



JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”
Week 15: “Pictures of False Teachers, Part 1”
November 3, 2024
Instructor: Steve Schmutzer

Review:

- A. Last time in our study of Jude, we wrapped up **vs. 11**, and we studied the examples of ‘*Balaam’s error*’ and ‘*Korah’s rebellion*.’
- B. Insofar as Jude focuses on the faults of apostates and their judgment, we learned some things about Balaam and Korah which continue to be the pattern of false teachers today.
- C. **Concerning Balaam, we have learned three important things:**
 1. First, Balaam had MIXED MOTIVES
 - a. He was much more driven by money and personal gain than a genuine love of God.
 - b. Balaam’s heart desired material profit and reward, and he was willing to compromise to get these things.
 2. Second, Balaam had MIXED METHODS
 - a. He blended his knowledge of the One True God with cultural standards and popular practices.
 - b. He mixed deception with truth. From God's perspective, such choices are always incompatible.
 3. And third, Balaam had a MIXED MESSAGE
 - a. This was because Balaam was not focused on doing what God had intended for him to do.
 - b. He had little desire to do what God most wanted him to do. Despite his early compliance, he later sought to have his own way instead.
 - c. He ultimately led the Israelites astray as a result and he paid for this sin with his life.
- D. **Concerning Korah, we also learned several very important things:**
 1. Korah felt entitled, and because of his pride he saw himself as more important, and more pivotal than he should have.
 2. Korah’s pride and attitude made him gather around himself a group of sympathizers: people that would see things his way.
 3. These people cultivated resentments just as Korah had cultivated them. Korah’s attitudes became their attitudes.
 4. Korah invested himself into partial truth, and he twisted this partial truth to serve his own ambitions. This meant he was not fully honest with himself or with others.
 5. Like the examples of Cain and Balaam, Korah was destroyed for his arrogance. Those who took his wrong positions and views were also destroyed

- I. We begin **vs. 12**, but it flows into **vs. 13**. This passage is a stinging rebuke of false teachers, and as the late Dr. J. Vernon McGee says about these two verses, *"You will not find anywhere language more vivid, more graphic, more dramatic, more frightening, than the description of the apostate in the last days."*

NOTE: Before we dive into this text, let's briefly remind ourselves of a couple of things:

First, these words are given to us by the direct and divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The second point is related to the first one: As the purpose of Jude is to arrest our attention and to urge us to 'contend for the faith,' so we should accept that God's intentions in these passages is for our personal benefit.

A. Now, there are five analogies (these are pictures or illustrations) of the false teacher here, and we will study each one in its proper order. These are:

1. *"Blemishes at your love feasts...." vs 12.*
2. *"Clouds without rain...." vs 12.*
3. *"Trees without fruit....." vs 12.*
4. *"Wild waves of the sea....." vs 13.*
5. *Wandering stars....." vs 13.*

B. I want you to notice something about each analogy in this list. After each one is mentioned, it is followed by an additional phrase or description that gives more definition to the picture provided. This pattern is consistent. We can surmise several things from this arrangement:

- 1. There is a specific meaning that we need to grasp with each analogy.**
 - a. This is not a portion of Scripture where we must guess what's being said!
 - b. Likewise, this is not a passage where we should try to impose on it a meaning or purpose that is not there!
- 2. Next, this is a thorough assessment of false teachers.**
 - a. Each one of these descriptors or pictures reveals a particular facet of the nature of false teachers and apostates.
 - b. We know they are about 'men,' and more specifically about men that are supposed to be proper 'shepherds.' We can see that in **vs. 12**. So, we cannot impose any other view here.
- 3. Then, there is an adverse effect or impact resulting from each one of these analogies.**
 - a. There is nothing positive here!
 - b. Furthermore, this is not a situation where it means one thing in one place and another thing in another place. It's all bad!
- 4. And lastly, each of these analogies are working against a higher ordained purpose.**

- a. We need to keep top of mind here that Jesus is moving humanity towards His ultimate plan. It's all going to result in the full and final realization of His kingdom!
- b. Along the way, there is opposition against Jesus' perfect and divine intentions.
- c. God wants us to recognize these dangerous elements in false teachers, so we do not become deceived.

All that said, let's now study them in order. Each of these analogies or pictures begins with: "These men are..." or "They are..."

