Apostates in the Last Days: As Described in the Epistle of Jude

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IN THE LAST DAYS
as described in
The Epistle of Jude

A Series of Messages
Given Over
Radio Station KMPC
Beverly Hills, California

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"JUDE"—A PREFACE TO "THE REVELATION"

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

With these beautiful words Jude opens his brief, but highly significant epistle. As "the servant," or "bondsman," of the Lord Jesus Christ, he fearlessly warns all true believers of all ages against apostate teachers and their satanic doctrines. His message is not addressed to a local church. It is a general epistle in a very special sense; for from the beginning, apostasy has crept into professing Christendom; and as this age of grace draws to a close, an ever-darkening blindness to spiritual truth will manifest itself in the church universal.

Because the Epistle of Jude sounds a warning of impending judgment upon all false teachers and their followers, it is a fitting preface, as it were, to the book of Revelation. Describing the apostates who will be much in evidence at the end of this age, it is a kind of prologue to the last book of the Bible, which goes on to tell of the purifying judgments to come upon the earth, sweeping it clean of all apostasy just prior to the visible, bodily return of Christ in glory to establish His millennial kingdom. In other words, Jude presents a shadow of the overwhelming judgments which are yet future. And what a solemn message it is! Nowhere
else in the Word of God are so many grave warnings packed into so small a compass as in this little book. And the illustrations used of judgment which overtook apostates of olden times are “set forth for an example” of the certain, eternal doom of all who reject the only Saviour of sinners.

My friends, Jude would not be a very popular preacher in certain circles today. He does not spare men. He does not mince words. His diction is startling, because he is writing of a day when men deliberately harden their hearts against the truth of the Holy Scriptures. But Jude is an illustration of the servant of God who goes to Him for his message, unpopular though it may be among unregenerate men who sorely need just such a warning. He had intended to write of “the common salvation” (Jude 3) — perhaps such a letter as that of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, or one of the doctrinal epistles. But the Holy Spirit guided him to change his theme, and to exhort Christians earnestly to “contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Why? Because of “certain men crept in unawares” — apostates (Jude 4).

Here we have an evidence of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Jude is not left to himself as to the form or subject of his letter. The Holy Spirit directed his mind along the line of exhortation. No doubt it would have been more pleasant to write such a letter as Colossians. The minister of the Gospel today would rather preach on heaven than hell, on the eternal city rather than the lake of fire, on the glories of Christ rather than the wiles of Satan. But the man of God is led by the Holy Spirit to warn men to flee from the wrath to come, as well as to point them to that “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). And Jude was led to pen such a message of warning, as the Holy Spirit guided him to urge all true believers in Christ earnestly to “contend for the faith.”

The Persons Addressed

It is beautiful to note how all born-again souls are addressed in the opening words of this letter:

1. “Sanctified by God the Father,” Jude 1. The word “sanctified” used here is the same term as that found in Hebrews 10:10, 14; and it means “set apart” unto God. In His great intercessory prayer for believers, the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven, saying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Paul constantly urged us also to let the Holy Spirit make us a separate people, separate from the world which rejects Christ. Likewise, Peter, James, John, and Jude hold ever before us the picture of God’s will for every Christian — the Spirit-filled life, “unspotted from the world,” “sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use.”

2. “Preserved in Jesus Christ,” Jude 1. No matter what the difficulties and trials, the One who saves us is the One who preserves us. This truth is very significant in the light of the apostasy described in the following verses. We sometimes call it the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, our preservation depending upon the finished work of Christ in His death and resurrection.

If you ever go to England, my friend, be sure to visit the Tower of London, and see the crown jewels. They are kept in a glass case, made in the form of a bowl. Surrounding this is an iron cage. If one should break that glass, the jewels would instantly sink into a pit of water. And standing by are the king’s guards. The crown jewels of England are well protected and preserved!
You and I, my Christian friend, are the crown jewels of the King of Kings. Of us He says: “They shall be mine... in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal. 3:17). If the British government takes such precaution to preserve her jewels, how much more does God preserve us! In a far safer place than a glass case surrounded by iron bars and soldiers—in the hand of the Lord Jesus, we are “preserved” for time and for eternity.

3. “Called,” Jude 1. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 16:16). These are our Saviour’s words to His own. Paul often expressed this same truth, even as he wrote in Galatians 1:15, 16, saying: “God... called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.”

“By his grace” God called the great apostle; “by his grace” He calls you and me, unworthy sinners. And all who respond to His call are among the “sanctified... preserved... called.”

