

THE WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY: THE CHARACTERISTICS AND JUDGEMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS JUDE 01:08–13

Introduction

There is a terrible danger facing believers, a horrifying danger that always lies right over the horizon. What is it? The danger of false teaching. If a believer swallows false teaching, he dooms himself. Any person who denies that God sent His Son into the world to save man — who denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world — will never be accepted by God. He is doomed to spend eternity cut off from God. Why? Because he has not believed in the name of God's Son. Time and time again, God warns believers of apostasy. This is the very reason for the books of Jude and Second Peter being written. Strong warnings against false teachers are also issued by Paul in Galatians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus. There are severe warnings all throughout Hebrews. And Christ Himself gave strong warnings time and again throughout all the gospels.

No matter who the person is — no matter how well liked and influential and attractive his teachings may be — if he denies Jesus Christ and God's Word, he is a false teacher.

Here is the thrust of the letter of Jude, the very purpose for which Jude writes. Here is one of the most horrifying pictures in the entire Bible, a picture of the characteristics and judgment of false teachers. (Note: this passage may need to be divided into several sections. It is combined into one outline because it all applies to the same subject. A suggested division would be Jude 3-7, 8-11, 12-16.)

- I. They are filthy dreamers (v. 8).
 - II. They reject authority (v. 8).
 - III. They scoff at spiritual beings (vv. 8-10).
 - IV. They go after the way of Cain, of unbelief (v. 11).
 - V. They go after the way of Balaam, of going astray (v. 11).
 - VI. They go after the way of Korah, of rebellion (v. 11).
 - VII. They are blemishes upon the fellowship of the church (v. 12).
 - VIII. They are filled with emptiness and instability (v. 12).
 - IX. They teach things that are shameful (v. 13).
 - X. They wander about as a falling star that quickly passes into eternal darkness (v. 13).
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I. Jude 08 False Teachers Are Filthy Dreamers

False teachers are filthy dreamers who defile their body. This means two things.

1. It means that false teachers engage in the pleasures of the world: the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, the cravings of sinful desires. They do not struggle to keep their thoughts clean and pure. They *dream and covet* after the positions, possessions, and things of the world. They look at the opposite sex, perhaps pornographic books, films and bodies not dressed as much as they should be. The result is *thoughts and dreams* of success, grandeur, personal recognition and honour, and sexual misbehaviour. False teachers defile the flesh through such dreams.
2. It means that the false teachers sometimes claim to have *visions and dreams* from the Lord that are not from Him. They use their visions and dreams to secure the following and loyalty of people.

Mat 9:4 *Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?"*

Mat 15:19 *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."*

Rom 1:21 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Gen 6:5 *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

Psa 94:11 *The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.*

Prov 6:18 *A heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil.*

Prov 23:7 *For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.*

Ezek 8:12 *He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'"*

II. Jude 08 False Teachers Reject Authority

False teachers reject authority (see note, *False Teachers*, 2 Pet 2:10).

III. Jude 08-10 False Teachers Scoff at Spiritual Beings

False teachers scoff at the idea of angels and of spiritual beings, in particular of Satan and other fallen angels. This is definitely the meaning of this trait: the illustration shows this (vv. 9-10). False teachers speak against, doubt and question spiritual beings such as angels and the cherubim and seraphim. They ridicule the ideas of Christ and angels and other spiritual beings living in a spiritual world. They question whether there are beings in a spiritual world who are living and functioning just as we are in this world.

- => The idea of another dimension of being, of a spiritual world that is as real and alive as the physical world is questioned.
- => The idea of levels of authority, of principalities and powers and rulers in a spiritual world is mocked.
- => The idea of Christ being exalted to the right hand of God and of believers someday ruling and serving and ministering for Christ in a new heavens and earth is doubted and often ridiculed.

But note two things.

1. False teachers do that which even the highest angel would not dare do. Even Michael himself, one of the highest if not the highest angel in heaven, would not rebuke the devil. This is a strong warning to the false teachers. The angels themselves do not dare rail and mock the principalities and powers of the spiritual world.

***Eph 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

***Col 1:16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

***Col 2:15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

2. False teachers make a terrible, foolish mistake. They are like brute beasts who have no understanding. They are speaking of things they do not understand. No person knows what the spiritual world is like, for no person has ever been there. There is only one Person who has ever been there, and that is the Person who came to earth from the other world, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone knows what the other world is like. This is the very reason He came to earth: to bring the Word of God and the promise of heaven to us. We either believe Him or not. It is that simple. But note this: the Word of God is the prophecy and record concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person does not believe Christ, then he has no right to claim to be a follower and minister of Christ. He should not abuse the Word of God through hypocrisy. When he does, he is as a brute beast, speaking about things he knows nothing about. And note what the Scripture says about him:

=> He is like an unreasoning animal made to be taken and destroyed (v. 10).

