













When you want to express an extremely strong emotion...what do you do? What does it sound like?

If there is something so horrific, so unthinkable, so dangerous, that has consequences that are almost too terrible to think about...what do you do? What do you say? What goes through your mind?

So let's think about this for a minute: What if that horrific, unthinkable, dangerous thing that has consequences too terrible to think about is this:

- A distorted gospel.

What do you do with that? How do you react?

Here's how Jude reacted to those who would twist the gospel: "*Woe to them!*"

*“Woe to them!”*

Why such a strong expression?

- Go back and look at v. 4, 8, & 10.

This short expression, *“Woe to them!”* drives our understanding of this entire paragraph, v. 8-13.

- Jude mentioned in v. 4 that “these people” were long ago “designated *for this condemnation.*”
- And then in v. 5-7 he gives three graphic pictures of judgment.
- In v. 8-10, Jude compares “these people” to those who faced severe judgment.
- In v. 11 he gives a pronouncement of judgment, followed by a picture of the character and danger of the false teachers.

But before we go any further...let's do this:

Here's the outline of Jude's short letter we're using:

v. 1-4—Jude's introduction and purpose: Contend for the faith

v. 5-16—Jude's sober warning and encouragement:  
*The ungodly will be judged*

v. 17-25—Jude's exhortation and exaltation: Keep yourselves in the love of God—He will keep you

This is how I put the main theme of Jude's letter:

- Contend for the faith with confidence—God will judge those who are distorting it.
- And v. 3 is our key verse.

But before we go any further...let's do this:

And here's a little breakdown of v. 8-16 –

- Description of the error of the false teachers – v. 8-10
- *Description of the danger of the false teachers* – v. 11-13
- Description of the character of the false teachers – v. 14-16

Here's what we'll do with v. 11-13 –

- Pronouncement of judgment on the false teachers for the choices they have made – v. 11
- Pronouncement of judgment on the false teachers for the danger they present – v. 12-13

Ok—now, where were we?

Oh yes, here: “*Woe to them!*”

Alright, all you brainiacs, what is *onomatopoeia*?

- Words that kind of sound like the sound they describe. Such as?
- Bang! Yawn. Purr. Buzz. Hoot. Boom! Click.

And if we were native speakers of ancient Greek, we could add this word to our list: *ouai*. That word translates into English as *woe*.

- So don't just say the Greek *ouai*, try yelling it in the most intense emotion or sorrow or pain or condemnation or burden that you can imagine. That's what this word is.

*“Woe to them!”*

A few examples of *ouai/woe* in the NT—

- Matt. 26:24
- Matt. 11:20-21
- Notice the contrasts: Luke 6:20-26
- Paul uses the word figuratively in 1 Cor. 9:16

So what is Jude doing by saying *“Woe to them!”*?

- He is pronouncing the ultimate spiritual judgment on them—these apostates, “these people” who twist the gospel into a license to deny themselves no sensual pleasure, and who in doing so deny Christ (v. 4).
- He is saying, “Alas! How horrible it will be!”

Pronouncement of judgment on false teachers for  
the choices they have made ~ v. 11

Jude gives three pictures—drawn from the OT—  
parallels to the teachers of his day.

Question: Why does he do this?

Answer: So that the saints can contend for the  
faith, v. 3. Jude's OT examples will help the  
believers to see what they are facing from God's  
perspective, and to understand that all those who  
distort the saving gospel will face a terrible judgment.

And notice this, it sounds somewhat like a  
progression: they walked...they abandoned... they  
perished. Let's take a closer look ~

“They walked in the way of Cain” ~

The text: Genesis 4:1-16; 1 John 3:12

The situation: After Adam and Eve sinned, their family plunged deeper still: Cain murders his brother, Cain's descendant Lamech takes revenge out of proportion to the crime committed (v. 24-24).

The line of Cain seems to be dominated by those who care little for the lives of others.

- v. 8-9 show that sin had mastered Cain, and he showed no remorse at all for killing his brother.

The meaning: According to Heb. 11:4, Cain is presented as the opposite of Abel, the man of faith. That view of Cain carries into Jewish history.

“They walked in the way of Cain” ~

The meaning: William Barclay: “To Hebrew thinkers Cain was the cynical, skeptical, atheistic materialistic unbeliever, who believed neither in God nor the moral order of the world, and who, therefore, did exactly as he liked.”

- Jude is saying that “these people” are like Cain: cynical, materialistic, defying God, with no faith and no love.
- Proud and self-willed...yet still, like Cain, religious on the outside (remember: even Cain brought an offering to God, though God could see his heart and so rejected his offering).

“They abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error” ~

The text: Num. 22:1-5, 7, 18; Deut. 23:4-5; 2 Pet. 2:15

The situation: Balaam is a rather slimy character, a pagan “prophet” whom God uses anyway to make a strong point: He is on Israel’s side, and thus no human power can prevail against them (Num. 23:21-23).

- The seemingly indirect, but barely veiled, ways Balaam asks for money suggest that he was out to get as much as possible for his “services.”
- Balaam had no love or regard for the people of Israel (see Num. 31:16), he was in this for himself.
- Why did God use Balaam? Good question. But then, God can even use a donkey (Num. 22:28-30).

“They abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error” ~

The meaning: Look who shows up again in Rev. 2:14: prevented from cursing Israel, he instead—for a sizable fee—advised Moab’s king to seduce Israel both sexually and spiritually (Num. 25:1-3).

- So in effect, Balaam taught Israel to sin. Barclay: “To sin for the sake of gain is bad; but to rob someone else of his or her innocence, and to teach another to sin, is the most sinful of sins.”
- So—like Balaam—the false teachers of Jude’s day loved power, position, prestige, and profit more than they did God and souls and faithfulness.

