

Jude #6 - Cain, Balaam and Korah

by Chuck Missler

Jude's sermon highlights the seriousness of apostasy and the process that leads to it, using examples from the past to illustrate the dangers of falling away from the truth.

Duration: 1:26:12

Scripture: Isaiah 48:18, Isaiah 61:3, Daniel 12:3, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Korah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the downward degeneration of individuals who profess to be Christians but do not bear fruit. He uses poetic language to describe this degeneration as local trees, barren profession, raging waves, wasted effort, and wandering stars. The speaker contrasts these negative traits with the attributes of Jesus, such as being the rock of salvation, the tree of life, and the bright and morning star. The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on God's guidance rather than our own natural judgment in spiritual matters.

Transcript

You recall the last time we were together, we talked about Michael contending with the devil and all of that. That brought us down through verses 9 and 10. All of this, again, continuing Jude's apparently forced or compelling mission to speak on apostasy.

And he, of course, has been drawing repeatedly from Old Testament allusions, so part of our interest in the book of Jude isn't just his message, but also to get a little perspective on some of these things that he presumes we know so well. But verse 11, he continues, Woe unto them, for they have gone the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. Now that's obvious to all of you what that means.

No? Good, okay. In fact, he picks these three men from the past, and it's only if you outline the whole book that you recognize this all pivots around verse 11 that happens. Verse 11 is midway between illustrations he has previously chosen from the supernatural realm, that was back in verse 9, for example, and from those that he's going to choose from the natural realm, verses 12 and 13, and we'll talk about that a little later tonight.

Another way of looking at this is that this verse is preceded by apostasy in history, that's what we've been talking up till now, and it's going to be followed by apostasy in prophecy. In fact, we're going to explore one

of the earliest prophecies in the scripture next time. So this verse is placed very specifically.

Now what he's doing here, he has been talking up till now about corporate examples. Israel that had its problems, the angels that sinned, etc. You and I may have a little trouble personally identifying with Michael's predicament in verse 9. But now we're getting right to examples that Jude has selected that are personal and individual examples.

The three men in this verse are examples that Jude selects to make a point that is intended to apply to you and I. That's difficult to do if you don't really know what the gainsaying of Korah is all about, and most of us may have been, what little we may know about Balaam is fascinating but mysterious, but what's all that about? And we'll get into that a little bit because it's, if nothing else, a key piece to our background in the book of Revelation. Then there's also this character Korah. These are not in chronological order.

You figure Cain, we know who Cain was, we think, sort of. We may know about Balaam late in numbers, and Korah is earlier in numbers. So they're not in order.

When the Holy Spirit puts something in order, he has a reason to do so. The seven letters, the seven churches of the book of Revelation, if they were in any other order, it destroys most of their message in a sense. I should say most of them, there's moral points there, but the prophetic outline of all church history is there because of the order they're in.

The Gospel of John deals with seven miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, seven discourses as a result of those miracles, and seven I Am statements. They're not in chronological order. Those episodes in the Gospel of John happened to mystically chronicle the history of Israel in a very peculiar way.

John was a mystic. Whenever the Holy Spirit puts something in order that's unusual, it should alert us that there's something else. We're going to discover that these three errors are not only three errors that we are admonished to avoid, they also portray a process that he wants to call to our attention.

And so I'll alert you to that in advance. First observation is that apostasy, bear in mind that's Jude's main message, is not confined to any one class of person. Let's take a look at these three people.

We've got a tiller of the soil, a prophet, and a prince in Israel. Cain we all know is a tiller of the soil, a farmer. Nothing wrong with farming, but he gets in big trouble.

We'll find out why in a minute. Balaam was a prophet. He had the office of a prophet.

He made his living as a prophet. I wouldn't take that as a vindication of his office, but I thought I'd throw that in. And Korah was one of the princes of Israel, made a gigantic blunder.

All three of them made serious errors in judgment, for which they perished. Each of these guys, these three gentlemen that we're going to explore, portrays a particular aspect of what it means to fall away from the truth. We talk a lot about finding the truth.

We hear a lot about evangelism. What Jude is talking about is falling away, the opposite of that process. Getting ahead of the story a little bit, so you know where I'm headed.

They basically form a process that involves three steps. They enter on the wrong path. They run riotously down that path, and they perish at the end.

Not very complicated. Very profound. Very real.

Very actual. And it didn't just happen in numbers. It happens right here in River City, tragically enough.

Now, there's another part of the message that it's hard to package pleasantly. You know me. I love to find little tidbits and merchandise them in some way that makes it all fun, because my primary motive is to get you to fall in love with the Scripture and dig for yourself.

So I love those little tidbits. Here in Jude, and there are some of those that makes it fun, and there's also just some plain, blunt, tough stuff that I don't know how to articulate cleverly, pleasantly, but just to lay it out on the table. There's no hope for apostates anywhere in the book of Jude.

Their doom is sure. To them is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Hebrews chapter 6, verses 4 through 6. We'll find that the words here are in the past tense about apostates.

Apostates have already perished. They have all the amendability of history. You want to change the history of this country back in 1700? I'm not going to do it.

The past tense is intended to connote its certainty. It's yet future. The apostates we're going to be concerned about prophetically are yet to happen.

But their doom is sure. So that's the heavy aspect of what Jude is dealing with, and I don't know any way to make that anything but straightforward. There's a lot of parallelisms between 2 Peter.

You notice we've gone into that a lot, because Peter has a very, very similar thrust in his message. In 2 Peter chapter 2, he talks about them. We'll pick it up, oh, verse 20.

Peter says, For if, after they have escaped from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in it and overcome, and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they had known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them, according to the true proverb, a dog is returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The example is such a vivid one. I don't know if you as kids, the first time you've ever seen a dog do that, when a dog gets upset and throws up, that's disgusting enough, but then to watch him turn around and lap it up is disturbing. Even as a child, that just, I remember being, whoa, you know.

And it's not unique to some dog. It's characteristic of them, why? I think because of the scripture. Why is that shocking to you? Because God wants it to be.

That's what he says here. It's a point. If you think you're upset when you see a dog do that, how do you think God feels when we, knowing better, fall into error? After knowing the way.

It's scary. Tough stuff. The real question that's in your mind is, okay, the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, was that sow ever a sheep of the good shepherd? Scripture implies, no, it wasn't.

Just the word knowledge here is head trip, not an experiential trip. Remember the swine of Mark 5? That ran down into the deep place, right? What we're going to see Jude suggest from these three, and we're going to go, obviously, this is all preamble, we'll go into each one of these, Cain, Balaam, and Korah

shortly. But the overview may be useful.

These three guys are guilty of three separate individual things, but Jude is rolling them together to describe a process, because they collectively characterize the process that all apostates go through. They knowingly choose the way of Cain rather than the way of Christ. They choose the error of Balaam rather than the truth of Christ, and the perishing of Korah for the life of Christ.

Three contrasts. By the way, this verse, to give you just a slightly more literal rendering of the verse, verse 11, in the way of Cain they went away, and in the wandering of Balaam for reward they rushed headlong, and in the rebellion of Korah they perished. Same thought, and yet maybe structured just a little differently in the literal translation.