C. The first picture on this list is: "THESE MEN ARE BLEMISHES AT YOUR LOVE FEASTS"

Question: "What's a love feast?" (Not to be confused with a 'love fest')

(Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, where Paul writes to the church):

"So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry, and another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!"

- D. Let's unpack this a bit. I want to focus on three things about these events in the early church:
 1. They were intentional get-togethers of a body of believers. These were usually done in conjunction with a celebration of The Lord's Supper (communion).
 2. Their purpose was to promote fellowship and interaction between believers, not just within a specific body, but between other bodies of believers as well.
 3. They were essentially designed as fund-raisers, or at least an occasion to obtain support for the poor, for the needy, or for that group of believers. We might call them 'a potluck with a purpose.'

NOTE: Various translations read a bit differently with this analogy...

Some may read 'blemishes;' that's what my translation, the ESV reads. Other translations say 'spots,' stains,' defilements,' or 'hidden reefs' (it's that last one, 'hidden reefs' that gets closest to the original meaning, and most of the translations use this phrase).

- E. The Greek word used here is 'SPILAS.' It means "a sharply cleft rock, hidden or covered by the sea, a reef." It's a nautical term.
 1. This word was used in various Greek writings to refer to "a flaw, a stigma, a spot, or a stain." (All these meanings fit, but 'reef' is the best one).
 2. A rock or a reef that is covered with water is dangerous. These reefs have caused many sailors to be shipwrecked, simply because they can't see the rocks until their ship strikes one, and then it is too late.
 3. So here, the false teacher is shown to be an ever-present danger, lurking just out of casual view, waiting to destroy the unwary ship and its occupants.

F. Jude's context of the 'love feast' gives us some additional clues about these false teachers.

1. Jude says they are: "...*eating with you without the slightest qualm...*" (Again, other translations say, '*without fear, without reverence, without a sense of awe*') –

- a. In other words, these men have little or no regard for a proper attitude.
- b. These events were designed to have real meaning and purpose, and these apostates, these false teachers, indulged in them without due reverence or proper regard for their purpose.

2. ***I Corinthians 11:20-22***. In this passage, we see some disturbing behavior patterns which show the degenerate spiritual condition of these men.

- a. They had a casual disregard for a reverent and purposeful occasion (again, these collective meals were often held in conjunction with the Lord's Supper or as part of addressing the greater needs of the body)
- b. They were self-serving and impolite (they ate without consideration of others, especially the poor and needy to which the church had a mission.
- c. They were indulging to excess (getting 'drunk') while others go 'hungry' These men were covetous and prone to gluttony. For them, it was about the food and not about the fellowship.
- d. They did not keep in proper perspective the reasons why they were there in the first place.
- e. A strong phrase is used: They '*despised the church of God.*' Rather than focusing on growing the institution of God's design, they were focused on what they could get out of it personally.

3. This leads to the next point: These men are "*...shepherds who feed only themselves.*"

NOTE: This phrase is pregnant with meaning, and it deserves our sober consideration. We can deduce several things from it:

- a. First, these men were leaders of their congregations (That's why they are called '*shepherds*').
 - The Bible makes it clear that the role of the 'shepherd' is to care for the flock, to seek out and address the needs of the sheep first, and to protect the flock from destruction.
 - In this picture in **Jude**, we see these individuals are '*with you,*' but we also see this is strictly an issue of physical juxtaposition. They are primarily concerned about themselves.
 - Here is what **Jude's** is saying: "Nobody is really benefitting from what they are doing."

b. The second thing we can derive here is these men are self-centered.

- They “*feed only themselves.*” They are primarily concerned with satisfying their own physical ambitions and their own personal goals.
- What’s important here is the word “*feed.*” It is one of the Greek words that is often used to describe the role of pastor, minister, or teacher.
- The word is ‘*POIMAINO,*’ and it means, “*to tend the flock, to direct, to superintend, to feed, or to rule.*”
- The intent of this word is straightforward. It refers to a local church which is defined as a body of believers that habitually get together and seek to be fed spiritually.
- But these men – these false ‘shepherds’ are missing the mark. Rather than investing themselves into the work of shepherding, they are satisfied with checking their own boxes, with hitting their own standards, and with meeting their own needs.

c. The last thing we can conclude from these complementary passages in **Jude** and **1 Corinthians** is these ‘shepherds’ were ineffective in their role. How is this seen?

