

Contending for the Faith "Dealing With Apostates" Jude 9-10

Introduction

So far, in our study of the book of Jude, we have learned that at the close of the first century, false teachers began to creep into the Church with corrupting doctrines and messages. After the disciples of Jesus were martyred, the first-century believers relied upon the Old Testament, the gospels and the letters written by the apostles to guide them in matters of faith.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, accepted Jesus as the Christ after the Resurrection. Now that most of the disciples have given their lives for their faith in Jesus and the gospel, Jude wants to make sure that the purity of Christ's message will continue. He is concerned about the subtle ways Satan is using false teachers and doctrines to distort the teachings of Jesus and destroy the faith of believers.

Last week, we studied the examples of faithlessness from verses 5-8. Today, we will examine Jude's instruction on how to deal with apostates from verses 9-11.

Let's begin reading with verse 8, "Likewise, also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jud 1:8-9 NKJV)

I. Michael vs. Satan

First of all, Jude compares the behavior of Satan with the archangel Michael. In verse 9, we see the mighty archangel Michael (who is powerful enough to cast Satan out of Heaven! Rev 12:7-9) defers to God to pronounce judgment on another angel, rather than do it himself.

Jude contrasts Michael, who would not take the law into his own hands, with the apostate teachers who were more than happy to do so. Verse 9 is fascinating since it is the only place in scripture that records the dispute between Michael and Satan. We're not sure from what source Jude knew this, but we do know that he wrote it under the Divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That makes this incident between Michael and Satan arguing over Moses' body a real event!

C H Spurgeon writes, "To what does this refer? I am sure I do not know. I cannot think it refers to anything recorded in the Old Testament, but to some fact, known to Jude, who here speaks by revelation, and records it. We believe it and learn from it that, when an archangel disputes with the devil, he does not use hard words even against him, for hard words are evidence of the weakness of the cause which they are used to support. Hard arguments softly put are the really effective weapons,

but it takes some of us a long time to learn this; and generally, in our younger days, we wear away our own strength by the violence with which we use it."

Michael is one of three angels mentioned by name in Scripture. The other two are Gabriel, who announced the birth of Christ and Lucifer (or Satan), who became evil and rebelled against God. Michael's name means, "Who is like God?" Satan ironically declared, "I will make myself like the Most High!" (Isa. 14:14) and he deceived Adam and Eve with the lie, "You shall be like God."

According to Daniel 10, Michael has special charge over the nation of Israel and is called "one of the chief princes." It is Michael who will lead the angelic armies in the war in Heaven against "the old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, according to Revelation 12.

The Bible describes Satan as Lucifer in the prophetic book of Isaiah. In Chapter 14, we read, "How you are fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. "Those who see you will gaze at you, *And* consider you, *saying*: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms,"
(Isa 14:12-16 NKJV)

Jude describes a historical event in history not mentioned anywhere else. His wisdom in dealing with Satan attacks may be the very reason God commissions Michael with casting Satan out of Heaven during the Tribulation.

The Bible describes the death of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy 34:5-6, "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day." (Deu 34:5-6 NKJV)

This scripture explains that God was in charge of Moses' funeral arrangements and burial, but it doesn't mention Michael's dispute with Satan. We know that Moses died on Mt. Nebo after God showed Moses the Promised Land that he brought Israel from Egypt to inherit. Origen said this reference to Michael is found in a Jewish work called "The Assumption of Moses," a writing that has been lost in antiquity.

The term "devil" is only one of the names the Apostle John ascribes to Satan. Others include the Serpent, the Dragon, the Deceiver, the Destroyer, Apollyon, or Abaddon. John also says that Satan is the Father of Lies, and his specialty is slander. He is "the accuser of the brethren" who "accuses them before" God "day and night.

A devil is a false accuser and slanderer. Followers of Satan are devils who misrepresent facts that defame and damage another's reputation. Have you ever

had someone say untrue and slanderous things about you? Then you know how hurtful and damaging slander can be. Devils maliciously make false statements and charges. They boldly spew their malice towards another person.

Jude says that Satan wanted to argue with Michael and challenged him to a debate over the dead body of Moses. While we always need to contend for the faith, there is an excellent piece of wisdom here from Michael. Pick and choose the right battles! You don't ever need to defend God! He is very capable of defending himself.

Satan always wants to argue about something. Michael, however, refrained from doing the very thing the daring apostates were continuously doing. Michael had probably seen enough of Satan's corrupt behavior over the years that he would be justified to bring a railing accusation against Satan. But he restrained himself from doing it! Have you ever had to restrain yourself from going off on someone? That is a very Godlike quality!

The word "judgment" means to decide a question of legal right or wrong or to determine the innocence or guilt of the accused. Michael refused to pass sentence on the Devil on his own authority. He simply says, "The Lord rebuke you!" These words also occur in Zechariah 3, where the Angel of the Lord replies to the charges of Satan. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! *Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?*" ([Zec 3:2 NKJV](#))

MacArthur says, "This is the supreme illustration of how Christians are to deal with Satan and demons. Believers are not to address them, but rather seek the Lord's intervening power against them."