That's the first one, the way of Cain. Strange story. Twice in the book of Proverbs, in chapter 16.25 and 14.12, it says, there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Our natural judgment is not a reliable guide in spiritual things. It's interesting to me that the creation showeth the creator his handiwork. The heavens declare the glory of God, right? From the creation we know that there's a designer, an architect, a personality behind all that we see.

To deny that is to just flaunt our observation and our reason. Do you realize that the creation cannot communicate his redemptive plan? God's redemption is his greater work. How big, how important is God's work? Well, how much space is in the Bible on the subject? The creation has a chapter or two in Genesis, a few chapters in Isaiah, some allusions in Job, and you can round up maybe, you know, a handful of chapters on the creation.

Either directly in Genesis 1 or subsequent comments on it. But it's surprisingly limited. A few Psalms.

What about his redemption? Most of Genesis, but certainly the book of Exodus, is the book of redemption. And you go all the way through. Book of Ruth, book of redemption.

Other dimensions to it. The Gospels, whole New Testament, certainly the book of Revelation. If you wanted to define those things whose unique message is redemption, you got most of it.

Which is his greater work? The creation of the universe or our redemption? Space gives you one answer. Let me give you another. What did it cost him? I suspect that God can breathe into existence universes larger than the one we're experiencing.

He just does it. Probably with less concern than a carpenter goes into a shop and builds a small piece of furniture. What did his redemption of us cost him? His son.

Furthermore, the creation that we see is under the curse. So we can't perceive in the creation the redemption plan. We get that revealed to us supernaturally by his word.

Now that leads you to think, where are you going, Chuck? What's that got to do with Cain? Well, let's read the story of Cain with all this preamble. Let's go to that story that's so familiar to us and yet perhaps has so much yet to reveal itself. We all know the story.

We've just been through Genesis 1 and 2. The universe has been created. Adam and Eve are there. We have Genesis 3, the famous story of the, I hate to promote, the myth of the serpent.

The shining one, mistranslated serpent. That's a whole other issue. If you ever want an interesting specialized study, I commend to you to explore what that word really means.

But we've been through that. Genesis 3 and the casting out of the garden. Adam and Eve caught in their sin are cast out, right? And they left the garden.

In fact, chapter 3 ends saying that the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. And he drove out the man. That's Mr. and Mrs. Man.

And he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword. The sword, by the way, is not in the hands of the cherubim. We always assume that.

The Hebrew implies it's not. It's there. But anyway, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life.

Now you and I usually presume that that's just to keep Adam from going back and getting the tree of life. It's a little more complicated than that. Because the whole goal of the scripture from Genesis chapter, say, 3 through Revelation 22 is to guard, that is to preserve the way to the tree of life.

And the exciting climax in Revelation is that the tree of life is available to man. Who is trying to deny it from man? Not God. Satan.

So what that really implies is a whole other set of issues. But we're in chapter 4, verse 1. Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. Excited about that.

Women have a right to be. This one has a very special right to be because a few verses earlier in verse 15 of chapter 3, the path of redemption was to come from the seed of the woman. And we generally presume that Eve presumed that Cain was that answer.

Turns out, obviously, he's not. There's a long road ahead, but she may or may not have been aware of that. Anyway, she's gotten a man from the Lord.

She again bore his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. Step 1. Don't presume that one calling is above another.

I've actually seen documents that tried to, out of this, say that shepherding was a higher calling than nonsense. Nonsense. I'll come back to this.

But anyway, verse 3. In the process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. That seems natural enough. He's a farmer.

He's tilling the soil, so he grows crops and he takes some of those crops and brings us an offering. Is there anything wrong with that? Not on the face of it. Let's read on.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.

Oh, really? I wonder why. It would be useful for you and I to get some insight into this. You know, there's a concept in business that you ought to know your market.

If you're selling a product, you'd like to know what your buyer prefers. It's awfully useful to you and I, before we start wandering up to the altar, to get some insight into the preferences of the one that we would please. One of the things you need to ask, if you had a little 15-minute quiz right now, you'd take out a piece of paper and say, great, what was Cain's mistake? Here's what he did not do.

He didn't deny the existence of God. Was he a believer? You bet. Incidentally, there are scholastic traditions, reasons to believe, that in this time the way the offering was accepted by God was literally, not to the pastor or to the church or to the priesthood, that fire came down from heaven and consumed it.

There are ancient traditions that point to that. They're not authoritative, but provocative. There wasn't apparently any doubt.

This wasn't a theological debate. Somehow God was pleased with Abel's. Something happened to manifest that enough to get Cain upset.

It wasn't a question of opinion here. And whatever Cain did, it didn't work. If fire was supposed to come down and consume it, it apparently didn't.

It was enough so it got Cain envious, upset, and leads, of course, to the second murder. I always like to put it that way because the first murder, in effect, was Satan murdering Adam by getting him to sin. But at least in one tradition this is often called the first murder.

It's not really the first one. Another thing that Cain did, he did not refuse to worship God. He wasn't some kind of agnostic.

He knew God was there. He was a believer. He also wasn't in rebellion.

He was not trying not to worship God, right? So what was his mistake? If you can put on his report card those two positive things, that he recognized God's existence and he moved so as to worship Him with an offering of the fruit of his labor, and he's still in deep trouble, you and I need to get a little uncomfortable because so far we fit the report card, right? We don't deny the existence of God and we don't refuse to worship Him. And we go through our little rituals, whatever they are, of all shapes and sizes. How do we know that God's attitude towards our meager moves is no different than God's reaction to Cain's? We need to find an answer to that tonight.

It would be kind of neat, wouldn't it? Right? Let's get a hint of what it's all about by turning to the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews was an epistle written to Hebrew believers. So they're probably a little better informed on the Old Testament than most many of the other epistle readers.

So it's not surprising to find little clues in the book of Hebrews that may illuminate some of this for us. And one of the great chapters, we all know 1 Corinthians 13 is the famous love chapter, and the great faith chapter is Hebrews 11, sometimes called the hall of faith because it almost becomes a tour of heroes of faith. Of course, it opens up with that famous definition, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it, elders, that is our forefathers, our predecessors, received a good report or received witness. Verse 3, through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. And if any of you in the room are competent in quantum mechanics, then you're excited about that because Paul seemed to, or whoever wrote Hebrews,

apparently was very perceptive about subatomic physics and all of that, but I won't get into that here.

Verse 4, 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 yet dead speaketh. Okay, great. I wonder what that means.

Well, it sounds pretty good. What does it mean? By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. What was there about Cain's offering? Well, it said faith, right? How does faith come? Romans 10.13, by hearing.

You can't have faith without hearing. You can have superstitions, beliefs, conceptions, presuppositions, all kinds of things. You can't have faith scripturally.

Faith cometh by hearing. Abel had heard something that was not recorded, I mean that hasn't been detailed in this summary narrative that we're reading in Genesis. Abel's offering was in response to a commandment.

