

Contending for the Faith "Describing Apostates" Jude 11

Introduction

Jude wrote his letter as a warning to the church. It is a warning that has proven relevant in every church age. Jude warns that false teachers have infiltrated the church with teachings that corrupt the faith of believers. He writes about the dangerous practices and doctrines that threaten to compromise the Gospel and the teachings of Christ. These were serious issues that the Holy Spirit wanted to address. Even today, the book of Jude serves as a valuable warning to the church in these last days.

It's not entirely possible to identify the exact heresy that Jude was trying to address. However, he does reveal the characteristics of apostates and the heresy they teach. In verse 11, he describes their tactics and strategies. Today we will look at three methods apostates use to corrupt the faith.

While we are contending for the faith, we must remember to "keep ourselves in the love of God." However, the love of God must already be in you before you can keep it there! Sometimes when you contend for the faith against apostates, it's tempting to become judgmental and harsh toward them. Our Christian faith calls upon us to love even our enemies. We may not be able to change the heart of the apostate, but we do have the opportunity to rescue those influenced by their teaching. That is the reason Jude writes this letter, and that is why we contend for the faith.

In verses 10 and 11, Jude says this about apostates, "But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah." ([Jude 1:10-11 NKJV](#))

Every believer must pray for discernment to combat apostasy and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered for all the saints. It is our responsibility to oppose the deplorable words and ways of apostates while keeping ourselves in the love and grace of Christ. Jude says, "Woe to those who walk in the way of Cain and fling themselves into the error of Balaam and perish in Korah's rebellion against God."

The people you hang out with have a considerable amount of influence upon you. People of shallow faith or no faith at all can have a very negative impact upon a person of strength and positive faith. That is what Jude is referring to when he speaks about Cain, Balaam, and Korah. In Romans 2, the apostle Paul says, "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS": eternal life to

those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath," (Rom 2:5-8 NKJV)

What is Jude teaching his readers through these OT characters? We find the story of Cain in Genesis 4. The account of Balaam in Numbers 22, and the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16. All three of them had Scriptural teaching and training, refused to obey God's revealed truth, and perished because of their rebellion. Hebrews 10 says, " For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries." (Heb 10:26-27 NKJV)

I. THE WAY OF CAIN

First, Jude says these apostates "have gone the way of Cain. Cain is mentioned 21 times in scripture. The "way of Cain" describes a life of greed, covetousness, envy, and turning your back on God to go your own way.

Even if you are the best of Christian parents, there is no guarantee that your children will choose to follow in your ways and decide to follow God. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the Garden of Eden, but Cain chose a different path of jealousy and rebellion that eventually ended in murder. Cain became a symbol of those who refuse to submit to the authority of God and follow His Word. Genesis 4 details his story.

Cain's brother, Abel, was a prophet who had a deep faith in God. Jesus mentions Abel in Luke 11:49. So, we know that Cain heard the message of God's redemptive plan but refused to submit to its truth. Cain's disdain for God grew until he could no longer contain it. In an act of jealousy and rage, he slew his brother Abel who represented all that was right with a life of faith in God. Ultimately, the course of your life becomes an issue of faith; Faith in God or faith in yourself.

Obedience reveals our faith in God's plan for our life. A sinful life is a life of disobedience to God's plan. Faith is the very root of obedience. It is what motivates all of your behaviors and works according to James Chapter 2. (Jas. 2:14-22) But faith is also the fruit of our obedience to God. The more obediently we follow God's plan, the stronger our faith in Him becomes.

Cain brought his offering to God, but his heart was rebellious. Cain wanted a relationship with God but on his own terms. So he brought an offering that was the fruit of his own hands instead of offering the slain animal sacrifice God instituted for the forgiveness of sins.

Adam and Eve attempted to cover up their sin with fig leaves, but God planned to cover their sin with shed blood. Cain chose the way of fig leaves and tried to cover his sin by presenting an offering of his own choosing. Cain substituted his own new and modern way of salvation; A salvation that put himself first.

Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it, he being dead still speaks." (Heb 11:4 NKJV)

1 John 3:11 says, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you." (1Jn 3:11-13 NKJV)

Cain is a type of the person who becomes consumed with jealous hate and self-centered desires. We see the results of the "way of Cain" being played out in our culture today. Many in our world have rejected God's remedy for righteous living and substituted their own effort in its place. The "way of Cain" dominates our world.

The "way of Cain" is the way of being religious without faith. It is a righteousness based on character and good works, not Christ's atoning sacrifice. The "way of Cain" is the way of pride. It is the way of establishing your own righteousness and rejecting the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ.

Cain became a fugitive from God's grace and tried to overcome his sinful ways by building a city and developing a civilization. The truth is a sinner can become extremely wealthy in this life. But Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat 16:26 NKJV)

Cain ended up with everything a person could desire in this life; that is everything except God. But to gain everything you want in this life and miss Jesus is to end up perishing, leaving everything you've worked for to someone else and having nothing stored up for eternity.

II. THE ERROR OF BALAAM

Secondly, Jude describes apostasy as the error of Balaam. Balaam stands for two things. First, he stands for the covetous person, who is prepared to sin in order to get ahead. Secondly, he stands for the evil person who is guilty of teaching others to sin.

