

I hope you remember that this series through 2Peter, Jude, and the opening of Revelation is called *Living in the Last Days*. As we continue in this chapter on false teachers, it is important for us to remember what Jesus said about the Last Days. When asked about the sign of His return, Jesus' first words were, "*See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.*" Matthew 24:4-5 (ESV) Just six verses later He repeats the point. *<sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.* Matthew 24:11 (ESV) And again 13 verses later, *<sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.* Matthew 24:24 (ESV) Jesus made a great emphasis on the abundance of false teachers in the Last Days before His return. (1John 2:28) In each case He warned that they lead people astray. In the last warning He said they will even be able to perform signs and wonders. (Revelation 13:13-14)

Our faith is not in the miracles we might observe. Just as Peter did not place his faith in the revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration, but rather on the more sure word of prophecy, so we place our faith in the Word. Peter knew that unless what He witnessed lined up with the Word, that he should reject it. We should do the same. (Isaiah 8:20)

Last week we saw that the false teachers' telltale signs are greed and sensuality. Jesus exhibited neither of these. In fact, when He died on the cross, His only possession was His clothing. Though the false teachers love to suggest that he had relations with Mary Magdalene or John, there is absolutely no evidence for either accusation. It comes from their imaginations that desire to justify their own sin. Recall the time when Jesus asked if anyone could convict Him of sin? (John 8:46) Not one voice dared even suggest what the false teachers 2000 years later are promoting.

Last week we ended in the middle of verse 10. The false teachers despise authority. It could also be translated lordship. They want to be their own god. They don't want anyone telling them what to do in government, the church, or the spiritual realm. He goes on to say that they are, *<sup>10b</sup> Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.* The false teachers then and now are so arrogant that they think they can speak against angelic beings. Jude says the same of them. (Jude 8) The glorious ones is a translation of the Greek word *doxa* which is sometimes translated dignities. It means magnificent or excellent ones. It had also been used to mean officials or church leaders but the context is of fallen angels.

**Commented [notes1]: 1 John 2:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

**Commented [notes2]: Revelation 13:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,  
<sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

**Commented [notes3]: Isaiah 8:20 (NIV)**

<sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

**Commented [notes4]: John 8:46 (ESV)**

<sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

**Commented [notes5]: Jude 1:8 (NIV)**

<sup>8</sup> In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.

Angelic beings command respect. Recall that Gabriel made Zechariah mute because he did not respect the message delivered to him because the being stood in the presence of God. (Luke 1:19-20) The false teachers rail against these glorious beings. They revile them as if they had the power and authority to do so. One angel can take out an army of 185,000. It's not the brightest thing to do to confront them. (2Kings 19:35) In railing against these angels that serve God, they are really trying to present themselves as a person of great authority. They are actually misled puppets of the evil one.

You would think God's angels could rebuke evil angels, but they do not even dare to rail against one another. Jude follows a similar statement up by saying that even the archangel Michael when contending with Satan asked the Lord to rebuke Satan. (Jude 9) We have an all too common misconception that we can bind angels and order them around. It is arrogant to think we can bind Satan at will. We better be sure that what we are asking is the Lord's command. We are dealing in realms that we often do not understand, so we better know what the will of the Lord is.

The angels are there to do God's bidding, not ours. (Psalm 103:20) Humbly make your requests if you truly believe it is God's will. The boldness of the false teachers causes the new believers to think they know whereof they speak. Peter goes on to declare that they are on the sure road to destruction.

*<sup>12</sup> But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, <sup>13</sup> suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.* Peter has chosen these descriptions with the wind of the Spirit filling his spirit. "Irrational" – I find that the false teachers are rarely rational. They rely on emotion and subjective feelings. When they are confronted with a rational argument to their teaching, they fall back on some subjective experience.

"creatures of instinct" – They allow their fallen nature to guide their reasoning to obtain the baser means of gratification. It reminds me of the 60's expression, "If it feels good, do it."

"blaspheming in matters of which they are ignorant" – They don't understand the Word of God and its richness. They can't comprehend what God is doing in the church. They just imagine in the vanity of their thinking that they are above it all. I have at several occasions had people tell me they were Christians that attended church but have evolved beyond that. Tell me how one could think they have evolved beyond Jesus' message through the Apostles. They even blaspheme spiritual beings whose workings and purposes they know nothing about. They will be destroyed when God destroys the angels that have rebelled.

