

We covered the false teachers extensively in our study of 2nd Peter. I'll briefly review those concepts and highlight the additional points that Jude made as well as his interesting references to extra-biblical material. Remember that it was Jesus that said the Last Days would be evidenced by false teachers. (Matthew 24:4-5) Last week we talked about how they no longer work secretly but openly deny the Lordship of Christ. I've witnessed a local pastor deny the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, and know that his denomination has rejected Jesus' death as payment for our sins. There is an all-out assault from without and from within on the faith delivered to us.

Jude had just given three examples in Jewish history of those who reject the Word of the Lord. Though they had a special status, they did not remain faithful and experienced the good justice of God. The Jews in the wilderness, the angels that fell, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah all served to warn us of how easily we can walk away from what we know and allow our lusts to lead us to destruction.

Now Jude goes on to compare the false teachers with those in his historical illustrations. *⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.* The false teachers are like the rebels in Biblical accounts in four ways. First, they rely on dreams.

Interestingly enough, a local church had a seminar on how to rely on dreams. Brothers and sisters, we need to know the Word. (Psalm 119:105) God can speak through dreams, but they better line up with the Word of God. We rely on the Word. A dream may confirm what we believe the Lord is speaking to us by His Spirit through His Word. But if you *rely* on the dream you have the cart before the horse. You open yourself up to being led astray by your pride.

God used dreams throughout the Old Testament. (Daniel 2:28-29) They did not have the recorded Word to direct them and the Spirit had not been poured out. God uses dreams even now to confirm the direction we see in the Word. The Law warned against dreamers who lead people away from the one true God. He even warned that they may show miraculous signs. (Deuteronomy 13:1-3) The key word here is "rely". We rely on the Word! The structure of the sentence seems to indicate that they used their dreams as a justification for their defilement of the flesh. In that case they were relying on their dreams as a source of divine authority over the Word. (Jeremiah 23:25-26)

They defile the flesh. Peter said their focus was sensuality. (2Peter 2:14) To them, the carnal was the goal, and they taught the misuse of the physical was the path to spirituality. It was really a justification of their own lusts. This teaching is rampant today

Commented [notes1]: Matthew 24:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,'" and they will lead many astray.

Commented [notes2]: Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Commented [notes3]: Daniel 2:28-29 (ESV)

²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be.

Commented [notes4]: Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (ESV)

¹ "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods, -which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Commented [notes5]: Jeremiah 23:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart,

Commented [notes6]: 2 Peter 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

in the secular world and in cults. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, and the disgust of using a person as an object for one's own gratification, defiling the flesh is touted today as natural and necessary.

The third indictment is that **they reject authority**. This may mean that they reject the authority of the Scriptures and of the local church elders. (Hebrews 13:17) In doing so, they reject God's authority. It usually goes hand in hand with rejecting civil authority as well. The reason they do so is that they desire to be their own lord. Submission is an ugly word to them because of their ego. Certainly this is also saying they reject Christ as the authority over their life. The illustrations that preceded this passage, that of Israel, angels, and Sodom, are all examples defiling the flesh and rejecting authority.

The last description is that they blaspheme the glorious ones. This description does not seem to have a connection with the illustrations unless possibly with the angel visiting Lot. This blasphemy against fallen angels is the topic of the next verse. *⁹ 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."*

Unfortunately, we do not have the original version of this story (The Assumption of Moses). The false teachers order angels around as if they were their servants and not God's servants. Some pretend to even bind Satan. Angels have more power in their little finger than an army. They are God's servants and even the fallen ones can only operate within the parameters permitted by God. (Job 1:12) If the mighty Michael (Daniel 10:13; 12:1) dared not rebuke the devil for hindering him from performing God's will, but asked the Lord to rebuke him (Zechariah 3:2) who are we to think we can tell the angels what to do? (2Peter 2:10-11)

Jude goes on to say, *¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.* They are bringing about their own destruction. Their prideful blasphemies against the fallen angels is a display of their sin sick souls. Jude says they are led by instincts, as opposed to being led by the Spirit. May God teach us the difference!

As believers, we are to no longer be instinctively led, slaves to natural desires. (Romans 8:12-14) One of the reasons more people are not attracted to Jesus is that His followers still act by instinct of the old nature rather than by the Spirit. The old nature is quick to defend itself. It is all about surviving and getting the upper hand and obtaining what it desires. The spiritual nature, by contrast, is all about serving and walking in the Spirit in such a way as to glorify Jesus. We may not be relying on dreams, defiling the flesh, rejecting authority, or blaspheming angels, but are we operating out of instinct or led by the Spirit?

