

The Destructiveness of Apostates

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[0:00] Well, boys, we're in Jude again tonight.

! This is actually our eighth lesson.! We're already at verse 13.! We're going pretty fast. The last time we met, Jude showed us human examples of apostates.

And the three that we looked at were Cain, Balaam, and Korah out of the Old Testament. And today, Jude will describe for us the characteristics of apostates using this time not individuals from the Bible, but from the natural world around us.

These were things around Jude. They're still around today. Let me read to you verses 12 and 13. These are the men, speaking of the apostates, who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam, wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Now, the Bible often uses natural phenomena to describe a spiritual truth. The Lord Jesus, in fact, was famous for this, especially in His parables.

[1:55] He talked in His parables about things like wheat and tares, fig trees, soil, and lost sheep. The Psalms also contain very rich language utilizing the natural to explain the spiritual.

And in our passage today, the Holy Spirit will use five examples from nature to teach spiritual truth. These five naturally occurring phenomena are hidden reefs, waterless clouds, fruitless autumn trees, wild sea waves, and wandering stars.

So the first thing we're going to do is take a look at these hidden reefs. Again, these are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves.

Hidden reefs lurk below the water level in the world's oceans and seas.

And they pose an unseen danger. Reefs, as we know, are made up of coral. Typically, they are found very close to the shoreline.

[3:24] Individually, coral is very small. Almost microscopic. But when they join together, they form a barrier and that can literally rip out the bottom of ships and boats in our day, which are made of iron and steel.

Well, think back to Jude's day. These were wooden hulled vessels. Just think what coral would do to them.

I have snorkeled in Puerto Rico, both on the Caribbean side and the Atlantic side. We've actually gotten too close to coral where the tide kind of moves you and you brush up against it.

It'll cut you. I came out with bloody knees more than once. Well, apostates are like hidden reefs in the church.

They embed themselves inside a church and they're there and they're ready to tear unsuspecting people to shreds.

[4:35] Now, how do they do that? They do it with lies and they do it with wickedness because they're wicked. They reject Christ. They reject the truth.

And they just lie there. They probably seem very passive, very loving, but they're a pile of coral ready to rip the heart out of people that come by.

Now, the love feasts in the first century were gatherings of people to study God's Word. And nowadays, if you mention love feasts, you know, your mind just...

Woodstock. Yeah, yeah, Woodstock. It's not good. But love feasts in the first century were gatherings of people that came together to study God's Word, encourage one another, care for one another, and confront one another when error began to creep into the church.

Boy, that just eliminated about 96% of the churches in the world that I confront with error because they have error. What we do at this church could literally be described as a love feast.

[5:46] They come together to do all those things. And as often happens, the love feasts became corrupted. And they were widely abused.

This corruption was introduced by defiling influences. And who were those guys? They were the false teachers. We've been studying on false teachers for a long time.

On Monday night, predates the Jude lesson, and Sunday morning, we've had book after book of Paul's that centered on false teachers.

These false teachers are embedded in the church. Though hypocrites and sinners, the false teachers were able to feast within the church without fear.

So Paul gives us a very accurate description of these hidden reefs. In 1 Timothy 4.2, he says, they are liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.

[6:57] And I would not expect Paul to be very meek on this topic. And he wasn't. And neither was the Lord Jesus. When he talked about false teachers and false prophets, these false teachers and false preachers had no concern, underline those two words, no concern for damaging those around them with their lies about the gospel.

The church gatherings were for the purpose of caring for one another. The false teachers cared only for themselves. That word caring in the Greek language, by the way, is the same word for shepherd.

false teachers do not shepherd the flock. They shepherd themselves.

And one writer has said this, their only interest of the false teacher was a self-interest and self-gratification. And typically, they are there for financial gain.

Hopefully, we don't have any of those guys in America, but, right? And on TV. They are there for financial gain.

[8:22] And they achieve that and all their other deadly things at the expense of everyone else, even at the expense of a church. As hidden reefs, these false teachers tore the bottom out of many churches.

That's why Jude is dealing with it here. Paul dealt with it elsewhere. Peter had to deal with it others. Jude also describes them as waterless clouds.

And that is another natural phenomenon. Clouds without water carried along by winds. Now, clouds are there to produce much needed rain.

But clouds without water give only the promise of rain and then fail to deliver. We've experienced that many times in Oklahoma, haven't we? Droughts and a cloud comes up and then it's gone.

