

Jude: Defend the Faith
The Truth about False Teachers

Jude 1:11-13

May 28, 2023

HDBC

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. James 3:1

Every person who accepts the challenge to teach spiritual truth brings upon himself a strict accountability. I teach 3 times a week. Occasionally more. Each time I have the responsibility to be accurate in what I say.

It is a solemn responsibility to stand and teach the word of God. Those who do it faithfully will be blessed. But those who use the position of teacher to lead people astray will come under **strict condemnation**. They will one day **answer to the Lord**.

Jude has some strong words for these teachers. He doesn't water down his sentiments, which are really the sentiments of the Holy Spirit who inspired this letter. As we read these severe words remember that this is a good indication of how strongly God feels about false teaching.

Jude begins by saying **Woe to them**. It is a pronouncement of **ultimate spiritual judgment** on these false teachers. Jude **presents illustrations** from two sources to help us understand the nature of false teachers and the dangers they present.

1. Illustrations from History (11)

In three illustrations we see some of the root sins that motivate false teachers. They were not simply misunderstanding the truth. They were deliberately rebelling against the authority of apostolic teaching to do their own thing. Jude also points out that God deals decisively with rebellion.

1) Cain

Cain stands forever as the man who thought only of himself. He had no concern for his brother, and in fact put him to death. This kind of **selfish jealousy** is a **first step on the way to rebellion**.

2) Balaam

The heart of Balaam's problem was **greed**. He was motivated by money and the desire to get more of it regardless of the cost.

His is a fascinating story found in Numbers but also referenced in the N. T. Hired by a pagan king, Balak, to curse the people of Israel. Balak was afraid of Israel and superstitiously felt that a prophet could put a curse on them. Balaam agreed to go but had an interesting journey.

As he was riding along, his donkey balked because he saw the angel of God blocking the way. Balaam could not see the angel. This happened three times. The third time Balaam began to beat the donkey. **God then had a little fun with Balaam**, allowing the donkey to speak with a human voice in order to rebuke the prophet.

God allowed him to proceed to Balak. Three times he was called upon to curse the Israelites and three times he blessed them instead. Balak was furious, but powerless. **That should have been the end of the story. Sadly, it is not.** His actions led the Israelites into sin.

Immediately after Balaam's ministry

Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way. While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So, Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. Numbers 24:25 – 25:3

New Testament adds to Balaam's condemnation.

Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. **2 Peter 2:15-16**

In return for money, Balaam led the people into sin. To lead someone else into sin is much worse than simply sinning yourself. Jesus said, *it*

would be better for him [by whom temptations come] if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. That was the error of Balaam.

The thing that leaps out at you in that story is **the greed of this man.**

3) **Korah**

Korah was one of the ones who said to Moses and Aaron, *who do you think you are, making yourselves the leaders of Israel? We are as good as you; we have as much authority as you have in Israel. What makes you think you have the right to speak for God?* (Num 16:3).

He openly and blatantly challenged the God-given authority of Moses and Aaron. Do you remember what happened to them? God said, *look, Korah and your group, you stand over there. Moses and the rest of you, stand over here. I'll show you what is going to happen.*

Suddenly the ground opened beneath Korah and his group, and they went down alive into the pit. This was God's dramatic way of saying *defiance of God-given authority represents ultimate sin.* The influence of Korah and his group had spread among many of the people. So much so that in the aftermath of the initial judgment, an additional 14,700 Israelites died from a plague sent by God.

These point to the sins that motivate false teachers. Jude then offers illustrations from nature. These offer insight into the danger of FTs.

2. Illustrations from Nature (12-13)

1) **Hidden Reefs**

These people are *blemishes in your love feasts.* Love feasts were potluck suppers. In the early church, the Christians would gather and bring the food with them to the service on Sunday. After the service, they would all partake together, and they **called this a love feast.**

Love Feast. What a blessed name! I like potluck suppers, but I do not like the name. I am physically opposed to the first syllable and

theologically opposed to the second. But love feast! Now there is a term for you!

Those love feasts were wonderful times for fellowship, bringing the people together and building relationships. These false teachers were participating, blending in, building confidence, and causing the people to trust them. But they were like hidden reefs.

What is the problem with a hidden reef? Unseen danger to ships. A reef is an undersea coral formation which is usually found close to shore. They can rip open the bottom of a ship and cause them to wreck. This is exactly what happened on **Paul's trip to Rome, the ship in which he was traveling struck a reef and began to break up, threatening the safety of all who were on board.** The fellowship of the body was in danger of shipwreck because of these men.

2) **Clouds Without Water**

These false leaders are promising life-giving rain but producing none. They promise life with their words, but cannot produce it, for their message is not the truth. Offer hope but not life.

3) **Trees Without Fruit**

Similar to the clouds with no water. Not only do they produce no fruit, but they are uprooted, and thus, dead. No true fruit from their ministries. Like plastic apples hanging on a dead tree. From a distance it looks real and good, but it is not.

4) **Waves of the Sea**

They are under the control of no one. They are wild and unaccountable to anyone. There are no theological boundaries to their messages. Unpredictable and uncontrollable.

5) **Wandering Stars**

The stars are fixed in space and are so true that sailors can navigate the oceans by them. Not so with false teachers. There is no consistency in what they teach.

There is something interesting about a wandering or shooting star. When you gaze into the sky and see one, **it catches your eye**. You naturally turn your eyes from the fixed stars and follow its path. But when it has run its course and burned itself up, the real stars are still in their place. They are the constant ones.

In a similar way it is sadly true that **many false teachers, like shooting stars**, draw peoples' attention away from the truth for a season. But when they have run their course, the truth will remain.

The Puritan colonists who settled in New England in the 1630s had a nagging concern about the churches they were starting: How would they ensure that the pastors would be educated? Their answer was Harvard University, a school that was established to educate ministers. They adopted the motto ***Truth for Christ and the Church***. It was named after a pastor, John Harvard, and it would be more than 70 years before the school had a president who was not an ordained minister.

Nearly four centuries later, Harvard's organization of chaplains elected as its president an **atheist named Greg Epstein**. Epstein is the author of the book ***Good Without God***.

Epstein said, *there is a rising group of people who no longer identify with any religious tradition but still experience a real need for conversation and support around what it means to be a good human and live an ethical life.*" He has been Harvard's humanist chaplain since 2005,

Epstein said, ***we don't look to a God for answers. We are each other's answers.***

Emma Goldberg, "Harvard's Chief Chaplain Is an Atheist," The New York Times (8-27-21)

This is one of the **great lies of Satan**. Like most of his lies it comes couched in language that is designed to sound reasonable, logical and even good. Here are some good illustrations of what I'm referring to.

We are each other's answers.

We are all God's children.

It takes a village to raise a child.

When you die, God gains another angel.

We all worship the same God.

It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.

If I have enough faith God will give me what I ask for.

The devil is in charge of Hell.

God will never give you more than you can handle.

False teaching is dangerous.

False teaching is destruction.

False teaching can jeopardize your salvation.

False teaching can doom future generations.

Recognize it for what it is. Reject its influence on our lives. Point out how it fails to pass the test of truth. Do all we can to warn our children and others of its dangers.

The truth will lead you to Christ and to salvation.