4. “Beloved,” Jude 3, 17, 20. God loves us. He sees us identified with His well-beloved Son. And, unworthy though we are, yet we are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6).

What a contrast is seen in the condition of the persons addressed at the beginning and at the end of this epistle—Christians—and the apostates described in the intervening verses! It is the difference between the saved and the lost, the saint and the sinner, the godly and the ungodly. The salutation to believers is one of comfort and hope: “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied” (Jude 2). And the closing words of exhortation and assurance, also addressed to Christians, are among the most beautiful to be found in all the Scriptures. What a contrast between these opening and closing verses and the warning of judgment to come upon all apostates, as recorded in the main body of the epistle! To which class do you belong, my brother? Which of these messages must be addressed to you? If you are not among the “beloved” of God, may He work a miracle of grace in your heart as you read this solemn warning of impending judgment upon all who reject Him and His salvation.

The Need for the Warning

The occasion for the Epistle of Jude is clearly set forth in verse 4: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” In these words we see how apostates have become related to our evangelical denominations. They have “crept in,” “gotten in unnoticed,” under a mask, under false pretense. Ungodly, lascivious, blasphemous, yet they have made a profession of faith in the Lord whom they deny. “Wolves in sheep’s clothing” they are—hypocrites. I have more respect for a man who makes no profession of faith in Christ than for the man who poses as a minister of the Gospel while he denies the very Word of God, which proclaims the Gospel he pretends to preach.

The true character of apostates may be hid from men, especially the unsuspecting and the untaught in spiritual things; but no false teachers can deceive God. He has them marked out all the while; He knows who they are, even as Jude tells us that they are “ordained to this condemnation”; that is, designated, marked out, by God.
who looks not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart.

Five times in this epistle these apostates are called “ungodly”; they refuse to be subject to God. They presume to set up their own rationalistic, human reasoning against the “Thus saith the Lord” of His eternal Word. They deny the Bible and its Christ. This has been true since the beginning of the Christian era. When such men have gotten into places of influence and prominence, they have invariably denied the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His eternal deity, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection, and His coming again in glory to reign over a purified earth. They turn “the grace of God into lasciviousness,” and deny “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Let no false teacher deceive you, my brother. The Saviour said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When Peter said to Him, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), He accepted this recognition of His deity. And to the unbelieving Jews He said, in substance, many times, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). It has always been Satan’s purpose to attack the deity of Christ; and the subtlety of his wiles is clearly seen when, in the guise of would-be spiritual teachers, blind leaders of the blind, he deceives men for whom Christ died.

Apostasy — No New Thing

EVER since sin entered, Satan has had his false teachers in the world to keep men from God. And Jude puts us “in remembrance” of judgment which came upon these apostates of olden times, “for an example” and a warning against all unbelief. He gives us three illustrations of former judgments: (1) Upon Egypt; (2) upon the fallen angels; and (3) upon Sodom and Gomorrha.

1. JUDGMENT UPON EGYPT, Jude 5. In Egypt God had given men an opportunity to know Him as the true and living Lord; but Egypt refused to have the knowledge of God in their minds. Pharaoh was even bold and blasphemous enough to ask, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?” (Exod. 5:2). All knowledge of God had been lost. And on the night of the first passover Pharaoh and all his army were drowned in the waters of judgment.

The glory of Egypt is gone, because Egypt apostatized from God. Today we see only the ruins of a civilization that has passed. And Egypt is a striking type of the God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting, Spirit-resisting world. Satan is “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4); and he “walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8), causing men to turn away from the living God.

When Jude wanted to warn believers against apostates, he reminded them of what happened to the glory of Egypt when Egypt forgot God.

2. JUDGMENT UPON THE FALLEN ANGELS, Jude 6. Again, Jude puts us “in remembrance” of the judgment which came upon “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,” and are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” How solemn are these words! How filled with mystery! When that scene took place, I do not know, possibly before Adam was created, possibly when Lucifer fell from heaven and became Satan. The Lord Jesus, eternal God, said when He was on earth, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18). And we need only turn to Ezekiel 28:12-19
and Isaiah 14:12-17 to find God’s record of the beauty and position of Lucifer before he fell through pride, before he sought to be worshipped as God. The Scriptures do not reveal all the story connected with the fallen angels; but it may be that when Satan fell, a host of angels who followed him fell with him. However that may be, all these angels had gazed with veiled faces upon the glory of God; and yet they sinned against their Creator, rebelled against Him, and brought upon themselves swift and certain judgment. Peter also tells us that “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (II Peter 2:4). Neither will God ever spare apostates — men or angels — who deliberately turn their backs upon the Light of the World, even Jesus our Lord.

