

## Cliff Notes of the History of Apostasy - Jude 5-16

James had a few road trip stories to open several of his sermons during the summer. I also have a road trip story. Laura and I love to drive up the coast and stop at scenic ocean points along the way like Montana del Oro, Morro Rock, The boardwalk near Cambria, Ragged Point, Big Sur. You cannot drive too far past Ragged point right now because of a road closure due to rock slides that took out Hwy 1 in several places during the heavy rains in the winter. There are barriers in place so you will not drive off a cliff where the rock slide is.

Now, if you've been reading ahead this week, you may have said, "this looks to get a little difficult here." Verses 1–4 were okay last week, but now it falls off a cliff at verse 5. What we have, are several illustrations grouped together by triplets giving us a quick history of Old Testament Apostasy. Hence the title for today is "Cliff Notes of the History of Apostasy." The illustrations are short and to the point and Jude's readers in his day would have been familiar with them as we see in verse 5, "*Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it...*" The illustrations that we are familiar with will go by quickly, but some will need a little more explanation and may leave some of us still scratching our heads.

I agree, this will be a hard read, I've been wrestling with it for a while but remember that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 say, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." NASB

Let's turn to the letter of Jude. If you're visiting with us today, welcome to Grace, and you will find a Bible in the pew rack in front of you or you can read it on the screens, and we will study verses 5-16.

Hear the Word of the Lord from the English Standard version:

*Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

*Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.*

*Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.*

*It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.*

For review, when Jude started to write a letter of our common salvation in Christ, he reminded his readers they are called, beloved and kept in Christ. He prayed mercy, peace and love for them. Then he unloaded an exposé of apostasy, exhorting his readers to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3). Because God led Jude to change his message, today we have this letter that demonstrates clearly that the spiritual battle for Biblical truth demands our effort.

Chuck Swindoll said in his commentary on Jude, “Apostates are people who willfully and deliberately defect from the faith. Although they once appeared to agree with the church on the doctrines of Christianity, truth be told, they never really trusted Christ for eternal salvation. With arrogance and defiance in their hearts, apostates purposely oppose the central teachings of the Christian faith and at the same time plant seeds of doubt, division, and dissension among believers.”

Believers in Christ who study Scripture and fellowship in a church already have the infallible sources of true knowledge and wisdom. Knowing this, Jude provided four essential reasons to contend for the true faith.

- **Apostates face certain doom.**

One reason believers must contend for the faith is because the doom of apostates is certain (Jude 5-7). Preventing further damage and rescuing their victims is therefore vital. To back up this claim of doom, Jude appeals to three examples.

**The Exodus** – Jude 5, *Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*

The first example refers to an event recorded in Numbers 13-14. The people of Israel, after having experienced the Exodus under Moses. And you will notice in verse 5 that Jesus is the one who brought them out. You say, “But Jesus? I thought he does not show up until Christmas.” Well, the second person of the Trinity is all through the Old Testament from the very beginning creating the world, and sometimes showing up mysteriously, and sometimes referred to as the Angel of the Lord.

So they came to the edge of the Promised Land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants and they stopped. Why? Because of unbelief. They didn’t believe they could take the new land.

They had sent out some spies on a reconnaissance mission in the land, in obedience to the Lord (Num. 13:1-2). But when they saw the grim odds they faced, the majority of the spies, except Joshua and Caleb advised against invading the land, contrary to the command of God. Because of their unbelief manifested in disobedience, the Lord judged that generation in the wilderness, and they did not enter the land (Num. 14:20-25). They **faced certain doom**. These people were in the crowd. They were circumcised Jews, but they weren’t circumcised in their hearts. Their hearts were full of unbelief. They were rebels. They rebelled against God’s rule. They doubted God’s promises. They were reluctant to believe his promises. And so God determines that that should be their end.

