

We left off with our expanded translation of Jude 12 as far as we have gone:

“These same false teachers are hidden reefs under the ocean (destructive), shamelessly feasting together with you (those you thought were making spiritual progress, but who are really trying to shipwreck you), in your love feasts.”

“Love feasts” here were the location for the “hidden reefs” (rocks). In other words, the false teachers where they do their damage.

It was a practice of the early church, a time of gathering and fellowship among believers of a church, and that fellowship was over a meal.

This meal was a prelude to the communion service. If we were having this “love feast” today, it would be on the second Sunday of the month. We would have a big meal, a big breakfast here, before we had the communion service, and we would call it a “love feast.”

We have an excerpt from “The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary”, Page 32:

A simple meal of brotherly love celebrated daily in the apostolic times in connection with the Eucharist, the two being spoken of together as the Lord’s Supper. At this meal the Christians, in connection with their common Redeemer, ignored all distinctions of rank, wealth, and culture, and met as members of one family. At the feast the bishop (presbyter) presided, the food having been prepared at home, or at the place of meeting, according to circumstances. Before eating, the guests washed their hands, prayer was offered, and the scriptures were read. After the meal a collection was taken for widows and orphans, the kiss of charity was given, and communications from other congregations were read and answered.

The Agape was never enjoined by divine command, and gradually, losing its peculiar feature of childlike unity, it led to all sorts of abuses, such as we find rebuked by the apostle Paul. Another cause for its discontinuance was that the Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 391) decreed that the Eucharist should be taken while fasting. Later several councils forbade its being held in the church buildings. Vestiges of the

practice remained as late as the council of Basle, in the fifteenth century. ¹

The purpose, then, was to express the Christian attitude of virtue love. Virtue love is an expression that is comparable to our personal love toward God in communion. It's a mental attitude.

It was a time of like-minded fellowship. A group of believers fellowshiping, who are supposed to be mature believers and should be demonstrating virtue love. But you have the “hidden reefs” who are lurking below the surface waiting to destroy those who are unsuspecting and gullible.

The “love feast” was also something else in the early church. It was a preparation for concentrating on the upcoming worship in communion at the communion table.

So, it was a time of fellowship, but it was also a time of preparation. And so, the feast was centered on the expression of genuine virtue love from the souls of maturing believers.

Let's look at another excerpt from “The MacArthur New Testament Commentary”, Page 179-180:

Jude's description of apostates as “hidden reefs” graphically depicts the unseen danger they pose. “Reefs” are undersea coral formations usually located close to shore. They are potentially harmful to ships because they can rip open the bottoms of their hulls, causing the vessels to sink. Like those “hidden reefs”, the apostates embedded themselves under the surface in the “love feasts” of the early church, from where they tore into unsuspecting people with their lies and wickedness. Originally, the “love feast” was intended to be a regular church gathering for the purpose of mutual instruction (cf. Acts 17:11), encouragement (Heb. 10:24-25), confrontation (cf. Heb. 3:13), and care (Rom. 12:10; 13:8; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25; 5:21; Col. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Peter 4:9-10). The feast was similar to a contemporary potluck dinner held on the Lord's Day. Believers would gather to worship, hear the teaching of Scripture, celebrate Communion, and then share their common love in a meal (cf. Acts 2:42).

¹ The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, Merrill F. Unger, R.K. Harrison, Editor, 3rd Ed., c1966, Agape, page 32.

However, the love feast eventually became so corrupted and abused, due to the defiling influence of false teachers (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-22), that it passed from the scene. Lacking a functioning conscience or sense of conviction, and being adept hypocrites, the apostates were able to “feast” with believers “without fear”. As Paul wrote to Timothy, such heretics are “liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” (1 Tim. 4:2). The fact that their actions do terrible damage to others is of no concern to them. While the love feast was designed for believers to care for one another, the false teachers were guilty of “caring” only “for themselves”.²

The false teachers are the “hidden reefs” in this metaphor. They await unsuspecting believers who are unaware of their rocky falsehoods.

Gullible believers can be almost anyone who is not taking in Bible doctrine, or negative believers, those who simply don't want Bible doctrine. They are without doctrine. They are vulnerable.

“Hidden reefs” of deceptive untruths and human viewpoint rip a gaping hole in their spiritual lives. It tears them to pieces and such shipwrecked believers sink into the depths of reversionism.

Jude then gives us both the time, place, and attitude where these “hidden reefs” of falsehood are hiding: the “love feasts.” They cause destruction and they reveal themselves.