Commented [notes7]: Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Commented [notes8]: Job 1:12 (ESV)

¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Commented [notes9]: Daniel 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

Commented [notes10]: Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

¹ "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

Commented [notes11]: Zechariah 3:2 (ESV)

² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

Commented [notes12]: 2 Peter 2:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

Commented [notes13]: Romans 8:12-14 (ESV)

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

These next verses are referred to as a woe oracle. Jesus delivered His own woe oracle in Matthew 23. Isaiah has one in Isaiah chapter 5. ¹¹ *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.*

Woe is a cry of sorrow and warning for impending judgment. It is usually followed by the reason for the coming judgment. In English it is in the past tense, but in the Greek "woe" is from a past point in time forward to the present and continuing.

They walk in the way of Cain. Jude is not saying they are murderers, but rather that they followed his path. Cain gave a half-hearted gift to God. He was jealous that God received his brothers offering but rejected his. God warned Cain that he should not let sin master him. (Genesis 4:7) However, he did let sin take control of his life and became the first murderer. This is the way of Cain.

It is a contrast to the way of the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament the way of the Lord is referred to as righteousness and justice. (Genesis 18:19) In fact, every time "the way of the Lord" is used it refers to justice. **The way of Cain is injustice.** Able was murdered unjustly. Cain rebelled against the justice and righteousness of God.

Jude refers to several extra-biblical texts in this short letter. This may be one of the three instances in which he had in mind one of those texts. That is not to say that those texts are to be added to the canon of Scripture as completely inspired, but rather that he saw this one point as being historically accurate. Remember, the Apostle Paul quoted Greek poets but was certainly not endorsing all they wrote. (Acts 17:28)

In this case, Jude may be referring to the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti, which are Aramaic translations and commentary of Old Testament passages. In those works Cain is referred to as saying, "There is no Judgment, there is no Judge, there is no other world, there is no gift of good reward for the just and no punishment for the wicked."^{source}

The closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games featured a video of John Lenin singing his version of this very quote from Cain. "Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try, No hell below us, Above us only sky..." It's listed as one of the top three songs of all time. The song suggests the heart of man is good and we just need to "live as one". Goodness without God, but that ignores human nature. It's a false dream based on a lie. It is the way of Cain. Lenin's song goes on to say that leads to a life of peace, but Cain's story says that the opposite is true.

If Jude had that quote from Cain in mind, then there is a strong connection with these false teachers who are given to sensuality and despise authority. It is increasingly the mantra of the world. I cringe every time I hear that lovely tune of Lenin's, for it lauds the way of Cain. The melody is beautiful, but the words are from hell. (Psalm 89:14)

Commented [notes14]: Genesis 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Commented [notes15]: Genesis 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

Commented [notes16]: Acts 17:28 (ESV)

²⁸ for ""In him we live and move and have our being" as even some of your own poets have said, ""For we are indeed his offspring."

Commented [notes17]: Translated by G. Vermes, "The Targumic Versions of Genesis 4:3-16" in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, SJLA 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 97-99. New American Commentary - New American Commentary - Volume 37: 1, 2 Peter, Jude.

Commented [notes18]: Psalm 89:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

They *abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error*. We went over the story of Balaam in a 2nd Peter sermon. Briefly, this prophet knew that God wanted to bless Israel, but for the sake of financial gain, he showed Israel's enemy how to seduce them through sexual temptation as a way to curse them. (Numbers 31:16) Here again we have the same sins, the forbidden sexual sins and despising God's authority, the description of the false teachers. Their whole purpose in doing so is the financial gain they received from their false teaching. It is happening today around the world. Wherever the gospel is preached there are false teachers who have abandoned themselves for the sake of financial gain.

The last phrase is prophetic, *and perished in Korah's rebellion*. Korah despised Moses' authority. He wanted to be the high priest. He incited others to try to claim the authority as well. God caused the earth to open up and swallow him and his entire family. (Numbers 16:31-33) The false teachers resist the authority of the Lord and the local church elders and lead others to do so as well. In their grab for power they assure their end will be a demonstration of the justice of God.