He was giving an offering by faith. Now this causes us to lean very heavily on some insights that are not obvious to the casual reader of the book of Genesis. Once you go back, we're back in Genesis, back in chapter 3, and there's a simple little sentence that by itself is easily missed, but it has a profound implication on your insight as to what God is all about.

In Genesis chapter 3, they obviously have sinned. In verse 7, the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked. Now that's funny, were their eyes closed up until the sin? Doesn't mean literally, does it? Adam walked with God.

Adam was perfect. From the Psalms and some other places in the scripture, we can draw the biblical inference that they were clothed with light. When the sin came and they were no longer righteous, there was something that happened to them dimensionally, whatever, that caused them to realize that they had lost that covering.

It isn't clothes. But being conscious of that, they did a natural thing. They attempted to clothe themselves.

They knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. This isn't a sex thing, it's far deeper than that, a much bigger issue. But they attempted to clothe them, very natural.

Okay, they got a problem, that's their dealing with it. Later in chapter 3, God, of course, pronounces war on Satan. I'll put enmity between thee and the woman and so forth.

We go on here and he talks to the woman and so forth. We get down to verse 20. Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

For Adam also and for his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothe them. Now that's a little strange. Adam and Eve had garments that were apparently inadequate.

I'm not one to promote the values of fig leaves as a garment. But isn't it a little bizarre that God didn't let them find that out for themselves? That he apparently personally, he didn't instruct them to do it. Go do that, it's better.

God made coats of skins and clothed them. The fact that God personally did it should get our attention. Even Jesus in most of the gospels ministered through the disciples.

The wedding at Cana, the disciples passed out the water. Feeding of the 5,000, 4,000, the disciples. He deals through his ministers.

Every once in a while he does something personally. That should get our attention. The more we read the scripture, that should, hey wait, what's going on here? Something very special.

If we had just this verse, I'd be really crawling on a limb. But if we take the rest of the Torah, the book of Exodus and the Passover lamb. If we take the book of Leviticus and we wrap that all together, we discover that from Genesis chapter 3 through Revelation 19, God consistently presents the principle that without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sins.

As we really understand the whole scripture, the whole counsel of God, we recognize what we might even call, maybe a little facetiously, a preoccupation with shed blood. We'll go through the offerings. You and I are denied the vivid object lessons of Judaism.

I mean the old Judaism, not current Judaism. I've often threatened to do this. I have never had quite the guts to do this, is to bring in to the Bible study a little duck or a chicken or something.

Let you all get acquainted with it, a little pet. And then here up in front, chop off its head. You'd be shocked and upset, and that would be the point.

Poor analogy, obviously, unless I handle it very carefully. But the point is, what I'm saying is God, before Israel, throughout their whole history, again and again and again, ordained rituals, slaughtering animals, shedding blood. The tabernacle's nickname is the house of blood.

The temple, by the thousands, special aqueducts and things to haul off, you know, from all the ritual. What's all that going on? You and I read about it, but it's not the same thing as standing and saying, what is all this barbaric ritual all about? God's way of letting us realize that sin is serious, that sin has to be paid for, not by the blood of sheep and goats. That's a model.

That's just an object lesson. That's a tutorial. It's all pointing to the cross.

Now, where am I headed? I'm suggesting to you that the cross was preached in Genesis 3. You notice why Adam called Eve the mother of all living? Because of these coats of skins. Look at this carefully. For Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

For Adam also, and for his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothe them. Strange enough, this passage is presuming that we understand the rest. There are some scholars that believe that the altar wasn't some local thing in those days.

The altar was at the gate. They were outside the garden, but they were instructed to bring offerings. God was instituting what I like to call the Levitical system this early.

What's my evidence of that? I guess I've got lots, but the most dramatic one is Genesis chapter 22. Long before Moses and Aaron and the Levites and all of that, God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac on a hill, a very specific hill. You all know the story.

Abraham takes Isaac up the hill, ready to be obedient and offer his son. Of course, God at the last minute intervenes, substitutes the ram. But Abraham knew he was acting out prophecy that 2,000 years later on that same hill, another father would be offering his son as an offering for sin.

Abraham knew that. The belief that saved him was the belief in the resurrection of Isaac. He knew Isaac would have to be resurrected from that experience.

And that's in Hebrews 3 and Romans 4. If I'm on strange ground, get the tapes on Genesis 22 to get his most fascinating prophecy study in the Bible, Genesis 22. But again, it's presuming and amplifying a sacrifice long before Moses and all of that. God instituted the concept of the faith offering, the blood sacrifice, in prophetically pointing to Jesus Christ as early as Adam and Eve.

When you understand that, now we can look at Cain with much more insight. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. That's Hebrews 9.22. For those of you that want to dig into that more thoroughly.

Now I'm going to back up a little bit and let's take another look at Cain and Abel. Cain was a tiller of the soil, no problem there. They needed food, right? Abel was a tender of sheep.

We've got a problem there. They didn't eat meat. They don't eat meat till later.

At this stage, meat is forbidden. God will later ordain meat to be eaten. Why are they doing raising sheep? Well, maybe wool.

That's fair. Maybe offerings. Abel's offering was by faith, Hebrews 11.4. Now what's Cain doing then? Cain failed to satisfy God by failing to approach Him on the revealed basis of vicarious atonement.

God has ordained then and still does that the only basis by which we can approach Him is on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Either prophetically in the Old Testament sense or memorially as we do. Cain didn't do that.

Cain brought what? The works of his own hands. So what is the way of Cain? He's presuming his readers understand all this. What's the way of Cain? To blaspheme God by declaring His salvation incomplete by our attempting to add to it.

There's two ways. Faith or works. You've all heard that, right? There's two ways to get to heaven.

I love the way Walter Martin presents this. He does a great job. Plan A and Plan B. Plan A by works.

What you do is be perfect. As you grow up, you never make a mistake. From the age of accountability on, no matter how irritable, tired, overworked, pressured, you never sin.

Never make a mistake. No matter what people do to you, you never sin. You do that all, not most of the time, all through your life.

And then when you die, you go to heaven and say move over. Now there's two of us. Now that's perhaps a little irreverent humor, but it gets the point across.

Plan B is that, hey, we can't do it. I've not only read the Ten Commandments, and I recognize those are not suggestions. They're called commandments, right? And if I fail to get the message in Exodus 20, when

I get to Matthew 5, 6, and 7, I know I'm in trouble because the Lord reinterprets this as not only the deeds, it's the thoughts of your heart.

Let me tell you, if you really knew the thoughts of my heart on some occasions, you wouldn't come to my Bible studies. You'd throw stones. No, the real message of the Scripture from Genesis on is that we can't make it by our own efforts.

There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. What is the basis? His completed work on our behalf. Now the amazing insight is our attempts to add to that is blasphemy.

Does that mean we shouldn't do works? No, obviously you should do good works, but not in attempt to earn anything. Because your attempt to earn position with the Lord by anything you might do is to declare that the position you have by faith in Christ is inadequate. That's blasphemy.

