



Ministry of the Word

**Sunday 06<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Jude verses 12 & 13

**Subject:** Part 8 – Clouds without Water

*“These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”*

So far, in Jude’s letter, which was written for the believers’ attention, we have looked at the warnings and judgments of apostasy in verses 5 to 11. We have delved into the three historical apostate groups we found in verses 5 to 7 which were, Israel in the wilderness, the rebellious angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah. We have probed at the description of contemporary apostates in verses 8 to 10, and last time we examined the three historical apostate personalities found in verse 11 which were Cain, Balaam and Korah. These verses leads us to additional description of contemporary apostates which we find here in verses 12 and 13.

Jude’s letter has pointed us in many directions so far, particularly in the Old Testament. I think that it is fair to say, that the examples he pointed to, clearly unmask Apostates and the act of apostasy. Through these examples, we have been shown evidentially, that Apostates and apostasy has been around throughout history. Also, Apostates are not ignorant people just making bad mistakes, but have known the truth and in spite of the truth turned away

from it for various reasons. Regardless, of their 'reasons', they are used by the devil to bring about deceptions, bring about another Gospel, destroy the truth, hostility against God, division amongst God's people, stumble God's people so that the Gospel will be put to shame; they seek to rob the people of God of peace and joy, and to turn others off God, they have their own agenda to service themselves, for position, prosperity and popularity but the heed here is, that they will end in destruction and we must be careful not to be deceived, because it will only harm us. These rebellious people, ministries of destruction are wolves in sheep's clothing, and they come in all shapes, sizes and degrees of obviousness.

Knowing this, then, isn't it amazing that when these people are exposed, even disciplined, there are many people who look on and even feel sorry for them, saying 'It's so hard, that was so un-Christian, where is the love and forgiveness, does Jesus not love everyone? They should read John 6 and 13 as well as Matthew 10:33

***"But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."***

But this is not about loving that one person, how about loving the church, the people who are either destroyed by these people's actions or teachings, the non-believers who are turned off God, the setting aside of God's Holy scripture and authority? Let me assure you, these people do not seek forgiveness, they don't ask for forgiveness nor do they want forgiveness, they don't want your pity either unless it will benefit them. They know exactly what they are doing.

Verses 12 and 13 unpins all this simply, beautifully, and as we now know with Jude, with many layers.

Let me read you The Amplified Version from 1987 as it is the nearest to the original Greek;

***"These are hidden reefs (elements of danger) in your love feasts, were they boldly feast sumptuously (carousing together in your mist), without scruples providing for themselves alone. They are clouds without water, swept along with the wind, trees without fruit at the late autumn gathering time -twice (doubly) dead, lifeless and plucked up by the roots."*** Jude verse 12 & 13

Here, Jude takes the natural phenomena as he continues his denunciation of these people. This is very like what Jesus done in many of his discourses in the Gospels to illustrate spiritual truths. For instance in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus uses nature in the various parables such as

different soils, The good sower, Wheat, the Mustard Seed, Leaven, Pearls, Fishing; Matthew 24 and Luke 13, He uses the fig trees and in Luke 15 is uses sheep.

Other parts of scripture use nature, creation, and natural phenomena, to explain many rich lessons to us such as those found in the Book of Psalms. [1, 8, 18, 23, 29, 33, 42, 46, 59, 68, 72, 90, 91, 97, 98, 104, 107, 114, 124, 135, 147, 148].

Nature is wonderful to watch but there are times when you need to be at a distance to keep this point of view. For instance, a storm at sea can be magnificent to watch when you are in a secure, warm place, that is unshakable, by the fire and plenty to eat and drink, but being in a boat in the storm is a completely different experience and I'm sure you won't think it was so magnificent!

In this passage Jude followed that well-established pattern by comparing apostates with five natural phenomena: hidden reefs, waterless clouds, fruitless autumn trees, wild sea waves, and wandering stars. So let's look at them.

## HIDDEN REEFS

*“These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves;”* (12a)

Jude's description of apostates as hidden reefs graphically depicts the unseen danger they pose. Reefs are undersea coral formations usually located close to the shore. They are potentially harmful to ships because they can rip open the bottoms of their hulls, causing the vessels to sink. Like those hidden reefs, the apostates embedded themselves under the surface in their love feasts of the early church, from where they tore into unsuspecting people with their lies and wickedness. Originally, the love feast was at the breaking of bread. It was intended to be a regular church gathering for the purpose of mutual instruction. We see this in Acts 17:11 where Paul arrives in Berea he goes to the synagogue, as they didn't have their own buildings, but there, they searched the Scriptures daily and broke bread. They wanted to know and live the truth. They also meet for encouragement, as seen in Hebrews 10:24—25. You get the picture that it was a time of fellowship not just the preaching or teaching but as they fellowship together they would encourage each other. Involved in this fellowship there

would have been confession, correction and care (cf. Hebrews 3:13, Romans 12:10; 13:8; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2,25; 5:21; Colossians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 4:9-10).