*They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.* The sinner usually waits for the cloak of

**Commented [notes6]: Luke 1:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

<sup>20</sup> And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."

**Commented [notes7]: 2 Kings 19:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

**Commented [notes8]: Jude 1:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

**Commented [notes9]: Psalm 103:20 (NIV)**

<sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

darkness to hide their deeds. (1Thessalonians 5:7) Not so with the false teachers. They think it is great sport to try to get away with things in broad daylight. When we should be using the day for the glory of God (Romans 13:13), they are using it for the lusts of their flesh. (James 5:5)

The early church would gather each week and have what became known as a love feast. It was kind of like a combination of our pot luck and communion. It was a time to share, celebrate what the Lord had done, and grow together as a body of believers. The false teachers took advantage of this time to sneak in and sow their false teachings and magnify themselves. (Acts 20:30) They were looking for the weak sheep that could be enticed away from the fold.

God sees them as spots or blemishes in the body of believers. They revel in their deceptive talents. While acting like sheep, they are cleverly disguised wolves luring the lambs to destruction. They know the language of believers. This is where we get the expression, "pulling the wool over your eyes". Because one of our chief goals is to love one another and show grace and understanding, they take advantage of these priorities and accuse you of not living up to them if you confront them. (2Corinthians 11:13)

*<sup>14</sup> They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!* While the body of believers is seeking to encourage and build one another up (Hebrews 3:13), they are seeking to entice the unsteady to give in to their flesh. Sometimes it is sexual in nature, and other times it is greed, such as a great investment plan they claim can make you rich. The unsteady are those who are not mature in Christ or who are being tempted by a weakness they are just escaping. Sometimes our situation in life can have us in a place of vulnerability. The false teachers can spot it a mile away. They lure the weak with the bait their flesh desires. That is the meaning behind the word "entice". It's like a hunter putting bait in a trap.

A soul or two is never enough for them. They will go from person to person, destroying lives. Peter says, "They have hearts trained in greed." What an expression! They can never get enough. We get our word gymnasium from the word translated "trained". They are dedicated and disciplined in greed. (1Corinthians 5:11)

Think about how a father feels when some man is trying to entice his young daughter simply to use her for his pleasure. That is how God feels toward the wolves that enter the flock of God. No wonder Peter calls them accursed children! *<sup>15</sup> Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, <sup>16</sup> but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.*

Balaam was a prophet from another nation who seemed to actually hear from God. When a king Barak wanted to hire him to curse Israel, Balaam was tempted to prophesy

**Commented [notes10]:** 1 Thessalonians 5:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

**Commented [notes11]:** Romans 13:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

**Commented [notes12]:** James 5:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

**Commented [notes13]:** Acts 20:30 (ESV)

<sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

**Commented [notes14]:** 2 Corinthians 11:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

**Commented [notes15]:** Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

**Commented [notes16]:** 1 Corinthians 5:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

for the money. On the way to the place his heart must have been trying to figure out how he could get the money without incurring God's wrath. An angel met him in the road. The donkey could see the angel and his drawn sword but Balaam couldn't. The donkey ran into a field, and little later it ran into the wall on the side of the road to try to escape. In the process it smashed Balaam's foot into the wall. Finally the donkey lay down on the road and would go no further. Balaam started screaming at the donkey and beating it when God enabled the donkey to speak in human language. Then his eyes were opened he too could see the angel. (See Numbers 22)

The false teachers are like Balaam. They know what is right, but they love money more than righteousness. They know what God desires, but they would rather live for what they lust after. A beast knows when its life is in danger but the false teacher doesn't see impending judgment! (Numbers 31:8)

*<sup>17</sup> These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.* When people journeyed through a dry area, they knew where springs were located. They would count on replenishing their water supply at these spots. These false teachers pretend to have living water, but they have nothing to nourish the soul. Mists driven by a storm we see in our area at this time of year. Our land is desperately in need of rain, but the clouds just pass over and lightening sets the forest ablaze. The false teachers promise refreshment but deliver destruction. There is a place of judgment for these. They have a reservation in the gloom of utter darkness. (Jude 13)