That sounds glib, academic stuff, but it's apparently pretty serious because it got Cain not only perished, but made an example for you and I that we should not perish that way. How? By bringing the works of our hands to the altar of God? Something wrong with that? Yes. Not by our judgment, but by God's preferences.

He wants offerings by faith, not works. That's what the way of Cain is all about. The blasphemy of God by declaring his salvation incomplete through our attempting to add something to it.

You can't add anything to the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Nothing. No matter what you do.

What's the ultimate you give your life? That's not yours anyway. You didn't do that, he did. Sorry to get into this whole business about life after death.

It's life after birth that's the problem. But that's another issue. Anyway, that's Cain.

Faith versus works. That theme goes throughout the whole scripture, but it starts right here, Cain and Abel. Amply dealt with in Paul's epistles in many ways, but somehow the graphic finality of Cain's situation is perhaps to me the thing that brings that home.

Cain was not saved. Abel was. They both brought offerings.

Both were believers. One saved, one not. One followed God's instructions.

One chose his own way. Although it sounds good, it didn't work. Okay, the next thing is the error of Balaam.

And of course the Greek there says they ran riotously or had been poured forth. Rampage. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

But who is this character called Balaam? Strange, strange character. We find his tale essentially in Numbers 22 on. Numbers 22.

We don't know a lot about this guy. He sort of shows up and he's a character. Now, the basic thrust of the story of Balaam is that he was a prophet.

He wasn't a false prophet in the sense of posing as a prophet. He was a prophet. Had a gift.

Had a communication channel. And I don't think we'll take the time to try to study Balaam in total. He's an interesting character.

He has some interesting prophecies. Just to skip ahead, which has nothing to do with the story, but to give you a flavor of Balaam, because you're going to talk a lot about the bad stuff, let me tell you some of the more interesting things. Chapter 24, verse 15.

And he took up this parable and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, the man whose eyes are open hath said, he hath said, who heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, who saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not near. There shall come, get this phrase, a star out of Jacob.

This is Balaam's star. Some scholars believe this is some link to what we call the Christmas star. And a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

And I don't want to go into this, because this is peripheral, but the point is, Balaam had some prophecies. Some of them are important. He's an interesting character.

But Balaam is best known for his major screw-ups. He was greedy for gold, and he ends up getting hired by the enemies of God to curse them. Okay.

Now, he is warned not to do this. See, verse 22, we have verse 1. The children of Israel set forth, and they are encamped in the plains of Moab, on this side of the Jordan by Jericho. And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw that all Israel had done to the Amorites.

And Moab was very much afraid of the people, because there were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel, and so on. So, verse 5, he sends messengers to Balaam.

And he says, Behold, the people come out of Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide in it. He's heard all the stories.

He's nervous. Verse 6, Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse for me this people. For they are too mighty for me.

Perhaps I shall prevail, and we may smite them, that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blessed is blessed, and whom thou cursed is cursed. Now, that's kind of interesting.

This is what, in logic, we'd call post hoc ergo propter hoc. Because this comes after, therefore, it's caused by. It's an error in logic.

An example is, you know, you do statistical studies, say, and you find out that people in college that don't smoke get better grades. Let's assume for the moment that that's a statistically verifiable thing. Well, that doesn't mean that smoking causes bad grades.

It just means that two may be caused by a third factor, some personality profile or something. You with me? Because one thing follows another doesn't mean that that is caused by the other. That's a classic error in reasoning.

You'll hear it. Because Balaam is blessing something, when he blesses them to get blessed, it doesn't mean that his announcing it caused it, you know. I often see this in corporate staff meetings.

The comptroller presents the profitable results for the quarter, and you get the impression that the financial people produce it. No, it's the poor guys on the line that produce the profits. The guys just happen to measure it.

There's two kinds of people in a company, those that make the money and those that count it, I often say. That always gets to be very popular with the accountants and the financial people. I often point out, you know, accountancy is the only profession where creativity is a punishable offense.

They don't like that either. These are chiefs. You can unite any line group by either picking on the accountants or the lawyers.

You know, that's easy. But that's, I'm getting off the subject. Anyway, Balaam is saying here, For whom thou bless is blessed, and whom thou curse is cursed.

And the elders of Moab and the children and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand. And they came unto Balaam. In other words, they brought their trophies and the prizes and the prize money and such.

And spoke unto him the words of Balak. And he said unto him, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me. And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

And God came unto Balaam. See, there's communication going on here. And said, What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balaak, the son of Zipporah, the king of Moab, has sent me saying, And he goes through the story here.

And God said in verse 12 to Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed. God tells Balaam, Hey, guy, you can't perform that mission.

In other words, they're willing to pay you a fee if you give them a bad report, but your report will be wrong. They're going to be, you know, people are going to be blessed. And Balaam rose up in the morning and said unto the princes of Balaak, Get you into your land, for the Lord refused to give me leave to go with you.

So Balaam's first step is to try to be obedient, it seems. Prince Moab rose up and went to the king, King Balaak, the head of Moab, and said, Balaam refused to come with us. And Balaak said, again, princes, more and more honorable than they.

So he sends more senior guys and probably, I'm assuming, with more money. He came to Balaam and said unto him, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me, for I will promote thee unto a very great honor. And I will do whatever thou sayest unto me.

Come, therefore, I pray thee, and curse for me this people. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balaak, If Balaak would give me this house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, and so forth. Now, therefore, I pray you, Tarry ye here also this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more.

He's going to try again. He's not going to give up. He's going to pester the Lord to go.

Verse 20, And God came to Balaam at night and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them. And yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. So now he's, you can go,

but you better tell him what I told you, right? Balaam rose up in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

God's anger was kindled because he went. In other words, you get the impression here that God says, Okay, if you must go, go, but you can't give the message that they want you to give. But God's even upset that Balaam didn't get the hint, right? God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.

Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. This is fun, verse 20. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand.

And the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. And Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. In other words, his donkey isn't going to go forward.

He's turning off because he sees the angel of the Lord with a sword drawn. We'll come back to him in a minute. Verse 24, But the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side.

So there's a place you can't turn away, right? And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. Understandably. How many people have that? Horses do that.

They always get you near a low branch or something, you know. So Balaam is getting upset. And the angel of the Lord went further, verse 26, and stood in a narrow place where there's no way to turn either to the right or to the left.

And when the ass saw that the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? Balaam said unto the ass, I have no idea what Balaam's reaction was to having this donkey speak to him. Because thou hast mocked me, there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill thee.

And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon whom thine has ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. I'm sorry, that's hard not to do with a little... Bill Cosby's got some more material here in the book of Numbers, I think. He could have fun with this one.

Verse 31, Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me. The ass saw me and turned me these three times, unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee and saved her alive.

He doesn't mess around. Who is he? This angel allows himself to be worshipped. Is there any angel that allows himself to be worshipped? Only one, and he's in a lot of trouble over it.

The angel of the Lord is a phrase that most of us ascribe, and I think with some justification, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the interesting cross-reference here would be Joshua chapter 5, before the battle of Jericho, where Joshua's presumably on sentry duty, and he sees that he's challenged. He sees the angel

of the Lord with a sword drawn, and he challenges him like a son.