If they gathered in each other's homes, not only did they fellowship but they feasted, I'm sure it was similar to our contemporary "potluck" dinner held on the Lord's Day. Believers would gather to worship, hear the teaching of Scripture, celebrate Communion, and then share their common love in a meal (Acts 2:42). They were not possessors of wealth but sharers of it.

However, the love feast eventually became so corrupted and abused, due to the defiling influence of false teachers. Paul deals with this in 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, in time it passed from the scene.

These types of apostates are not obvious, but given time, their actions begin to harm believers. They sit with the believer, without fear and they ensure that their needs are met. Judas is a biblical prime example of this. He walked and talked with Jesus, he even acted upon Jesus' instructions, and yet, just like Jesus knew from the beginning, the time came when Judas was exposed due to his action by subscribing to the plot to defame and Kill Jesus, which scattered many of Jesus' disciples but God had other plans, thankfully!

There such hidden reefs today in the church. There are many who are ministers of a gospel that is so close to the original, but different enough to keep people from a true relationship with God. There are many who go under the radar, but cause nothing but trouble to believers who nearly destroy their lives as well as people's relationships. We've seen them here in this country never mind the bigger, well known 'ministries'. These hidden reefs threatens the safe navigation of the church as well as the individual believer.

As Paul wrote to Timothy, such defectors are *"liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2). The fact that their actions do terrible damage to others is of no concern to them.

## **WATERLESS CLOUDS**

Next we have these waterless clouds, we don't see too many of them in Ireland, they are always full and ready to pour! In normal weather cycles, clouds regularly produce the anticipation of rain, that's part of their function. Clouds without water arrive with the mere promise of rain and then fail to deliver. Solomon said,

***“Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely”***

(Proverbs 25:14).

Apostate teachers promise to bring the true spiritual blessing and refreshment from God, but they do not deliver on that promise. Jude likened them to clouds carried along by the winds, constantly foretelling rain but failing to produce it. The term translated without water also occurs in Matthew 12:43 –

***“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.”***

Also see Luke 11:24-26 –

***“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”***

By describing false teachers in the same way that Luke describes demons, Jude reiterated the connection between the apostates and their satanic sources. He is not having a go for the sake of having a go, but there is a bigger picture that we don't see too readily. There are real dangers and pit falls, hence the urgency of the plea.

These clouds have captivated the hearts and minds of millions who are told by false teachers that if they comply to the apostates teachings they will have the hope of heaven, have their best life now, will overcome all obstacles, have new revelation, bring in the birth of something new. They tickle the ears of their hearers all right, they claim to speak to God, even tell God what to do, they prophecy without accountable and they claim to heal but with no evidence of repentance ever. You just have to turn on the T.V. or go on you-tube, and you will see these so call ministers of the gospel, perform, and tell you whatever they think will increase their numbers, popularity wise as well as financial. There is a move of new age practices being brought in to many churches under the guise of God doing a new thing, a new spirituality. People are so desperate to experience God without having to be studious, or having to grow the relationship. They want it all here and now, yesterday. These teachers claim godliness but have no sense of the power of God at all, just whatever counterfeit the devil allows them.

Today there are a few that are willing to sound the trumpet, to let the believers know in our day of the dangers associated with a great many false teachers of fame. Those that do, often suffer from the same fate as the prophets such before them as Jeremiah and are labelled as critics, judgmental, jealous, and a host of other names.

We are in the last days and people don't want to heed sound teaching, not only that they don't want to be told what the Bible teaches on their way of life.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 –

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.”*

## FRUITLESS AUTUMN TREE

*“autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted”*; (12c)

The phrase ‘autumn trees without fruit’ depicts the disappointing reality of a barren harvest.

Jude likened the apostates’ empty profession and utter lack of spiritual life to a barren harvest. He called them doubly dead; first, they are fruitless because there is no life in them; second, they are uprooted, dead at the very core. They are like trees that have come out of the ground, disconnected from the life-giving source of water and nutrients. As Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted”* (Matthew 15:13). Such people produce no life-changing fruit, neither in themselves nor in others.