=> He shall utterly perish in his own corruption. That is, in trying to pollute the Word of God and Christ, he destroys lives; therefore, he shall be utterly destroyed. His own corruption shall destroy him.

***Mat 6:23** "But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"*

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

Rom 10:13 *For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Eph 4:18 *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”*

1 John 1:6 *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

Jer 4:22 *“My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.”*

IV. Jude 11 False Teachers Follow Cain, The Path of Unbelief

False teachers go after the way of Cain, the way of unbelief and lack of godly love. Cain committed the very first murder on earth: he killed his own brother Abel (Gen 4:1-15). Why? Because Abel was a believer. Abel believed God, that he was to worship God exactly like God said, by the blood of a sacrificial animal. Cain did not accept such a belief. He felt that if he brought the fruit of his own hands to God, then God would accept him because of his hard work and because he worshipped and gave offerings to God. God accepted Abel’s worship and offering. It was evident in his life by the way God blessed him and took care of him. But God rejected Cain’s offering. Cain did not have a real sense of God’s care or blessing upon his life. Therefore, he became jealous and envious of Abel, and he killed Abel. Three things are being said about false teachers.

1. False teachers do not believe God — that a person has to worship God exactly like God says, by the blood of Jesus Christ. They do not accept Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for man’s sins. They believe like Cain did, that they can become acceptable to God by the works of their own hands, by being good and doing good.
2. False teachers do not love like God says to love. God says that we must love one another in the *love of Christ*. What is the love of Christ? It is the love that loves so much that it will sacrifice one’s life for the other person, even if the other person is an enemy. (See note, *Love*, 1 Jn. 3:1.)
3. False teachers shall be destroyed. Note the word “woe.” It means grief or denunciation (Kenneth Wuest. *In These Last Days*, Vol. 4, p. 248). All false teachers shall be doomed to an eternity of grief and denunciation or judgment.

V. Jude 11 False Teachers Go Astray like Balaam

False teachers walk in the way of Balaam, the way that forsakes the life of God and leads to destruction (see note, *False Teachers*, 2 Pet 2:15).

VI. Jude 11 False Teachers Rebel Against Authority like Korah

False teachers walk after the way of Korah, the way of rebellion and rejection of authority (cp. Num. 16:1-35). Korah was the man who rebelled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Korah wanted a higher position of leadership among the people; therefore, he rebelled against Moses and Aaron. He wanted to serve where he had no right to serve. As a result he was judged and doomed.

The point is this: false teachers follow the way of rebellion and rejection of authority. They rebel against and reject the authority of God and of the ministers God has appointed and placed in His church. And most of all they rebel and reject the supreme authority of Christ, the Lord Himself. They reject His deity, that He has purchased the church through His sacrificial death. They rebel against the very authority of God Himself. They choose to go their own way and do their own thing. They use the church and believers for their own ends.

Acts 28:27 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

1 Tim 4:1-2 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

Heb 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Prov 29:1 A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy.

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

2 Pet 2:10 This is especially true of those [the wicked] who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings [authority].

Isa 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

Jer 44:16 "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord!"

Zec 7:11 But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears.

VII. *Jude 12 False Teachers Are Blemishes Upon the Fellowship*

False teachers are *blemishes* upon the fellowship of the church. The Greek word for “blemishes” (*spilas*) can mean *submerged rocks or hidden reefs* that can wreck a ship. False teachers are reefs within the church which can wreck the fellowship of the church. Translators differ as to which meaning Jude intended. Perhaps he meant both, for both are certainly true.

The *love feasts* referred to were called *love feasts* by the early church. They were fellowship meals that the church celebrated after the services on the Lord’s Day. Each family brought what food they could. This, of course, meant that the wealthy brought plenty and the poor brought little or nothing. Remember that many of the believers were slaves in that day, so some of them would not be able to bring any food whatsoever. Some churches had the most joyful fellowship around the love feasts. It provided a time when the believers could share the warmth of their hearts and grow in fellowship together. It was a time when the Holy Spirit could draw the hearts of believers together in love and joy and care and sharing. It was a time that the Holy Spirit could use to bind believers together in feelings for one another and in warmth and tenderness.

The point is this: fellowship among believers is a most wonderful time, a unique opportunity to grow and share together. But when false teachers are present, the scene is entirely different.

=> False teachers are spots or blemishes upon the fellowship of believers. They dirty and soil the name of Christ and the testimony of the church. They profess to be believers and are even teachers of God’s Word, but they are not pure. Their false teaching disturbs genuine believers and causes division within the fellowship of the church. Those who are not rooted in Christ and in God’s Word follow and support the false teacher; those who are rooted in Christ and in God’s Word reject the false teacher. False teachers always spot and dirty the fellowship of the church because they cause division among the people and destroy the Spirit of Christ among them.