- They preserved their own interests above the interests of those they served. Basically, they had a ‘me first’ mentality.
- They had ravenous and impulsive appetites: (This is seen in their actions in **1 Corinthians and Jude**).
- Perhaps the best way to think about this is these men had ‘charismatic and larger than life’ personalities.
- They had a personal agenda which they were quick to serve. As a result, they were slow to consider the bigger picture of the church they served and the needs of others.
- Not only were they concerned about their own physical needs first, but they completely failed in the priority of properly teaching the Word of God to their flock.
- The entire context of Jude makes this last point VERY clear.

II. I feel I need to unpack this last point a bit more, because it’s an IMPORTANT one:

- A. Churches today are known for a lot of things: beautiful buildings, lots of programs, big sound and light systems, coffeeshops and cafes, emotionally-driven praise and worship, gluten-free communion wafers, shallow short sermons, and so on.
- B. But throughout God’s Word, we find the prescription and description of the church to be quite basic. The modern church has become a cultural institution much more than a spiritual one.
- C. The church is all about the people, not the building and everything else. It’s about quality fellowship and meeting communal needs. It’s about growing in Jesus Christ and in the knowledge and application of His Word.
- D. But MOSTLY, it’s about sound teaching. This is the main priority of church leaders, the ‘shepherds.’

- E. It's about preaching and teaching the hard truth, the tough truth, the politically incorrect truth, and truth that forces us to take an honest look in the mirror and change whatever we need to change.
- F. The bottom line is church is all about growing and developing the saints. **Ephesians 4:11-12** tells us that pastors and teachers need to *"equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."*
- G. In **2 Timothy**, Paul is writing to his protégé, Timothy, who was going to churches to help raise them up, to get them back on the right path, and so on.
- H. Paul tells Timothy in **Chapter 4, vs. 2**, *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."*
- I. In the book of **Titus**, Paul is once more writing to another early church leader, and he instructs Titus in **Chap. 2, vs. 1**, *"You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine."*
- J. I'm just scratching the surface here. Sound doctrine is stated over and over in the Bible to be vitally important in the church. We should not dare to tamper with or overlook God's divine communication.
- K. The principal duty of the pastor or teacher, and the primary purpose of the church, is to deliver a message of sound doctrine, not to change it or dilute it.
- L. Responsibly delivering sound doctrine, and properly receiving sound doctrine are two sides of the same coin. Every solid body of believers should regularly deliver and receive sound doctrine.
- M. This is a dynamic that will become rarer as the end times draw closer. It will become more common that churches and their leadership will sidestep the priority of teaching sound doctrine in favor of socially acceptable themes and novelties.
- N. That's why Paul says in **2 Timothy 4:3**, *"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."*
- O. We live the time right now that Paul is describing. I speak for myself as well as Dan and the other Elders, that Solid Bread Community's priority is to teach sound doctrine. NOTE: Please hold us up in your prayers because Satan hates this objective, and he is always seeking ways to erode it.

Keeping all that in perspective, let's continue with Jude's picture analogies. Next on the list, and it is also in **vs. 12**, is *"clouds without rain."*

- P. **(Jude says) "THEY ARE CLOUDS WITHOUT RAIN." (Background to the matter of 'rain')**
 - 1. Question: "What is God trying to say? What's the picture here?"
 - a. Clearly – with the underperformance issues of this context (for example: 'trees without fruit') - this analogy of *"clouds without rain"* intends to show false teachers as a letdown, as a disappointment, as a hope that is dashed.

- b. Imagine yourself in a situation, where drought is severe / where needs are great / where personal and public welfare is threatened / and perhaps,...where prayers have been offered to God in great supplication.
- c. This is the picture Jude is painting. Things are **urgent** – rain is desperately needed!
- d. And here comes the clouds! Expectations are high. Anticipation swells. But these clouds become like false teachers. They produce nothing. They offer no water.
- e. Here is the irony of this situation as this picture describes false teachers, and I'll quote once more from Dr. J. Vernon McGee:

“They may look as though they are filled with water; they may appear as though they are filled with the Word of God and the ability to teach it, but they are empty, dry, and vacant instead.”

- 2. (Now, do not miss this key point!) I believe the greater context of the Word of God may teach that there is a ‘deliberate element’ at play here.
 - a. That is to say, this specific analogy of ‘clouds without rain’ may indicate some willful deception on the part of false teachers and apostates (**Cf. Prov. 25:14**).

“Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given.”

