. It is a fellowship produced by the Holy Spirit centering in and around Jesus Christ. But when natural teachings creep in, they soon disrupt this fellowship. This must not be allowed in a Bible church, and when it becomes visible, mature believers must reject and cleanse the house of God.

(2) *“Spots or stains”*

The Greek word “spots” (*spilos*) occurs only here in the New Testament and has a dual meaning. It can mean “spots, blots, blemishes, or stains.” And it can refer to submerged reefs or rocks washed by the sea water. Both commentators and translators are about equally divided as to what Jude meant in his usage of the word. If he means that the false teachers are spots or blemishes upon the fellowship of the church, he means that they stain or make dirty the name of Christ and the testimony of the church. They disturb the fellowship of the Spirit of Christ. One only has to remember how the announcement by Jesus of an apostate being in their midst so disrupted the fellowship that was occurring at the Last Supper or the Passover Feast. What a blemish Judas put upon that holy assembly!

However, if Jude was using the meaning of a submerged reef, he was warning the churches that the apostate teaching was threatening to shipwreck the fellowship of the church. The pilot of the ship must be on the alert for water that, while it looks calm and safe, it can contain hidden reefs which can sink the ship. The first usage describes how the false teachers could defile the church, while the second refers to how they could destroy the church.

(3) *“feeding (shepherding) themselves without fear.”*

The word translated feeding means shepherding. But instead of shepherding the flock and caring for the needs of the people, these apostates’ only concern was to see that their needs were taken care of. Jude probably had in mind the statement found in Ezekiel 34:2 which says, *“Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”* These deceivers feasted among the saints without any fear of being called into judgment for their sins. This first metaphor shows that the root sin of apostasy is that of selfishness.

- b. **Second, Empty Clouds, *“clouds they are without water, carried about of winds”* - the picture of emptiness.**

As the anxious farmer sees the clouds form on the horizon, they produce

hope and expectations of refreshing rain for the thirsty ground, but they have no rain in them, and bring nothing but disappointment. They are empty and are merely being blown around by the winds. These teachers appeared on the scene with their eloquent speech promising refreshment and enrichment for thirsty souls, but had nothing to contribute that was of substance and long lasting. In verse 16, Jude says that, ***“their mouth speaks great swelling words”*** which impress but contain no substance for the soul thirsting to know God.

It is a common thing in our religious culture to see ministers with enthusiastic personalities and plans arrive on the scene and quickly gather large numbers of followers. They may double or triple the numerical size of a church in a short period of time. Then the enthusiasm levels off and the false teacher has nothing to feed upon and he leaves, and his followers scatter to other churches which give promise of greater benefits. We live in a time when both ministers and laymen are drifting from church to church looking for something to fill their emptiness, thinking that shallow excitement and entertainment will meet their needs. What appears as promising, soon proves to be empty of rain. The need is for Bible teachers and churches who will take people into the depths of God’s Word and anchor them to the solid rock so they can remain stable when the storm clouds hit their lives. This second picture portrays the emptiness of apostasy.

c. **Third, Dead Trees, - *“trees whose fruit withers without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”* - the picture of fruitlessness.**

(1) ***“Trees whose fruit withers”*** is an expression referring to autumn trees without fruit. The picture is that of a fruit orchard in autumn, the time when the farmer expects fruit. But these trees are fruitless. They bear no fruit because there was no life in the tree.

(2) ***“Twice dead”*** - They were dead in appearance in that no fruit was evident on their branches, but they were dead in reality in that no life existed in the root system. They were of no value to the farmer, they must therefore be rooted or dug up and burned in the fire.

(3) ***“Plucked up by the roots.”*** This paints a graphic picture of the lifeless condition of these apostates. They were spiritually barren, having produced no fruit. They are to be looked upon as dead and worthless. No amount of pruning or fertilizing can restore them because the trouble is deep down in the roots. Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, ***“Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.”*** Apostates are twice dead. They are dead to the fruit of profession, and dead to the root of possession. Their fruitlessness is a sign of death even though they may look alive. Paul said that the individual ***“that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”*** (I Timothy 5:6). By their birth and state they are dead in trespasses and sins with nothing in their future facing them but to be cast into the lake of

fire which is the second death. (Revelation 20:14).

These men gave no evidence of ever having been regenerated. One of the evidences of true salvation is producing spiritual fruit. The seed that fell on the hard soil, the shallow soil, and the crowded soil, did not produce fruit, but the seed that fell on the “good ground” did produce fruit. (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23). Jesus said in Matthew 15:16, ***“You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”*** True Christians are fruit bearers on an ongoing basis and their fruit is lasting.

