

Religion, Greed, and Rebellion

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[0:00] We're going to be back in Jude, primarily verse 11 tonight.

! As we all know by now, the short one chapter book of Jude is filled with warnings to the churches. By the way, there's a book by that title that I highly recommend by Bishop J.C. Ryle. He lived 150 years ago in England, and it's called Warnings to the Churches. And it sounds like 21st century stuff.

But Jude issues warnings to the churches about the encroaching presence of apostates within the fellowship.

Some of you are probably thinking, when's he going to stop talking about apostates? Well, when we get to the end of Jude, we will. That's what it's about. And as we've said before, an apostate is someone who has been exposed to a certain level of truth and considers it and turns and walks away from that truth, looking for something more, something different, something in addition, and drags as many people along with him as he can.

[1:33] That is the definition of an apostate. Now, the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of this short book, will next give examples of past apostates So the church in the day of Jude and in the future, even to our time, can learn from these examples.

And he identifies three such men who after hearing truth, turned and became apostates.

And the men that are mentioned in Jude were Cain, Balaam, and Korah. It says in the first part of verse 11 there, Woe to them, for they have gone the way of Cain.

Now, let me inject something here. When you're reading your Bible and you come to woe, we don't use that much in our Americanized English anymore, but woe is a word that was often used by Christ, often used by the prophets of the Old Testament.

It's a three-letter word, and in that three-letter word, there is a pronouncement of ultimate and final spiritual judgment.

[3:09] That's why they are hit with woe. The spiritual judgment we're going to be studying is on apostates and apostasy.

Woe is a way of saying something really bad is about to happen to the individual that it's directed to. It reveals something terrible that is going to happen, often with far-reaching implications. In fact, we can say eternal implications.

People that walk away from Christ looking for something better in addition to, a better way, a different way, that's eternal damnation according to Paul in Galatians 1, verse 6.

Let them be the anathema of God if they follow any other gospel other than the one Paul preached to us. Anathema is a kind of a cleaned-up version of the eternally damned.

[4:18] That's what that word means. The eternally damned. So, Jude mentions Cain. Now, as far as the human family is concerned, Cain was the first apostate and he serves as a prototype of all those who have departed from the faith once revealed to them.

And obviously, Cain did not have the amount of light that we have today. For instance, we have the completed word of God. He didn't have that. But he was given light by the light giver, the Lord.

The Lord used his parents to give him light. He used Abel, his younger brother, to give him light. And he made very well, and he did, in fact, give him direct light.

And so he had been exposed to a measure of faith. It had been revealed to him and then he departed from the faith once revealed.

That's the definition of apostate or apostasy. Now, what do we know about this guy? Well, we know that Cain was the first child of Adam and Eve, our original parents.

[5:44] We know that he was born after sin had entered into the human family. You all remember that in Genesis chapter 3.

No women here tonight. When women led us into sin. If my wife was here, she would open up Genesis 3 and say, it says right here, an Adam who was with her.

So she would be really quick to point that out. And by the way, whose sin was it? Adam's sin. The Bible says it is Adam's sin. But I got that in anyway. So we have the first child of Adam and Eve. He's born after sin, entered into the human family. And after they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Cain had no concept of the Garden of Eden.

He had to toil and try to grow stuff in probably land that looks like my front pasture right now. Pretty bad.

[6:42] And just a very, very difficult life. He didn't know it. He had never experienced the Garden of Eden. Now, let me read to you out of Genesis. Rather lengthy, but it's okay.

In Genesis 4, starting in verse 1. Now, the man, and that, by the way, is Adam, had relations with his wife Eve.

Didn't say Steve, did it? Eve. And she conceived and gave birth to Cain. And she said, I have gotten a man-child with the help of the Lord.

Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks. But Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.

What was that? Well, we don't know, but vegetables and fruit and whatever. Abel, on his part, also brought the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions.

[7:52] And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry?

And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

And its desire is for you, but you must master it. Now that's a principle for all of us, right? That the Lord gave there. Cain told Abel his brother.