II. Michael vs. the Apostates

Jude also compares the behavior of the apostates with the archangel Michael. Look at verse 10, "But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." ([Jude 1:10 NKJV](#))

The apostates defile the flesh and speak spitefully against authority, whether it's divine, angelic, or human. Apostates will take liberties that even Michael the archangel would reject. Peter gives us a similar description. He says these apostates are, "presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." ([2Pe 2:10-11 NKJV](#))

Jude contrasts the appalling arrogance of these evil men who "rail on God" with the mild response of the Archangel Michael, who didn't even dare to revile Satan even though he could have. Even though the devil was motivated by malice and Michael recognized that his accusation was slanderous, he did not attempt to dismiss the devil's case – Why? - because he was well aware that he was not the judge. What

Michael did was ask the Lord, who alone is the judge, to condemn Satan for his slander. The point is, none of us can ever be a law to ourselves. We are not an autonomous moral authority. Only God is!

III. Apostates vs. Animals

Jude also says the apostates are animalistic and ignorant revilers. Look at verse 10 again, "But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." (Jude 1:10 NKJV)

Jude says these people are like animals. They continuously revile, slander, and rail against things they don't know anything about. They have no more knowledge than the brute beasts and make a lot of noise but have no idea what they're yelling about! They speak disdainfully of those who are genuinely spiritual because they do not personally know them, and the heavenly realities are beyond their ability to perceive and comprehend mentally. They are like brute animals bullying their way in an attempt to overpower what they cannot understand.

Apostates are spiritually blind, and true believers can always see through their arguments. The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian believers, "We speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1Co 2:6-8 NKJV)

The verbal reactions of these apostates is a revelation of their inner nature. Apostates revile things they do not understand. What things? - To the whole range of invisible things.

Apostate teachers, in their brash, bold, egotistical infatuation with imagined power and authority, rail on that which they don't even understand. Apostates are intellectually arrogant and spiritually ignorant. MacArthur says, "They don't know the truth because Satan has blinded them, and spiritual matters are beyond their unregenerate capacity to understand." 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." (2Co 4:4 NKJV) Spurgeon says, "It is a horrible thing when a man's sin goes the full length of his knowledge, and he sins up to the degree of his possibilities."

To know something means to gain a firm mental grasp of, or to be fully acquainted with something. Apostates don't know or don't want to accept God's spiritual truths. They rely on their base instincts, seeking to gratify their flesh, which will only lead to their ultimate destruction. They corrupt themselves with the human instincts they share with the brute beasts. They allow their human instincts and reasoning to corrupt their minds and corrupt their bodies. Jude describes them as

people who have lost all real spiritual awareness and made animalistic instincts their standard.

Even though we are born with a sense of God and spiritual things, we can ignore and lose that sense. Many have turned away from God until spiritual things cease to exist for them.

A person can lose any skill you quit using. It's true of simple things like games and skills. If we quit playing a game, we lose the ability to play it well. What's true naturally is also true spiritually. Every person can hear the voice of God, and each of us has basic instincts that perpetuate the future existence of humanity. But, if you consistently refuse to listen to God and substitute your own base instincts as the sole focus of your conduct, in the end, you will be unable to hear the voice of God and will become a slave to your brute desires.

It is a terrible thing when a person reaches a stage where they are deaf to God and blind to goodness, but that is precisely who Jude is describing. Webster defines instinct as an inheritable and unalterable tendency of an organism to make a complex and specific response to environmental stimuli without involving reason. It describes behavior that is mediated by reactions below the conscious level.

Apostates claim to be guided by unique spiritual insight gained in heavenly revelations but are really following the sexual instincts which they share with the animals. The 2nd-century emperor Marcus Aurelius characterized animals as creatures ruled by instinct as opposed to humans, who were ruled by reason, and considered unreasoning humans to be "wild beasts."

Jude says these false teachers act like instinct-driven animals, guided not by real intelligence but by their animalistic cravings and base passions. Their thinking is corrupt. They are deceived and don't even know it. Rather than following reason and revelation, they are guided by ignorance and instinct and sinful passions.

Apostates are ultimate religious hypocrites who profess to have deep religious insights when, in reality, they are led about by the natural senses and cravings rather than by Biblical truths. Paul describes them this way in 2 Timothy, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2Ti 3:1-5 NKJV)

Like wild animals, these spiritual imposters react only to present circumstances, without giving thought to the eternal consequences of their actions.

Conclusion

Apostates act like wild beasts, and so reap the same destiny.

Samuel Smiles wrote,

Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

In his commentary, Matthew Henry writes, "Men, under the power of sin, are so far from observing divine revelation that they do not exercise reason, nor act according to the direction thereof. They walk by sight, and not by faith, and judge of things according to their senses, as these represent things pleasant and agreeable, so they must be approved and esteemed. Brute-creatures follow the instinct of their sensitive appetite, and sinful people follow the inclination of their carnal mind; they refuse to employ the understanding and reason God has given them, and so are ignorant of what they might and ought to know."

Apostates have no sense of the moral issues of life.

Sin will take you further than you ever intended to stray.
It will keep you longer than you ever intended to stay.
And it will cost you more than you ever dreamed you would pay.

The ways of the apostates are destructive. They corrupt the lives of people in this life and ruin their hope eternally in the life to come! Don't lower yourself to the level of the animals to be guided by base instinct. You are a God-breathed spiritual being.

Don't follow the teachings of the apostates who only abide by the laws of nature, who are godless persons, and will be destroyed by the very things they fail to understand. They place themselves on a par with the animals, but because they refuse to obey the laws God has placed in nature, they seal their own destruction.

What is our response? Psalm 20:7 says, "Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God." ([Psa 20:7 NKJV](#))