But you see, the warning here by Jude about the “love feasts” indicates that the “hidden reefs” or the “false teachers” can still be discovered before they do their damage.

They were present at the “love feasts” and they were active, or Jude would not have written this epistle to the churches.

So the “hidden reefs” are out there. They just haven't quite taken all of the ships of these churches and destroyed them yet. They are lurking below the surface to pervert the true purpose of the love feasts.

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary 2 Peter & Jude, John MacArthur, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL; pages 179-180.

That's what false teachers do best, manipulate. That's what they like to do inside congregations, manipulate other believers to get what they want.

This was, in fact, something happening in the churches Jude was writing. The "love feasts" were being subverted. The false teachers were quietly beginning to do damage as the "hidden reefs" in the metaphor.

They did participate in the meals, they were there, but, in reality, they were phonies below the surface, speaking with an empty spiritual vocabulary.

They were not focused on preparation for communion worship. They were focused on their own agendas.

Well, the "hidden reefs" came to the meals filled with mental attitude sins, full of treacherous thinking and pseudo-Christian activities, full of false doctrine, which, of course, is certainly the opposite of the virtue love displayed by maturing believers.

The resulting problems at the love feasts were revealed by the Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 11:16 -22.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22: "Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

Verse 21: or in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry, and another is drunk.

Verse 22: What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."

Paul admonished the Corinthian church at the practice of "love feasts" before communion. The love feasts were dropped, it was not revived, and for the most part it is no longer in operation in the church today.

Certain denominations like the Eastern Orthodox Church continues the "love feast tradition," as do some Methodist churches because John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, held "love feasts," so they continue that tradition.

The attitude, then, of the hidden reef is aptly described in the first sentence where they are characterized as “shamelessly serving only themselves.”

This is self-centeredness. “Serving” here is the present active participle from a verb “ποιμαίνω” – “*poimainō*” and it literally means “to tend a flock of sheep” or “shepherding” or “guiding a church congregation,” which is, of course, the duty of every pastor-teacher.

In fact, the word in the New Testament for pastor is “ποιμήν” – “*poimēn*.”

“*Poimainō*” and “*poimēn*” are synonymous or, one is a derivative of the other, and that's the case in our context. “*Poimēn*” means “to function as.”

“*Poimēn*” means to function as a shepherd, to lead to pasture. That's the duty of a pastor. The shepherd provides care, protection, nourishment, and guidance to the sheep.

So, this word describes the duty of a pastor as he teaches Bible doctrine to his congregation. He has the characteristics of a shepherd.

But what about the false teacher as shepherds?

Jude's inclusion of the accusative masculine plural of a pronoun “ἐαυτοῦ” – “*heautoû*,” meaning “themselves,” tells a different story of their shepherding.

The false teachers are shepherding, not a congregation, not individual people, even though that's the facade they put on. They are interested in themselves, and only themselves. They care for no one else. They are out to promote themselves. They misguide with human viewpoint and false doctrine for their own reasons. Not for the benefit of any other believer, but for their own benefit. They're shepherding themselves.

It is a total perversion and reversal of what “*poimēn*” should be and do. They certainly don't protect believers at all. Believers need protection from them.

1. These apostates, these “hidden reefs,” feed their own schemes and desires, instead of tending the sheep.

2. Some of these “*poimainō*” may actually be pastors. They may actually hold the office, but they are not feeding anyone. The false shepherd rejects all authority but his own.
3. These “hidden reefs” hate Bible doctrine and believers who are growing spiritually. The false shepherd is in the camp of the cosmic system. He is anti-authority; he opposes the pastor who teaches doctrine, and he opposes believers who are growing to spiritual maturity.
4. Instead, these false shepherds prefer their own brand of humanistic rambling. They lead you astray. I am “*poimén*,” I am the shepherd, and you are the sheep. They lead the sheep astray.
5. They are self-centered “hidden reefs,” covered by the waters of legalism, religiosity, hypocrisy, activism, pseudo love. They are not spiritual sheep herders; they throw themselves into the activities of the church, like the “love feast” that Jude mentions, while undermining the sheep and the pastor's authority and his teaching, and they spread their evil mental attitudes and humanism among the congregation.

These people are found in churches today. There's a great application here of all these metaphors of hidden reefs and false shepherds and serving themselves. It wasn't just in the first century, in the churches written to by Jude. It is found today in churches all over America.

