

## **The Way of Cain**

### **by Fred DeRuvo – Study-Grow-Know Ministries**

*“Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.” Jude 1:11-13*

I love the imagery Jude conjures up here in this section of his letter. He refers to apostates as “hidden reefs” and “clouds without water.” These pictures are striking.

Jude begins by issuing a declarative “*Woe to them!*” This is obviously *not* a good thing even if you do not know what a “woe” is all about.

A “woe” is something that is absolutely terrible, and before Jude happened on the scene, the prophets of old used this phrase to warn the people to whom they prophesied what was ahead if they continued in the path they were moving on, *spiritually* speaking.

### **Cain**

Jude is saying that the deepest misery awaits them because they are doing the same thing that Cain did when he killed his brother, Abel. He compares them to Balaam also, who tried on several occasions to curse Israel but was unable to do so because he was stopped by the Lord.

Men like Cain and Balaam do what they want to do for their own personal gain. In Cain’s case (cf. Genesis 4:1-15), he killed his brother Abel because he was jealous of the fact that Abel had brought before the Lord the *correct* offering.

Obviously, both men had been taught about sacrificing to God, something that both Adam and Eve had learned directly in the Garden of Eden after they fell when they saw God kill several animals in order to make proper clothing for the two (cf. Genesis 3). There were probably a number of things that God explained to them that day about the sacrificial process, which, of course, was not thoroughly outlined until much later, through Moses.

Adam and Eve passed on this knowledge of the sacrificial offering to their children, and it is clear that Cain – though he brought the wrong sacrifice *deliberately* – knew of it, as did Abel. Cain could have gone to his brother and bartered with him, fruit and vegetables (Cain farmed) for a proper animal for sacrifice (Abel tended flocks). Cain chose not to do this in spite of the fact that he knew he was bringing the wrong sacrifice.

Someone may argue, “Well, gee, at least Cain brought *something* to sacrifice.” That’s true, but that is not the point. The fact that Cain brought the *wrong* sacrifice speaks of his own carelessness with respect to any relationship he may have thought he had with God. In fact, what he did, he did simply out of *duty* and *compulsion*, not because he truly wanted to do the right thing in God’s eyes. In other words, Cain’s heart was far from God. His heart wasn’t in it.

The sacrificial system that God first introduced to Adam and Eve was always designed to point ahead to the time of Jesus and His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. He died a terribly painful death, shedding His blood for humanity. While vegetables and fruits are certainly living things, they are no replacement for an animal that bleeds, feels pain, and sheds its blood onto the ground. This type of death pointed ahead to the Passover death of Jesus on behalf of the world.

Cain consciously chose to ignore the ramifications of the sacrificial system and brought vegetables instead of a live animal. Even though Satan was very unlikely to see what the sacrificial system ultimately meant, this was undoubtedly Satan’s attempt to downplay the importance of the cross of Jesus.

At this point in time, Satan would not have been able to see ahead into the future to a time when God would become human, live a sinless life and then die for humanity. At this point with Cain, Satan was likely simply tempting Cain to become disobedient and do things his way instead of God’s way. That’s always the way it is with Satan.

This is the basic attitude in the person who is an apostate. They will deny this to the hilt, and in some cases they are simply unable to see it, but they are completely self-centered, caring only for themselves. The easy way is the *better* way for them. Such was Cain’s attitude.

### **Balaam**

Balaam was the same. He tried to tempt Israel into compromising their faith in God by worshipping idols. He did this because he was offered a large sum of money. He wanted the money, of course, but why was he offered the money in the first place?

Numbers 22 tells us that Balak, King of Moab, had seen how the Israelites had dealt with the Amorites. He was naturally afraid because the number of Israelites was so great. He envisioned them one day doing to him and his kingdom what they had done to the Amorites.

So Balak crafts a plan, a plan he hopes will bring the Israelites to the point of judgment by their God. If he (Balak) can somehow convince the Israelites to sin by worshipping idols, then maybe God would judge them, and he and his kingdom would be safe.

So he offers Balaam a hefty ransom to curse the Israelites so that they would compromise and worship idols. Balaam is nearly completely overcome by his greed, and each time he tries to curse Israel, he winds up not being able to do so, blocked in his attempts by God.

All are likely familiar with Balaam and his donkey, because at one point, while riding his donkey to go see Balak in order to curse the Israelites, the donkey stops because an angel blocks her path. At first Balaam is unable to see the angel and starts whipping the donkey to get her moving.

The Angel of the Lord that blocked the donkey's path is given the ability to speak, and then Balaam's eyes are unveiled enough to also see the angel. He realizes the stupidity of his ways and immediately repents.

Ultimately, Balaam is guided by his own greed, which nearly does him in. This is the way of the apostate, who, as has been pointed out, lives his life to please himself and surrounds himself with people who can make his dreams become reality.

### **Korah**

The "rebellion of Korah" refers to Korah the Levite, who led a mutiny against Moses. We read the sad tale in Numbers 16.

*"Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took action, and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Numbers 16:1-3)*

Wow, talk about *arrogance!* Look at the last sentence in the above text. There, Korah – *on his own* – has decided that every person in the camp is *holy*, and from his standpoint, the Lord is with them. He then pointedly asks Moses why he thinks he has the right to "exalt" himself above everyone else.

Well, if I remember correctly, way back at the burning bush (cf. Exodus 3), Moses did *not* want the job that God offered. Moses tried numerous times to refuse it, making a number of excuses to the Lord, and finally telling Him that he stuttered and so wasn't able to be any type of real spokesman for the Lord.

The Lord finally had enough and said that He would give Aaron to Moses to do the speaking for him (Moses) if need be, but Moses was the chosen man whether he liked it or not. During this time in Egypt and after leaving, Moses had put up with quite a lot from those who would become Israelites.

Moses' reaction here speaks to his humility. *"When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, 'Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the presence of the LORD tomorrow; and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the one who is holy. You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi!'"* (Numbers 16:4-7)

Moses was a humble man, and he knew that what he was doing he did because of the Lord. He was also not above becoming righteously angry as well when the situation warranted it. This situation is reminiscent of the many times that the religious leaders of Jesus' day came to Jesus demanding to see His "credentials."

Moses was under God's direction, and though many within the camp of Israel could not or would not understand God's leadership in and through Moses, the truth is that God was in charge and Moses was simply His servant, carrying out the Lord's wishes. Moses could have asked God to strike these infidels dead, but he chose not to do so. In fact, by the time we get to verse 15, we see that Moses does become fairly angry, but it is a righteous anger because he knows that he has not wronged anyone and he ultimately leaves it in the Lord's hands to decide the outcome. The Lord would decide, and this is exactly what transpired.

Verses 20 through 22 tell us God's response. *"Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.' But they fell on their faces and said, 'O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?'"*

God was going to hold the *entire* congregation of Israel responsible for Korah's rebellion. Immediately, Moses and Aaron interceded for the congregation. Once again, Moses acts as a type of High Priest, interceding on behalf of the people. Since all the people in the congregation were sinners – even though they had not specifically involved themselves in this particular sin led by Korah – they were guilty nonetheless. God in His holiness could have justifiably destroyed them all and started over with Moses.

Ultimately, God chose to destroy Korah and those who stood with him. There should be no doubt that God had chosen Moses and Aaron, and He would prove it to the Israelites once again.

When Moses finished speaking with God, he spoke to the Israelites. *"Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, and he spoke to the congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.'*

We are going to stop here today, but will continue with this next time. I hope you'll join me then and until we meet again, may the Lord open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!