Jude is saying that people become wicked and leave the way of righteousness to become wealthy, or famous, or popular and then turn around and teach others to do the same. To achieve their own purposes, they rush headlong into the error of Balaam. Apostates are greedy for personal gain; Not just money, but recognition and popularity and notoriety.

Someone said, "If Balaam had printed a business card, it would have said, "Prophet for hire." Make no mistake; if you have a price for selling out your faith, Satan is

more than willing to pay it. Countless celebrities started out in the church using their talents for the glory of God. But Satan tempts with a promise of fame and fortune if they sell out to the world. There is always pleasure, for a while, in a life of sin. But then the stranglehold of the world squeezes the life out of you and leaves you with emptiness and despair. How many celebrities turn to drugs and alcohol and other vices to ease their pain instead of turning to God.

2 Peter 2:15 says, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;" (2Pe 2:15 NKJV) Do you really want to be that person?

Jude uses a vivid metaphor here for excessive indulgence. One writer says apostates are like a river bursting its banks and running out of control on a rampage of destruction. They completely abandon the normal flow of life and embrace a lifestyle of action without restraint, destroying everything and everyone in their path. They do all of this in a rush to be noticed and celebrated. The enticements of the world cause them to stray from sound doctrine and the path of righteousness.

Balaam is mentioned 59 times in the Bible. He is a picture of false teachers who are greedy for material gain, and like Balaam, they will do anything for money. The error of Balaam is thinking you can get away with your rebellion. The tragedy is that Balaam not only took the wrong path himself, but he abused his God-given gift as a prophet to lead the Israelites astray. He ruined his reputation by teaching the children of Israel to indulge themselves in sinful pleasures and ignore God's laws. He encouraged them to worship Baal Peor instead of Jehovah. The world's way always opens the door to every kind of indulgence, but the broad path of sinful living always leads to despair. Apostates use their knowledge and abilities for money, pleasure, and power, not to honor God or spread the gospel message.

Balaam had a serious and eventually fatal heart condition. He knew God wanted to bless Israel, but he set his heart upon the rewards Balak offered him to curse them. It's important to know that false teachers can speak the words of faith; they just don't live them. While Balaam obeyed God and didn't curse Israel, he did an end-run and counseled Balak to seduce the Israelites and cause them to sin, knowing it would bring God's judgment upon them.

The greed of the apostates causes them to use and abuse anyone who they think will help them further their cause.

III. THE REBELLION OF KORAH

Jude's final description of the apostates is the rebellion of Korah. Korah stands for the person who refuses to accept authority and reaches out for things which he has no right to have. Jude charges these false teachers with defying the legitimate authority of the church and setting themselves up as authorities. Those who usurp authority through pride will find the consequences can be disastrous.

Korah was from the tribe of Levi. The Korites were in charge of the temple furniture. During the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. They challenged Aaron's authority suggesting that they had as much right and knowledge as Aaron and, therefore, should have just as much say over spiritual matters. Numbers 16 records the Korite rebellion.

What the Korites failed to recognize was that Aaron was God's choice for the priesthood, and therefore Korah's rebellion was a rebellion against God. Aaron didn't need to be the smartest, wisest, talented, or even best-looking priest for the job. His position was by divine appointment, and how many of you know whom God calls He qualifies. It's not that you can't disagree with Christian leaders, it's that you can't replace them if they are divinely called and appointed.

The Korites perished because of their rebellion. Any attempt by false teachers to destroy the authority of Christ will result in their own ruin. Rebellion will render you useless to the created purpose God has for your life.

The problem with living a fake Christian life is that it profoundly affects your children. When Moses asked to see God, the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (Exo 34:6-7 NKJV)

How many children have perished because their parents did not live a life of obedience to God before them? You may think you can practice sin privately, but the consequences can permeate through your family for generations.

I encourage you to read the 16th Chapter of Numbers about Korah's rebellion. But in verse 30 Moses says, "But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD." (Num 16:30 NKJV)

As Moses finished speaking these words, the ground split open, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb 10:31 NKJV)

Like Korah, Jude's apostates openly and defiantly resisted the established authority within the church. This type of behavior will only increase and intensify as we head towards the Tribulation and last days.

Like Korah, apostates reject God's authority and disregard his Word.

CONCLUSION

People who reject God's authority see Him as unjust and unfair. They read about Cain and can't understand how God could be so unfair as to reject Cain's offering. After all, as a farmer, he simply brought to God what he had. How could God expect him to go and buy a different kind of sacrifice?" That misses the point.

It wasn't that God didn't like vegetables. He knew Cain was hiding his unrighteous attitude. His response reveals Cain wasn't fully committed and obedient to God. 1 Samuel 16: 7 says, "For *the* LORD does not *see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

So what is the condition of your heart today? Are you tempted to listen and follow the way of Cain, or the error of Balaam, or the rebellion of Korah? Or, like David, are you a person after God's own heart? When we express our love and devotion to God, it is an offering He won't refuse. God will never refuse a person with a humble heart.