Our corrected translation as far as we have gone:

Jude 12: “These same false teachers are hidden reefs under the ocean (destructive), shamelessly feasting together with you (those you thought were making spiritual progress, but who are really trying to shipwreck you), in your love feasts without fear, shepherding themselves,”

1. The false teachers fellowship with believers, while shamelessly tending to their own agenda.
2. These people build cliques of fooled and foolish believers. Believers who are a part of, and outside of, the doctrine taught in the church.

3. These “hidden reefs” foment conspiracy against any and all church authority, including gossiping about what they think someone might be doing that's shocking.
4. If you remember our study of Korah in his rebellion against Moses, these false teachers desire to be the authority regardless of the will of God. They are outside of the will of God. As Paul said, the result of such activity is shipwrecked believers.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 goes right along with what we have been studying in Jude 12 in the first metaphor.

1 Timothy 1:19-20: “Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Verse 20: Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.”

This is a perfect description of the hidden reefs. The false teachers are demonstrated, as Paul says, by these two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander.

They were examples of shipwrecked believers. And the result? God placed these two believers under intensive discipline.

It doesn't mean when he turned them over to Satan that now they are unbelievers, and they are on their way to hell along with Satan.

They are shipwrecked believers. But they have made their own choice for the cosmic system and, therefore, God simply turns them over to that choice so that they can wallow on the hidden reef and move on, or they will simply sink into reversionism.

God turned Hymenaeus and Alexander over to the cosmic system of Satan and the domain of false teachers.

Paul's warning to the churches was get back on track or die miserably under the mantle of apostasy and suffering. This is what Hymenaeus and Alexander had to live under.

For those believers who follow after false teachers, suffering follows, and it is designed for one reason: to awaken believers to their position before they crack up on the rocks.

It would be better to avoid the hidden reefs of false teaching by advancing spiritually under a qualified pastor-teacher. But, we have our volition, and false teaching works well on the gullible or uninformed.

1. These “hidden reefs,” the false teachers are disgracefully out for themselves. They are not looking out for your spiritual life or your spiritual growth.
2. These false teachers, the “hidden reefs,” their leadership is false. Why? Because it's deceptive, it's selfish, and it's hardened against doctrine.
3. Disingenuous leaders destroy believers who are blind, immature, and don't recognize the pitfalls of the “hidden reefs” by willingly adopting the anti-doctrine attitude of the false teachers.
4. People who follow false teachers take on the same characteristics that Jude has just described. Those who follow the false teachers are just like them: self-centered, greedy, revolutionary, all of those qualities that we have studied up to this point.

Verse 12b: “they are clouds without water carried about by the winds.”

Clouds without water is the picture of a parched earth. If a cloud doesn't have water, it doesn't give rain. You have a drought.

This phrase describes a lack of spiritual growth without the water of the Word of God. That's the metaphor and the results are dry, parched, dead, spiritual lives.

“Clouds” here is the nominative plural of the noun, “νεφέλη” – “*nephélē*” and it means “cloud.”

Next we have the adjective “ἄνυδρος” -“*ánydros*.” A cloud that is “*ánydros*,” is “without water” or “dry,” “waterless.”

Literally, this cloud is a waterless place. A cloud that should contain water, but this is not the type of cloud that is in this phrase, so it's a cloud that that is waterless.

In this metaphor in Jude 12b, it refers to the Word of God, to Bible doctrine. The “false teachers” are the “clouds” who have no water of the word of God.

So, they can't provide any water to drink or to water the land. They only pretend to bring the water of the word to thirsty souls.

The “false teachers,” the “hidden reefs,” are incapable of providing the spiritual water from correct doctrinal teaching, and this is corroborated by the previous phrase in verse 12.

“*Poimainō*,” shepherding only themselves, but no other believer in the churches they have infiltrated. Shepherding themselves as waterless clouds they are present, but they have no good effect on anyone.

So, waterless clouds don't produce rain for growth or life on earth. Without of course dropping rain, they cause drought that is destructive to life.

So, the metaphor here of “waterless clouds” is apparent.

No rain of Bible doctrine from “waterless” “false teachers” means no spiritual life for believers on earth.

Wouldn't it be great if this auditorium was overflowing with people who were thirsty, who wanted the water of the word, and they had parched souls because they weren't getting any rain anywhere else.

PRINCIPLE: [Your faith will grow when you water it with the Word of God.](#)

The teaching of “false teachers” contains no truth, no sound doctrine for dehydrated souls.

Now a further metaphor here concerning these clouds is that they are driven by the winds.

Clouds move on currents of winds and in verse 12, “these waterless clouds,” “false teachers,” move on the figurative winds.

In the second half of verse 12, the metaphor says, “they are clouds without water,” (false teachers), “carried away by the winds.”