

THE BOOK OF JUDE

(Lesson Four)

“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

I. INTRODUCTION

In the previous message on verses 8-10, we observed three main characteristics of the sinful conduct of the apostate teachers in the time of Jude’s writing. We saw that they defiled or polluted their flesh, meaning their conduct, and put a moral stain on their characters. Also, they despised or rejected dominion meaning they rejected all forms of authority that restrained their sensual desires. Again, they spoke evil or slandered. That is, they scoffed at or insulted the idea of the angels having any ability to influence their lives. They were dreamers or visionaries who claimed that God spoke directly to their spirits so that whatever their hearts or senses desired was that which came from God. Today, Jude shows the company which these New Testament apostates were keeping by associating them with examples of deception found in three Old Testament apostates, namely, Cain, Balaam, and Core (Korah).

II. JUDE’S ARGUMENT (Heretics Described) vs. 4-19.

5. Three Examples of Error or Deception.

Jude has already given three examples of apostate groups in verses 5 - 7, namely, the children of Israel, the angels that sinned, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now in verse 11 he gives three more examples of apostasy, but this time in the form of individuals, as opposed to groups. The individuals mentioned, Cain, Balaam and Core, could well be the first inductees into what could be called the Old Testament “Hall of Shame.” Hebrews 11 contains the names of several individuals who were famed for their faith or belief in God. These individuals are shamed for their unbelief in God. He pronounces a “woe” of condemnation upon those who would duplicate the sins of those whom he was describing. This means they are heading for destruction. Jesus used the woe in placing a curse upon the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida in Matthew 11:21. He also rebuked the Pharisees with a series of seven woes in Matthew 23. Paul called down a woe upon himself if he failed to preach the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:16).

a. First, *“the way of Cain”* - the sin of self righteousness.

The Scriptures mention Cain in four different books: Genesis 4:1-17; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12; and Jude 11.

Cain was Adam and Eve's first born son. Abel was his brother. Cain was a religious man but a natural, unregenerate man. He believed in God and believed in religious duties, but based on his own ideas which were pleasing to his nature and will. His religion was what Colossians 2:23 calls **"will worship"**; a self-made or self-imposed religion which rejects the God-revealed way of salvation in His Word. Cain rebelled against God's way of salvation. In clothing Adam and Eve with the skins of slain animals (Genesis 3:21), God revealed that the only way of approaching Him, as a sinner in need of forgiveness, is through the shedding of blood. Hebrews 10:22 says, **"Without the shedding of blood is no remission."** This is the way of faith. But Cain rejected this divinely authorized way and brought the fruits of the ground that he had raised, and presented them as an offering unto God.

In doing so he denied he was a sinner and came to God in his own self-imposed way. He rejected redemption by blood and righteousness by way of a substitute. Cain thought he could come to God in his own self-devised way. Since Cain rejected God's way, God rejected Cain and his way. God accepted Abel's sacrifice and declared him righteous because he believed in the divinely appointed way. Hebrews 11:4 says, **"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 speaks."** God rejected Cain's sacrifice because it was not offered in faith. This angered Cain and he was greatly offended (Genesis 4:5). God spoke to Cain and informed him that he could yet be forgiven if he would but bring the sin-offering (Genesis 4:7). Cain refused to do so and got into a religious argument with his brother Abel over the way of acceptance with God. Cain became so enraged that he killed his brother Abel. 1 John 3:12 tells us that it was over the issue of sin and righteousness. **"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."**

God placed a curse upon Cain and Cain's religion (Genesis 4:9-15). Cain responded by going out from the presence of the Lord and proceeded to build a city called Enoch (Genesis 4:16, 17). When the Bible says that he went out from the **"presence of the Lord"** it means that he separated himself from God, the altar of God, and the people of God. He became the first willful unbeliever or apostate. He fulfilled Hebrews 10:26

which says, *“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.”*

In order to sear his conscience from the curse, he became an humanitarian. He erected an entire civilization dedicated to human achievement. This included agricultural pursuits (4:20), musical arts (4:21), manufacturing skills (4:22). It was a civilization that later became so wicked that God destroyed it in the flood (Genesis 6:1-7). The way of Cain is a way which enables man to maintain his pride, to establish his own righteousness by good deeds which benefit humanity, and at the same time reject the need of an atonement for sin. If Christ is included into the religion, He is seen as an example or role model for humanitarian deeds, rather than as a Savior to save from God’s wrath and justice. An early Jewish commentary on Genesis 4:8 has Cain saying these words to his brother Abel, “There is no judgment, no judge, no world to come, no reward will be given to the righteous, and no destruction for the wicked.” All teachers who reject the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of rendering satisfaction to God’s justice, in the form of paying for a sin debt, are apostates from the truth of God and should be separated from those who are true believers.

b. Second, “the error of Balaam” - the sin of covetousness or greed.

The Scriptures make mention of Balaam in numerous locations. The initial and primary source is Numbers 22 - 24. His death in battle is recorded in Numbers 31:8,16. His error or doctrine is recorded in Deuteronomy 23:4,5. He is mentioned in Joshua 13:22; 24:9, 10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5; II Peter 2:15, 16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14.

