

The Epistle of Jude (3)

vv.8-16: The Conduct of Apostates

12 These are ~~spots~~ (hidden rocks) in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, ~~feeding~~ (shepherding) themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried ~~about of~~ (along by) winds; (autumn) trees ~~whose fruit withereth~~, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Six metaphors from nature are used in vv.12-13 to describe the **conduct** of the apostates. Two are from the *sea*, two from the *sky* and two from the *land*.

- Hidden **rocks** (sea). The apostates are like 'hidden rocks' that threaten the moral shipwreck of others. The fact that they are 'hidden' suggests their evil character and teaching is not immediately apparent (see v.4). 'Feasts of charity' or 'love feasts' were a practice of the early church (see 1 Corinthians 11.20-22, 33-34). They were communal meals eaten in connection with church services to express brotherly love; the contributed food being shared by rich and poor alike. It was usual for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated at the conclusion of the meal and prophetic words or teaching to be given (see Acts 20.7-11). The love feasts soon degenerated into occasions for gluttony and drunkenness, possibly influenced by the apostates seeking to satisfy their own lusts (2 Peter 2.13).
- Self-**shepherds** (land). As they were so devoted to satisfying their **own** desires and appetites, these men were 'shepherding themselves' instead of caring for and nurturing others (see Isaiah 56.11, Ezekiel 34.2-3, 8-10, John 10.12-13). According to Ezekiel 34, shepherds are those who should: feed the flock, strengthen and support the sick, seek after and restore the lost, protect and defend the vulnerable.
- **Clouds** without water (sky). In the desert regions of Syria, Jordan and Israel, large heavy clouds would often bring promise of rain and yet fail to deliver. Here were men of *promise* without the *performance*. Others may have looked to them for spiritual refreshment but they found none (Proverbs 25.14). The apostates were spiritually barren, promising liberty but enslaved to immorality (2 Peter 2.19). The same could certainly not be said of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.2) or the LORD (note Isaiah 55.10-11). To follow such men would be to be blown off the right course of truth and purity.
- Autumn **trees** (land). Autumn was the end of the fruit harvest and a time of gathering, yet there was no fruit to be found on these trees. It was not that the fruit had been *removed*, but rather it had not been *produced*. The apostates are therefore recognisable by their lack of good fruit (Matthew 7.15-20). What about the production of spiritual fruit in our lives? These trees are described as 'twice (i.e. thoroughly) dead', having already been 'uprooted' (*aorist passive*). These trees are therefore *dead at the root, demonstrated by barrenness in the fruit* (branches). An uprooted tree was an OT symbol of divine judgment (Psalm 52.5, Jeremiah 1.10); a future certainty for these apostates. Into whom or what are we rooted? *Colossians 2.6-7: Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him.*

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

- Raging **waves** (sea). The OT parallel is found in *Isaiah 57.20: But the wicked are like a surging sea that is unable to be quiet; its waves toss up mud and sand*, i.e. the constant actions of the wicked reveal a character of uncleanness (mud and sand). Thus the picture is of the restless, unrestrained and wild nature of these men. Their behaviour constantly exposes to public view the shameful acts they commit.
- Wandering **stars** (sky). As wandering stars these men chart a course which cannot be relied upon for navigation. Those who follow them and their teaching end up hopelessly lost and confused. Their ultimate and 'firmly fixed' end is the 'blackness of darkness'; the fate of all those separated from God, *the source of all true light*.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

In v.4 Jude has already reminded us that the condemnation of these men was prophesied long ago in the OT. Now he quotes such a prophecy as spoken by Enoch. It is possible that Jude is quoting from the apocryphal book of Enoch, a well-known and highly respected volume of religious writings which was in existence in the two centuries before and after the birth of Christ. Fragments of this book were discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls written in Aramaic. But the following considerations should be noted:

- Even if Jude cites this book, there is no evidence that he regards it as Scripture.
- Quoting from the book does not mean that he agrees with the whole. Paul cited three Greek poets but he certainly did not endorse all that they wrote (Acts 17.28, 1 Corinthians 15.33, Titus 1.12).
- Jude does not quote from the *book* of Enoch, but rather the spoken words of Enoch *himself*. This may have been handed down by oral tradition or given by divine inspiration.

- It is very difficult to date the book of Enoch. Parts of it could have appeared in the second century AD, thus later than the book of Jude was written. William Kelly states that the book of Enoch '*has every mark of having been written subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD70)*'. However, Kelly wrote this statement before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered which dated some parts of the book of Enoch to c.150-200 BC.
- The book cannot be divinely inspired as it contains many errors and statements which do not agree with Scripture. For example: it rained before the flood; angels built the ark; the sun revolves around the earth; the sun is the same size as the moon; there are ten heavens; angels are eternal and uncreated, and giants 450ft tall were the result of angelic procreation with humans.

Regardless of Jude's source, he states that Enoch was the 'seventh (generation) from Adam'. **Adam** – Seth – Enosh – Kenan – Mahalalel – Jared – **Enoch** (see Genesis 5; 1 Chronicles 1.1-3). Enoch was viewed as a model of righteousness and spiritual knowledge as well as being a prophet (as the naming of his son Methuselah suggests). Enoch prophesied primarily to the antediluvians, but his words no doubt had a future application 'with respect' to the apostates in Jude's day and beyond (see Matthew 24.37-39). As the reference is to the Lord's coming in judgment (v.15), the second coming to the earth is in view, not the rapture. He will come 'with his holy myriads' a term which can include both angels and believers (see Deuteronomy 33.2 at Sinai, Zechariah 14.5, Matthew 25.31, 1 Thessalonians 3.13, 2 Thessalonians 1.7-10, Revelation 17.14, 19.14).

15 *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

At the second coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth He will 'execute judgment upon all'. This has Armageddon (Revelation 19) and the judgment of the living nations (Matthew 25.31-46) primarily in view. It is interesting to note the righteous character of the Lord's judgment. It is **universal** as not one person alive on earth will escape or be overlooked. It is based on an examination of the **evidence** after which the verdict will come 'down upon' or 'against' the guilty. Every person will be '**convinced**', i.e. *their guilt will be established beyond all doubt* and that because of their 'ungodly' or 'irreverent' deeds and 'hard speeches' (rough, harsh and offensive things) against Christ.

16 *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*

This verse records a summary character assassination of the apostates (actions and words) bringing to a close his expose and condemnation. Soon he will provide the believers with an exhortation and strategy to live effectively in the light of such men. Finally then, these apostates are 'murmurers', those who 'whisper expressions of discontent' as the nation in the Wilderness (1 Corinthians 10.10). These are people who have a dissatisfaction of anything and everything not to their liking. *Whenever a man gets out of touch with God he is likely to begin complaining about something. As believers we must guard against such an attitude which is often seen amongst the unsaved. William MacDonald: They always find fault with God. Why does He permit wars and suffering? Why doesn't He put an end to social injustice? They find fault with God's people for being narrow minded in doctrine and conduct.* They are 'complainers', constantly fault-finding with their lot in life, being discontent. Though they have indulged the flesh and walked after their own sinful desires and cravings, they find no real satisfaction or happiness in doing so. They speak to 'impress others' using arrogant and proud 'big talk'. They are pompous and self-exalting, possibly in the claims they make against God (as Daniel 11.36 and see Psalm 12.4, 2 Peter 2.18). Finally they demonstrate a 'flattering admiration of persons' showing warm interest in selected people whom they think can be exploited, possibly those of status or wealth, in order that they might promote their own ends. What contrasts can be drawn with the Lord Jesus and the way every believer should live.