“They...perished in Korah’s rebellion” ~

The text: Num. 16:1-11, 25-33

The situation: Israel needs to learn a critical lesson: ethical holiness is not priestly holiness...i.e., not just anyone can approach God in the tabernacle, only a priest. Korah was a Levite, but not a priest; when he accuses Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves, he shows that he (and his buddies) have totally missed the point: *God Himself* appoints the priests.

- So in a swift and terrifying judgment, God judges those who thought they could have all the privilege of priests if they felt like it.
- Let’s put it this way: God affirms the leadership of Moses in a way no one can question.

“They...perished in Korah’s rebellion” ~

The meaning: Korah wanted something that was not his to take: Aaron and his sons were appointed priests, and that didn’t sit well with Korah.

- He defied the rightful leadership of the priests... and apparently the same spirit was evident in the false teachers who were troubling the saints.
- Notice Titus 1:10-11, 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; and our old friend Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10. the spirit of Korah was—and is—alive and well.

Proud, cynical, uncaring; greedy, materialistic, no moral restraint; defiant, hungry for power & position... apparently Jude doesn’t think highly of “these people.”

Back to something we passed over rather quickly ~

Notice these words again: “They...

- “...*walked* in the way of Cain”
- “...*abandoned* themselves...to Balaam’s error”
- “...*perished* in Korah’s rebellion”

What do you notice about those words?

- They all point to choices made
- They all suggest a complete and willing involvement—a lifestyle, all-in.
- And it suggests a progression: they made choices to walk a certain path, they eventually gave themselves wholly up to it, and in the end the very path they have chosen will destroy them. Like Ps. 1.

# Pronouncement of judgment on the false teachers for the danger they present – v. 12-13

Jude condemns these false teachers in the strongest possible terms—“Here is blazing moral indignation at its hottest and fiercest flame.” – Barclay

- hidden reefs
- shepherds feeding themselves
- waterless clouds
- fruitless trees
- wild waves
- wandering stars

Each of Jude’s metaphors presents some aspect of the danger these teachers represent to the saints.

“These are hidden reefs at your love feasts”

The love feast was one of the earliest gatherings of the church—the Christians in each little house church brought what each could bring and shared a meal on the Lord’s Day. They would often share communion together, then, in joyful fellowship, share their common meal. But, sin soon reared its ugly head, and Christians divided themselves (1 Cor. 11:17-22), and the love feast soon descended into immorality (2 Pet. 2:13-14).

- Jude saw the false teachers as sunken rocks, ready to rip out the hull of a ship—doing terrible damage.
- By promoting immorality and division, these people were “like sunken rocks on which the fellowship of the Love Feasts was in danger of being wrecked.” – Barclay

“These are...shepherds feeding themselves”

If shepherds feed only themselves, what happens to the sheep?

- There was no metaphor more personal to God than this—see Ezek. 34:1-16.
- The Gk word means “to shepherd,” and these apostate false teachers weren’t interested in anyone else but themselves: self-gratification.
- They should have done this: Acts 20:28. They pretended to be teachers, but rather than feed the flock, they fleeced the flock.
- “The man who feels no responsibility for the welfare of anyone except himself stands condemned.” ~ Barclay

“These are...waterless clouds”

What does a waterless cloud do?

- Gives the promise of refreshing rain...but never delivers. An illusion. See Prov. 25:14.
- It sounded like they were going to teach things that would bring true spiritual blessing and nourishment to the saints...but they never delivered on that promise.
- Like so many false teachers today, they advertise that they preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ, but instead preach themselves, or preach that they need \$54 million for a new jet to take the gospel around the world...and there is no true spiritual food to nourish weary souls.

“These are...fruitless trees in late autumn”

A fruitless tree in late autumn is...what?

- Worthless.

Notice that Jude describes these fruitless trees as “twice dead”—not only fruitless, but uprooted.

If a tree that should bear fruit is fruitless, what does that suggest about the tree?

- There is something terribly wrong with it.
- In Jude’s case, these “trees” were barren, incapable of bearing fruit—these teachers were “devoid of the Spirit” (v. 19), dead at the core.

“These are...wild waves of the sea”

These “wild waves” are “casting up the foam of their own shame,” which suggests what?

- When the tide goes out after a storm, there is a foamy, dirty, smelly line of bits of seaweed, driftwood, garbage, and various dead crabs & fish, etc. on the beach. See Is. 57:20-21.
- That junk on the beach benefits no one, no one wants it—in all the empty talk of these teachers, there is nothing that gives life.
- “It is a picture which vividly portrays and conveys the ugliness and the repulsiveness of the deeds of Jude’s opponents.” ~ Barclay

“These are...wandering stars”

Jude says these “wandering stars” have this to look forward to: “the gloom of utter darkness...forever.”

What is the picture Jude is drawing here?

The picture here is of a shooting star that flashes bright for a time and then disappears...but where does it go? As far as the science of the 1<sup>st</sup> century knew, they disappeared in utter darkness forever.

- These false teachers are in darkness themselves, and though they promise light, they can give none.
- They taught that the grace of God meant that they could indulge in immorality, and that showed that they were in darkness and faced only “utter darkness... forever.”

*“Woe to them!”*

Jude paints a graphic, disturbing picture. Why?

- The gospel was being distorted, sinners were promised life but received only death, Christians were urged to sin, were taught to sin, and were never fed on the life-giving words of Scripture.
- And so the church had to fight hard—to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”
- Jude is trying to teach his people discernment: recognize the extreme danger of error when you see it, and take action to preserve the gospel and protect the church. Much is at stake.