

THREE PATHS TO CONDEMNATION

August 23, 2015

Jude 1:1-25

“Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” Jude 1:11

Jude cited three Old Testament characters to describe evil men who subtly entered the congregation of God’s people. These invaders threatened that assembly, and their presence will threaten any congregation. By such, the entire church of Christ is threatened.

1. **“They have gone in the way of Cain . . .” (Genesis 4:1-24)**

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4)

“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” (I John 3:12)

Cain devised a sacrifice that represented his own work applied to the ground that was cursed (Gen. 3:17-19). He may have thought that his labors could reverse the curse, or that there was no curse at all. Such manmade religious schemes will never win God’s favor. When God rejected Cain’s sacrifice, he was not humbled, but enraged (Gen. 4:5). Rather than repenting, he murdered Abel (4:8). In rebellion he “went out from the presence of the Lord” (v. 16). Jude’s opponents practiced manmade religion, rejecting divine revelation.

2. **“ . . . and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward . . .” (Numbers 22-25; 31:1-16)**

The error of Balaam (Jude 1:11)

The way of Balaam: “. . . cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.” (II Peter 2:14b-16)

The doctrine of Balaam: “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” (Revelation 2:14)

Balaam was a prophet for hire, willing to do whatever would advance his own earthly welfare but heedless of spiritual health. Religion was for him merely a way to advance his own interests. This characterized those against whom Jude warned.

3. **“ . . . and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” (Numbers 16:1-35)**

Core, or Korah, rejected Moses' and Aaron's God-appointed leadership of Israel, and sought to usurp them with his own. Ultimately, he and his associates were killed as the earth opened and swallowed them and their families. And 250 leaders who supported them were consumed by fire from God. Jude's opponents also "despise dominion" (v. 8), seeking to usurp God's order.