

Contending for the Faith

Apostate Metaphors

Jude 12-13

Introduction

After giving three examples of apostates in the Old Testament, Jude reveals the characteristics of apostates and the heresy they teach. From our study in Jude, we know apostates misunderstand the concept of grace. They try to convince people they are Christians, even when their teaching and lifestyles deny Christ. They distort the gospel to fit their own dreams and ideas of faith. They reject the Holy Spirit's presence in the earth.

Apostates are critical and suspicious of God's involvement in the world. They try to manipulate believers and even mock the angels of Heaven. They are licentious and lawless and will viciously destroy others for their own gain. They corrupt and pervert the gospel and blaspheme and rebel against divine authority. Their sensual passions rule over them, and they regularly defile themselves. They are arrogant and use people to promote themselves. Apostates hide out among Christians but embrace the ideals and behaviors of the world.

Jude's purpose is to expose their subtle perversions and inevitable doom. Today we will look at the five metaphors Jude uses to describe the fruit of the apostates and their teaching. Let's read verses 12-13, "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (Jud 1:12-13 NKJV)

The New English Translation says, "These men are dangerous reefs at your love feast, feasting without reverence, feeding only themselves. They are waterless clouds, carried along by the winds, autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, uprooted."

The early Church met together often for fellowship and to share a meal. They would regularly celebrate Communion during these meals. Jude says these apostates would join in the fellowship meals but were like the dangerous reefs that could quickly shipwreck you.

Apostates had no fear or shame of their immoral behavior. Like clouds blowing over dry land without giving rain, these apostates promised everything and produced nothing.

I. Hidden Reefs In Your Love Feasts

Jude says hidden reefs can cause shipwreck of a believer's faith. The NKJV uses the term "spot" instead of reef. Other translations use the word blemish.

The "love feasts" were meals believers shared, which often included the Lord's Supper. Communion was a very sacred and uniting celebration. At first glance, the apostates seemed to fit right in. The false teachers would participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper with no regard for the terror of the Lord against those who make a mockery of his Son's death. Paul mentions this in his discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11:29. "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1Co 11:29 NKJV)

Apostates do not follow the example of Jesus. They are not shepherds of God's flock. Apostates always have an ulterior motive for their serving and always put themselves above others. According to Scripture, authentic Christian leaders have a servant's heart and are not self-serving. Apostates are like reefs in the sea, submerged and invisible beneath the surface of the water. Reefs are hazardous and can prove deadly for ships that venture near their jagged edges.

Paul writes to Timothy, "This charge I commit to you, my son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some, having rejected concerning the faith, have suffered shipwreck," (1Ti 1:18-19 NKJV)

Jude's words recall the disciple's last supper with Jesus. None of the disciples had a clue that Judas was the betrayer among them! The tragedy is, the members Jude is addressing also didn't realize the nature of false teachers! They thought these apostates were sincere followers just like them.

J Vernon McGee writes, "Apostates are like the tip of an iceberg. Very little of it is visible, but if a ship runs into it, the ship will go to the bottom of the sea. Oh, how many people there are, especially young people, whose faith has not only been shaken but wrecked by a person who is an apostate!" (McGee)

This metaphor suggests at least two characteristics of apostates. First, they conceal themselves and their true intentions (wolves in sheep's clothing), and secondly, they are a spiritual danger to unsuspecting and immature sheep in the flock. Paul warned the elders about these deceivers, writing, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years, I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Act 20:29-31 NKJV)

Apostates would use get-togethers and fellowships to get close to unsuspecting believers. The love feasts Jude mentions were similar to our contemporary potluck dinners. They would hold them after worship on the Lord's Day. Believers would gather to worship, hear the teaching of Scripture, celebrate Communion, and then share in a common meal. The apostates would join right in, masquerading as shepherds or leaders.

John MacArthur writes, "Their own schemes and lusts took precedence over the tending of the flock of God. Such piranhas have always been around in religious circles." These spiritual predators insisted on participating in these love-feasts, not to express mutual love and concern, but to promote themselves. Wiersbe writes, "They are an arrogant lot! This is the difference between a true shepherd and a hireling: the true shepherd cares for the sheep, while the hireling cares only for himself."

II. Waterless Clouds

Secondly, Jude calls them "Clouds without Water." Proverbs 25:17 says, "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely."

Clouds that promise rain but fail to produce what people hope for are a disappointment to those who desperately need water. Apostates boast of their abilities, but they are unable to produce any fruit of faith. They promise spiritual blessings and refreshment from God but never deliver on that promise. The term translated without water also occurs in Matthew 12:43, identifying the wanderings of evil spirits through dry and barren places (Luke 11:24–26). False teachers and demons share a mutual connection with Satan.

We've all seen the sky darken with black clouds and claps of thunder, only to have it pass by, yielding no rain, and for desperate farmers, no help for the crops! Apostates have an air of authenticity about them. The Apostle Peter writes, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. (2Pe 2:19 NKJV)

"These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."
(2Pe 2:17 NKJV)

Like clouds, these false teachers attract attention to themselves and promise refreshment, but they prove to be all show and no substance. They are spiritually barren, offering nothing that nurtures the soul. There were times in Palestine when people would pray for rain, and clouds would pass across the sky, bringing with it the hope of rain. But the promise was only an illusion, the clouds blew over, and the rain never came.

Sometimes the Word of God is compared to the rain and the dew. Isaiah 55:10 compares God's Word to the rain and snow from Heaven that bring fruit on the earth. Like the clouds in the sky, the false teachers may be prominent and even attractive; but if they cannot bring rain, they are of little value. It is unsafe to follow these kinds of teachers. Not only are apostates unstable themselves, but those who follow them will be led astray from the path of truth and purity.