3. JUDGMENT UPON SODOM AND GOMORRHA, Jude 7. Yet again, Jude reminds us of the fire from heaven which wiped out “Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them” — cities of the plain — all of which had given themselves over to corruption. Turn to the record in chapters eighteen and nineteen of Genesis, and read the solemn story. Not even ten righteous men could the Lord find in Sodom. Those cities were reeking with moral degeneracy. And where are they today? They are, and have been for thousands of years, covered by the waters of the Dead Sea. They rejected the light of God, “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh.” What “an example” of judgment upon the ungodly!

Moreover, you will note in Jude 7 that, though the cities were destroyed, yet the souls of the wicked who dwelt therein were not annihilated; they are still “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Thus the false doctrines of soul-sleep and annihilation are definitely contradicted by the Word of God. Those apostates who pervert such a passage as Malachi 4:1, 3, trying to make it teach annihilation, find no argument in the face of Jude 7. What the Holy Spirit does refer to in Malachi 4:1, 3 is not judgment after death, but the purifying of the earth before Christ’s millennial kingdom. Then the bodies of the wicked shall be burned up, reduced to ashes; but there will be a resurrection of the wicked dead after the thousand years’ reign of Christ on earth; then body and spirit re-united will suffer “the vengeance of eternal fire.”

My unsaved friend, the Lord Jesus said, “It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment” than for those who reject Him! Do not rush on to eternal condemnation. Christ loves you. He died for you. He wants to save you. But there is no other way to escape eternal judgment and to find heaven and Christ than by the way of His cross.

Apostates Today

“LIKEWISE also” — note carefully these connecting words. Apostasy is no new thing; and although it will be more and more in evidence as this age of grace draws to a close, yet the men we call “modernists” today are proclaiming no new doctrine. If they are “modern,” then so were Pharaoh and the fallen angels and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. “Likewise also” — the parallel is striking. Like the apostates of old are the false teachers of our own day — like them in their manner of living, like them in their teaching, like them in their coming doom.

1. NO LOVE FOR GOD — NO FEAR OF SATAN. Jude describes these “modern” apostates in no uncertain terms in verses 8-19, a description which he began in verse 4. He calls them “filthy dreamers” who “defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities”
(Jude 8). They have no fear of God; neither do they fear Satan or hell.

On every hand today we meet these “filthy dreamers” who deny that there is a personal devil, and laugh at the thought of a hell. Modern apostates deny God’s grace, and they have no fear of the certain judgment which will overtake them in their sins. Satan has led scores and scores to believe that he is a joke. He wants men to believe that he is only a myth and a fable; for then they will fall into his snare and refuse the light of the God of all grace. Satan is behind all apostasy of all time.

Ungodly men, in their foolhardiness, “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities”; “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’” (Jude 9). Michael, great and powerful as he is, recognized the presence and power and personality of the devil. He dared not even rebuke him, but said, “The Lord rebuke thee.” Yet poor, miserable, frail creatures of dust, ungodly men, presume to say that there is no devil. They speak lightly, flippantly, cynically about this terrible personality whom the Lord Jesus told us to fear. And they ignore the teaching of the Word of God which plainly declares that our holy God must judge sin, simply because He is holy.

In Jude 17, 18 we read that “the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ” said that “there should be mockers in the last time.” Surely we must be living in the closing days of this age, for the “mockers” at the truth of the Word of God are on every hand, even in many pulpits of our evangelical denominations.

But let us pause here for a moment to examine more carefully the strange reference to Michael and the devil and their contention over the body of Moses. Jude is the only inspired writer who mentions this event. We turn back to the thirty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy to find the record of the death of Moses. And there we read that “Moses the servant of the Lord died,” and God buried him “in a valley in the land of Moab ... but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”

Why did the devil want the body of Moses? Was it because Moses, whom God buried, and Elijah, who “was translated that he should not see death,” are to be the “two witnesses” referred to in Revelation 11:3-12? We do not know. But certain it is that, whether these two witnesses are to be Moses and Elijah, or a company of faithful witnesses to God, coming in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah during the short reign of the Antichrist, they will perform miracles like unto those performed by these two great men of God. (See Rev. 11:6.) It seems probable that for some reason God preserved the body of Moses, so that it did not see corruption, while Satan contended for it, to turn it into corruption.