Now look, what does that mean? He told Abel. I've had a conversation with the Lord. And it came about when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and killed him.

[8:56] I've been in law enforcement 44 years, give or take. And that always amazed me. When we had four people on earth, 25% of them were murderers and 25% were murder victims.

You know, there were four people. Didn't take long, did it? Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know.

Am I my brother's keeper? And God said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you.

You will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, My punishment is too great to bear. Behold, you have driven me this day from the face of the ground and from your face I will be hidden.

[10:03] I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. Whoever finds me will kill me. So the Lord said to him, Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.

And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain so that no one finding him would slay him. By the way, what was that sign? We don't know.

And there's been people write books about that. Throw them in the trash. We don't know. There was a period in American history where people said the mark of Cain was black people.

There's no basis for that. No basis whatsoever. Well, there can be no doubt that Cain knew the proper sacrifice that he was to bring in the worship of God.

He knew the right way. His parents probably told him. That would be natural. Abel probably told him.

[11:10] And he may well have received it also directly from the Lord. He knew what was expected of him. But Cain knew that the only acceptable sacrifice was one that required the shedding of blood.

And that's very significant. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness for sin. The blood has to be shed. I'm always offended when I watch Hollywood movies that depict this.

One, the Bible, which is actually a very good movie. But in this part, they showed Cain bringing his portion and he lays it before the Lord and it's this big basket. Looked good. A lot of vegetables and fruit and all this. And then he takes some grain and he takes some back. And it's like the Lord's mad because he took some back. That missed the whole point. He could have brought a whole silo full of grain or tomatoes or whatever. Instead of obeying, he did what most people do today.

[12 : 26] And that was to invent his own method of worship. That's really what people do today. And not just in foreign lands.

In our land. When Cain or anyone else tries to approach the eternal God with some man-centered, man-created form of worship, it becomes the very height of irreverent blasphemy. You cannot approach our holy God unless you are cloaked in the righteousness of Christ. I'm reading a book right now from a Puritan in the 1600s. It's hard go. Those guys are smarter than I ever was. But it's called Christ Our Righteousness. And He is our righteousness. And you can only approach God through Christ. It is a very obvious form of rejecting God's revelation and operating instead on a works righteousness that human pride creates.

[13 : 47] And guys, let me tell you, there's works righteousness that permeates this earth. It's in all the world's religions. It's all the cults. It's all the occult. And it's in a lot of mainline denominations.

Even in the U.S. And works righteousness, I mean, even Christ plus something. You can't mix that. That's works righteousness. The Lord Jesus is sufficient. And nothing can be added to Him. Nothing need be added to Him.

It is all of Christ. And all of grace. So we see here Cain in a works righteousness religion. Now let me suggest to you, he understood the human religion. His mom and dad had been guilty in the garden of inventing a human religion. It was called fig leaf religion.

[14 : 48] Well, you know, we ate that forbidden fruit and now we realize we're naked and we have fled from the presence of God. By the way, where do you go to do that? Show me that place.

We have fled from the presence of God, but to be acceptable, let's sew some fig leaves together and we will dress up, hide our shame, and be presentable again.

So they invented fig leaf religion. Well, Cain now is inventing his own religion. I don't have to come God's way. I can just, if I'm sincere, this is what we hear in the 21st century.

If you're sincere, then it's okay with God. No, God doesn't say that. God doesn't say that. So here we have Cain and through him people try and approach God on the basis of not what God has done, but what they have done.

What Cain do when he grew some vegetables or some grain. Wouldn't have been something when he went out of God and said, get your own dirt, don't use mine. Get your own sun and your own rain and water and you know, you can't, it's like those scientists said they could create life and scoop down and God said, no, get your own dirt, don't use my dirt.

[16 : 14] You know, can't be done. There are billions of people right now awaiting final judgment because they've tried to approach God in a manner not prescribed.

It's strange fire. Remember that story in the Old Testament? Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire in the Holy of Holies and fire came out and consumed them.

