

Text: Jude 11-13

Title: The Ungodly, Part 2

Truth: The ungodly offer nothing but a sure path to destruction.

Date/Location: Sunday January 18, 2015 at FBC

Introduction

This segment of Jude is often called a “woe oracle.” It is a heavy message of judgment on those who, like the examples in verses 5-7, will be judged because of their sins set forth in verses 8-10.

I. Woe to Them, for Judgment is Certain, v. 11

A. Woe! This is a strong word used to refer to a future pain that will come upon a person, or a current situation of extreme distress that someone is undergoing. This word is prophetic of God’s judgment upon the ungodly. The word occurs commonly in the Bible, 106 times. Here are some examples:

1. Isaiah is the prophet fondest of using the word *woe*. God called him to a ministry of proclaiming judgment against a hard-hearted people (Isaiah 6:9-13). For some of his more famous or pointed statements of woe, see Isaiah 3:11, 5:11, 5:20-22, 10:1, 31:1.
2. Matthew and Luke use the word almost as frequently as Isaiah. Every time that the word is used in these gospels, it is found coming from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 23 alone he pronounced woes on the scribes and Pharisees seven times (v. 13-16, 23-29).
3. Revelation also uses the word seven times, indicating future judgment.

We have to understand that this is not “wow” or “whoa.” This is WOE. Divine judgment is coming. There is no escape except through Jesus.

B. Why? The reason for the woe is given by the word “for.” Unfortunately, the NIV omits the word entirely, whereas the other good English translations include it. Doing so helps you understand the point. It means what it says—Woe to them *because* they have followed the same path as other ungodly people of old and will therefore receive a like judgment. As one commentator wrote, “moral degradation is the pathway to destruction.”¹ Jude gives three historical examples:

C. **Cain.** A disobedient, angry murderer. If you look carefully at the passage in Genesis, you will note several things.

1. God had showed Adam and Eve the need for an animal sacrifice to make a covering for them (Genesis 3:21). This was more than just a clothing covering, but an indication that they needed something to deal with their sin, which itself made their nakedness unacceptable.

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *1,2 Peter, Jude* (New American Commentary, 2003), p. 404.

2. They undoubtedly told this to their sons and the sons knew what kind of sacrifice God wanted.
 3. Cain brought a sacrifice that was inappropriate for the circumstances. God is pleased with sacrifices, and indeed would later in the Mosaic Law accept some grain offerings, but not in this case. A sin offering always had to have animal blood in it. We know it was inappropriate because it says God did not ‘respect Cain and his offering.’
 4. **Cain became angry** because of the results of his own sin—he **had disobeyed God**. He didn’t think it was wrong, and he was angry with God because of it. But the reality is he became angry at God for something that Cain himself had done wrong! This is just like a child who becomes angry at his parent when the parent is only pointing out a sin the child has done.
 5. He took his anger out on his brother. God had predicted the sin which “lies at the door” would try to overcome Cain. It conquered him. How inappropriate to be angry at God, and then also at someone else for your own sin, and then to kill that someone because of it! He **became the first murderer**.
 6. Cain whined about his punishment, which was to be a permanent fugitive and vagabond. He would not know a peaceful existence for the remainder of his life (Genesis 4:11-16).
 7. The ungodly that Jude is warning about have gone down the same path of error. They fit the general description without being literal murderers.
- D. **Balaam**. A false prophet greedy for money. This Midianite-hire has often confused Bible readers. Let us be clear that Balaam is evaluated as a bad character by God:
1. Revelation 2:14 tells us exactly what Balaam promoted, and it was evil.
 2. Balaam, moreover, was hired to curse Israel (Micah 6:5, Neh. 13:2, Joshua 24:9-10, Deuteronomy 23:4-5). That is a losing proposition, as we know from the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3). He agreed to take money to do so.
 3. For further study, read Numbers chapters 22-25 and chapter 31 also. In short, King Balak hired Balaam as a prophet to curse Israel, but God did not permit him to do so. Therefore, he schemed another way to turn God against Israel by seducing Israel to sin with Midianite women. This fact is clearly revealed in Numbers 31:16, making it straightforward to see that Balaam was a villain, not simply an innocent pawn in some prophecy game.
 4. The temptation led to Israel’s sin, and sin in turn led to God’s judgment, which made Balak happy. Later on, Balaam was killed in Numbers 31:8.
 5. In Numbers 31:15, Moses was upset that the people kept some of the women, because they were the ones who had enticed Israel to sin!

