



JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”
Week 13: “Recognizing False Teachers, Part 3”
October 13, 2024

Review:

- A. In our last couple of lessons in the Book of Jude, we learned how to recognize false teachers.
- B. A three-point outline provided the structure for the details of **vs. 9 and 10**:
 - 1. Who are these false teachers?
 - 2. What do these false teachers do?
 - 3. Why do these false teachers do what they do?
- C. The last time in this study, we evaluated the way false teachers are contrasted with the righteous example of the archangel, Michael, which is outlined in **vs. 9**.
- D. We saw that Jude specified three ways false teachers do what Michael did NOT do:
 - A. **“First, they speak abusively, or they blaspheme”** –
 - a. We learned that to blaspheme means to “speak contempt about God or to CHOOSE irreverence.”
 - b. We learned that the habits of choosing irreverence are easily transmitted and that they cause others to regard God poorly and improperly.
 - c. Jude’s point here is Christian leaders are especially responsible to conduct themselves in a way that does not cause others to blaspheme.
 - B. **“Second, they show they do not possess a wisdom from God.”**
 - a. This means false teachers do not fully comprehend truth in both mind and heart.
 - b. It is this kind of wisdom that changes a person. The Holy Spirit makes this wisdom real and relevant to one’s heart.
 - c. Jude’s point is the false teachers do not possess this kind of wisdom. Evidence for this lack shows in their priorities, their speech, and their actions.
 - C. **Third: “They act on brute instinct.”**
 - a. Jude says in **vs. 10** that these false teachers are like unreasoning animals. We learned this means they only have instinctual knowledge.
 - b. They act without really consciously knowing what they are doing. Jude’s point is that false teachers do not possess any superior wisdom from God.
 - c. He says they act instead with the same base instincts that animals possess, and like unreasoning animals, their ways will destroy them.

NOTE: For these three reasons, **Jude 11**, which follows, has some of harshest language yet which Jude directs to false teachers.

- I. **We need to fully absorb the first three words of this verse: “Woe to them!”**

- A. I imagine that most of us are challenged to think seriously about the word, "Woe." I want to briefly unpack this little word which we tend to overlook.

1. Occurrence:

- a. 'Woe' occurs roughly 71 times in the Old Testament. Most of these occurrences are found in the prophetic books.
- b. The New Testament uses the word 40 times. In 32 of those, it comes from the lips of Jesus! He used this word often!
- c. If we are to take the words of Jesus seriously, we need to soberly assess the full implications of the word, "Woe!"

2. Meaning:

- a. A study of the Biblical meaning of "woe" shows the word is sometimes used to express lamentation. It is used in association with the grief of death, for example.
- b. However, Jesus used "Woe" to denunciate someone or something, or to announce judgment, and in most cases of its use in the Scriptures, this is the intent.
- c. **(EX., Cf. Revelation 8:13)** – *"As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"*
- d. Sometimes the word "Woe" is used as a noun for actually BEING a judgement. **(EX., Cf. Revelation 11:14)** – *"The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon."*

3. Now let's glance at its Biblical use: The examples in Scripture to review:

1. A good OT passage to better understand the Bible's use of the word "woe" is **Isaiah Ch. 5**. Here it occurs 7 times. – **Verse 20** is a familiar verse from this chapter, and it reads:

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

2. This verse reads with great relevance for our present time, and it affirms that God is displeased with upside-down moral and spiritual values.
3. Here, "Woe" is used to underscore pending judgement or consequence for depraved choices and values.
4. Here's the straightforward three-point conclusion:
 - #1: God DOES have a standard!
 - #2: that standard is found in His inspired Word.
 - #3: when people choose to go against God's standard, they deserve God's judgment.

- II. I mentioned a moment ago that *Isaiah 5:20* describes very well the conditions of our times.
- A. It is often the opposite standards of the Bible which our culture embraces.
 - B. It is often God's laws which are attacked as 'intolerant' and 'hateful.'
 - C. It is often deception which is elevated while truth is being crushed.
 - D. It is often the truth of God's Word which is subordinated to myth and fables.
 - E. These kind of upside-down values are finding more and more support in our churches today.
- a. Another passage that helps us understand the word "Woe!" found in the New Testament. (***Cf. Matthew Ch. 23***)
 - b. Here, Jesus states multiple times, "*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! (Et. Al.)*"
 - c. In this passage, Jesus calls the religious leaders a lot of different names.
 - d. Besides 'hypocrites,' Jesus calls them 'blind guides,' 'fools,' 'whitewashed tombs,' 'serpents,' 'a brood of vipers,' and so on.
 - e. A simple study of ***Matthew Ch. 23*** reveals that Jesus has strong words for the practitioners and teachers of shallow and corrupt religion. It feels a lot like the content of ***Jude***.