And there's a very poignant passage in there which says, and Aaron was silent. What do you say? And there's evidence that those boys got drunk and went in there and were playing around.

They were grown men, but there's evidence they were intoxicated. Went in, offered strange fire to the Lord and were consumed on the spot. So Jude here describes such people as those who have gone the way of Cain.

And like many today, Cain was religious but disobedient. that almost sounds like they can't slide each other but they don't.

[17 : 26] And I even get aggravated when people talk about the Christian religion. Christianity is not a religion. Religion is what men create to try and reach God.

And some of them are well-meaning and some of them are horrible and had human sacrifice and all that. But they have one thing in common and they always fail. Christ or Christianity is God reaching down to man.

There's a big difference. Huge, huge difference. So here we see Cain, a religious man but disobedient. And religion is always mankind's efforts to reach God and it always falls short.

When God rejected Cain's offering, Cain responded in a fit of jealous rage.

He is really mad. He is so angry that when his brother, his younger brother came to check on him and no doubt maybe walked up might have put his hand on his shoulder and said, you know, brother what's wrong?

[18:35] The scriptures say he killed his obedient brother Abel. Killed him. Now we learn this in our study of the book of Hebrews some time back.

And you may recall this verse some of you that were in my Hebrew study years ago. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous.

God declared Abel righteous. God testifying about his gifts and through faith though he is dead yet he still speaks to us.

Abel was killed four, five, six thousand years ago. We're sitting here in the middle part of America talking about him. We still talk about righteous Abel. That righteous man.

But he had an unrighteous brother who killed him. So Cain serves as a progenitor of apostates. He's who we go back to look at.

[19:44] This is where it started in the human family. We look to Cain. He was exposed to the truth. He walked away satisfied that he was going to be able to make himself acceptable God as he was.

Folks, the majority of people on this earth do that. I dare say the majority of people in churches probably do that. It's a frightening thing. There are others who would fit that mold.

Balaam was one of them. Balaam. Don't ever name your kid Balaam. You're going to have children. Or Jezebel. That's another one. In the second part of Jude 11 and for pay they have rushed headlong into the era of Balaam.

They went in to Balaam worship for money. So we're going to see what that is. What is the primary motivation behind false teachers?

And let me tell you guys there are more false teachers on earth today than any time in history. They're everywhere. What are they motivated by?

[21:07] And Jude gave us inspired words three little words and for pay. It's all financial. It's money. They have no comparison with God's true shepherds.

You can read about that by the way in the 11th chapter of Hebrew. They were hidden caves and woods and they were sawn in half and placed in prison. That was God's faithful shepherds.

But the ministry of those that follow into the era of Balaam is based upon greed and envy.

Now I'm not going to call any names. You know me better than that. But think in terms of televangelists and faith healers of our day. Look into the bank accounts and lifestyles of the Roberts family.

Of Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Hagen, Kenneth Copeland, Jan and Paul Crouch. Paul's now gone to his reward. And so on. These people have more money than we can imagine.

[22:17] such false teachers rush headlong into the air of Balaam and the evidence is that they do it for pay. That's central to their ministry.

They've got to bring in bucks. And they rush headlong into greed and envy. And I'm going to tell you, they asked Billy Graham, you know, Jim Baker fell, then Jimmy Swaggart shortly after that. And someone was interviewing Billy Graham. They said, Dr. Graham, how have you stayed above all that? And he said, the Billy Graham Association every year brings in tens of millions of dollars. He said, I cannot write a check on the Billy Graham Association for five dollars or for one dollar. I have no access to the money.

None. And his top salary in the Billy Graham Association, was \$72,000 a year. And people said, oh, come on, he's a millionaire. Yeah, he writes books.

[23:24] And he'll tell you, he says he is a millionaire. He bought all his kids a house. He's done some good things for the church. money. But he said, money will kill you.

It'll ruin you. And it ruined Balaam. We learn about Balaam in Numbers chapters 22 to 24 and 31.

