

Jude 11-13

Further Examples and Comparisons of the Opponents

Jude 11

- Jude moves to his third series of examples and comparisons with the opponents. He begins with the exclamation “Woe to them!” This is similar to Jesus’ woes upon the Pharisees and Scribes in Matthew 23 and Luke 11.
- Jude’s quick succession of Cain, Balaam, and Korah again implies a familiarity with their stories by the original audience and typical examples in Jewish polemic.
- The story of Cain is found in Genesis 4. Cain is the archetypal sinner in many ways. By comparing the opponents to Cain, Jude is making the strongest denunciation possible by tying the opponents to the man considered to have laid down the pattern for human sin.
- The second story is of Balaam from Numbers 22-24. Balaam is traditionally condemned for prophesying for gain. He is also tied to the following story in Numbers 25 of the women of Moab enticing the Israelites to bow down to their gods. Balaam was a false teacher associated chiefly with avarice.
- The final story is of Korah’s rebellion, which actually precedes Balaam chronologically in Numbers 16.
- The opponents are said to have perished in Korah’s rebellion. The judgment on Korah and his followers for opposing Moses was that the earth swallowed them alive and took them straight to Sheol, or the realm of the dead (Numbers 16:33).
- Korah is the classic example of the heretic who rejects God’s law, being tied historically to the law regarding tassels in Numbers 15:37-41.

Jude 12-13

- Moving from the text examples, Jude moves to the condemnation of the opponents themselves.
- Depending on translation decisions, the opponents are called blemishes (spots) or hidden reefs at the agape meal. The agape by this time is an expansion of, but includes, the Lord’s Supper. Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 11 against eating the meal in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27).
- The opponents are accused of feasting without fear. Fear of the Lord is a *good* thing. (Proverbs 9:10, 15:16, etc.).
- Shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds, being swept along by winds, fruitless trees in autumn, twice dead, uprooted - all of these comparisons are of things that are the opposite of what is good and expected. A good shepherd cares for the sheep. Good clouds provide rain. Good trees bear good fruit - and live.
- The comparison continues into verse 13 with the sea imagery of wild waves and the foam of their own shame. The sea was thought to be approached with caution and, in an honor and shame culture, cultivating honor and avoiding shame was of paramount importance. The opponents throw caution to the wind and their shame is evident for all.
- Wandering stars (interesting this is where our English word “planet” comes from) are references to those caught in error. While we know the wandering stars as not stars at all but rather

planets, to the eye while the “true” stars stay put in the sky while the planetary “stars” wander and leave their proper place.

- The consequence of their errors concludes the section. The gloom of utter darkness has been reserved for them - an allusion again to eternal punishment.
- Some have argued that this :”gloom” alludes to passages in 1 Enoch, although the arguments are inconclusive. However, there is no doubt of that connection with Jude’s next textual example...