=> False teachers are reefs or submerged rocks that wreck the fellowship of the church. Their teaching is often injected into the church quietly and insidiously, completely unknown to the general membership. Therefore, the fellowship is subject to being shipwrecked upon the reefs of false teaching.

Note that the false teachers feed themselves — that is, they fellowship with believers — without fear. There is no fear of God nor thought about the damage they are doing to the fellowship of the church. Their interest is to boost themselves forward; to be recognized as an excellent teacher or preacher, a person of unusual gifts, a teacher with new insights, a teacher who is progressive, who is a notch above others.

Thought 1. The fellowship of believers is spiritual. It is not a social fellowship based upon emotional feelings for one another. It is fellowship wrought by the Spirit of God. Feelings are involved; but beyond that there is godly love, joy, peace and

purpose, meaning and significance — all centred around Jesus Christ. When false teaching is present, all this is disrupted. Therefore, false teaching must never be allowed in the true church. But when the mature believers become aware of it, *in Christ* they are forced to reject it and to make it known.

Mat 18:20 *“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

Mat 23:28 *“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

Luke 12:1 *Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”*

Luke 24:32 *They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

Rom 3:13 *“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.”*

1 Cor 1:9 *God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

1 Tim 4:2 *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

VIII. Jude 12 False Teachers Are Empty and Unstable

False teachers are filled with emptiness and instability. Two illustrations are given.

⇒ They are like clouds that offer rain to the farmer, but when the clouds arrive, they are driven away by the rushing winds of the storm.

⇒ They are like fruit trees that seem to be flourishing and that promise fruit, but when harvest comes there is no fruit.

This is a picture of false teachers offering hope to people, but their hope is empty and unstable — just as empty and unstable as the world’s fleeting clouds of hope and unbearing promise of fruit. The false teachers cannot water the seed of God’s Word in people’s hearts, nor can their teaching bear fruit within people. The opinions of false teachers cannot help people in facing the trials and temptations of life, nor can they prepare people to face eternity that lies just over the horizon. In dealing with eternity — with God, Christ and the Holy Scripture — the false teacher is nothing more than a cloud without water and a tree without fruit. He may sound like he offers hope, security and

fullness of life; but his message is unstable and empty and will leave a person hopeless when he meets God face to face.

***Eph 4:17** So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

***Eccl 2:11** Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*

***Eccl 2:23** All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.*

***Isa 55:2** Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.*

***Isa 57:20** But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.*

***Mat 7:15-21** “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

IX. Jude 13 False Teachers Teach Shameful Things

False teachers teach things that are shameful and ugly and repulsive and that do not belong within the church. The picture is that of sea waves that rage and foam under the fierce winds of a storm. After the storm quiets down, there is all kind s of debris strung along the shoreline, debris such as driftwood, seaweed, scum and all kinds of litter. The sight is ghastly and ugly and repulsive. The sight is shameful. Thus it is with false teachers. They foam out their teaching that leaves a ghastly scene upon the church. What they teach is shameful; it brings shame upon the name of Christ and shame upon the name of the church. Their teaching is a disgrace, ugly and repulsive. It is nothing more than useless debris that does not belong in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Luke 6:46** “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”*

***Rom 2:21** You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?*

***Rom 2:23-24** You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”*

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

James 3:10 *Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*

2 Pet 2:2 *Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.*

Neh 5:9 *So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?”*

Prov 3:35 *The wise inherit honour, but fools he holds up to shame.*

Prov 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

Jer 23:40 *“I will bring on you everlasting disgrace — everlasting shame that will not be forgotten.”*

X. Jude 13 False Teachers Pass into Eternal Darkness

False teachers wander about as a falling star that passes into eternal darkness. This is the picture of a shooting star that shoots its light across the sky ever so quickly, but then it is gone forever into the darkness. The light promised by false teachers does not last nor can it last, for it is only of the earth; and all things of the earth disappear through age, change, deterioration, decay and death — disappear into the eternal abyss of darkness ever so quickly.

False teachers wander about grasping for light after light, truth after truth, idea after idea, help after help. But nothing meets the desperate need of man for life — for love, joy, peace, fulfilment, completeness and satisfaction. The reason is ever so clear: life in all of its fullness is found only in Christ, the One who revealed the life of God to us.

Psa 119:176 *I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.*

Prov 21:16 *A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.*

Prov 27:8 *Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home.*

Lam 4:14 *Now they grope through the streets like men who are blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments.*

1 Pet 2:25 *For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

2 Pet 2:15 *They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.*

Jude 1:13 *They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. ■*