

The Epistle of Jude (2)

After exhorting the believers to earnestly contend for the faith (vv.3-4), Jude now relates three OT examples to prove that God will judge the behaviour of the ungodly men (apostates) who had slipped in among them (v.4).

vv.5-7: The Case Studies of Judgment

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Although these believers already knew the OT well, Jude sought to remind them of some particular examples that they might reflect upon and apply them to their present circumstances. The examples are not chronological but moral in order, beginning with *unbelief* (v.5), leading to a *rejection of Divine authority* (v.6) and unrestrained *immorality* (v.7). The first example concerns the **unbelief** of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Even though the Lord had once for all taken them *out* of Egypt they did not believe He was able to take them *into* the Promised Land (Numbers 13-14). Thus God judged them at Kadesh Barnea and their dead bodies fell throughout the wilderness journey (Psalm 95.7-11, 1 Corinthians 10.5, Hebrews 3.7-12, 17). The apostates were just like this. They professed salvation and yet were now proving themselves to be ungodly and characterised by an evil heart of unbelief (see Psalm 78.40-41).

6 And ~~the~~ angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Additionally, fallen angels did not **'keep'** or 'carefully watch over' (guard) their God-given 'position of authority' at creation. In fact, they once and for all chose to abandon their 'heavenly dwelling place' and rebel with Satan against God (Isaiah 14.12-15, Luke 10.18, Revelation 12.4). Consequently, God has **'kept'** or 'guards' them! Their movement and influence is restricted *under* a sphere of darkness with a view to God's great and final day of judgment (Matthew 25.41). The Devil and his angels are in the custody of God (Job 1.6-7, 2.1-2) and constantly fearful of their impending doom (Matthew 8.29). Like these angels, the apostates refused God's authority and the Lordship of Christ in their lives.

Note. It should be said that many expositors link this passage with Genesis 6, teaching that a specific group of angelic beings procreated with the 'daughters of men' creating an offspring of giants (450ft tall according to the book of Enoch). It apparently required the flood to cleanse the earth and the angels responsible for such heinous sins are now incarcerated in Tartarus (2 Peter 2.4). Many believers differ in opinion on this passage but a simple reading of Genesis 6.4 (without the italics) suggests that the 'sons of God' were 'mighty men' and 'men of renown'. A careful reading of Ezra 9.1-2 in this regard may be illuminating.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner (to these), giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

A final example of divine judgment is Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities together with Admah and Zeboim (Deuteronomy 29.23, Hosea 11.8) 'gave themselves over to fornication', i.e. an out and out devotion to sexual immorality (cf. Romans 1.24). In particular this involved 'going after strange flesh' which signifies a departure from the divinely established order of nature, i.e. homosexuality (Genesis 19.4-8, Ezekiel 16.49-50, Romans 1.27). Sodom and Gomorrah were 'to be compared' with 'these' which is a phrase used throughout the epistle of the apostates themselves (see v.8 for example).¹ The inhabitants of these cities are *still* suffering (*present tense*) the 'just sentence' or 'punishment' of eternal fire. Their 'example' is held up as a Class-A exhibit. Even the Dead Sea today in its barren and lifeless state stands as testimony to the judgment of God on these cities. The apostates were characterised by the same immorality and will suffer the same fate.

vv.8-16: The Conduct of Apostates

8 ~~Likewise also~~ (Nevertheless) these ~~filthy~~ dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Despite these fearful examples of Divine judgment, the apostates persisted in their course. They are described as 'dreamers', those who live in a world of selfish imagination and unreality. 'Dreamers' is a term applied to false prophets in the OT (Deuteronomy 13.1-3, Jeremiah 23.25) suggesting these men claimed divine revelation as the basis of their practices. As they did not guard their minds they were carried away with the lusts of the flesh, morally polluting their bodies (this parallels the example of **Sodom**). Like the **angels** (v.6) the apostates also 'rejected authority', even the Lordship of Christ (v.4). Finally, like **Israel** (v.5, cf. Numbers 14.21-23, 27), they 'spoke evil of dignities' or literally slander (blaspheme) 'glories', a term associated with God's honour, praise and acts of power. He is the God of Glory.

