

The Dangers of Falling Away From the Faith

Jude 5-11

Jude 5-11: *“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.⁶ And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”¹⁰ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”*

Background Notes

To whom did Jude write this book? We don't know, but the many references to Old Testament people and events indicate that the recipients of this epistle were Jewish Christians. Jude was writing for the purpose of exposing the false teachers who had already penetrated into the early Church. *“For certain men have crept in unnoticed... who turned the grace of our God into lewdness and deny our only Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ” (v4).*

These false teachers were not backsliders. They were *apostates*. A backslider is a true believer who has wandered away from the Lord and His Word. An apostate may profess to be a believer, but is not a true believer. Apostates have turned away from the truth, even though they may still be going to church. In this letter, Jude was writing about false teachers who were apostates.

In this portion, Jude gave three examples from the Old Testament to show how God judged those who turned away from the truth in the past. The first example is the generation that came out of Egypt, but perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Verse 5: *“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”*

The second example is the angels who left their proper domain. Verse 6: *“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”*

We believe that Jude was referring to the fallen angels mentioned in Genesis 6, before the Flood. Genesis 6:1-2: *“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”*

There are other interpretations for this passage, but a very strong biblical case can be made that these “sons of God” were fallen angels. It is believed that Jude was referring to the Genesis 6 “sons of God” in Jude v6. Verse 7 indicates that these fallen angels were involved in sexual sin. The Bible doesn’t reveal exactly how all of this took place, but presumably the angels, or “sons of God,” left their God-given position in the created order, took on the bodies of men, and committed this sin.

The third example of people who turned away from God and His truth was the people involved in the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities. Verse 7: *“As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* The people of Sodom and Gomorrah and those surrounding cities left God’s natural order for sexual practice, and were involved in gross immorality. For their defiance of God, they were judged then with fire from heaven, and they will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire in hell (v7).

In verses 8-10, Jude drew a parallel between these Old Testament examples and the false teachers of Jude’s day who had infiltrated the church. Verses 8 & 10 seem to leave no doubt that these false teachers were involved in sexual immorality: *“Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh”* and *“like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.”* Clearly Jude was drawing a parallel between the false teachers in the early church and the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. The same is true of many false teachers in the church today. You don’t have to look very far to see that false teaching and immorality go together.

The false teachers of Jude’s day not only rejected God in the moral area, but they rejected **all** authority. They showed no spiritual reverence. *“These dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries”* (v8).

“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (v9). This verse indicates that it is wrong to speak of the angelic ranks with scorn and contempt. These angelic realms are beyond our limited knowledge, and must be left to the Lord. These Gnostic false teachers thought they knew everything about the spiritual realms, but Jude said they were woefully ignorant.

Where did Jude get this information about Michael the archangel contending with the devil over the body of Moses? This information may have been Jewish tradition, but it is not found in the Old Testament. But remember - Jude was writing by

inspiration, so the information came directly from the Lord. All the historic information given by inspiration from God through the authors of the Bible is reliable!

Can you imagine the shrine (and the resulting false worship) that would have built up around Moses' tomb, if Satan had gained control over the location of Moses' body? God prevented that possibility when He buried Moses in the land of Moab, and no one knows the location of Moses' grave to this day (Deuteronomy 34:6).

Doctrinal Points

1. False teachers take the way of Cain.

Jude 11 - *"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain."* What is the "way of Cain"? Cain's way is thinking that people can approach God on the basis of human efforts. Remember, Cain tried to approach God on the basis of his own good works, rather than coming to God by the way of sacrifice.

Approaching God on the basis of human merit and good works is not **God's** way of salvation. There is no way that even the best of our good works could ever measure up to God's standard of perfection. Salvation is only found by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. He gave His life as the perfect Sacrifice. He died for our sins. That is God's way of salvation. Beware - false teachers take the way of Cain.

2. False teachers rush for profit into the error of Balaam.

Jude 11 - *"Woe to them! For they have... run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit."* The story of Balaam is found in Numbers 22-24. Balaam was a diviner, or mystic, who was hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel. But instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blessed Israel, and even spoke a Messianic prophecy. For this reason, some Bible teachers have a hard time condemning Balaam, but this passage in Jude makes it clear that Balaam was a false prophet.

On that occasion in the book of Numbers, God so controlled Balaam that he blessed Israel and uttered a true prophecy - even though he was not a true prophet of God. Read the whole account in Numbers. Balaam counseled King Balak to get Israel involved in idolatry and immorality - clearly not what a true prophet would advise. And it's obvious that Balaam was "in it for the money." He preached for profit. This is the error of Balaam that characterizes false teachers - in Jude's day and today.

There would be a lot fewer false teachers today if there was no money to be made in religion. As it is, there are big bucks to be made in religion today, and the false teachers know it. They preach what people want to hear and then collect the cash. False teachers rush for profit into the error of Balaam.

3. False teachers perish in the rebellion of Korah.

Verse 11 - *“Woe to them! For they have...perished in the rebellion of Korah.”* The account of Korah’s rebellion is found in Numbers 16. Korah, and the others who joined him, revolted against Moses and Aaron. Korah would not acknowledge that God had put Moses and Aaron into positions of authority over the nation of Israel. Korah was a Levite, but he was not satisfied just doing Tabernacle service - he wanted to be in a position of authority! As a result, God had to judge Korah and those who rebelled with him. They were swallowed up alive in an earthquake that God sent as judgment.

God hates insubordination and rebellion against the authority structures that He has set up, whether in the home or in the church. False teachers like to set themselves up as authorities. They hate to submit to any kind of spiritual authority, especially if it exposes their false teaching.

Look at religious false teachers who pose as authorities today. They appear on many of the talk shows as invited guests. Like the Gnostics false teachers of Jude’s day, they think and they speak arrogantly and authoritatively, as if they know everything - but in reality they are sadly ignorant of God and His Word!

God has His own ways of bringing these false teachers into judgment now - and they will certainly be judged at the final judgment. False teachers perish in the rebellion of Korah.

Practical Application

Don’t be a “prophet for profit.”

The sins of verse 11 were in reference to false teachers, but all true believers must be careful not to commit some of these sins. Take the error of Balaam, for example. Even true believers can end up preaching for profit.

Don’t fall into the trap of only preaching and teaching or sharing what people want to hear! It’s easy to fall into this trap if you’re looking for popularity or position - or if the people are paying your salary or an honorarium! So to those of you who are Bible study teachers or church leaders or pastors: remember, don’t be a “prophet for profit.”