Are you for us or our enemies? He says, take off your shoes, you're on hallowed ground. And Joshua realizes who it is, takes off his shoes. Why that phrase? Because it was the same phrase he used out of the burning bush.

Joshua didn't fight the battle of Jericho, Jesus Christ did. And the last part of Joshua 5 goes into that. But from Daniel and John and other passages, we know that angels never allow themselves to be worshipped.

They obviously accept Satan, which got them in a lot of trouble. And obviously when the phrase is used of the angel of the Lord, meaning as an Old Testament presentation of a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. Not free of dispute, but a widely held view among biblically fundamental scholars.

Anyway, Balaam is allowed to go on, and he blesses then Israel rather than curses them, which displeases his hirers. But basically, he is a hireling. He was warned not to go.

He was not satisfied with this answer. Made further requests. Give him permission, but not to allow anything but blessings.

Moses summarizes this for us in Deuteronomy 23. You might rather than wander through this whole story, let's kick ahead to Deuteronomy. You can do that at your leisure.

Deuteronomy 23. Chapter 23 is an interesting chapter. Let's just pick up a few verses of it, show you there's tidbits everywhere.

Deuteronomy 23. He who is wounded in the stones, or hath privy, membered, cut off, shall not enter the house of the congregation. A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

That verse you might mark and link it to Ruth 4, when the blessing is pronounced in the house of Phares. He's a bastard son of Tamar. What kind of blessing is that? Well, because the bastard son cannot enter until the tenth generation, the tenth generation from Phares was David.

That's a prophecy of David. You won't get that out of Ruth 4 unless you understand verse 2 of Deuteronomy 23. But moving on to verse 3. It talks about Ammonite, the Moabites, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever, because they met not with bread and water with this day, when ye came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee, Balaam the son of Peor, of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee. And then Moses goes on. That's your little summary of Balaam's error.

Okay? It gets worse, gang. Balaam, you figure, geez, kind of off balance, but what harm can come of that? Well, he's not through yet. He obviously got deprived of the rewards that King Balak of Moab was going to offer him.

So Haskovitch's heart conceives a plan. He couldn't execute the mission that Balak had laid out for him, so he comes up with another idea. You recall they were camped by the borders of Moab.

Balaam's done his homework. He knows the laws of Judaism. He knows what Israel's rules are.

He assumes that if he can get Israel to sin, and God can't bless Israel, he'll have to curse them. It's a very interesting thing, because with that spiritual insight, he weaves a plan to get carnal reward, because he goes to Israel's enemies, King Balak, and suggests that what they do is get their good-looking gals along the border to entice the Israeli guys into cross-marrying, which was forbidden for Israel. They were supposed to stay separate.

And so by getting the gals to get them to compromise that commitment, God would have to curse Israel. And if God punishes Israel, Balak's purpose would be served, and Balaam would be rich. And if you go into Numbers 25, you find that it worked.

Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. Verse 2, They called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people that eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined herself unto Baal-peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

He's kindled against Israel because they're being disobedient. They're compromising their commitment of separation, that he called them to. How did that get all engineered? By Israel's enemies.

How did they get that insight? From Balaam's counsel. So that's the error. And it works.

And you find it happening here, and you pop over to, say, Numbers 31. 31.15, Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor. And there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. Moses didn't mess around. So they deal with it.

And I won't take the time to tell you, we'll use all our evening if I go into all this, but you get the gist of it. And you can track that down. Now, you will find that in the scripture there are three phrases that surface.

And some people make a distinction between the three. I'm not sure it's valid or that critical, but I should share it with you. The error of Balaam, that's the phrase Jude uses, and that's generally regarded as the natural reasoning that God could not fail to curse a disobedient people.

Seeing the immorality in Israel, the error of Balaam was that God couldn't by grace respond to that. That's one view. 2 Peter 2.15 makes reference to this and calls it the way of Balaam.

And that tends to focus there on the very fact that a prophet is holding out his gift for hire. That's called the way of Balaam. His style was to sell his services.

But the error is perhaps more closely linked with another phrase that we find in the book of Revelation, chapter 2. Revelation chapter 2, verse 14, deals with the letter to the church of Pergamos. Now, if you remember the cycle of the seven letters, you have the church of Ephesus, the first love that was lost, right? Smyrna, the suffering church, right? And then the third one is Pergamos. That's the marriage to the world.

You know what bigamy means, double marriage. Pergamos means mixed marriage. Okay, so the names themselves, if you remember that study, are significant.

Smyrna means mur, crushed, so forth, the suffering church. Pergamos is the church married to the world. And here the Lord Jesus Christ, in writing a letter to the church at Pergamos, says many things, but he gets to the verse 14.

He says, chapter 2, verse 14, But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam. The doctrine of Balaam. What's the doctrine of Balaam? Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication.

The Lord Jesus Christ is using in his letter to the seven churches an allusion that we've just read from the book of Numbers about Balaam and his whole screwy business with Balak and Moab. These aren't little quaint stories that are ancient traditions. They really happened.

And the Lord Jesus Christ himself uses that event to make a spiritual point to a future church, a whole era, in which the church becomes married to the world, whose leadership caused them to stumble by eating things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication, spiritual fornication. And from that you can go on to your Revelation study. Now, what happened to Balaam? Balaam took the way of Cain, lived riotously afterward.

He got his reward from Balak, so he scored, but perished miserably with the enemies of God at the last. And you can read that record in Joshua chapter 13, where he gets his. The error of Balaam for hire, Jude talks about, sacrificing the eternal riches for temporal gain, lust for the pleasures of sin for a season, the greed for the treasures of Egypt.

Phrased out of Hebrew 11.25 and Mark 8.36. Just before Jude in 2 Timothy 4.10, Demas left Paul, having loved this present world. The passion for worldly enticements to interfere with your eternal riches. You know, many times people say, well, what's wrong with doing X? That's not the question.

What's right about it? I don't care whether you're talking about anything, a hobby, an interest. The issue is, does it get in the way of your relationship with Jesus Christ? Things don't have to be great momentous sins to separate you from God. A light touch on the things of this world.

That's our challenge. Well, to keep moving, we have now the next illusion. We have Cain, we've had Balaam.

The third one is Korah. Now, the first thing that strikes me about Korah, it's a little strange, it's out of order. Because Korah, we'll discover, is really in number 16, not 22.

So, for some reason, Jude is taking them in a different order. You would think, if you're going chronologically, you'd say, gee, there's Cain, there's Korah, and there's Balaam. But Jude, or through the Holy Spirit, turns it around, so there's Cain, Balaam, and then Korah.

Because by doing that, it validates, illustrates, if you will, a process that occurs. Cain, the way of Cain. The error of Balaam.

What's the next thing? The rebellion of Korah. Now, in the Bible, it may say the gainsaying of Korah. Some of your older translations may have that.

Speaking against. The word in the Greek is antilogia, which actually means against the word. Which is kind of interesting.