*<sup>18</sup> For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.* They are often quite charismatic and confident. I knew a man that, when he got low on cash, would try to find a speaking engagement at Pentecostal churches. He knew he could always walk away with renewed resources. Their target is often the babes that have not yet found complete victory over the life they once lived. As the young Christian has almost climbed out of the pit of self-destruction, the false teachers drag them back in with their enticements. They offer them the option of being a spiritual giant and indulging in their flesh as well. They promise the best of both worlds, but they never deliver. The best of one world is destruction. You cannot serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24)

*<sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* I've told you before that I've observed this. The speaker promises to deliver the listeners from the bondage of poverty, or stinginess, or a lack of trust and manipulates them into handing over their money. The speaker is enslaved to mammon, and he uses the promise of an abundant return if they will just plant that seed money into his pockets right now. While he is lusting after more money, the weak believer is tempted to believe that they will be rich *and* spiritual if they can just "give in faith" and watch the windows of heaven open. (Malachi 3:10) The false

**Commented [notes17]: Numbers 31:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup>They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

**Commented [notes18]: Jude 1:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

**Commented [notes19]: Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

**Commented [notes20]: Malachi 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup>Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

teacher sprinkles their teaching with misused portions of Scripture. While he is enslaved by sin, he encourages others to be enslaved as well. (John 8:34) And because many are so Biblically illiterate, they think the person is some spiritual giant who has really learned to trust the Lord. We need the light of the Word to discern when someone is truly challenging us to obey God or if the person is a shyster robbing the flock. (John 10: 1)

*<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.* Some commentators believe these last verses are speaking of those seduced by the false teachers. The text is vague. Perhaps it could be either. I see it referring to the false teachers. These guys know what they are doing. They come into the church and learn of our teaching and see an opportunity. Sometimes they even give Christianity a try. I'm not saying they are born again, but rather that they attend the church and hear the Word and give up their sinful ways for a time. It looks as if they were converted. We might even ask them to give their testimony. (Hebrews 6:4-6) How do we know they were never converted? Because they go back. (1John 2:19) Perseverance is the sign of genuine belief.

*<sup>22</sup> What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."* Peter compares a life of sin to vomit and mire. They decide that filth is more desirable than the Savior. Some would argue that this passage along with Hebrews 6 argues that one can give back the free gift of salvation that they have received. Others would insist they were never saved.

One thing is certain, if you are tempted to give up the life of holiness and turn back to your sin, you better fear the Lord and His loving discipline and justice. (Hebrews 12:5-6) And if you are afraid the enemy will drag you back into the pit from which you came, you need to lean on the powerful arms of the Savior that said He will never leave you or forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5) **Whatever your doctrine, don't become apathetic and lazy about your relationship with Jesus.** That puts you in that unsteady category that opens you up to the false teachers. (Proverbs 26:11)

Peter started off this letter encouraging us to grow in our faith. He is giving us reasons why we should. First, was that the Lord is coming and we need to get ready to meet him face to face. The second is our study these last two weeks. False teachers abound in the Last Days. Jesus warned that they can lead us astray. Grow in your faith and knowledge of God's word so that you will not become a victim of their seduction and be judged at the Lord's return.

**Commented [notes21]: John 8:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

**Commented [notes22]: John 10:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber."

**Commented [notes23]: John 10:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber."

**Commented [notes24]: 1 John 2:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

**Commented [notes25]: Hebrews 12:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

**Commented [notes26]: Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Commented [notes27]: Proverbs 26:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly."

Deepen your relationship with Jesus. Ask the elders when you hear some secret theology has been going around the congregation. Keep growing more Christ like in your daily life. Continuing in your faith assures joy at His coming. (Colossians 1:21-23)

#### Questions

- 1 What was one of Jesus' repeated warnings about the Last Days?
- 2 Why should we avoid dealing with angels?
- 3 Review the 4 descriptions in verse 4.
- 4 What gives the false teacher pleasure?
- 5 Who is their target?
- 6 Discuss the meaning of the word in verse 14.
- 7 Review the story of Balaam. How are the false teachers like him?
- 8 How did Peter describe them?
- 9 What's wrong with their promise of freedom?
- 10 What is the application of the proverb?

#### Commented [notes28]: Colossians 1:21-23 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

<sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.