NOTE: We ought to pause here and consider what Jesus was so upset about. The Pharisees were a smug, deluded, and a self-righteous bunch.

- F. They were convinced of their own views, their own methods, and their own message at the same time as they refused to accept the full counsel of God's Word. (as it was available to them at that time).
- G. They touted their education, their habits, their public reputation, their clout, and their position to everyone.
- H. However, Jesus saw them as they REALLY were, and He stated this clearly.
- I. They were 'dirty cups,' or 'whitewashed tombs.' They appeared as one thing on the outside, but they were really something else inside.
- J. This infuriated the Pharisees who considered themselves superior, as model examples, and as 'having their act together.' Jesus disagreed.

NOTE: In effect, with the themes of ***Jude*** in view, the Pharisees were the false teachers of Jesus' time:

- K. They were highly educated, however they missed the mark.
- L. They were in positions of authority, but they were really serving themselves and not others.
- M. They were responsible for bringing people TO the truth, but they were actually dragging people AWAY from the truth.
- N. In response to God's Word and to structures of accountability, the Pharisees showed themselves to be false teachers:

- O. They ‘changed the message,’ (*as we saw in Jude 4*), they ‘rejected authority’ (*as we learned in Jude 8*), and they ‘spoke abusively’ (*as we saw in Jude 10*).

III. **This is a good transition to bring us back to our text in Jude 11.**

- A. This word, “woe” we’ve been learning about is the first word of **Jude 11**. By using it, Jude declares ultimate judgment.

- 1. Now, look at the third word, “them.” Who is this? Jude is denouncing the apostates, the false teachers.
 - a. This is the focus of **Jude**, starting all the way back in **vs. 4** where the theme of this book is introduced.
 - b. Just as Jesus condemned the Pharisees for missing the mark, and just as Isaiah proclaimed judgment on those who had reversed the proper standards, Jude now points out that judgment is coming to those who have chosen to go their own way rather than God’s way.
 - c. Jude follows the example of the prophets and of Jesus Christ when he says “Woe!” He pronounces judgment by giving three examples of individuals.

B. **This is a good time to revisit a certain pattern that Jude has established:**

- 1. Jude has been giving historical examples of each of the points he’s making: they really happened.
- 2. The first examples were groups of people in **vss. 5-7**. Now, Jude is about to give three more historical examples in **vs. 11**, however these are individuals.
- 3. As we have learned, these are all events that his readers ‘*already know*’ (**Cf. vs. 5**). and we should also know these events well!
- 4. Remember, the purpose of each example Jude provides is to thoroughly instruct his readers against the dangers of apostasy and false teachers.
- 5. There is not a more central message to be gained from **Jude** than this one.
- 6. This point is made in **vs. 3** where Jude stated he was going to write about “*the salvation we share.*”
- 7. This – as we learned - is the good news, the Gospel. But instead, he was directed by the Holy Spirit in a different direction.
- 8. The end result is Jude’s message is one of profound warning! And the message of Jude is timely, not just to the readers of his time, but to us in our time!
- 9. To extract the proper message from Jude, we cannot impose another meaning or purpose upon the text that is not there.
- 10. We cannot pretend the text is not saying what it is. That would not be responsible handling of the Word of God, and it dilutes the power and intent of the Scriptures.

C. **Now, that brings us to the first example of “Woe!” Jude gives us in vs. 11, and that is the example of Cain.**

- 1. **Jude 11** says about false teachers, “*They have taken the way of Cain...*”
- 2. What is the ‘way of Cain?’ It cannot be a good thing, because the context implies that.

3. Jude has just stated “Woe!” here regarding the ‘way of Cain,’ so what does this phrase mean?

D. Like all the historical examples Jude provides, there is an OT text that recounts the story (We find the account of Cain in **Genesis 4**.)

IMPORTANT: It is often said that to understand the Old Testament, you need to see it through the lens of the New Testament. This is a big problem in the greater church, and I disagree.

1. That sort of thinking suggests the OT has little application or value. Here, in Jude, once more, we find the reverse to be true. We see it is a proper understanding of the OT that reveals the full truth of the NT.
2. **Let’s start by flying high here. Let’s begin with some high-altitude observations about Cain:**
 - a. First, he was, at some level, a religious man.
 - He believed in God at least to some degree.
 - He engaged in an outward display or ritual of this belief (**Cf. Gen. 4:3**).
 - b. But, when it was all said, he was a natural and carnal man in the process.
 - He met God on his terms, not on God’s terms (he rejected God’s plan and came up with his own plan instead).
 - Cain, in effect, was the first apostate! He was the first to depart from the truth and what was right to something else.
3. **Now, let’s lose some altitude here. Let’s take in some more details about Cain:**
 - a. Cain knew what was right. He knew what he needed to do.
 - Cain’s problems were not an issue of his ignorance.
 - In fact, his brother, Abel, was a prophet according to Jesus in **Luke 11:49-51**:

“Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ Therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.”