Michael, the prince and champion of Israel, withheld his railing accusation, so well did he realize the power of the devil. But Michael’s time will come! In Rev. 12:7-12 we read of another “war in heaven,” which will be fought between “Michael and his angels” and “the dragon ... and his angels”; and Michael will prevail. No longer will Satan have access to the presence of God as “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10). No longer will he accuse us to the Father. He will be cast down to the earth, “having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). That day is yet future. It will come to pass after the church has been translated, and before the return of Christ with the church to establish His kingdom on earth. But today Satan is still “the prince of
the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). Even as he went into the presence of God, falsely to accuse Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7), so also he is still “the accuser of our brethren.” Paul suggests to us something of the supernatural power of the enemy of our souls when, in Eph. 6:12, he writes: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It behooves us to “put on the whole armour of God,” that we “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). It behooves us to “resist the devil, and he will flee” from us (James 4:7). Yet “these filthy dreamers,” of whom Jude writes, scoff at the Bible teaching concerning a personal devil and a literal hell. They “speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them!” (Jude 10, 11).

2. “The Way of Cain” — A FALSE RELIGION, Jude 11. “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.” Again Jude takes three illustrations from the Old Testament to show that God’s attitude toward apostates never changes. “The way of Cain” illustrates a false religion; “the error of Balaam,” a false ministry; “the gainsaying of Core,” a false worship. Let us examine these forms of apostasy, for they tell the whole story of rebellion against God.

“The way of Cain” is the way of all false religions which deny the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse from sin. And it takes us back to the dawn of the history of the human race. In fact, Cain and Abel are the religious leaders of all mankind. And you and I today are walking either in the way of Abel or in the way of Cain.

Both were sons of Adam, who had lost for himself and all his descendants his standing before God, his innocence, and his God-likeness. Then Jehovah showed him and his sons that only on the ground of sacrifice could fellowship with Himself be restored. Therefore, it was “by faith” that “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4). The animal sacrifice pointed on to the Lamb of Calvary; whereas, Cain brought the fruit of his own labors, a type of man’s self-righteousness, which is ever in God’s sight “as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

Abel came God’s way. He showed by his act that he recognized in himself a helpless sinner needing a Saviour. And every sinner saved by grace, from the time of Adam, has put his faith in “Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and . . . the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:24). Abel’s sacrifice was but a shadow of the death of our Lord and Saviour, who was our perfect Substitute on Calvary. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” of sin (Heb. 9:22).

“The way of Cain” is not the way of the infidel, my friend. He believed in God. He even professed to worship God. So do thousands of apostates today. That is why their teaching is so subtle and so dangerous. They deceive the unwary, who think it is enough to be sincere, to talk about God and the Bible and prayer. But Cain is a picture of the natural man, the unregenerate man, the eternally lost man, who refuses to go God’s way. His false religion looks more beautiful to the natural eye than the way of the bloody sacrifice; but it can not save the soul.

“Cain went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16). Likewise, all who reject Calvary’s Lamb will
one day hear Him saying unto them: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). Cain was a wanderer upon the face of the earth; so also will all apostates ever be as “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13).

Are you walking in “the way of Cain,” my friend? Then “woe unto you,” unless you turn your steps toward Calvary. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He alone can save you from eternal doom.

3. “The Error of Balaam” — A False Ministry, Jude 11. Turn to chapters 22-25 of the book of Numbers, and read the story of Balaam, how he “caused the children of Israel . . . to commit trespass against the Lord to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14). And Balaam represents every false minister who holds his position for personal profit, whether it be for money or influence or popularity. Such a false shepherd removes the curse of the cross from his message, that the purse-strings of the ungodly may be loosed. He stifles his own conscience, and proclaims what he does not believe, or what is untrue to the Word of God — for money. He is a lover of the wages of unrighteousness.

When the Lord would not allow Balaam to curse Israel for a bribe, then this wicked prophet counselled the people of God to disobey Him by inter-marriage with heathen people, by eating things sacrificed to idols, and by indulging in the gross immoralities of the nations about them. He knew that such a course would weaken Israel, even as a lack of separation from the ungodly world always weakens the people of God.

Balaam is a significant representative of the founders of many cults and false doctrines, which have come in the name of the Lord Jesus, at the same time denying Him and “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” I could name at least four founders of cults who, when they died, were immensely wealthy. They never preached on hell, eternal judgment, or accountability to a holy God. They “ran greedily after the error of Balaam.”