Now, there was a guy, Balak, another name you want to avoid, the king of Moab. He hired Balaam, hired, pay, to pronounce a curse on God's chosen people, Israel.

He hires this guy. And when Balaam started on his journey to go curse Israel, to do just what he had been hired to do, he encounters of all things, a talking donkey called Balaam's ass.

And it was, the scriptures tell us, the angel of the Lord. Usually, and especially in the Old Testament, when you read those words, the angel of the Lord, that's the pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

[24:37] That's Jesus. And he's speaking through a donkey. The angel is the Lord Jesus Christ. And Balaam is an interesting and a pathetic figure in the history of the Old Testament.

He agreed to curse Israel on behalf of Balak, that's who's paying him, and the Moabites, where in the world did they come from? Remember Lot? Had two daughters, and they said, well, you know, Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed, the cities on the plains, there were more than just Sodom and Gomorrah, five cities were destroyed, he said, there's no more men on the earth, let's go in and have relations with our father, we'll get him drunk.

Well, I'd really have to be drunk. this is his daughters, guys. Can you imagine what God thought about that? And the Moabites came from that union, and actually today, Moabites are spread throughout the Middle East, including Jordan and other places, and they're bitter enemies of Israel, that continues down to our day.

So he's on his way on behalf of Balak and the Moabites who hate Israel, and they were birthed by this pagan culture because of an ancestral relationship between Lot and one of his daughters.

They were bitter enemies of Israel and are to this day, although they're embedded in different countries that surround Israel. I mean, Moabites, they aren't who they are. But they're there.

[26:11] They're spread among the Arab nations that surround the modern Jewish state. God, in His sovereignty, and always remember that, you can always depend on God's sovereignty.

Lean on God's sovereignty. You want your kids saved? Lean on God's sovereignty. You want your grandchildren saved? Lean on the sovereignty of God. Go to the sovereign Lord of the universe. God, in His sovereignty, turned Balaam's cursings of Israel into blessing for them and cursing for their enemies. And He did this three times, and each time He would do it, the anger of Balak increased.

It was building. Finally, toward the end of his life, Balaam proclaimed a curse on Israel, seduced them into idolatry and into horrendous, vile abominations that follow that sort of thing.

And because of the success of Balaam with the Israelites, God brought down a terrible judgment on Israel. 24,000 Hebrew men died on the spot.

[27:29] Only when Israel was willing to acknowledge their sin, and turned from their idolatry back to the living God, did the killing subside?

I'm glad we live in the age of grace, but can you imagine in the church if God reacted to lack of faith or unfaith or blasphemy by doing that?

Well, that'd shake up the church, wouldn't it? Probably wouldn't have near the numbers every Sunday that we have. I don't know if we're going to walk out of there alive or not. God finally stopped killing those during that judgment, but not before Balaam was dead.

He died as well. Balaam stands as a prime example of a prophet for hire. And in that regard, he is the prime example of a modern day false teacher, parenthesis, apostate, that have so infiltrated the church.

They're everywhere. And these are the men who love the wealth, the prestige, the prosperity more than faithfulness and obedience to God.

[28:50] Much more. I want to get up and give an invitation some Sunday morning when I'm preaching and I'm going to say, come to the Lord Jesus and you're going to lose some friends.

Your family might disown you. God might send you to the darkest Africa and you may lose your life. Now, hymn of invitation to just as I am, who will come? And you know what?

Some will. Some will come. Those called out by God will come. Even under that type of invitation, which is a very accurate invitation.

So here we see the prophet for hire, loved wealth, prestige, prosperity, didn't care about faithfulness or obedience, hired himself out to this bitter enemy of Israel.

And by the way, if you're a bitter enemy of Israel, you're a bitter enemy of God. There's a third example of an apostate that Jude mentioned and it's Korah.

[29:53] Korah. And in Jude 11 at the end there it says, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. In the Old Testament book of Numbers, we are presented the story of Korah.

He was a cousin to Moses. He was a Levite and specifically a Kohathite. I'm glad Don didn't hear to correct me. The Kohathites were responsible for being the door keepers and musicians for the

tabernacle and later the temple.

