

Brute Beasts

Jude is continuing his attack on false teachers who have infiltrated the church and who risk polluting the purity of the gospel with their doctrines and practices. Jude is certainly not vague or evasive about his concerns. His language is personal and pointed as he calls down woe on these deceivers. In our verses today the apostle employs another three notorious examples from the history of the Old Testament people and labels his targets 'brute beasts'.

Brute beasts

By using this phrase 'brute beasts' Jude conveys the idea of both ignorance and sensuality. He has previously called these people 'ungodly men', now they are brutish and beastly. They are beast-like in their teaching because they are bereft of spiritual understanding. There is a brutish physicality about their religion due to their emphasis on works. They have unfettered animalistic instincts for lust and pleasure and there is cruelty in the hurt they inflict and the damage they cause.

The way of Cain

Jude turns to the scriptures to provide analogies for the influence of these false teachers. The likenesses are powerful. Cain was the first son of Adam and Eve. He sought to worship God by offering the work of his own hand, the produce of the earth. This was not offered in faith and sincerity but in a formal, hypocritical manner, without regard to Christ's sacrifice or the glory of God. When his offering was rejected Cain angrily slew his brother out of jealousy and was cast out from the presence of the Lord.

The error of Balaam

Balaam was soothsayer whose services were for hire. He was recruited to bring a curse on Israel. Despite being told by the Lord not to interfere, and not to curse what God had blessed, he persisted, for the love of money, in setting himself against God and His people. Balaam's error was to invoke God and Christ against the very people God had blessed in Christ. His own ass spoke to warn him not to be so foolish but the depravity of his heart stoked his desire for riches, despite the warnings of God.

The gainsaying of Core

Core, or Korah as he is elsewhere called, was head of a Levite family who led a rebellion against Moses following the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood at Sinai. Korah was a cousin to Moses and a proud and ambitious man. Led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, two hundred and fifty princes joined the conspiracy. Korah and his associates presented themselves before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle and were slain with fire. Dathan, Abiram with all their families were swallowed up when the ground opened beneath their feet.

Lessons to be learned

Each of these examples was purposefully chosen by Jude to convey his message and reinforce his warning. From the earliest chapters of the Bible we learn from Cain how worship not offered in faith, not offered with an eye to Christ, will not be accepted by God. Later, by Balaam, we learn God's blessing of grace will never be foiled, and woe betides all who come between the Lord and those He loves. Finally, we learn that God's gospel and His honour in His church will be jealously guarded by the Saviour Himself. The Lord slew thousands in the days of Korah for the sake of His own glory.

False worship

Cain's worship glorified himself, not God. It was not spiritual worship and Cain was expelled from God's presence. Balaam's religious posturing gained him the price he craved from Balak. He led the Israelites away from Christ and into idolatry and fornication but it cost him his life. The gainsaying, or rebellion, of Korah earned him and his confederates divine retribution. They tried to overthrow God's appointed priesthood and deprive Christ of His unique, high priestly office and work.

A continuing application

So, too, the false teachers of Jude's day, and our own, are guilty of instituting non-spiritual worship that promotes man's

works and disregards saving faith. They curse what God has blessed and bless what God has cursed. They are not Christ-serving preachers but self-serving mercenaries who erect man-made structures, and call them churches, to satisfy their own lust and serve their fleshy ambitions.

Enemies of the gospel

From Jude's warnings we learn that the Lord's glory and Christ's salvation have always been opposed by natural man. Despite a pretence of worship these ungodly men are as brute beasts who possess no true spiritual wisdom and cannot lift their passions above the lusts of their own flesh. They set themselves against Christ's gospel. They despise gospel preachers. Paul says, they have 'changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator'.

Amen

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