



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 22nd April 2018

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Jude verse 11

Subject: Part 7 – Woe to them!

“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”

When we began our journey of Jude’s letter, we looked at its clear layout and we can see without a shadow of doubt the fingerprints of God in it all. This letter of warning in relation to apostates is so relevant for us today as we are undoubtedly living in the end of the church age and are witnesses of prophecies on the edge of being fulfilled, just turn on the news if you are in doubt. Apostasy is one of the major signs of the end times and it is currently increasing in our nation never mind globally. The reason I’m reminding you of this is, that as we get into the nitty and grittiness of this letter, it is possible to lose focus of why it is so important and relevant for us as individuals and as a church to keep these things in our minds and hearts, least we be deceived.

Everything that the Spirit does is purposeful. We can see that here in verse 11 as the Holy Spirit directs us to three natural examples: Cain, Balaam and Korah. May I point out to you, that they are not in chronological order for if they were it should read Cain, Korah and Balaam. So this alerts us that the Holy Spirit has put it in this order for a specific reason. Let me submit to you, that the reason for these people and this order, is that it is not just a behavioural lessons but it outlines a process of apostasy. Each of these characters are without question

worthy of study, as they have a lot to teach us for we can learn from others mistakes as well as our own.

Before we commence to look at these three characters, there is a warning in the first three words of verse 11 – which are – **‘WOE TO THEM’**.

The word **Woe** translated from the Greek, is an interjection or emotional cry that is essentially like exclaiming, “Regrettably, how horrible it will be!” Not the commencement or the continuing, but the consequences is in view. “There is pleasure in sin but only for a season”, then the day of reckoning when man stands before God and has to give an account. This has eternal consequence which is why God is warning people by exclaiming, Woe to them! Jude follows the example of Christ in Matthew 23:13-16

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’

Unfortunately terrible damage has already occurred in the lives and minds of the people who listen and follow these apostates. On Judgment Day, the full and terrible horror will be made known and the just judgment will be passed. Jude cries out, “Woe to them”, dramatic yes, but heart felt and painfully so. God does not take delight in the death of the wicked, why should we? Jude not only follows Christ’s example but also that of the prophets (Isaiah 3:9, 11; 5:8-23; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; Jeremiah 13:27; 23:1; Ezekiel 13:3; 16:23; 34:2; Hosiah 7:13; Zechariah 11:17) in pronouncing ultimate spiritual judgment on apostates.

Cain - ..for they have gone the way of Cain, (11b)

Jude is dealing with both the apostate and their followers, “for they have gone the way of Cain”. What is “The way of Cain”?



Cain was the first child of Adam and Eve, born after the fall and he was the first child to be attributed to God. Genesis 4:1-15 contains the familiar story.

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.”² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶ So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.¹¹ So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

¹³ And Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ And the Lord said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.”

Genesis 4 show us how quickly it progressed. Sin in the individual was developed and expressed in the family. This chapter, like the preceding three, is full of “beginnings,” as it were. We have brought before us the first mother, the first birth, the first family, the first murder, the first martyrdom, the first indications of human development. Not least of all, we have the record of the first conflict between the two seeds (chapter 3:15), and man’s approach to God.

When we read Genesis 4, we first see Cain and Abel bringing sacrifices to God. Cain, a farmer, grew crops and so we may think that it was an obvious choice for him to bring his fruits as the sacrifice. His brother Abel, a shepherd, brought a sheep and the fat of it as a sacrifice. God rejected Cain's offering but not Abel's. Three things are to be carefully noted in regard to the approach of worship which are, there was an appointed place, an appointed time and a prescribed way of worship.

If we look at Genesis 3 in verse 21, when Adam and Eve sinned, it says that their eyes were opened and they covered themselves in Fig leaves, but their way was not God's way. God stepped in and made them garments of skins and clothed them. God showed them that it was only through the shedding of blood could their sin be covered. It all points to the cross from the beginning. Abel continued on the way he must have been taught and by faith, as told in Hebrews 11 verse 4 –

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”

So what was Cain's problem? Was Cain an atheist or someone who was refusing to worship the true and living God?