The fruit of a Christian is the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22-24 we have this fruit described. ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”*** All of this flows from the spirit of humility. The false teachers cannot produce this because they are sensual or natural. They can only appeal to the natural desires, and they think these natural desires are spiritual. But they have no hunger for the Word of God which humbles the flesh and restrains the works of the flesh. The apostate may attract many with his fleshly enthusiasm and promise much, but he cannot produce any food for the soul of the spiritual man. He can only produce empty professions for the flesh can produce nothing but flesh. This metaphor pictures the fruitlessness of apostasy.

d. Fourth, Raging Waves - *“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame.”* - the picture of shamefulness.

In the fourth metaphor, Jude probably is paraphrasing the words found in Isaiah 57:20, 21: ***“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”*** The picture is that of the wild and restless sea waves surging upward under the fierce winds of a storm. They reach a crest or swell with great power and crash down upon the rocky barriers of the shore line where they are dashed and turned into foam and spray. They disappear back into the sea from which they came leaving behind a shameful landscape that is littered with scum, seaweed and garbage. The sight is ugly and repulsive. It is indeed a shameful scene.

(1) *“Raging waves of the sea”*

This expression portrays the restless and unrestrained nature of these apostates. They do not know God and thus have no peace with God. In verses 15 and 16, Jude says of them that they have committed ***“ungodly deeds,”*** have spoken ***“hard or proud speeches,”*** are ***“murmurers and complainers”*** about their lot in life, and have spoken ***“great swelling words”*** to flatter the carnal instincts of the flesh. Thus like the proud swelling surging waves, the restless desires of these apostates were constantly dashing themselves against the

divinely ordained barriers of order and authority. This soon turns into foam and filthy spray.

(2) ***“Foaming out their own shame”***

In the two previous metaphors, the clouds and the trees both promised something which they failed to produce, namely, rain and fruit. In this metaphor, the waves produce something, shame and reproach. As wave upon wave of false prophecy or teaching washes ashore, it brings a shameful reproach to the church and is repulsive to God and His holiness. Instead of edifying the body, it soils and stains the testimony of the cause of Christ. It is repulsive and ugly, and the leadership of the church must exercise both care and discipline to keep the churches' shoreline looking clean and pure. This metaphor pictures the shamefulness of apostasy.

e. **Fifth, Wandering Stars, *“wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”* - a picture of hopelessness of apostasy.** Jude concludes his five word pictures by likening the apostates to “wandering stars”.

(1) ***“Wandering Stars”***

This figure has been understood in two ways. One, it is believed to refer to the planets, which change their positions in the heavens and appear to violate the fixed order in creation. The second view is that it describes a meteor or “shooting star” which flashes across the sky and then disappears into darkness. The point is that it has wandered out of orbit and is not governed by an orderly system.

(2) ***“To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”***

These stars appear for a short period of time, and then vanish into the darkness of the night never to be seen again. Once they get out of orbit, they cannot recover themselves and all hope for their survival is gone.

I believe the second view to be the preferable of the two. These professing Christians appear on the scene for a brief period of time like a flash in the sky, and attract great attention to themselves. But their unstable character causes them to drift about in strange errors of doctrines and practices until in a sudden flash they disappear into the darkness of eternal apostasy. They make a big flash and then burn out. They come and go like “shooting stars.” They are fulfilling Satan's strategy for infiltrating the church with tares.

They are unlike true Christians who shine as fixed stars which can be depended on to guide the traveler through the darkness. Christians are described in Daniel 12:3 which says, ***“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”*** Philipians 2:14, 15 also says, ***“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”***

The light promised by false teachers does not last for they are of the earth and will soon disappear into the blackness of an eternal hell. Having wilfully broken away from God's established order, they are destined to disappear into darkness. Their fate is fixed and abiding, and they shall never rotate back into the orbit of God's people ever again. They have brought all this upon themselves by departing from the faith or truth of God.

Two images of the eternal torment of the wicked are given by Jesus. First in Matthew 8:12, ***“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** Here the image is that of outer or black darkness. The second is that of fire. In Matthew 13:41-43 we read, ***“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*** The picture is that of total hopelessness.

Well, the night sky is flashing with lots of falling stars today. The false teachers are lighting up the religious scene. The ones we see today are not the ones we saw twenty years ago. They continue to come and go and their number will increase as we draw close to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ: I warn you, beware of following a falling star. It will lead you into eternal blackness.

Jude has spoken of these deceivers as presenting themselves as Christians in the assemblies or love feasts of believers. But they are empty of spirituality and bear no fruit. They scatter dirt and refuse over the life of the church and bring shame to its name. They soon burn out and go to their destiny in eternal darkness.

Jude has helped us to identify five things which exist in the lives of apostates. They are selfishness, emptiness, fruitlessness, shamefulness, and hopelessness. What a contrast is He who says, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life”*** (John 14:6), and ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*** (John 10:10).