There's maybe a very intentional pun there. Who was Korah? He was a Levite, cousin to Moses. You can find his background in Exodus chapter 6. Now, the real issue here was, under his leadership, he and his associates, Dathan and Abiram, rejected God's appointed mediator.

Moses had been appointed by God, and Dathan, Abiram, and Korah were the trio that led a rebellion against Moses' leadership. Now, what's so wrong with that? Well, first of all, they're rebelling against a type of Christ. And that's part of the mission for us.

Now, they may not have realized that, but we need to realize that. Now, they made some mistakes. They dared to think that all are holy.

Let's take a look at number 16. It's time to get into the text there. Number 16.

Verse 1, Korah the son of Ishar, and the son of Kohath, and the son of Levi, and Dathan, that's Edward G. Robinson, for those of you that remember the movie, and Abiram, and sons of Eliab, and On, and the son of Peleth, and the sons of Reuben, took men. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, 250 princes of the assembly. Hey, we're talking a big crowd here.

How many people came out of Egypt? Probably a million. That's a lot of people. I don't know how many of you have ever been involved with a large group.

You may say some of those military rules are a little strange, but if you've got several hundred people to get orderly, they work, because they've got rules and things. And if you've ever taken a tour group of a couple hundred people, it gets complicated to move them to an airport, let alone across the Sinai. And we're not talking a few hundred, we're talking a million people.

And excuse me if this is an ethnic slur, but they were Jewish. Have you ever been to Israel? And I'm not being racist here. I think David Ben-Gurion made that crack.

You know, in terms of trying to find a people to rule, you couldn't do worse. And Moses, if you studied Moses and his conversation with God, you'd say, hey, this was your idea. I didn't ask for these people.

A million people, so they had princes. And there's 250 princes that rebelled. They rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel.

250 princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. These are the heroes. They had standing.

They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, Ye take too much upon you. Seeing all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Being a little presumptuous there, Moses. Are all sons of God? Jesus Christ didn't think so in John 8. Year of your father the devil, he says to the Pharisees. That was Jesus Christ's comment on the brotherhood of man.

We love that idea that we're all part of one family. No, that tragically is not true. Most of us in this room, I hope, are members of the forever family of God, and they are a small minority and a separate part from the world.

Not all are holy. Is a mediator, one, Moses, in this case, is he needed? I think so. He was a type.

What happened in John 14.6? Jesus Christ said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the father but by me. Heavy words.

Often quoted. Very pleasant. Stop and think what they say.

One way. Is the cross really necessary? Boy, there's lots of answers to that, but I'm repeatedly drawn into Matthew chapter 26. I've been skipping some of the background stuff here, but I think this is one I really want to get into because it affects you and I every day.

We all ponder this strange, rigorous, narrow concept of the cross. Is the cross really necessary? I'd like you to travel with me from Matthew chapter 26, verse 36 for a few verses. We're talking Gethsemane here, the olive grove at the base of the Mount of Olives, just across from what we call the Golden Gate, the entrance to the temple.

They've left. They've crossed the valley. They're at this place, which apparently was one of their favorite places in the evening to pray.

And come with Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemane, which means the oil press. That's an interesting pun, too, isn't it? And say unto his disciples, sit here while I go and pray. Yonder he took with him Peter and the two sons of Israel.

In other words, Peter, James, and John are the insiders. They get to go in a little closer. And began to get very sorrowful and very depressed.

And by the way, how many were left alone? Peter, James, John, how many were left behind? Eight. Good for you. How many people were in the ark? May not have anything to do with anything, but I'll leave you with that to wonder.

Verse 38. Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. Those are heavy words.

Don't let their familiarity mislead you. Look at them. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.

Let's carry here and watch with me. And he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, get this prayer. Listen carefully to what he's saying.

If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Did he know what was coming? You bet. He's known it for a long time.

He's finally announced it to them. I'm going to Jerusalem and will suffer death. Does he know what's going to come that evening? Does he know what's coming the next morning? Does he know what the next day is going to bring? Yes.

Does he welcome it? No. And I'm not trying to take anything away from his commitment to us. Don't misread me.

But he prays, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Satan offered him that and the temptations. He turned it down.

Satan said, hey, take a shortcut. Worship me and we'll pass all this stuff. I'll give you all the people and all the nations and the kingdoms and all this stuff.

Interesting. He never challenged Satan's ownership of it. Went the hard way.

But he gets to the final hour. He says, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, what a wonderful word.

Underline that in your Bible. I'm sure glad that's there. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Translated into English, there's no other way. Moving on. He cometh to the disciples and finds them asleep.

And we always focus on the sleep issue. They didn't stay awake. He wakes them and he goes and prays again.

In the story here, we often don't notice what he prays three times. He says, the disciples watch and pray. He entered out in temptation.

The Spirit is willing, but the profession is weak. Then he went again and prayed the second time and said, let's quote it again, verse 42. O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.

Same essential concept. Then he came and found them asleep again. Left them and went away again.

And prayed a third time saying the same words. If there's any other way for anybody ever to get into heaven other than the way of cross, Jesus Christ died in vain and his prayer was not answered. That's heavy.

It's not very attractive. We like to somehow feel that the way is bigger than that. But that's not what he said.

Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to salvation. Broad is the gate that leads where? You're going through a gate with lots of other people and everybody's welcome. You got the wrong gate.

So Korah and these guys have rebelled against Moses. They didn't feel that, you know, that Moses had some special ordination. They're going to get a lesson in the ordination of Moses, if you will, in Numbers chapter 16 starting about verse 31.

Let's begin by verse 28. It's kind of funny. Moses said, verse 28, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works.

Do I have your attention, guys? Moses says. For I have not done them out of my own mind. If these men die a common death of all men, and if they be visited upon the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me.

But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open up her mouth and swallow them up with all that pertains to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. Not to worry. And it came to pass, as he finished speaking, all these words of the ground split open that was under them.

And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. And their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korah, and their goods, how many were there? Three? No. Two hundred and fifty plus buddies.

They and all that pertained to them went down, and this is an interesting word to me, they went down alive into Sheol. I mean the more they were alive when they started. But I think it's an interesting phrase.

And the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. Now that's what I call a climactic finish. Jude places Korah third, because by doing that Cain, Balaam, and Korah describe a process.

They choose a way, they rush headlong into that way, and perish at the end. One of the interesting things that I'm fascinated by the book of Jude is its craftsmanship. The Holy Spirit skillfully picks every word and has structured this precisely.

We shouldn't leave this without talking about the grand apostasy, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. All of this that Jude's talking about is prophetic. And I'll take just a quick look at it now. It's familiar to you I'm sure, but it's an appropriate place to take a quick look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. And it's hard to pick this off because it's full of the great apostasy led by what we sometimes call the antichrist, the man of sin.

Verse 3, Let no man deceive you by any means that that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, that the man of sin may be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalteth himself above all that is called God or is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Now the temple of God is a specific thing and so on. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things, and he goes on here.

Let's pick it up about verse 8. Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. But that's a flash future if you will, not a flash back but a flash forward. Assuming you understand that's ultimately going to happen to him.