The woe oracle continues with descriptions of the dangers these false teachers present. *These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;* The first is that they are like hidden reefs. Some translate the same word to be blemishes. "Hidden reefs" is more descriptive of the danger they present. The word is literally "rock in the sea". Unseen and below the surface, they don't appear to be dangerous until it is too late. Ships that run aground on them will be beaten to pieces by the waves. (Acts 27:41) When the church gathered for a meal and celebration of communion, they are right there among them with no fear of God's impending judgment on them for spreading their destructive heresies.

"Shepherds feeding themselves" implies that they were seen as leaders. Instead of feeding the flock the pure Word of God, they are fleecing the flock for their own financial gain. (1Peter 5:2) Ezekiel warned about shepherds like these that care only for themselves. (Ezekiel 34:2) Pride is one sign of their true character. They think they deserve their unjust gain and do not need to be accountable because they are so superior to everyone they instruct.

Our passage for today concludes with four illustrations from every part of the natural world used to describe these false teachers. The first is "Waterless clouds swept along by winds". (2Peter 2:17) They promise refreshment but never deliver and are soon gone. Jude may have been alluding to Proverbs 25:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ *Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give*. They pretend to have great insights, but they are spiritually blind.

Commented [notes19]: Numbers 31:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD.

Commented [notes20]: Numbers 16:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart.

³² And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods.

³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

Commented [notes21]: Acts 27:41 (NIV)

⁴¹ But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stem was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

Commented [notes22]: 1 Peter 5:2 (NIV)

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

Commented [notes23]: Ezekiel 34:2 (NIV)

² "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?'

Commented [notes24]: 2 Peter 2:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

Fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted That describes their lack of fruit when it should be present and a lack of the genuine life in Christ. They are disconnected from the life source. They are not, as Jesus said, "in the vine"(John 15:4-5), or as Paul wrote, "grafted in". (Romans 11:17)

They are ¹³ *wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame*; Here Jude is probably referring to Isaiah 57:20 (ESV) ²⁰ *But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt*. The turmoil they cause in the local church brings up a lot of mud. They stir things up and make a mess. (Job 24:18) What was a peaceful calm becomes pounding waves as their teaching causes one problem after another. On top of it all is the foam of their shame, the result of their actions, the bad fruit they have produced. They were fruitless as to anything of the Spirit, but as to the carnal ways, the frothy foam is evident.

...wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. The ancients called the planets wandering stars. They did not follow the path of the stars and therefore were not able to guide the traveler who looked to them for direction. Sometimes the angels are referred to as stars and fallen angels are called fallen stars. If that is the case here, it would imply that they have fallen as well and are headed for the same fate as that of the fallen angels. (Matthew 25:41)

Fire and darkness are both used to describe hell. They must be metaphorical terms for the two cannot coexist. What is certain is that the judgment they insist will never come is indeed coming! That punishment that will be the justice they deserve is reserved forever. It is not for some short period of time until they repent. They have chosen the way of Cain and they will never turn from it. The darkness their teaching has sown in the congregations will be what they reap forever.

Sometimes I ponder how they can get away with it for so long. How many of our youth will they lead astray before God acts? How many sheep will they fleece and drive from fellowship before God exposes them? (Psalm 94:1-3) But God has His time, and His time is always best. In the meantime, let us hold out the light of the pure word of God to those in darkness, while we establish ourselves in the faith (1Peter 2:12) with godly disciplines, accountability, and spiritual growth.

Brothers and sisters, our educational system and many of our denominations have been led astray by these false teachers just as Jesus and the apostles predicted. As the world grows darker, our light shines brighter. Let us be prepared to contend for the faith! Pray for and use every opportunity to sow the light of the glorious gospel. It is the only solution for the burden of guilt that all people carry. It is the only power that can transform a broken life. Jesus is the only answer to the great emptiness in the soul of man.

Questions

Commented [notes25]: John 15:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Commented [notes26]: Romans 11:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,

Commented [notes27]: Job 24:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Yet they are foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one goes to the vineyards.

Commented [notes28]: Matthew 25:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Commented [notes29]: Psalm 94:1-3 (ESV)

¹ O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth!

² Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!

³ O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?

Commented [notes30]: 1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- 1 Discuss the three previous examples.
- 2 What were the four similarities?
- 3 Which two apply to all three examples?
- 4 How do they operate? And you?
- 5 Woe for what 3 actions?
- 6 Cain's reported words match what popular song?
- 7 What does Korah show them?
- 8 What is pictured by a wandering star?
- 9 What is reserved for them and for how long?
- 10 What is Jude expecting from his readers?