

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 10



Contend
for the faith
which was
once delivered
to the saints
Jude 1:3

THE WAY OF CAIN

Scripture Text: Jude 11

Verse 11 is really the heart of Jude's letter. Apostasy in history is depicted in the verses before it, and apostasy in prophecy is shown in the verses following it. It is the only verse in the entire letter where Jude used more than one Old Testament illustration. In this text, Jude reminds us of three infamous Old Testament characters: *Cain*, *Balaam*, and *Core*. He is telling how these historical figures were like the apostates of his day. In this lesson, we want to study the first one: *Cain*.

MEMORY VERSE: *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

—1 Corinthians 10:11

The Power of Choice

Woe unto them! for they have gone. This verse begins with a sharp pronouncement upon those apostates described in the previous verses, but it is actually upon all who have embraced apostasy. Why? Because men were originally created with the power of choice. They live as they do because of the choices they make. The men in the past chose to sin. They were not predestined by some sadistic god to follow that route. They were not powerless individuals compelled by some inborn force.

Before *Cain* ever killed Abel, God was faithful to him and spoke to him. He confronted *Cain* with a choice. **Genesis 4:6-7** states: "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

Genesis 1:27 says that God created man in his own image. **Colossians 3:10** tells us, "the new man . . . is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." **Ephesians 4:24** says, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." So to be in God's image, you must be living morally right and without sin.

God created Adam and Eve in His likeness, in righteousness and holiness, and every other person who has been born into this world has been born in the same sin-free state. **Ecclesiastes 7:29** substantiates this: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright." **Ezekiel 28:15** says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." When does man lose his perfection? Man remains perfect until he *willingly* chooses to go contrary to the known will of God.

Why does man turn to his own way and go astray? Is the environment the cause? Is some *supposed* inherited sin or Adamic nature to blame? No. We go astray and sin in how we exercise our power of choice. Throughout the Scriptures, men have been divinely advised to make the right choice. Apostates do not want to accept the fact that their condition is the result of a wrong choice. They want to blame their pastor, the congregation, their husbands, their wives, or others. However, the truth is, they have chosen to be there.

Refusing to Obey Truth

In the way of Cain. *Cain* holds two unique places in Bible history: he was the first child to be born, and he committed the first murder. The account of that murder in **Genesis 4:2-5** reads: "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."

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Many suppositions have been made as to why God accepted one offering and rejected the other. Some say *Cain* should have taken his fruit and traded it for a sheep to offer as an acceptable sacrifice—but this was many years before the Law was given. Why then, was a distinction made between the offerings? **Exodus 23:19** says, “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God.” Abel brought the “firstlings of his flock” to God, but *Cain* brought his offering from the earth “in process of time.” *Cain* was not devout or diligent.

In **Genesis 4:6** the Lord asked *Cain* why he was angry. What produced his wrath? Religious jealousy. Abel’s offering was accepted but *Cain*’s was not. Why not? Sin was at his door, according to **Genesis 4:7**. It was ready to spring and devour him. The Lord had warned *Cain* that if he stepped outside the bounds of what he knew was right, sin would be crouching, waiting to pounce on him, and he would be at its mercy. When he refused to dwell in the truth God had shown him, he became true to his name, which means “possessed.” He rose up against Abel (which means “breath or vapor”) and killed him.

The Tongue—A Weapon

What was Jude trying to tell us about ones who have gone *in the way of Cain*? Just this: they, as *Cain*, want to worship God in their own manner, at their own convenience, and contrary to truth. Ones who are righteous bring condemnation to apostates, and just as *Cain* did, apostates murder them. **1 John 3:15** proclaims, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

In what manner do apostates murder their righteous brothers? **Jeremiah 18:18** has the answer: “Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.” Apostates go *in the way of Cain* when they slander the righteous ones and attempt to kill their influence. **1 John 3:11-12** says: “We should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. . . . Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

Those whose works are contrary to truth and love would like to stomp out truth with their murderous tongues; but **2 Corinthians 13:8** declares, “We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” Regardless of the apostates’ intention to destroy the saints and the church, the Church of God has endured numerous assaults throughout history. It will continue to endure them because Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18**, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

JUST A THOUGHT

Did it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurs to God?