III. Fruitless Autumn Trees

Jude says apostates are also "Autumn Trees without Fruit."

Autumn is the season when farmers and gardeners expect to harvest the final crops of the year. If the crop fails, they must endure the disappointment and hardship throughout the winter. Their only hope is to wait for the next spring when they can begin again the painstaking process of fertilizing, planting, watering, and waiting for the crop to mature. The phrase "autumn trees without fruit" pictures the disappointing reality of a barren harvest.

If you uproot a fruitless tree, it is dead forever, or as Jude says, "It is twice dead." Apostate leaders are spiritually dead in two ways. One, they do not bear spiritual fruit in others, and two, they are without spiritual root themselves. In Matthew 7:16, Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruits." In Matthew 13:23, He says, "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Mat 13:23 NKJV) And in Matthew 15, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted." (Mat 15:13 NKJV)

Psalms 1 says, "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law, he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper." (Psa 1:1-3 NKJV)

Manufactured "results" are sterile and dead, but real fruit continues to grow and reproduce itself in the lives of others." (Wiersbe) Unfruitful means barren, without fruit, unprofitable. Apostates are like a tree without fruit under the most favorable of circumstances.

The fruit God seeks in us is righteous and loving acts that bring peace and harmony to the body of Christ. God's solution for peace and a life of purpose is a personal relationship with Jesus. When we live in obedience to God and develop a relationship with Jesus, God's Spirit energizes us, and we produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness that can come only from the Lord.

Promise without performance is useless. Apostates are disconnected from the life-giving source of water and nutrients of the Word. Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted." Those who die twice are those who die physically and spiritually. The adage is true: "born once, die twice; born twice, die once."

In Matthew 7, Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits, you will know them." (Mat 7:15-20 NKJV)

Because of these “ravenous wolves,” we must heed the warning of Jude, “But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God” [Jude 1:20-21](#). To avoid being pulled into error, Keep a firm grip on the truth. Jude continues in verse 13, “raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” ([Jude 1:13 NKJV](#))

IV. Wild Waves of the Sea

Apostates are “raging waves of the sea.” “Raging” describes the demeanor of the apostates; they are untamed. The sea is often pictured in Scripture as chaos and refers here to spiritual leaders who do not have any real knowledge of God. False teachers are like waves that cast their foam or scum at the seashore. That is their end product.

Isaiah 57 says, “But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. “*There is no peace,*” Says my God, “for the wicked.” ([Isa 57:20-21 NKJV](#)) The Amplified Bible says apostates are like “waves casting up their own shameless deeds like (dirty) foam.”

Though waterless clouds and fruitless trees may promise good things, but deliver nothing, wild sea-waves are conveyors of filth spewed forth from the belly of the sea. Barclay writes, “After a storm when the waves have been lashing the shore with their frothing spray and spume, there is always left on the shore a fringe of seaweed and driftwood and all kinds of unsightly litter from the sea. That is always an unlovely scene. The deeds of wicked men are like the useless and unsightly litter which the waves leave scattered on the beach after a storm.”

Wiersbe says, “Jude compared the apostates to “raging waves of the sea” not because of their power, but because of their pride and arrogant speech. “Their mouths speak great swelling words.”_They make a lot of noise, but what do they produce?

V. Wandering Stars in Black Darkness

Jude also calls apostates, “wandering stars in black darkness.” The ancients called planets, comets, and meteors “wandering stars.”

Just as you cannot use moving stars for navigation so false teachers are useless and untrustworthy. If a mariner followed one of these wandering stars, he would be led off course. In the same way, apostate lead unwary followers astray, pretending to be something they are not. Jesus said, “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:14)

These wandering stars shine for a while and then pass into the darkness. The fate of these wandering stars is eternal darkness. The Greek word “planet” really means wanderer. Long ago, stargazers observed that these wanderers across the

sky were different from the fixed stars. In a similar way, the false teachers have gone off course and led people astray.

False teachers are wayward stars. They are unreliable and offer disastrous guidance. The irony is that these wandering lights will burn out and experience the darkest depths of eternal darkness.

Conclusion

Jude finishes verse 13 by saying this, "Black Darkness has been Reserved Forever." The apostates Jude speaks about have a reservation of eternal darkness awaiting them. It is the outer darkness that is far from the presence of God.

True believers have a forever, eternal life awaiting them. But those who reject the faith and turn away from God, have a forever, eternal separation from God as their just reward. Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mat 8:11-12 NKJV)

All false teachers have the same characteristics:

- a self-serving spirit,
- they are devoid of spiritual substance,
- they have no real spiritual fruit,
- they have no sense of shame, and
- their teaching leads people away from God.

Apostates can be hard to detect at first, but the judgment for these rebels against God is certain. We must do all we can to save those who are being led into judgment by the apostate blind guides. Hebrews 2 says, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*," (Heb 2:1-3 NKJV)

The eternal future of false teachers is indescribably dismal. Jude's advice is to keep yourself in the love of Jesus! Don't leave the faith, and don't turn away from God. The greater your God-given opportunities have been, the greater your judgment will be when you must answer for yourself before God. Beware of following a falling star! It will lead you into eternal blackness!

The punishment of hell is forever because if you reject Jesus, you must pay for your own sins. Because you are imperfect, your sacrifice must be repeated over and over again for eternity. Only a perfect person can offer a single sacrifice, and the only perfect person who did was Jesus. Jesus is our only hope to escape eternal darkness and receive eternal life.