The warning to the false teachers in Jude’s day is obvious: Those who lack genuine faith will not go unpunished. Unbelief will keep you from Christ. Unbelief will keep you from heaven. That’s the point that he’s making. And I will remind you the being part of the visible people of God is no guarantee of eternal security unless it is combined with a living, personal faith in the Lord Jesus.

**The Angels** - Jude 6, *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day*

The second example pertains to fallen angels whom God judged. *“the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling.”* I think this one needs a little clarification.

There are at least a couple views on what this is talking about. One might be that this refers to a point in eternity past when Satan rebelled against God and took a 3<sup>rd</sup> of heaven’s angels with him. I don’t see this being the case here for at least one reason, not all demons are *“kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day,”* like it says here. I read in the 1 Peter 5:8 that “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” He is not chained now. But he will be later.

What I believe is that this likely refers to the events in the background of Genesis 6, when fallen angels somehow entered the physical realm and cohabited with women on earth. The result of this exceptionally immoral and unnatural union was a race of “mighty men” called “Nephilim.” Gen. 6:1-4 says, “When man began to multiply on the face of the land..., the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.”

The effect of this was widespread: rampant, worldwide wickedness. Gen. 6:5 says, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” The warning is again clear to the immoral false teachers in Jude’s day: Those who engage in such acts will be severely judged.

Alistair Begg said, “And as bizarre as this actually may sound to us, we have to constantly guard against a kind of rationalistic worldview that says it’s not possible for these things to happen. Oh yeah, they happened. And you will notice what happened to them: the angels didn’t keep their assigned place, and now they in turn have been “kept”—notice that little pun, almost, there—“he has” now “kept” them “in eternal chains under gloomy darkness.”

He says, “Remember what happened to the people who were left wondering in the wilderness. And remember what happened to the sons of God, to the angels, who used their privileged position as a springboard for perverse activity.”

**Sodom and Gomorrah** - Jude 7, *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

The third example takes us to the horrific events in Sodom and Gomorrah, recorded in Genesis 19. According to Genesis 13:13, “The men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.” And Genesis 18:20 says, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.” God didn’t wink at their sexual immorality, and He condemned them to destruction. As such, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah became an archetype and foreshadowed the judgment of “eternal fire” that awaited unsaved apostates who also engaged in such wickedness. The immoral false teachers of Jude’s day were indulging in this kind of “gross immorality” and were thus in line for similar punishment. God destroyed these cities because of homosexual and heterosexual sin.

Because such apostasy brings certain doom, believers must strive against these false doctrines and wicked lifestyles. And unbelievers who are led astray by such false teachers will lose the opportunity to hear the truth and to be genuinely saved both from the disastrous lifestyle of wickedness and from eternal judgment.

I quoted Thomas Manton last week, and I'll end this section with him. Manton says, "The Angels had the blessings of Heaven, the Israelites of the Church, ... Sodom of the World. But the Angels on their Apostasie lost Heaven; the murmuring Israelites were shut out of Canaan; and the Sodomites were together with their fruitful ... land destroyed." Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of Jude* (London, 1658), 327.

- **false teachers blaspheme.**

*Jude 8 and 10, Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.*

Another reason believers must contend for the faith is because the tongues of apostates are blasphemous (Jude 8-10). Apostates can do great damage to new believers as well as unbelievers by their sneering cynicism and irreverence toward things that are sacred. They get their ideas not from God's revelation but from their own "dreaming" imaginations, by which they become their own authority over what's true and right. The result is a reviling or blaspheming of spiritual things (8, 10).

You've got to give Jude ten out of ten for absolute clarity, for not pulling his punches. There's no way in which he's softening the blow. "They're dreamers, they defile the flesh, they despise authority, and they speak evil of the glorious ones (or angels)."

They might say something like, "Well, we don't really pay much attention to the Bible; we have visions. We have dreams." You don't want to go to somebody who just says, "Well, let's see what the Bible has to say." No, no you should go to somebody who is able to go direct to the source. That's what they'll tell you: "We have fresh revelation." Or, "Here's a new twist." Or, "Here is what this *really* means." "I know you have your Bible, and I know you know a bit about it, but if you come to my study, I can tell you what it *really* means."