Falls apart. And we've seen that in our state. Apostate teachers come on the scene and they promise a very refreshing spiritual rain, kind of a purifying rain, a cooling rain on the church.

[9:45] but they don't deliver. They don't deliver. Jude says these guys are like clouds that bring great promise of rain and then they move on with no moisture dropping from heaven.

They are without water. They don't have any water. The false teachers don't have anything to teach but air and sin. Now, that term without water is interesting.

In Luke, it is used to describe wandering evil spirits through dry and barren places. So, we see there a connection between demons in Luke and apostates in Jude.

They're drawing a connection here. The apostates come from and receive energy from demonic sources.

And they're there for their own good and to kill a church. And they will kill it in a heartbeat. Jude also says they are fruitless autumn trees.

[10:58] Autumn trees without fruit doubly dead uprooted. Autumn which I suppose is upon us is it winter yet?

That's in December, isn't it? Autumn is my favorite time of year. I love autumn. Diane hates it because of allergies.

Just killer. I mean, it's horrible. I love autumn. Of course, autumn is a time when farmers expect to harvest their final crops and bed down the land for the winter.

Winter's coming. You know winter's coming when autumn gets here, right? When the harvest is weak or when the harvest fails, the farmer must then endure disappointment and suffer hardship through the winter.

I mean, for a lot of people, the harvest was everything, particularly in agrarian cultures. And during the winter, they turn their attention to the coming spring when once again they will begin anew the painstaking process of fertilizing, planting, watering, and then waiting for the crops to mature.

[12 : 24] And the Lord uses a picture here of autumn trees, very beautiful, but trees without fruit. This is a portrait of a very disappointing reality of a barren harvest.

There's no fruit. And Jude is making a connection here with the apostates that were invading churches. And he likened their false and empty profession and lack of spiritual life to just another barren harvest.

There's nothing to show for it. The fruit basket is empty. A barren harvest was without value and Jude actually carries it even further.

When he uses this language that really struck me, he says, these apostates are doubly dead. I mean, let's face it, it's bad enough to be an unbeliever and be dead, but to be an unbeliever and be doubly dead?

These guys were doubly dead. They were fruitless because there was no life in them, and they were uprooted because their roots were dead.

[13 : 43] Even the root system had died among these apostate false teachers. Jesus once told the Pharisees that every plant which my heavenly father did not plant shall be uprooted.

I wonder the Pharisees figured out who he was talking about. I think they did. I think they pretty much figured that out. Apostates produce no life-changing fruit in themselves or in others.

They don't do it in others. Now, people may ask, well, okay, you've got these false teachers going around. Has any soul ever been saved under the teaching of an apostate?

And the answer is that there has been people saved, but not, I don't think, on a regular basis, certainly not on a sweeping basis. So how can that happen?

The reason some are saved under the teaching of an apostate is something we have to remember, the power is in the word. It's not in the deliverer.

[14 : 49] The power is in the word. And I hope I'm not stepping on any toes here, but people got saved under Jimmy Swagger. One and maybe two got saved under Jim Baker.

Maybe two, I don't know. But the power is in the word and not in the person who delivers that word. the increase comes from where?

It comes from the Lord. The Lord gives the increase and if he so desires, he can reach people through the mouth of a donkey.

Remember that? He can reach people through the mouth of a donkey. In fact, he did so in the Old Testament, but that was not a reason for the church to tolerate apostates.

You don't tolerate apostates just because that might happen. You deal with them. You deal with them. The power though is in the word.

[15 : 49] And then Jude says this, they are wild sea waves. You don't have a lot of those in Oklahoma. I don't know, I saw a wind one day and there was white caps on my bird bath out.

Look at this thing and I'm pretty amazed by it. I told Diane, go out there and put some more water in that thing. Wild waves of the sea casting up their own shame like foam.

Like foam. Now, in Scripture, the sea is often used to describe those who do not know God. Isaiah spoke of wicked people being like a tossing sea.

He said, those types of water only produce refuge and mud. I'll tell you where that really came to my mind a few years ago.

It reminded me of the tsunami that devastated Japan. I looked at those pictures, you can see them on YouTube. The Japanese, I've been there a couple of times, and the Japanese, they're very orderly.

[16 : 58] They have these little things and they're all lined up. as you go through Japan on the way to China, when you take off, you can look down and see, and here came this mud and debris, and it just wiped everything.