This principle of growth is dependent on so much. There needs to be a healthy seed, in healthy soil, and plenty of food and water to help it grow, as well as sunshine to help guide it and help nourish it. This is the same for a true follower of Jesus. In John 15, Jesus said that he is the true vine and unless we abide in him, he will not abide in us. Just as a vine-offshoot bears fruit only when it abides in the vine, so also believers will bear spiritual fruit only when they abide in Christ. Hence, the precept which underlies the entire section is Abide in me in order that you may bear fruit abundantly. This main idea is clear from the frequent occurrence of the words bear fruit and abide. Branches that do not bear

fruit are taken away, allowed to wither, picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned (15:2a, 6).

Again and again in the Fourth Gospel those to whom the good tidings are proclaimed and who therefore, in a certain sense, “have the light,” are divided into two groups: 1 - those who accept the message; and 2 - those who reject it (see on 1:9; 12:35, 36).

Jude in this verse goes a step further, just like in Revelation 20:14 –

*“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”*

Regardless of these apostates ministries, and appearance of success in their prime time, there comes a day where their fruit will be tested, but there will be nothing there and they will experience the second death.

Hebrews 6 verses 4-8 reinforces this idea,

*“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.”*

## WILD SEA WAVE

*wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam;* (13a)

Scripture often uses the sea as a symbol for those who do not know God. *“The wicked are like the tossing sea,”* Isaiah wrote, *“for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked”* (Isaiah 57:20-21).

We live on an island, and we know from our own experience that when the sea waves are wild, they can’t help but cast up foam, it’s in their nature, it’s just what they do. In the aftermath of a storm, the seashore is littered with debris and mire, which is neither beneficial nor life-giving. That is a graphic picture of what false teachers produce, it’s in their nature, they seem like they can’t help themselves. With all their empty talk and self-serving activity,

they are like wild waves. In the end they are casting up only their own shame like foam. Their disgraceful attitudes and actions fizz up to display all forms of heresy, deception, immorality, irreverence, and insubordination. Many end up being caught out with having immoral or unethical behaviour, much to their own shame but many seem to be able to come back from it, while those who are true ministers of the gospel, if they made the same errors would be destroyed.

## WANDERING STARS

*wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.* (13b)

Wandering stars does not refer to heavenly bodies that continuously shine and have fixed orbits. Most likely the expression signifies a shooting star, or even a falling star, something that flashes across the sky in an uncontrolled moment of brilliance and then disappears forever into the black darkness, like the fallen angels in verse 6. Apostates often appear for a short time on the stage of Christianity. They promise enduring spiritual light and direction but deliver nothing but an erratic, aimless, worthless flash. The utter blackness and darkness of hell has been reserved forever for them as Peter supports this in his epistle 2 Peter 2:4

*“For God did not [even] spare angels that sinned, but cast them into hell, delivering them to be kept there in pits of gloom till the judgment and their doom.”*

From these verses, we can see how Jude is warning us –

The Hidden Reefs are the unseen or hidden dangers

The Waterless Clouds, or false clouds are representative of their false promises

Fruitless Autumn Tree are their empty profession which amount to nothing

Waves of Sea, shows us the time wasted and their shameful ways

And finally, wandering Stars – the aimless course which is limited and ends in destruction and perishing.

So how do we avoid these traps?

Avoidance may not be possible but the rule is unchangeable.

We need to be doctrinally sound by that I mean we need to know the foundations of our Salvation and who we worship through the inerrant word of God. That is how many are deceived because they don't know the difference between the satanic counterfeit Kundalini spirit and the Holy Spirit! The only way to do that is to get out the shallow tickling ear teachings and dive into the word of God and be open to God's teaching, correction, warnings, guidance as well as His encouragement. So here are my 4 simple suggestions to help you.

1 – Don't go near the edge, Don't let idle curiosity get the better of you.

2 – Make sure you judge all things, and test the Spirit with the Word of God.

3 – Be a follower of Christ and not a follower of man. Keep the Lord always before you as your example.

4 – Understand that feelings and experience can lead you astray. They do not replace the instruction of the Word of God.

When you look at all of these things we can truly see what a contrast these apostates are to our wonderful Saviour who is;

The Rock of our Salvation, The one who will come in the Clouds, Who is the tree of Life, Who leads us beside still waters and is brighter than the morning star.

It is even a contrast to the true believers who are described as –

Living Stones – 1 Peter 2:5

Sources of living water – John 7

Trees of righteous – Isaiah 61:3

Peace like a river, is a promise that we can experience

Shine as the stars – Daniel 12.

You know Jesus, Himself warned up and as the days draw closer to His return, do we understand them as found in Matthew 24:4-5

*And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.*

*Amén.*