So, you have this picture, don't you? Their dreams are fantasies. Showing utter contempt for authority. Refusing to learn from history; choosing instead to rewrite it according to their dreams.

*Jude 9, But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."*

In verse 9, Jude illustrates the extreme folly of the apostates' blasphemies through an episode reported in an apocryphal book that would have been familiar to his audience. This book was known as the Assumption of Moses or the Testament of Moses.

And what he's actually doing here is he's quoting from Jewish material, from a particular story about the assumption of Moses, which ran, if you like, alongside the unfolding of the canon of Scripture. And so he's able to refer to it in the way in which people could say, "Oh yeah, I get what he means."

You can read about the assumption of Moses in Deuteronomy 34. Nobody knows to this day where Moses was buried. There's a real kind of mysterious little bit to the departure of Moses when you read at the end of Deuteronomy.

The argument, presumably, was about Moses being allowed into heaven. And the devil is saying, “Moses should not be allowed into heaven,” presumably because, he would claim, “Moses murdered that Egyptian guy. And therefore, I don’t think he should be allowed into heaven.” Michael refuses to side with the devil, and he defers to Almighty God as the Lawgiver and the Judge. He doesn’t take authority to himself to say, “I’ll decide who goes into heaven, including Moses, because I am the archangel Michael. I am a significant person.” No. Because he recognizes that not even the archangel Michael can declare Moses innocent. Not even Michael can defer the accusations or remove the accusations of the law. He simply didn’t dare to, because he recognizes that only the sovereign, almighty, gracious God can do that. And he is the God of mercy and of judgment. Michael said, “the Lord rebuke you,” and left the judgement to God.

Now, notice verse 10, because it’s key: “But these people...” You see? So he’s pointing out a big contrast here. If the archangel Michael didn’t presume to overstep the bounds of authority, who in the world do these people think they are to overstep their authority?

Those blaspheming apostates “revile the things which they do not understand” —that is, spiritual things. But what they are familiar with —natural things of the flesh —they indulge to the point of self-destruction (10). In other words, they live by sight, not by faith.

Surely for more reasons than I recognize, we are studying Jude right now, (for I just chose a short book to preach for a few weeks) If ever there was an expression of the reality of what happens to a society, to a life, to a family, to an individual that turns its back on the truth of the living God, it is here, written in the pages of Scripture. As they recklessly ride the downward spiral of humanism, apostates consider themselves masters of their own bodies, to do with them as they please.

So the result of rejecting God’s perfect plan leaves them in the realm of irrationality. Isn’t that it? “But these people blaspheme all ... they do not understand.” They’re “destroyed by [the things] that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.” It’s not uncommon that people say, “Where did common sense go? Where did basic biology go? Where did objective truth go?

- **the religion of the apostates is empty.**

**Three Old Testament Examples - Jude 11, *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error and perished in Korah’s rebellion.***

Now, a third reason believers should contend for the faith is because the religion of apostates is empty (Jude 11-13). It’s not as though they were a valid alternative, wrong on a few minor points, but close enough. Instead, they had nothing to offer their followers. The errors of the apostates were manifold, as shown by further comparisons with negative figures from the past.

### **Cain**

Cain offered a sacrifice that went against God’s requirements for the kind of offering He desired. By doing things his own way and presenting an offering from the fruit of his labors (rather than an animal sacrifice), Cain’s offering did not meet God’s approval (Gen. 4:1-7; Heb. 11:4). What Cain offered had the outside appearance of piety, but it lacked the substance of sincere faith and obedience. “If we’re going to understand what was going on with Cain, we need to realize that he had rejected the very idea of his accountability before the holy God.” When it came to the sacrifice, he wanted to do it his own way.