¹ Some expositors take 'these' to be the angels of v.6 this being the 'most natural' antecedent. If so it merely suggests a *similarity* in the sense that both are an example of divine judgment, but a *difference* in that the case of Sodom and Gomorrah was the sin of fornication (unlike the angels).

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

The term 'dignities' (v.8) may also include angelic beings as those who are representatives of God, hence the reference here to Michael. Michael is the 'archangel' or 'first in rank' angel, also called the 'chief' or 'great prince' (Daniel 10.13, 12.1). He seems to have a special relationship to Israel, acting as their protector (Daniel 10.21, 12.1, Revelation 12.6-7). Although Deuteronomy 34.6 states that God buried Moses, there is no mention of this contention between Michael and the devil over his body. It is possible Satan claimed Moses' body on the basis that he holds the power of death (Hebrews 2.14) or he may have wanted to make it an object of worship for Israel. Nevertheless, Michael did not 'risk dishonour or shame' by making himself judge and jury thus usurping his place of authority. The attitude and actions of Michael are to be commended as a contrast to the apostates. They would 'slander' angelic beings without a thought, whereas Michael would not 'verbally attack' the devil but committed the case to God (Zechariah 3.2).

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know (perceive) not: but what they know (understand) naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

Thus, these apostates 'speak reproachfully' of things which they 'know not' or are 'unseen'. **Spiritual** truth and realities are beyond their comprehension. Rather they do 'understand' and are familiar with what is **natural**. In this sense they are like 'animals' governed, not by reason, but by basic instincts. *Barclay: They allow the instincts they share with animals to have their way; their values are fleshly values. They have lost all awareness of spiritual things.* This is not the first time mankind has been compared to animals (Psalm 32.9, Isaiah 53.6, Jeremiah 2.24, James 3.3)! Having given themselves over to their fleshly and natural desires they are 'corrupting' or 'destroying' themselves morally which will ultimately result in their eternal ruin.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

'Woe' is a cry of grief and despair. Jude is denouncing the apostates, warning of impending sorrow. Using another triad, Jude gives three examples of **apostates** in the OT in order to show that the character and conduct of such men has not changed over the ages. *The three examples were all 'religious' men. Note also the slippery slope of apostasy.*

- **Cain** = false worshipper; embarking on a course ('gone in the way');
- **Balaam** = false prophet; abandonment to the course ('ran greedily');
- **Korah** = false priest; end of the course ('perished').

The apostates had followed the moral example and conduct of **Cain**. He attempted to approach God on his own terms and apart from faith (Hebrews 11.4, 6). The 'way of Cain' describes the conduct which developed in his life apart from God and His presence (Genesis 4.16). He indulged in fleshly and selfish desires and his works were evil (1 John 3.12).

The apostates had also 'whole-heartedly' abandoned themselves to the 'error of **Balaam**' (see Numbers 22-24, 31.8, 16). The word 'error' signifies 'wandering' or 'leading astray'. Balaam rebelled against God's word and will in order to receive financial and material gain. When Balaam found he could not curse God's people he led them instead into the snare of idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2.14). *J Grant: The error of Balaam was his desire for reward, just as the false teachers had material gain as part of their motives.*

The final example is **Korah** (Numbers 16). He was of the family of Kohath and thus responsible for carrying the Ark and holy vessels through the wilderness. However, he considered the service God had given him to be small and insignificant. He grasped after higher things, even the priesthood (Numbers 16.9-10). As such he led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses and the Aaronic priesthood 'speaking against' them with 'hostile words'. Just as Korah and his associates 'perished', being swallowed by the earth (Numbers 16.31-32) and destroyed by fire from heaven (Numbers 16.35), so also have these apostates (*arist* tense). Their eternal ruin was already decreed in Jude's day; their doom had been determined.