6. The ungodly in Jude's warning "gave themselves completely to the kind of deception that Balaam practiced for the sake of money."²

E. **Korah.** A rebel against divinely-sanctioned authority.

1. Numbers 16 records Korah and his followers rebelled against God's appointed leader, Moses.
2. Moses, like Joshua before him, did not lift himself up to the post of leadership in the nation, but God put him there (Joshua 3:7). Moses was a humble man (Numbers 12:3).
3. Korah and those he gathered with him began not to accept Moses as their leader and they rose up against him. Our American forefathers had to answer the question as to when such a thing is appropriate; but in the case of Moses, the fact that he was God's appointed leader was pretty obvious. The fact that Aaron and his descendants were appointed to the priesthood was also obvious.
4. The consequences that followed were very severe, including the death of several hundred people the first day by earthquake and fire, and many thousands the next day. It may not seem so obvious to you why such a deadly punishment should be doled out. We live in a question-and-disobey-authority kind of era so our mindset is not only to question authority, but to buck it. Not so in God's arrangement of things—not in the home, government, and certainly not in a theocracy mediated through certain men. What Korah and his gang were doing was not detailed in the 10 commandments. But in this case, rejecting God's leader was the same as rejecting God. It was direct rebellion against God. Their behavior amounted to treason.
5. After those men were killed, and then God once again demonstrated who was His appointed priestly leader. They went through that process in chapter 17.
6. This example, like the previous two, represents the kind of people Jude is concerned about in the church. They will most certainly perish like Korah did.

II. Other Descriptions: Morally Filthy and Spiritually Bankrupt, v. 12-13

- A. **Spots.** Stains or hidden reefs. There is a fairly even split amongst English translators as to how this word should be translated. If the latter, it refers to a rocky outcropping underneath water that can wreck a ship. If the former, the stains or spots are blemishes or imperfections in the church's fellowship meal associated with the Lord's Table. Either way they are not good, and mean either a spoiling of the purity of the church, or a great hidden danger to its spiritual life.
- Furthermore, they participate in the holy services of the church without any kind of fear that what they are doing is morally reprehensible. They don't care about

² Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 41.13.

the consequences of offending God. On top of that, they “serve only themselves.” The verb is “to feed like a shepherd” so it may well indicate that Jude has primarily in mind evil so-called “leaders” in the churches. There are many examples of such leaders today.

Jude next describes the ungodly with four illustrations from nature.

- B. Empty Clouds.** They are blown by the wind and perhaps seem to offer a promise of life-giving water, but they actually carry no water. As such clouds are to those who are in need of rain, so the ungodly are to those who need spiritual nourishment. They promise everything while they actually offer nothing. See Proverbs 25:14.
- C. Dead trees.** As Jesus taught, you will know a tree by its fruit (Matthew 7:17). It produces bad fruit, or good fruit, or no fruit. Autumn trees should be full of fruit, but these have nothing at the time of fruitfulness. The ungodly are like trees destined for destruction. When it says they are twice dead, that means that they are dead, with no leaves, no fruit, bark coming off, and then they are pulled out by the roots, so they are *really* dead. They are only fit to be burned (Matthew 3:10).
- D. Raging waves.** This figure was not as clear to me. But when I correlated it with Isaiah 57:20, it made good sense. The wicked throw out their own shame and evil like flood waters bring up a muddy mess. They simply cannot settle down into a life of calm and peace.
- E. Wandering stars.** These stars could be referring to planets, which look a lot like other luminaries in the night sky. Since they are relatively close to earth and follow their particular orbits, they are not reliable as guides for travel like the stars, which have been used for centuries as navigational aids. Whether planets, or comets, or stars useless for navigation, the point is that ungodly false teachers cannot provide a compass by which to live your life....unless you want to go where they are going. They are destined for an eternity which offers black darkness forever. I take it this refers to the lake of fire in the middle of inky-black nothingness. Some suggest that fire and darkness cannot coexist, so the Biblical descriptions all must be figurative. But both darkness and fire are used together of the Lake of Fire by the Lord and other NT writers in such a way that I take them to be literal descriptions of that place (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30; Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). I cannot fully explain what it will look like, but I’m glad as a believer in Jesus that I don’t have to worry about it!

Conclusion

The point of the passage is that the ungodly face certain destruction from God. The nature of the destruction is devastating, similar to being banished like Cain; being killed like Balaam; or being swallowed up alive by the ground like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; or burned up like their co-conspirators. Don’t go their route!

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