Motivated by greed, the apostates also rushed into “the error of Balaam,” who set out to sell his prophecies against Israel to the Moabites until the Lord stopped him (Num. 22; Deut. 23:3-4; Neh. 13:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:15-16).

## Balaam

Balaam also lured the men of Israel into sexual immorality and the worship of idols (Num. 25:1-3; 31:15-16). So, Balaam served as an Old Testament parallel of the apostates, who not only twisted doctrine until it broke but also deceived people into sin.

Balaam was prevented from cursing the people, which he wanted to do, but he managed somehow or another to make it work so that he could get Moab's king to seduce them into both sexual and spiritual adultery.

And don't for a moment imagine that the word "error" there might be regarded as a little slip—you know, Balaam just made a little bit of a mistake. No, it's not a casual mistake he made. It was deliberate, it was deceitful, and its objective was to bring about the downfall of the people of God. That's what he wanted to do. And Jude is saying, "When these characters emerge, you should know that that's their objective."

## Korah

Finally, Jude summons the testimony of the rebels of Korah, a Levite who led a mutiny against the legitimate leadership of Moses and Aaron. In his arrogance, Korah presumed that he could approach God on his own terms. Because of his presumptuous defiance, God caused the earth to open up and swallow him and his followers (Num. 16:1-33). In the same way, the apostates in Jude's day defied the authority of Christ and the apostles, choosing instead to put together a religion that filled up their own egos but provided no saving power to its adherents.

You notice, I think, there is a progression here in the verbs. "For they walked in the way of Cain"—they began to think in that way. They "abandoned themselves" to the error that Balaam promulgated. And they "perished in Korah's rebellion." Actually, in Korah's rebellion, the people who perished are the people that we just read about in the Old Testament. But he describes the end of these characters in the past tense. It's as if they also have gone down in the rebellion with Korah. In other words, it's a downward spiral.

**Apostates live godless lives and seek to spread their evil ways among others.**

*Six Pictures - Jude 12-13, These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.*

In 5-11, Jude summoned a long roster of Old Testament and even extra-biblical witnesses to testify against the wickedness of the apostates. In 12-13, he unleashes vivid images from nature itself to illustrate his argument. The false teachers showed up for the church's "love feasts" as if they were genuine members of the community of the faithful, but in reality, they were like "hidden reefs" that lurked just under the surface, ready to shipwreck others' faith (12).

They were eager to fill their bellies from the pantries of the church, but they were unwilling to fulfill their obligations to the people of the church! They cared nothing about others, only themselves. In Ezekiel 34:2 it says, "Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?"

Their emptiness is underscored when Jude uses illustrations for nature and says the apostates were like "clouds without water," having nothing real to offer a thirsting soul (12). Along these same lines, the heretics were like fruitless and rootless trees—bearing no marks of holiness in their lives and, in fact, removed from the life-nourishing ministry of the church. In this sense, they were "doubly dead" (12). And the picture of being "twice dead" is a graphic picture. It's what the Bible talks about in Revelation: that on judgment day, those

who have been fruitless, those who have been deceptive, those who have undermined all that God desired, who have died physically, will experience the second death in a final, irrevocable separation from the God who made us to know him, to love him, and to follow him.

Jude illustrates their destructive nature by comparing them to foaming waves of the sea, he's combining in the metaphor both the physical and the moral. So the picture is understandable if we've ever stood on the shore or we've seen the waves come crashing in, and someone has said to you, "Don't get too close, because that stuff could spray all over you, and there's no saying what it might bring." A lot of crashing, entirely unpredictable, and leaving behind a mess to clean up: that's the picture. (13).

Finally, their lives are like "wandering stars," which appear for a time but fail at providing guidance. Instead, they lead into the darkness of destruction any who count on them for direction.

"These false teachers can only ultimately lead you astray."

