

L 12 ... Unmasking Prophets for Profit

Jude 11-16

In this passage Jude continues to warn us about false teachers. A “journey into becoming an authentic Christian” requires knowing how to unmask prophets for profit. In these verses, Jude gives us **four** ways to do this. First is ...

Examine their company (11)

There is a lot of truth in the old saying: “Birds of a feather flock together.” Jude uses three Old Testament characters to identify false teachers.

Example #1: Cain. *Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain* ([11a](#)). The word *woe* is an exclamation of denunciation and impending doom ([Isa. 5:8-9](#); [1 Cor. 9:16](#)). In [Matthew 23](#), our Lord uses this word several times in His blistering sermon condemning the Pharisees. Cain, the firstborn child of Adam and Eve, is the first person in the Bible who chooses to reject God’s way of worship. As a result, he murders his brother Abel ([1 Jn 3:12c](#)).

Why, according to [1 John 3:12e](#)?

Cain was religious, but he wanted to worship God his own way. Just as Cain murdered his brother, false teachers murder people’s souls with their deceit. False teachers don’t care about their followers; they just want to worship God their own way—to get money.

Example #2: Balaam. False teachers and preachers run *greedily after the error of Balaam for reward* ([11b](#)). As already discussed in Lesson Five, Balaam is the only person in the Bible whom God rebukes through a donkey ([Num. 22:21-31](#)). Balaam was a spiritual mercenary hired by a pagan king, Balak, to curse the Israelites.

How does [Revelation 2:14c](#) describe his sin?

There are still many spiritual mercenaries who, because they love money, lead people into idolatry—teaching them to worship the idols of wealth and health.

Example #3: Korah’s rebellion ([11c](#)). Korah [Core] led a revolt against Moses and Aaron’s authority ([Num. 16](#)). By rebelling against God’s divinely appointed leaders, Korah and his 250 followers were actually rebelling against God. Therefore, Moses tells the Israelites God will give a sign that Korah and his followers *have provoked the LORD* ([Num. 16:30](#)).

As soon as Moses stops speaking, what happens ([Num. 16:31b-32](#))?

Like Korah, false teachers set themselves up against spiritual leaders who faithfully preach the Bible and condemn false teachers.

These three examples describe false teachers of all generations. Like Cain, they are without love. Like Balaam, they are greedy for money. Like Korah, they belittle and attack those who truly preach the Gospel. To unmask prophets for profit, **examine their company** and ...

Examine their content (12-13)

False teachers and preachers *are spots in your feasts of charity* ([12a](#)). The word translated *spots* (SPILAS, spee-las') means "hidden rocks" and refers to reefs of rock in the sea. The false teachers were like hidden reefs, ready to shipwreck believers. They attended the love *feasts*, which were intimate fellowship meals, and ate with believers *without fear* of judgment ([12b](#)).

False teachers are also like *clouds ... without water, carried about of winds* ([12c](#)). *Clouds* bring the promise of rain and are always a wonderful sight in dry climates like the Holy Land. However, false teachers are like *clouds* without rain; they profess to bring answers and hope, but they have nothing to offer.

How does [Proverbs 25:14](#) describe such charlatans?

Jude also describes false teachers as being like *trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots* ([Jude 12d](#)). Trees usually produce their fruit in the fall. False teachers are like fruit trees that look like they will give fruit but produce none. False teachers are *twice dead* because not only are they fruitless, but like fruitless *trees*, they will be uprooted and burned.

False teachers are also like *raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame* ([13a](#)). Have you ever seen polluted water and the scum it leaves on the shore? False teachers produce the scum of their *shame*. Jude might have gotten his illustration from [Isaiah 57:20](#).

Write it below:

False teachers are always *foaming out their own shame*, or scum, in the form of selfishness, greed, deceit, and immorality.

They are also described as *wandering stars*, or falling *stars* ([13b](#)). You may remember the song, "Catch a Falling Star and Put It in Your Pocket," made famous by Perry Como in 1957. In Jude's day, fixed stars were used for navigation, both on land and sea. False teachers are like *wandering*, or shooting, *stars* that offer no guidance or helpful directions.

Jude describes their end: *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever* ([13c](#)). Prophets for profit have reservations for the worst places in hell forever.

To unmask prophets for profit, **examine their company, examine their content**, and ...

Examine their condemnation (14-15)

Jude writes, *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied* about these false prophets ([14a](#)). We don't know much about Enoch, but from what we do know, he was a wonderful follower of God.

God was so pleased with Enoch, what does [Genesis 5:24](#) record about him?

Enoch was a preacher of righteousness in the wicked era before the Flood. He faithfully walked with God for over 300 years ([Gen. 5:22](#)). Only Jude tells us what Enoch preached: *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, ¹⁵To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him* (14c-15).

Enoch's prophecy was fulfilled in the Flood during the time of Noah. However, it is clear this prophecy also refers to God's judgment at the end of time. Our Lord says when the end comes, the world will be as the time of Noah ([Mt 24:37](#)).

At that time, what will Jesus do ([Matthew 13:41](#))?

To unmask prophets for profit, **examine their company, content, condemnation**, and ...

Examine their character (16)

Jude concludes this section with more descriptions of false teachers.

- 1. They are *murmurers, complainers*** ([16a](#)). This describes people who complain about those who faithfully proclaim God's Word.
- 2. They follow *after their own lusts*** ([16b](#)). They have an insatiable lust for sensuality and monetary gain.
- 3. They speak *great swelling words*** ([16c](#)). They use an impressive religious vocabulary that makes them sound super-spiritual.
- 4. They have *men's persons in admiration because of advantage*** ([16d](#)). They flatter people to get what they want. They are amazingly good at telling people what they selfishly want to hear, making it all sound spiritual. Paul warns the time will come when people will not tolerate *sound doctrine* and will have *itching ears* ([2 Tim. 4:3a](#) & c).

How does the rest of that verse describe them?

Prophets for profit flatter people who have *itching ears* by telling them God wants them to be rich. In addition, people are told that by sending money to these “prophets,” they can get much more money in return. They spiritualize greed and selfishness to make it sound Christian.

To unmask prophets for profit,

EXAMINE THEIR COMPANY,

CONTENT, CONDEMNATION,

CHARACTER.