Verse 9, Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders. That's a heavy sentence. This guy's not a phony.

This guy's not a charlatan. He's not pretending to have power. He's not pretending to do phony miracles.

With all power and signs and lying wonders. Those are the same Greek words used of the miracles in the Gospels. You're going to have supernatural gifts.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should receive the lie. Proper, put a definite article there.

It's not a lie, the lie. The ultimate lie. That they might be judged to believe not the truth and had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The same process shows here. And they were contrasted with us who have chosen from the beginning. So the only way you get through all of this is to be supernaturally elected by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So there's an ultimate super apostasy yet coming that I think is very close that we're on the threshold of. And that's why spending some time in what the scripture says about apostasy is worthwhile. We've taken a large time on verse 11.

Now we're going to quickly pick up verses 12 and 13. Just to keep the momentum going here. We started to do that.

Take one verse for an hour and a half and then two verses for ten seconds. But that's okay. Verses 12 and 13 are not that hard.

That's why we're going to just flow with this. But they have five word pictures occur here. Let's read verses 12 and 13.

There are spots in your love. These, he's speaking again apostasy. The whole subject is apostasy.

These are spots in your love feast. The word spots is unfortunate here. The word is actually rocks.

In the sense of hidden rocks to a mariner. If you're sailing, the Greek word there is the rock that you don't see but ends up being your shipwreck. These are spots in your love feast.

They're the agape feast. They met to fellowship and have feasts. These guys came to eat and plunder in effect.

They didn't come to the church social to fellowship and share Christ. They came because the potluck was great. Okay, that's the flavor.

When they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. That's the first thing. These hidden rocks.

I'll come back to them. Second one. Clouds are they without water carried about by the winds.

Clouds are for what? For rain. These are clouds that are carried about by the wind that offer deceit. They don't have water.

That's the second one. Third one. Trees whose fruit withereth without fruit twice dead plucked up by the roots.

I'll come back to these. Fourth one. Raging waves of the sea foaming out their shame.

And the fifth one. Wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Two verses with five very articulate graphic images concatenated in there.

These are the hidden rocks in your love feast when they feast without fear. They're clouds without water carried about by the winds. They're trees whose fruit withereth without fruit twice dead plucked up by the roots.

Raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame. Wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Great.

Let's look at that briefly. Five things. Hidden rocks, waterless clouds.

Now the word for trees, by the way, the Greek is a combination of the word for autumn and the word to wane. These are late autumn trees. Now you and I aren't normally agricultural.

What does that mean? That's where they're without fruit. In fact, let's go through these first. The hidden rocks.

The Greek term here implies reefs below the ocean threatening safe navigation. Rocks that are known are not as big a problem. These rocks are hidden.

So they perform a threat. People among us in the fellowship who really aren't of the body of Christ. The agape feast thing, if you want to research that, is in 1 Corinthians 11.

You can look at that. There's a phrase in verse 21 that deals with that. The second example was clouds without water.

Now this is the deceit and discouragement for the thirsty of a cloud without water is in contrast to Luke 12 and so forth, clouds that have water, that are the living water and so forth. Without water also it suggests dry places and in Matthew 12, 43, that's where evil spirits are said to wander, in the dry places. Right? Clouds, it says here, they're carried aside by the winds.

The word winds is the wind in the Old Testament is ruach, in the New Testament is numah. The same word is used for spirit. Wind and spirit, same words used.

These guys are carried about by the winds. Why? Because they're bond slaves to Satan. Romans 6, 16, John 3, 8, a couple of places to look at that.

By the way, a cloud doesn't go where it pleases. It goes where the winds carry it. And these guys are, these are waterless clouds carried by the wrong winds.

The third thing was the autumn trees. Now we have this concept of the harvest. Believers are gathered into his barn in Matthew 13, right? Others are rooted up and transgressors rooted out.

That's in Matthew 15 and Proverbs 2, 22, and other places. The other phrase that occurs here, can't help but catch your eye, is twice dead. Jude uses the phrase in here about these trees, fruit withereth without fruit, twice dead plucked up by the roots.

What do you mean twice dead? Well, several things. They're dead to the fruit of profession and they're dead to the root of possession. They're dead to the fruit of profession.

They didn't bear fruit, so they're dead in that sense. They're also dead in the sense of root of possession. They're rooted up.

They have no possession. They're no longer there. And that's 1 Timothy 5, 6, for those of you who want to chase that idea.

Perhaps more provocative to all of us is Revelation 20, 14, which speaks of the second death. The scripture speaks of two deaths. Now we know from 1 Thessalonians that the architecture of man is at least tripartite.

Spirit, right? Soul and body. Natural death that you and I are aware of, would be the separation of the soul and the body. Spiritual death would be the separation of the soul and the spirit.

All of us have two deaths. It's important which order they come. You and I, our second death was taken care of at the cross.

So the death that remains has no fear to us. Tragic it is for those who's got it in the wrong order, whose second death is final. That's what Revelation talks so articulate about.

And you get that in Revelation 20, when we'll keep moving here. Now the contrast of these trees would be trees planted by the rivers of living water. In Psalm 1, 3. Jeremiah 17, 7 and 8. He goes on here and talks about wild waves.

Now the sea is repeatedly used in the scripture of the unsaved. Isaiah 57, 20 and 21. The wicked are like this troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

Idiomatically, the sea is always used of humanity in its crass, self-serving, unhappy state. A couple of other observations. Psalm 104, 9 says that God has imposed limits on the sea.

Luke 10, 19 says nothing shall hurt you. And 1 Peter 2, 12 says all to account to his glory. In Psalm 89, 9, he rebukes and stills the seas.

He rules and stills the sea. Matthew 8, 26 is where he has the storm. He rebukes the sea.

Interesting phrase. Who's causing that storm? Satan. There's a lot going on behind the scenes.

You have to look carefully to notice. And this whole theme of the sea, you can carry forward. And many people make a big mystical thing out of it.

It's kind of interesting that there's more going on there than maybe you and I are generally aware of. But what's fascinating, what seems to substantiate that viewpoint, that rather mystical viewpoint, in Revelation 21, 1, in the new world, new heaven, new earth, one of the observations made is that there was no more sea. So, speaking idiomatically, there's something negative consistently used about that idiom.

In any case, these apostates are raging waves in the sea, foaming out their own shame. And the final example he uses is wandering stars. Now, the phrase here implies meteorites.

That's the term that they would use in those days because they're, you know, like wandering, you know, falling stars. What is a falling star? It's a meteorite. Its illumination is derived.

It flashes brilliantly for a brief time. Right? And if you'll excuse the Missler translation, that then makes an ash of itself. Okay? Sorry.

Stars are in orbits ordained by their creator. Judges 5.20. These are not. These are wandering stars, as opposed to stars in orbit.

That's the concept. Okay. It says they are destined for the blackness of the outer darkness forever.

Matthew 8.12. I think this is very interesting because we're discovering black holes. Black holes. Certain stars have a certain gravity.