When we read the first few verses in chapter 4 we can see that Cain appeared to be a believer in the true and living God but he was not a true follower of God's ways. You see Cain didn't refuse to worship God but his mistake was that he wanted to worship God in his own way and on his own terms. He failed to approach God on the revealed basis. Cain brought the works of his own hands and the witness of his own labours and the worth of the earth but not what God ordained which was the shedding of blood. Proverbs 14:12 tells us –

“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

It is without question that Cain was 'otherwise' minded. So are many who hear the truth but never really listen. James once reminded the believers in his epistle – James 1:22-26 of this very thing.

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of

man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

We are blessed to hear the truth but if that is all we ever do with it then there is no conversion of the soul. Knowledge in one thing but heart reality is quite another. It is the difference between being saved or not. You see it is all about what kind of faith we really have.

Cain's offering was without faith. He blasphemed God by rejecting the atonement of the sacrifice required by God, declaring it as not the only way. Cain went his own way by using his works as a way to worship God. This was the way of Cain.

Note, it does not state that Abel was more excellent, but that the offering which he presented was more pleasing and acceptable to his Maker. I'm sure Cain's offering was a very beautiful one. No doubt he selected the very choicest fruits that could be found. His offering cost him considerable toil and labour, and probably it was with no little self-satisfaction that he came before the Lord. Yet God had no respect for his gift. Remember what Hebrews 9:22 says

"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"

Cain reaction of this situation showed Cain's true heart, his countenance fell and he was furious.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?"

The condition of Cain's heart was clearly revealed by his anger at God's refusal to receive his offering. In fact in verses 6 and 7, God speaks with Cain about his heart condition –

"So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

His worship, like that of multitudes in our day, was merely "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5), that is, destitute of any genuineness or reality. He was angry at the thought that he could not approach and worship God according

to the dictates of his own mind. He was not filled with repentance even though he was given a chance by God and God warned him that sin would be lying at his door. So it is today. Unless the darkened understanding of man be illumined by the Holy Spirit and the enmity of the carnal mind be subdued, the human heart rebels against the idea of the impossibility of approaching God save through a bloody sacrifice. The natural man in his pride and self-righteousness hates the truths of substitution and expiation worse than he hates the Devil. Like many apostates today, they know the truth but won't repent from the wrong they are doing.

God had not forsaken Cain but strove with him in order to turn him around but he would not, not that he could not, he refused. That refusal carried with it a heavy burden the saddest verse in the chapter in verse 16, "so Cain went away from the presents of the Lord...". In fact he went into further rebellion. God told him that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond and then Cain goes off and builds a city and names it Enoch after his son. There is a great deal more we could say about Cain. He surely had all the marks that Jude has been sharing with us, but he's not alone for next comes Balaam.

Balaam - ", " (11c)

Numbers 22 introduces us to Balaam, who was a prophet but was not an Israelite. In fact, he lived in Moab and he most certainly communicated with God. Numbers 22-24 relates the story of Balaam, with some additional references occurring in chapter 31. Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse Israel. In the first half of Numbers 22, Balaam appears to be a faithful prophet (w. 7-21).

He first tried to be obedient to God which cost him money but when he was promised payment and promotion it was too much for him to resist. So Balaam devised a plan in which he could use God's laws and rules against the Israelites. He weaved a plan that would lure Israel into idolatry and immorality thereby believing that God would have to punish the Israelites and then he would get his rewards. Even though Balaam claimed to speak only the words of God, the Lord knew that he wanted to curse Israel in exchange for money. Because of his greed, Balaam received a rebuke for his own transgression. While he was riding on his mute donkey, the Lord miraculously caused the animal to speak and the madness of the prophet was restrained. Balaam was so greedy that he was "beside himself." His love of

money had caused him to act irrationally, sure he didn't seem phased that his donkey was talking to him!!

In Numbers 31:16, Moses identifies Balaam as a primary corrupting influence: "Behold, these [pagan women] caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor". Balaam encouraged the Israelites to practice idolatry, immorality, and intermarriage in a second attempt to destroy them. This time by assimilating them into pagan Canaanite society. The prophet's apostasy not only assaulted God's holiness, but it also threatened the very existence of His chosen people. Although Balaam knew better, he allowed fleshly impulses to guide his choices. And, as a result, he suffered the ultimate penalty of death (Numbers 31:8; Proverbs 13:15).

3 Phrases surface in the new testament in relation to Balaam.

1st – The Error of Balaam which we find in Jude letter from this verse, verse 11. Here we see the natural reason, greed and ambition by trying to use God for his own advantage.