And even now, debris from Japan continues to wash up on American shorelines in Washington, Oregon, and California.

in the aftermath of a great storm, the seashore is littered with debris and mire.

I think of Hurricane Sandy in Katrina. That is a very graphic portrait of false teachers and false preachers. Apostates are filled with empty talk and engage in self-serving activities.

they are like wild waves. They are like debris that washes up on the seashore, and they only cast up their own shame like foam.

[18:08] Now, eventually, their actions display all forms of heresy, deception, immorality, and insubordination. Like foam, they are good for nothing.

And, you know, let's be honest, we see these guys all the time on television. We don't make a habit of them. We flip by the channel. I can't stomach them. I mean, I can't even prepare for stuff like this. I just, I can't watch but a couple of minutes. It's horrid. They do. And then Jude says this.

He describes another thing in nature. He talks about wandering stars. Very, very interesting.

Wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

That's what these apostates are like. Wandering stars and there is reserved for them black darkness. Our final natural phenomena tonight are described as wandering stars.

[19:24] And in the original language I'm told these are not heavenly bodies like stars and galaxies, which you can go out many nights, you can't go out tonight and do it, and you'll see them at the same time pretty much in the same place, depending on the earth's axis and everything.

They continuously shine. They have what we would call fixed and predictable orbits. You know, people in the old days thought they were just stuck there on the roof of the sky.

Wandering stars may be a reference to meteors. They flash through the night sky for only a second and they are gone.

by the way, 90% of the meteors you see when you're out places like where I live, you can see them, they're the size of a pebble. We're entering our atmosphere.

My son Rob called me the other night, a couple nights ago, and he said, Dad, we got out of the car, it was dark, Whitney and I just happened to look up at the same time and they saw a meteor coming in and it was at a certain angle, it hit the earth's atmosphere and it skipped.

[20:39] And they'll do that. They could skip off, this was the great fear of Apollo 13. If they didn't get that re-entry correct, they would have skipped and gone out into space and they would have lived through that until they ran out of oxygen.

So we have here this possibility that these are meteors. They light up part of the night sky. if you're lucky enough you can watch them for maybe a second or two and they're gone.

I saw one in New Jersey when I was in high school and I got to see it for about four minutes. It had re-entered very high and it was huge and it was this fireball.

I thought it was an airplane crashing but it was a meteor. Actually I drove about five miles north of where we live looking for the debris. I found out later it landed on earth in the Arctic Circle near the North Pole.

So I was a few thousand miles off, several thousand miles off. The flashing of course is caused by the fact that the meteors have entered earth's atmosphere and they're burning up.

[21:51] They're burning up. Apostates we can say are like meteors. They appear on the stage of Christianity there for a short period of time but they're going to burn up.

Probably a double meaning to that term burn up. They're going to burn up I think in this lifetime and the one to come. Then they are gone but here's the problem.

They leave behind significant damage. Humanly speaking sometimes beyond repair. Humanly speaking.

God can repair it. But they leave behind destruction. They make all kinds of promises.

They promise spiritual light. They promise wealth and health and prosperity. But they are only a flash for a moment and then they're worthless.

[22:57] having been in a lot of parts of black Africa where people are very poor. These guys have gone in over there and promised health and wealth. And they have to have, almost have to have military guys with them to get them out of the country.

When it doesn't happen, it's pretty scary for them. One of them spoke to, and he was promising health and wealth.

In Nigeria, one million people showed up. They wanted their health and wealth. The average annual income in Nigeria is about \$35 a year. When I was there, we'd go to lunch, we'd give a tip, 50 cents or a dollar.

That was like 20% of his annual income. We gave him a dollar. Very poor. And when these guys show up, these false teachers, and start making promises, and then can't deliver, they're at great risk.

They promise spiritual light, but it's a flash, and it's gone. It's worthless. Such apostates have a place reserved for them in hell and eternity.

[24:11] I read a commentary on this passage, and I copied these notes down about wandering stars. This particular author, I didn't even catch his name, but he thinks they're comets.

And let's face it, they do come through, and then they leave, and they may come back sometime. I think, what is Haley's every 70 years? Comes around. Listen to what he says, is this what a lost eternity is like?

Eternal loneliness banished from God's presence. I'll let these wander off. many subscribe to this more humane interpretation of a lost eternity rather than eternal torture in the fires of hell.

That's sort of the new thing. What do they call that, pastor? Annihilation? That eventually unbelievers will just be annihilated. Their molecular molecules will disintegrate, melt, burn up.