In striking contrast with these, stands the testimony of such a man as D. L. Moody. Though thousands of dollars were received during his evangelistic campaigns, yet he died a comparatively poor man. On one occasion, when a check for $50,000 was offered him, he refused to touch it, turning it over to his secretary instead, to be invested in schools for the training of young men and women in Christian leadership and in the Word of God.

Do not be led astray by apostates, my brother. Do not sit under their teaching or support their false ministry. Let the eternal Word of God teach you how to discern truth from error. You can always tell the false shepherd by his attitude toward the Christ of Calvary and His Holy Word. “Woe unto them” who run “greedily after the error of Balaam,” and woe unto all who follow in their steps!

4. “The Gainsaying of Core” — A False Worship, Jude 11. Again we turn to the Old Testament to find the record of the sin of Korah. In Numbers 16:1-15 we read the story; in the following chapter, the sequel. (“Korah” is the Hebrew spelling; “Core,” the Greek.)

Korah’s sin was that of rebellion against God’s appointed priests and intrusion into the presence of God without divine authority. “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb. 5:4).
Korah was not a priest. By his act he said, in substance: “I do not need a priest. I do not need the services of Aaron who is a type of the promised Messiah, the Great High Priest.” So that in rebelling against Moses and Aaron, Korah was rebelling against the Redeemer who was to come, of whom Moses and Aaron were such significant types.

Likewise, all apostates who deny that Christ, our Great High Priest, offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sins forever, are following in the gainsaying of Korah. All who deny that He rose bodily from the grave and ascended into heaven, there to intercede for His blood-bought children, as their Great High Priest, will perish in the gainsaying of Korah. The earth opened and swallowed him and his followers; so also shall all apostates perish.

God bore testimony to the fact that Aaron was His chosen priest by causing his rod to bud miraculously over-night. (See Num. 17:1-13.) So important did God consider this typical lesson of the coming Redeemer, that He told Moses to lay Aaron’s rod up in the golden covered ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, “to be kept for a token against the rebels” (Num. 17:10; Heb. 9:4). And so important does the eternal, triune God consider the High Priestly work of Christ that He tells us plainly: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). He alone is “the way, the truth, and the life.” “No man cometh unto the Father” but by Him.

“The way of Cain,” “the error of Balaam,” and “the gainsaying of Core” inevitably go together. Apostates who deny the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus as an atonement for the soul also pervert the Word of God and deny the authority of Christ as eternal God, only Saviour, and Great High Priest of a sinning people. And what happened to Cain, Balaam, and Korah is but a shadow of the end of all who walk in their footsteps.

5. Apostates Further Described, Jude 12-19. What metaphors are these! What a description of all apostates!

“Spots in your love feasts.” The original term here means “hidden rocks” or “sunken rocks.” These are dangerous for the mariner, hidden beneath the surface of the water, deceiving the eye. Not so the rock pictured on the captain’s chart. What the Holy Spirit is teaching us here is that if these apostates would come out in the open with their dangerous doctrines, their influence would be nullified with many, as was the influence of Ingersoll and Voltaire. But no; they are “hidden rocks.” They speak of Jesus and God and prayer and the Bible, deceiving the sinner, lulling him to sleep with a false sense of security.

Recently I listened over the radio to such an apostate, a man whose name is spread abroad in the land as that of a great preacher. He spoke eloquently of Christ’s death, but compared it with the death of Lincoln. He described in beautiful language Christ’s love for babies and little children, His sympathy for the wayfaring man, His tears over Jerusalem. I am sure many listened with aching hearts as he appealed to the emotions in a masterly way. But then he spoke of “the mistake of Calvary.” And he closed his message by saying that Jesus died and was buried — he did not call Him “Lord”; “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3). Calling Him “Jesus,” His earthly name, this apostate closed his message by saying that Jesus died and was buried, and that “the dust of His body mingles with the dust of
the Palestinian hills; yet His Spirit goes marching on.” He had no place in his sermon for the eternal God who is the risen Lord. My friends, that man is a “sunken rock.” Thousands hang on his words, and will be eternally lost because they have heeded his message. And he is but one of many.

“Feeding themselves” — not feeding God’s sheep, not nourishing His lambs, they seek their own selfish interests.

“Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.” Did you ever see the farmer eagerly scanning the heavens for a cloud? Did you ever see clouds of promise driven away by the wind? There are men like that. Many a child of God sits in the pew, hears a much-loved text read from God’s Word, thinks his soul will now be refreshed; but lo! he hears Shakespeare or Browning or Tennyson instead! What a terrible responsibility is that of the man who stands in the pulpit!

“Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” Themselves “dead in trespasses and in sins,” they know nothing of fruit-bearing, of pointing lost men to the Lamb of Calvary. Their following among men is traceable to their own personalities, their humanitarian and benevolent ideals — admirable traits, but apart from the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, nothing but “filthy rags” of self-righteousness in the sight of God.

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame.” James describes the man who has no stabilizing faith as “a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). “Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” these apostates know nothing of the Christian’s hope, “sure and stedfast . . . as an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19).

“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Like lost planets, hurled out of their natural order, they plunge off into ever-deepening darkness, farther and farther away from God, the Source of light.

“Ungodly sinners,” wicked in their lives, rebellious against God.

“Murmurers” against God and His Word.

“Complainers, walking after their own lusts.”

“Their mouth speaketh great swelling words.” They boast of human progress and of an advanced civilization, not realizing that this godless civilization is doomed. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22).

“Having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage”—not seeking the glory of God, they seek to honor men. How the Spirit of God drives the pick of investigation into the very motives of men’s hearts!

“Mockers in the last time, who . . . walk after their own ungodly lusts.” Ridicule and scorn at the fundamentals of the faith “once for all delivered unto the saints,” cynical unbelief—these are marks of apostasy. They are much in evidence today, my friend. Peter wrote of these “scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” — meaning the return of our Lord (II Peter 3:3, 4). We are living in very solemn days!

“They separate themselves” from God by denying that One who is the only Way to God.

“Sensual,” natural, unregenerate.

“Having not the Spirit.” “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). These were the Lord’s words to Nicodemus.
Enoch’s Prophecy

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 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,” Jude 14, 15.

God knew that apostasy would mark the last days. Until recent years many have been saying that the world has been getting better and better. We no longer hear so much of that, in the face of war and armaments and lawlessness and crime; but God saw from the beginning how rebellious man would rush headlong into judgment. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). And He knows what is in man. In His “longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish” (II Peter 3:9), He has dealt with us in grace. But the day of reckoning will come, and of that day the prophet Enoch spoke. But for Jude, we should not know that Enoch was a prophet; for this is another reference found nowhere else in the Word of God.

This prophecy of Enoch is altogether different from the promises of the rapture of the church—“that blessed hope.” Enoch’s vision was of the Lord Jesus returning with the church, personally, bodily, visibly, to establish His kingdom on earth. In that day He will come “to execute judgment upon the ungodly,” to judge all apostates, to rule with a rod of iron. Enoch’s prophecy is in keeping with the Epistle of Jude!

It is significant also that it was Enoch who uttered this prophecy to the men of his own generation; for “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5). When? Before the flood in the days of Noah. The flood is a type of the judgments to come upon the world in the days of the great tribulation; and Enoch is a type of the church, which will be translated before the Antichrist is revealed and the purifying judgments sweep the earth. Noah and his family may well represent the faithful Jewish remnant which will go through the tribulation and be preserved in it. But Enoch, who “walked with God” and “was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5:22, 24), speaks to us of the blood-bought Bride of Christ who walks with Him now by faith, and will one day meet Him “in the air” (I Thess. 4:13-18). Then after the great tribulation has run its course, Enoch’s prophecy will be fulfilled. Then “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1:9).

“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man” (Luke 17:26). There was apostasy in the days of Noah. Corruption filled the earth. And our own generation today is swiftly becoming corrupt—“as it was in the days of Noah.” But thank God! He is coming for His own to take them out of this scene of apostasy and corruption. And He is going to return with His redeemed to rule in righteousness and peace. To the saints His coming will be glory; to apostates, it will be a terrible time of certain judgment. To which class do you belong, my friend? “Today is the day of salvation.” Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.
Exhortation to the People of God

“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how that there should be mockers in the last time . . . But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,” Jude 17, 20-23.

HOW restful and comforting are these words, following the vivid description of sin and unbelief! In these closing words Jude encourages us to study the Word of God, that we may be built up in the most holy faith; to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit; to have fellowship with the Lord’s people; to win souls and encourage the weak; to keep our garments unspotted from the world. If we heed Jude's admonition, my Christian friend, we shall be able to discern truth from error, apostates from the children of God. And our hearts will be satisfied, even in this day of stress and strain and turmoil and chaos as we “occupy” till He comes.

We need have no fear of impending judgment; for our God “is able to keep” us “from falling, and to present” us “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Assurance of salvation? Yes; the eternal security of every born-again soul! And added to that, “the presence of his glory,” the presence of our Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us — His presence throughout the endless ages!

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 25).