Balaam was a Gentile prophet and fortune teller. (II Peter 2:16; Joshua 13:22). God spoke to him on numerous occasions conveying messages and answers. He had the gift or spirit of prophecy upon him and even by Divine inspiration gave a prophecy of the forthcoming of Christ. In Numbers 24:17 we read, *“there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.”* But in spite of all these gifts, he proved to be an apostate.

It came about in this manner. Balak, the King of the Moabites was afraid of Israel. He contacted Balaam and asked him if he could persuade God to curse the people of

Israel, and if this happened, he promised to reward Balaam financially. Balaam knew it was wrong to cooperate with Balak, but his heart was covetous and he wanted the money and honor that Balak promised him. Balaam knew the true God and the will of God to bless His people Israel, but he left the right way and went into error or the deception of others. II Peter 2:15 says, ***“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.”***

From the very outset, God told Balaam not to help Balak. At first Balaam sent the messengers of Balak home. Balak then offered him more money. Balaam thought maybe he ought to “Pray about it.” His prayer was similar to that of the preacher who was contacted over the telephone by a larger church than where he was presently pastoring. They wanted to know if he would come and be their pastor. This would mean a considerable increase in salary. He said he would have to pray about it. He hung up the phone and immediately informed his wife of the matter. He then told her that he was going to go into his office to pray about the decision and that while he was praying that she should immediately go start packing.

God put Balaam to the test by permitting him to go with the princes of Balak. While on the way God gave Balaam’s donkey the ability to speak and he rebuked Balaam for his plans. Balaam was not able to persuade God to curse Israel, but he was able to tell Balak how to weaken and defeat Israel. All the Moabites had to do was to become good neighbors and invite the Israelites to share in their pagan love feasts. These consisted in sexual orgies. Israel committed fornication with the Moabite women and were led into the idolatrous worship of Baal. This became known as the “doctrine” of Balaam. In Revelation 2:14 we read where God rebuked the church at Pergames with these words, ***“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 stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”*** God judged the people of Israel and thousands of them died thereby weakening their military strength.

The error or doctrine of Balaam occurs when the people of God are led to compromise their separated position and become friendly with the world in order to

grow stronger and have more influence with the world. The leaders who influenced the people of God to do so are thereby enabled to enjoy financial security and social honor in return. This enables the people to engage in loose living while still enjoying the honor of being called the people of God. In Jeremiah's day God said of Israel, ***"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"*** (Jeremiah 5:30, 31).

Balaam knew better, he knew the right way, but willfully chose the wrong way because he wanted financial security and honor. Churches and church leaders who will compromise doctrinal truth and purity of life in order to gain the friendship of the world are either in the process of apostasy, or have already departed from the faith. When God later defeated the Midianites, Balaam was in their midst and died by the sword (Numbers 31:8). Let us not be found with the apostates when Jesus comes to judge His church.

c. Third, *"the gainsaying of Core"* - the sin of rebellion against constituted authority.

The incident involving the sin of Korah is recorded in Numbers 16:1-50. It is referred to in Numbers 26:9-11 and in Psalm 106:16-18, and here in Jude 11. Korah was from the tribe of Levi and was a cousin to Moses (Exodus 6:16-20; I Chronicles 6:2,3). He resented Moses being elevated above him in authority as the leader of Israel. He spoke out against Moses, which is the meaning of the word gainsaying in our Authorized Version. He, along with Dathan and Abiran, and 250 leaders in Israel led an insurrection to overthrow Moses and take over the priesthood from Aaron. They said to Moses in Numbers 16:3, ***"You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"***

All Israel knew that God had appointed Moses as the leader. Korah was speaking out against this constituted order. He, like the apostates in Jude's day, despised all constituted authority because it put a restraint upon their desires. Jude's emphasis upon Korah and his supporters was the fact that they perished in their rebellion. And

perish they did. Their punishment was swift and dramatic. God caused the ground to give way beneath their feet and swallowed them alive. Jude says that sudden destruction awaited the apostates of his day.

In rejecting Moses, Korah was rejecting God and His law as given by the angels to Moses. They were discontented with their appointment in life and claimed that all of God's people share a common equality within God's family. They were envious of the rulers in Israel. Jude's apostates were rejecting Apostolic authority and the authority bestowed upon church leaders, namely the elders and deacons. Korah's conduct was clearly a rejection of law and authority. Since Jude uses this Old Testament example, this is why I believe the apostate sin in Jude is that of antinomianism or lawlessness, not Gnosticism as held by other teachers. It was a Jewish error, not a Gentile one.

Let us learn from these three Hall of Shame members that self-righteousness, greed, and rebellion breeds strife and division within the church. Those who disrupt an orderly church arrangement shall bring upon themselves severe punishment, both in this life and that to come. God opposes those who oppose His authority. Jesus said in Matthew 18:7, ***“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”*** All apostasy is a rejection of the sovereignty of God. Never expect an apostate to love and uphold the teachings of God's sovereignty. Let God be true and every man a liar.