- So, Cain had obviously heard the truth, but his choices showed that he refused to submit to it.
- b. It’s possible that greed, covetousness, and envy all played some role in Cain’s refusal to submit to the authority of God and His Word.
 - c. But most certainly, Cain’s arrogance played a key role in his choices.
 - Instead of accepting God’s word literally as God had provided it to Adam and Eve - who then, in turn, conveyed it to their two sons - Cain twisted God’s Word to fit his own ideas.

- He willfully rejected God and His standards. He did this because he had no respect for God as he needed to have.
4. Another thing we need to consider about Cain: Various commentators point out that Cain was likely a cynical, materialistic man who didn't believe in God's moral order of the world.
 - a. He therefore did as he pleased. It was no big deal for him to reject God's standards.
 - c. He was prone to anger and outrage because his choices and values were a rebuttal of God's standards.
 - d. His relationship with God was severely compromised, and this even showed in his countenance (**Cf. Gen. 4:5**)
 - e. Like many liberal pastors and theologians, and 'woke' apostates of our day, Cain became quickly unstable when confronted by the truth. He was angry in his responses.
 - f. This was because he had rejected God's instructions. He formulated his own ideas and practices that were contrary to God's word.
 5. **Now, let's come down even lower. Let's fly just above ground level. Now we can see all the granular details. Let's look at Cain's problem closely:**
 - a. Cain rejected God's instruction's about offering an animal sacrifice. This is more important than we might realize at first glance.
 - God's purpose in giving Cain's family the instruction of offering an animal sacrifice was to fore shadow the coming promised Messiah.
 - The coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was first mentioned back in **Genesis 3:15**.
 - Everything that the Lord has instructed man to do religiously – from that point to now - He has always explained.
 - Cain and Abel knew the animal sacrifice ritual pre-pictured the coming sacrifice for sin of the Savior. Abel did what was right, but Cain did not.
 - This disparity was a matter of faith, and Cain clearly had no faith or trust in God. **Hebrews 11:4** explains this well. It reads:

“By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.”

- b. Here's what we need to understand from this example. Cain knew better.
 - c. He had received the proper instructions. He knew what God's standards were. However, he didn't care enough to follow them.
 - d. He wanted his own way instead because he lacked a proper faith.
- IV. **So that brings us back to the question, “What is the ‘way of Cain?’**
- A. The way of Cain is exercising one's choices against God's choices. God had prescribed a way to Himself, a relationship WITH Himself, that was by faith. Abel did that, but

Cain did not. Cain chose to come to God on his own terms and by his acts instead.

NOTE: Let me begin a wind-down process by outlining some considerations and applications:

- B. Most of us read the story of Cain and we hold his decisions and reactions at arms' length.
 - 1. We say to ourselves, "I'm not like that."
 - 2. "I've never been so angry that I would end up murdering someone."
 - 3. We fail to extract from this account of Cain the things we need to.

- C. I want to encourage us all to take a more honest look in the mirror. I think that is a healthy exercise at this juncture.
 - 1. Cain's problem was he did as he pleased. He was not obedient.
 - 2. His response to God's standard was wrong. He pushed back against what was right and proper. That indicates a bigger spiritual problem.
 - 3. He believed **in God** without having a right relationship **with God**. As one commentator put it, Cain was 'a religious man who was not born again.'
 - 4. Jude is making the point that Cain preferred to go his own way rather than God's.
 - 5. There are many 'Christians' who demonstrate similar behaviors. Cain evidently didn't respect or fear God sufficiently, and so he did exactly as he pleased in that moment without considering the consequences.

- D. The "way of Cain" is the exercise of religion without a genuine faith. It is the appearance of righteousness based on character, activities, and good works.
 - 1. The "way of Cain" is – in the summation of all things - the way of pride.
 - 2. The 'way of Cain' is yielding to that temptation to earn or establish one's own righteousness.
 - 3. The 'way of Cain' is one that rejects the all-sufficient righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ.

- E. It's worth noting that 'the way of Cain' is a problem that can take deep root. It certainly was for Cain.
 - 1. He became a fugitive.
 - 2. He tried to overcome his wretched state-of-affairs by building a city and developing a civilization (**Cf. Gen. 4:16-17**).
 - 3. He ended up with a family, and influence, and goods, and everything one could desire everything except a right relationship with God.
 - 4. The 'way of Cain' is therefore a very dangerous path to find oneself on.