*Jude 14-15, It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

After these illustrations from nature, Jude caps off his description of the apostates' judgment with a quote from the popular apocryphal book, 1 Enoch. The strong language used in 1 Enoch 1.9 applied well to the condemnation of these false teachers. Did this mean that Jude believed the whole book of 1 Enoch should be included in the Old Testament canon? Richard Bauckham clarifies that even though Jude regarded the words of 1 Enoch 1.9 as prophecy, "it need not imply that he regarded the book as canonical Scripture. At Qumran, for example, the Enoch literature and other apocryphal works were evidently valued without being included in the canon of Scripture." To illustrate truth, Jude likewise drew from a variety of uninspired sources that nevertheless contained truth, like the Assumption of Moses in Jude 8-9 and 1 Enoch in Jude 14-15.

What was the content of 1 Enoch that caught Jude's attention and led him to apply it to the acts of the apostates? The passage quoted emphasizes the absolute certainty of the judgment of the ungodly. This quote serves to cap off and sum up the preceding discussion. Think of it as Jude's "closing argument" as he presents his final case to his readers that they must contend earnestly for the faith in the face of the false teachers in 14-15, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Did you notice the repeated word "ungodly"? It's the same term used in Romans 1:18, where Paul says "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." One day, Christ will come with an entourage of angelic warriors and a parade of glorified saints to make war against the ungodly and to vanquish them. None will escape the judgment. They will be judged both for their ungodly deeds and for the words of blasphemy they spoke when they rejected their only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (1:15).

*Jude 16, These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.*

Finally, Jude lays into the apostates with a litany of vices that clothe the false teachers. Grumbling, faultfinding, lusting, boasting, and flattering. Because of their conscious, willing, stubborn rebellion, God will punish them one day.



In closing, what can I say besides, “don’t be an apostate” and don’t be taken in by them?

Jude wanted to instill in his audience a sense of righteous anger against the apostates. But if we’re not careful, righteous indignation can boil over into uncontrolled contention on our part. We must prepare ourselves to stand up for truth and rely on the Holy Spirit to help us exercise control.

There is no question here, that this woe and this warning is tough. And it’s important, I keep reminding myself, that Jude, the servant of the Lord Jesus, is addressing the matter in the awareness that God wants his people—God wants his people—to be the opposite of these things. He wants the shepherds of the church to be totally unlike these six pictures in verses 12-13.

So, for example, the negative—followed by our response.

The hidden reefs---The Light of the World is our lighthouse beacon to warn of hidden reefs. We should be life savers to be merciful to those whom have been shipwrecked spiritually and physically by the hidden reefs.

The greedy shepherd feeding himself---The Good Shepherd is the bread of life. We should bring the Bread of Life to others for their nourishment.

Clouds without rain---The one who made the clouds gives living water. We should give living water to others in need.

Wild waves of the seas---Jesus calms the sea. We should be a calming influence to those around us.

Fruitless trees---Jesus is the vine that produces fruit in and through us. Show love, joy peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law,” Galations 5:22-23.

Wandering stars---fixed point. The star of Bethlehem led wise men to Jesus. “...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven,” Matthew 5:16.

“Don’t go down that pathway of apostasy. Hebrews 13:8 says, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Navigate by him who is the Light of the World, John 8:12.

Psalms 18:30 says, As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him, (NIV)

Some of you are here this morning, and honest, you’re following wandering stars. You may have just wandered in here as well. That’s another possibility. We have nothing to offer except the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the way, ... the truth, and the life.” John 14:6. Turn to him.

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## Discussion Questions

Would you say that your knowledge of the Bible is adequate to help you discern false teaching and false teachers?

The children of Israel did not go into the land because they sided with the majority report that it would be too hard to take the Promised land. Do you tend to go along with the crowd or stand alone like Joshua and Caleb did?

What do you think of the interpretation that Angels cohabitated with “daughters of men” in Gen. 6 which created a super human race called the Nephilim?

Do Jude’s examples of people who lost the battle help you see the schemes and lies of the devil more clearly?

Do you ever rebuke the devil, or do you ask God to?

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