- b. **There are several points to make here:**
 - Jude probably read Proverbs. He may have had this passage in mind; they are linked in a number of commentaries. Furthermore, Proverbs is quoted several times in the New Testament (**ex. Cf. Romans 2:6 > Proverbs 24:12**).
 - The issue here is the abilities of the false teacher do not measure up to what had been anticipated – expectations are high, hopes are strong, but there ends up being no substance behind the facade.
 - There is also a ‘boastful’ element behind the lack of performance. In the **Proverbs 25:14** passage, there is a declaration made about personal ability, personal gifting, personal credentials, and a ‘look at me’ sense.
 - However, the true test is ‘results,’ and when rain is needed to slake the thirst, none comes.
 - There is also a deceptive element here in this **Proverbs** passage: (NASB – “boasts of his gifts falsely” / KJB – “whoso boasteth himself of a false gift” / YLT – “a man boasting himself in a false gift”).
 - These translations (and others like them) suggest a willful misleading, a deliberate deception. I have been in churches where this EXACT dynamic played out with incoming pastors.
 - The Bible says these are people who are ‘religious’ for their own purposes and their own desires (much like the ‘blemishes at love feasts’).

Q. I want to take a short rabbit trail here, but I think it is relevant. There is a **Biblical association between God's judgment and the issues of rain** (put on your thinking caps...). My point being: There may be other issues worth considering in this particular analogy that Jude provides:

1. The first point is rain comes in judgment
 - a. Rain was not present on the earth before The Great Flood (**Cf. Gen. 2:5-6**). A *'mist came up from the ground and watered the whole earth.'*
 - b. Rain, at this time, was unknown. The deluge God sent was sent in judgment.
2. But secondly, rain is often withheld (Biblically-speaking) as a sign of God's judgment too.
 - a. In Elijah's time, rain was withheld by God for three and a half years. That too, was judgment (**Cf. story in 1 Kings 17**)
 - b. The Two Witnesses will do the very same thing in the Tribulation. They will have the ability to withhold rain in judgement (**Cf. Revelation 11**)
3. Just as too much rain can define God's judgment, not enough rain does the very same thing.
 - a. So let me ask a provocative question: "Does this 'cloud and no rain' analogy also suggest God's judgment on a congregation?" (I THINK SO....)
 - b. **Remember the source of these false teachers** – They enter a body of believers two ways (we learned this already):
 - They come in covertly: secretly, keeping a low profile (this is suggested in **Jude 4**, and is also mentioned elsewhere (**Cf. Galatians 2:4 – 'spies'**))
 - But they can also come in publicly: very visibly, with fanfare, by the choice of their congregants who according to **2 Timothy 4:1-4** want to reaffirm their own wayward agenda; they don't want full truth, just another 'version' of it.
 - c. **The effect is the same for both methods:**
 - Sound teaching is replaced by theological drift – the proper teaching of the whole and inerrant Word of God is abandoned
 - Individual desires receive as much attention as inspired doctrine
 - Enduring truth yields to novelty, trend, and current movements
 - The socially acceptable message of goodness becomes as important / more important than the socially unacceptable message of 'Godliness'

R. This whole 'rain thing' suggests to me that God is reminding us of four important things, and I'll wrap up with these four points.

(Let's consider Deuteronomy 11:13-17).

"So, if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then

the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you."

Now, this is a passage giving instruction to the new nation of Israel that Moses has been leading to The Promised Land. But - what can WE apply from it as it relates to *Jude 12*?

- 1. First of all, God is looking for our faithful obedience.**
 - a. As the Lord promised to provide rain to dry conditions, there is first the requirement that we follow Him fully, that we obey and do what is right
 - b. Just as God sends drought to a people that are wayward and in need of repentance, so God can also judge bodies of believers by sending to them '*clouds without rain.*'
- 2. Secondly, God remains in absolute control.**
 - a. We cannot out-think, out-plan, or out-maneuver God's purposes and design.
 - b. We must remember that He is our absolute and sovereign Lord, and we are His sheep. It is our job to follow. He is God and we are not.
 - c. In the same vein, the presence of challenges – personally and corporately - does not mean God has changed.
 - d. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So, who moved?
- 3. And thirdly, God is calling us to better choices.**
 - a. This point is evident in **Deuteronomy 11:13-17**. Here we find the right amount of rain at the right time is provided or withheld as a direct result of a nation's behavior.
 - b. Whether we like it or not, there are consequences to the choices we make.