That was their role. Korah was passed over for the position of priest and it infuriated him. He was furious. So to show his displeasure, he goes out and he enlisted the aid of 250 men. There were men like Dathan and Abiram, not Abraham, Abiram, and they formed a rebellion against the leadership of Moses.

[31:03] Well, who had put Moses in his position? God had. And here Korah is going to overthrow God's chosen man. Moses was God's chosen vessel.

And you know, any time when you see Moses attacked, or even in the desert wandering, when you say, well, they murmured against Moses. They murmured against Moses. They're murmuring against God. They just didn't have the courage to name God in their murmuring, but they were murmuring against God.

Moses was God's man. Listen to number 16.3. This is the assault on Moses. They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, you have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst.

So why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? In an exercise of pride, so prevalent in the heart of all false teachers, even in our day, they're driven by pride.

I heard one of those guys, he's talking about all the Rolls Royces he owned. He said, your lack of faith out there in the congregation, you don't own a Rolls Royce because you don't have the faith I have.

[32:29] And I'm screaming, I don't watch these things as a habit, but I'm screaming on television, you're at the top of the Ponzi scheme. Those are the people that bought you those Rolls Royces by official giving because they were promised healing or some get wealthy or whatever.

I threw that in for free. Korah challenged the idea that the Hebrew people needed a leader and a mediator between them and God.

This was the very office that God had called Moses to fulfill. This was the office that Moses was called to. Moses, of course, was the great teacher of Israel.

He taught them the law and the oracles of God. The law is still there. hasn't gone away. Korah rebelled against all of this out of anger.

On the basis of anger, he didn't get promoted to one of the priests, become a priest. So he's mad at having not been chosen priest.

[33:34] He openly rebelled against God's authority that had been given to Moses and he rallies 250 men to his cause. God responded by termination of the rebellion and the rebels.

Number 16, 32 to 35, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up and their households and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions.

So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol and the earth closed over them and they perished from the midst of the assembly. All Israel who were around them fled.

I'd say so. Probably did. I think there's a hole opening up in Wyoming right now. I can read about that. They fled at their outcry for they said the earth may swallow us up too.

Even the righteous Jews are running. Let's get away from this. Fire came down from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering incense.

[34:52] They thought to God but it was really to Korah. And it consumed them. So we got 24,000 who died. We got all these who died. We got the 250 that were the core army of Korah.

They died and the deaths didn't stop there. Many in Israel had become sympathetic to Korah and his band of followers. Many.

These were the very people who grumbled against Moses and so grumbling were grumbling against God. The Lord sent a plague that consumed another 14,700 Israelites.

This is a judgment. And you know I had a thought that just popped in my head. I don't know if it even applies. Remember when the Lord fed the 5,000 Jesus?

And by the way that was 5,000 men. It didn't include 5,000 wives and 10,000 children if they had two kids in his family. So we're talking probably around 20,000 folks out of what was it?

[36:04] Two fish and five loaves of bread. Thank you Levi. Sometimes I say five fish and two loaves of bread. Remember when God did that?

Jesus did that? And the next day, do you remember what the people said to Jesus? We're hungry again. Moses, you only gave us one meal yesterday.

Moses fed us for 38 years in the desert. That's what they said to him. Or 40. Moses fed us.

Now Jesus pointed out later, Moses didn't give you anything. That came from my father. But that's what they were saying. You're not a greater than Moses because he fed us all those years. Well here, they're wanting to kill Moses and God consume them. Given these numbers, it is apparent that Korah had a significant number of followers.

[37 : 05] False teachers have followers, guys. They have followers. Many of the false teachers and false preachers today have significant numbers of followers.

Like their counterparts of old, they too will share in the coming judgment. Like Cain, Balaam, and Korah, one day every apostate will share in the same fate.

They will all experience the eternal wrath of God. Those 24,000, those 250, those 14,000, today, they're under the wrath of God and they will remain there for eternity.

Thank you.