If the characteristics are such that there's enough mass, that there's enough gravity, it'll collapse because the gravity of the star causes it to collapse. And if there's enough mass there, it collapses enough to become very, very dense. As the density increases, the gravitational forces increase, and the thing is, in a sense, circular.

It finally gets to the point so that it gets so intensely gravitational and strong that even light can't leave. Anything that gets near it gets drawn into it. And so because of that, there's no radiation from these things.

In fact, neutron stars, there's a whole area you can get into, and I don't want to get, we're short for time to get into all of this, and it's a little distracting. But the point is, the existence of a black hole is a very provocative idea in physics and astronomy and astrophysics because you can't see them, but you can detect them by the absence of stuff that's there and so on. And they're finding ways to prove the existence of these things.

But what's really intriguing about this is that the black holes have no light because light can't escape from them. Anything that comes near to them gets drawn into it. And incidentally, the mathematics of it is such that it's believed that within them, time doesn't exist.

They're timeless. That's a whole other issue. Some feel they're time tunnels, and there's all kinds of cosmological speculations about them.

But it's very, very interesting to me, and you should be grateful I saved you tonight with a whole diatribe on black holes, which have nothing to do with this anyway. But it's interesting here that Jude says that these are wandering stars, not in orbit, but loose, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Isn't that interesting? These guys are destined for, at least spiritually speaking, black holes.

That's kind of fun, I think. Now, a couple of things here. Just a couple of observations that are interesting with these five graphs.

I'm leading somewhere, trust me. Hidden rocks, unseen danger. Waterless clouds, false promise.

Right? Autumnal trees, barren profession. Raging waves, wasted effort. Wandering stars, aimless course, ultimate perishing.

It's interesting to me to see these five, for not only are they poetically articulate ways of expressing the spiritual truth, they're in a very specific order. It's not obvious from the rocks. You read this, it's pretty articulate, kind of poetic language, and you move on.

You analyze it, the unseen danger, the false promise, the barren profession, wasted effort, aimless course, and destruction. It's, again, a process. This passage has been crafted masterfully.

Now, these five graphical ideas, poetically articulated, present the same downward degeneration that verse 11 started with. That's why I've tied this all together. The men were present at the Christian love feast.

They were carried away, fruitless, uprooted, dead, through shame. Outer darkness is their destiny. That's what those five things say.

Let me give you a couple more contrasts, and we've made it. I want you to contrast these five things with our Lord. Hidden rocks threatening shipwreck with the rock of our salvation.

Clouds without even a temporary blessing with he who comes with the clouds. The trees of death. This one's easy.

Tree of life. The restless troubled sea with he who leads beside still waters. The wandering stars in eternal darkness with the bright and morning star.

Interesting, isn't it? Whenever you do that, go one step further. Let's contrast these five with the believers in Christ, those who abide in Christ. These are dangerous rocks.

We are living stones. Verse Peter 2.5. These guys are waterless clouds. We are sources of living water.

John 7. The dead trees versus the tree of righteousness, Isaiah 61.3. Raging raves versus what we have seen all the time, right? Peace like a river. Let's use that. Isaiah 48.18. Wandering stars, in this case, look at Daniel 12.3. He says that we, those who in may righteousness, shall, what? Shine as the stars forever.

Those are stars in orbit. Those are not wandering stars, ultimately. Now, yes, there's points here.

You can dig this up for yourself. The point I'd like to leave you with is the craftsmanship that the Holy Spirit has woven into this text. Okay, so that's Jude 11, 12, and 13.

And we've run our time. I'm going to leave you with a Bible trivia piece for next time. If you know the answer, don't tell.

Make your friends dig it out for themselves. We all know that Methuselah was the oldest man in the Bible. Lived 969 years.

Yet he died before his father. Isn't that a dandy? Think about that. We will deal next time with Methuselah.

He's the oldest man in the Bible, yet he died before his father. And if you have a Bible friend, they get stumped on that. They'll immediately catch on when you recognize who was Methuselah's father.

Enoch. He obviously did not die. But we're going to discover some things in Genesis.

Next time, your lesson for next time is Genesis chapter 5. You're going to discover some amazing things out of the early chapters of Genesis next time. We're going to talk about Enoch. It's going to be fun.

That's one reason I wanted to do it this way, because I want to leave time for Enoch, who is one of the earliest prophets. He has a fascinating ministry that takes some digging to get what's really going on there. The story of Methuselah and Enoch is really provocative.

What's really interesting is a false book of Enoch, quotes from Jude, can cause a lot of confusion. There are several. In fact, there are three books of Enoch floating around the literature circuit.

That's apocryphal. There is a phrase a little different than the one in here. Many people think Jude took it from this ancient book of Enoch, except the ancient book of Enoch is a fraud.

I'll show you why it is from its own text next time. Don't waste your time in the apocryphal unless you're just a scholar of ancient texts and you like to spend time in dusty libraries. But we'll deal with that next time.

Enoch and Methuselah and that whole bit. I'm taking for granted that those of you in this room are not apostates. You wouldn't be here.

You would find better ways to spend your Monday nights than to come here. These things aren't that interesting. So why are we spending our time on this? Because if you're saved, I don't believe you can get unsaved.

I do think you have a commitment to abide in the Lord, and that's a whole other thing. We're talking about people here who really rejected the truth, having known it and then rejected it later. That's what an apostate is.

So why are we spending all this time? Yes, we get some insights in terms of our walk. I hope there's been some of that tonight. The way of Cain.

We should have new insights hopefully. The error of Balaam and the rebellion of Korah. Those are meaningful ideas even though we're not apostates.

But the real thing we want to do is understand apostasy because it is around us. It comes in attractive forms. It's easy to get confused.

And furthermore, it's going to be the characteristic environment of the end. We talk about prophecy. We look at the Soviet Union.

We look at the peace euphoria that's in the air. It's all prophesied. We look at Israel and what's going on in that land.

We look at Europe, what's going on there. All these things are consistent with our perceptions of biblical prophecy. But the stage that's going to really characterize the final chapter is a widespread, worldwide, global apostasy that will climax in the adulation of the man of sin.

For lots of reasons, some of which we sort of just skipped over in the interest of time. For lots of reasons, I believe we can demonstrate the church will not be here during the so-called tribulation period. That does not mean, though, that the whole stage setting won't be visible to us.

In fact, as you get tuned to this and sensitive to it, you will take a certain kind of encouragement by seeing the world fulfill its destiny by becoming what it's headed for. So that may sound very, very elliptical, perhaps almost a little sadistic, but don't misunderstand me. I think it's important for us as Christians to be informed and understand the signs of our times.

And that's what Jude is really aiming at. Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Father, we just praise you for this time.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for its illumination to our lives. We would ask you to increase in us an appetite for those things that you have for us.

Help us to be more sensitive to the importance of sound doctrine. Help us to be more in tune with your instructions for us as to how you would be worshipped, what it is you would have of us. For indeed, Father, we understand that we are called to obedience, our obedience to Christ.

We ask you, Father, to just fill us with your spirit. Go with us this week. Increase our hunger for these things.

And help us all to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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