The Bible didn't teach that. The Bible teaches eternal punishment. Like comets wandering stars in the ancient vernacular, they are destined to float aimlessly and alone.

[25:30] You know, I hear people all the time tell me, well, yeah, I'm going to be in hell, but I'm going to have a lot of company. I don't think so. I think you're all alone. And I think the only sound you hear is a reverberation in your ears of the last thing you ever heard from another person, and that was, I never knew you.

Depart from me. That will probably echo for eternity. They are destined to float aimlessly alone. That can almost seem peaceful, but this entirely misses Jude's meaning. I'm reading again. Jude liberally quotes and references the book of Enoch.

Enoch. And that's where these images were derived. Now, let me tell you, don't open your Bible and turn to Enoch. It's not going to happen. It wasn't one of the inspired books.

It did not make it into the canon of scripture, but it is quoted in some places. Quotes are inspired. Pardon me? The quotes are inspired. Yeah.

[26:41] Exactly. Because anything, surely somebody brought a Bible. Anything in there is inspired. The King James Version reading of blackness, of darkness forever, is perhaps rendered deepest darkness forever.

That's inspired. And it refers not to aimlessly wandering about the universe, and let's face it, the Bible writers had no concept of that, but of the deepest depths beneath the earth.

The stars in Enoch are angels and Judas comparing evil men to fallen angels. Now this is the writer I looked at. Confinement to deepest darkness is along with fire a form of eternal judgment in the Jewish tradition.

Now here's some passages for me. Again, this is not inspired. That might shed light though on the tradition, the Jewish tradition. And I saw a deep abyss with columns of heavenly fire, and among them I saw columns of fire fall, which were beyond measure, like towards the height and towards the depth, and beyond that abyss, I saw a place which had no firmament of the heaven above and no firmly Founded earth beneath it.

There was no water upon it, no birds, but it was a waste and a horrible place, and I saw there seven stars like great burning mountains, and to me when I inquired regarding them, the angel said, this place is the end of heaven and earth, this has become a prison for the stars and the hosts of heaven, these are demons and unsaved people, and the stars which rolled over the fire, they which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord in the beginning of the rising, because they did not come forth at their appointed times, and he had wrath toward them and bound them to the time when their guilt should be consumed for ten thousand years.

[28:45] That's a fearful description. Probably the most graphic description I ever heard of hell, I read actually in Christianity today, which I don't read anymore, but I used to, and this writer said, picture a place of utter darkness, and he said, I'm not talking about turning the lights out, or walking outside with cloud-covered night, but the absence of light, probably the closest I ever came to that was a, how many have been through the Grand Canyon?

Carlsbad. Carlsbad, and they turn, you get to the very bottom, and they have you sit down, and they turn out the lights. Boy, it's dark. Let me tell you, it's dark.

But even then, if they had the instruments, they could measure light. But this is the absence of light. I was reading this article. Picture the absence of light. And some people say you can't have that because of the fire, the fires of hell.

Let me tell you, if you're in a house fire, and I'm a former friend of us here, and it's pretty involved, you're not going to be guided by the light of the fire.

If you wonder what that's like, take a blindfold and put it around your eyes, and take both hands and put it over your eyes, that's what it looks like in a burning house.

[30:19] It doesn't give off light because of the smoke. Because of the smoke. But here, this guy, he's in utter darkness, absence of light, and the article went on to describe hell for him as he's suspended.

There's nothing solid. He's not standing on ground or a floor. He's not leaning against a wall. He can't move. He's suspended in utter darkness.

And I haven't thought about that article for a long time, and it went on with a few other descriptions, but then this really hit me. It said, when that person has been there for one million millennia, as we measure time, they will not have reduced by one second the amount of time they have to spend there.

Boy, that'll grip you. If you've got unsafe family members, unsafe friends, that'll grip you. That'll grip you. So we see Jude with various descriptions of apostates.

They are hypocritical deceivers. They are immoral sinners and materialistic spiritual terrorists. And they're embedded in the church today.

[31:53] they're embedded. They lie about the gospel. They spread lies throughout the church.

These are the ones who have chosen the way of Cain, the heir of Balaam, and they suffer death like Korah, and their hidden reefs and wandering stars and all those other things that we describe tonight.

And the only remaining sentence I have is, may Christ Jesus protect us from apostates.

Church needs to be protected from apostates. to be