2nd – The Way of Balaam which we find in 2 Peter 2:15-16

"forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

The prophet sells his gift or service for a premium. In the case of false teachers, Peter revealed that their primary incentive was and is personal gain. Put simply, their premium was really a price tag—they are motivated by money, as has already been noted in verses 3 and 14 of the same chapter in 2 Peter 2.

3rd – Hold to the doctoring of Balaam, which we find in Revelation 2:14. This is indicative of marriage to the world and when a leader causes people to stumble for his own gain.

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

As a prophet-for-hire, Balaam is a prime illustration of false teachers, those who love wealth and prestige more than faithfulness and obedience.

The false teachers, like Balaam before them, were forsaking the right way, which in the Old Testament is a metaphor indicating obedience to God's Word (Gen. 18:19; 1 Sam. 12:23; Job 8:19; Psalms. 18:30; 25:9; 119:14, 33; Prov. 8:20, 22; Acts 13:10). It is a direct deliberate rebellion against Scripture. These apostates sacrifice their eternal riches for what they can get right now. Their greed makes them short sighted. Here Jude unmasks the fundamental motive behind the religious interests of false teachers; they do so for profit - 1 Timothy 6:10 –

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Unlike God's true shepherds which 1 Peter 5:2 describes as -

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly”

These ministry mercenaries follow in the error of Balaam, rushing headlong into envy and greed.

Lastly, we find the finally natural example Jude give us -

Korah - “and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” (11d)

Numbers 16 presents the story of Korah, a cousin of Moses and Aaron, from the tribe of Levi. As a Levite and a Kohathite, Korah had significant duties in the tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 3:6-8; 18:3; Deut. 10:8; cf. 1 Chron. 15:2). However, when he was not chosen to be a priest, he became irate. To show his contempt, Korah enlisted Dathan and Abiram (along with 250 other men) to join him in a rebellion against Moses' leadership.

The book of Numbers records Korah's disingenuous indictment against Moses: “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?” (Numbers 16:3). In his rebellion, Korah disputed the idea that the people needed a leader and mediator, someone who could speak for God and teach them His truth. He openly rebelled against the authority that God had given Moses, and he actively rallied others to support his spiritual mutiny.

God, however, responded by terminating the rebellion of Korah in an abrupt and decisive fashion, such that all the apostate rebels perished. Numbers 16:32-35 says,



“The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their house- holds, 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 at their outcry, for they said, “The earth may swallow us up!” Fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense”.

Tragically, the consequences of the rebellion extended beyond the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the 250 men. In the aftermath of God’s judgment, many of the Israelites, having grown sympathetic to Korah’s position, grumbled against Moses and Aaron. As a result, God sent a plague that killed an additional 14,700 Israelites (Numbers 16:41-50). The plague’s widespread devastation marked Korah’s extensive influence among the people.

Let me underline this point, Korah was not just in rebellion against Moses, but he was in direct rebellion against God. Often Moses is said to be a typology of Christ, and Jesus said ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’, that there is ‘only one mediator between God and man, and that is the man Christ Jesus’.

This is what many of today’s false teachers and apostate teach, that there is more than just one way to get to God. While they may mention Jesus as Saviour, they do not mention that He needs to be Lord of your life and that you have to obey His Word. Anything goes with these people, in fact, they often have it that God is servicing us and sure isn’t everyone Holy as claimed by Korah.

Yet, those who follow in the steps of Korah and his supporters’ rebellion, will eventually experience God’s wrath (Mark 3:29; John 15:6; Heb. 10:26-31; Rev. 20:10-15). The rebellion of Korah teaches us much. It speaks about our attitudes towards God’s authority; The pressure of our relationships; and God’s response to rebellion.

When we look at Cain, Balaam and Korah, we can see the process that occurs for most apostates:

Like Cain – These Apostates choose a way, their own way and like Balaam, they marry the world and rush head long into sacrificing their eternal riches for what they can have now, but like Korah, their rebellion will end in their destruction as they will experience God’s wrath.



Just like God told Cain *“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

Repentance is a very important truth and God has made a provision for us to come to him, and he is willing to forgive – Romans 8:33-39

“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

*“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is so important for us to keep continuous check on our own lives, that we are not just hearers of the word but doers. There are so many apostates out there, it is so easy to be persuaded by their teaching, especially when it tickles our ears, but these warnings are not just for them but those who follow them. So as 1 Peter 5 verse 8 to 11 says:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. ¹¹ To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Amen.