

Jude 1:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Analysis

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Jude employs vivid metaphors exposing false teachers' true nature. "Spots in your feasts of charity" (Greek houtoi eisin hoi en tais agapais hymōn spilades, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις ὑμῶν σπιλάδες) literally means "hidden rocks" or "reefs" at love feasts. Love feasts (agapai) were communal meals accompanying Lord's Supper, expressing Christian fellowship and unity. False teachers' presence creates hidden danger—appearing to participate while actually threatening shipwreck.

"Feeding themselves without fear" (Greek heautous poimainontes aphobōs, ἑαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες ἀφόβως) uses shepherding language ironically—they shepherd themselves, not the flock; fearlessly, without reverence for God. True shepherds feed others; these feed only themselves. "Clouds without water" (Greek nephelai anydroi, νεφέλαι ἀνυδροί) promise rain but deliver nothing—impressive appearance, no substance. "Carried about of winds" indicates instability, lacking rootedness in truth.

"Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Greek dendra phthinopōrina akarpa dis apothononta ekrizōthenta, δένδρα

φθινοπωρινὰ ἄκαρπα δὶς ἀποθανόντα ἐκριζωθέντα)—autumn trees that should bear fruit but are barren. "Twice dead" suggests both naturally dead (no spiritual life) and judicially dead (under condemnation). "Plucked up by the roots" indicates total removal, complete judgment. The imagery echoes Jesus' teaching about fruitless trees being cut down (Matthew 7:19, Luke 13:6-9).

Historical Context

Love feasts were central to early Christian practice, combining fellowship meals with Eucharist celebration. Paul addressed abuses at Corinth where wealthier members feasted while poorer members went hungry (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). By Jude's time, false teachers exploited these gatherings for selfish purposes, enjoying food and fellowship while spreading destructive doctrine—like hidden reefs threatening to wreck the church's ship.

The agricultural metaphors would have resonated in an agrarian society. Clouds promising rain but delivering nothing meant crop failure, potential famine. Fruitless trees occupied space and resources without producing. Farmers removed such trees entirely. Similarly, false teachers promise spiritual blessings but deliver emptiness; they consume church resources while producing nothing of value.

The phrase "twice dead" possibly reflects Jewish teaching that unredeemed people die twice—physically in this life and spiritually in eternal judgment. False teachers demonstrate spiritual death presently (no genuine life) and face second death ultimately (Revelation 20:14). Their impressive appearance masks internal deadness, like whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can churches develop discernment to recognize 'hidden reefs' threatening spiritual shipwreck?
2. What practical indicators distinguish shepherds who feed the flock from those feeding only themselves?
3. How can believers evaluate teaching to distinguish substance from empty promises?

Interlinear Text

οὗτοί εἰσιν ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις ὑμῶν σπιλάδες,

These are in feasts of charity your spots
G3778 G1526 G1722 G3588 G26 G5216 G4694

συνευωχούμενοι, ἀφόβως ἐαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες νεφέλαι
when they feast without fear themselves feeding clouds
G4910 G870 G1438 G4165 G3507

ἄνυδροι ὑπὸ ἀνέμων περιφερόμεναι· δένδρα
they are without water of winds carried about trees
G504 G5259 G417 G4064 G1186

φθινοπωρινὰ ἄκαρπα δὶς ἀποθανόντα ἐκριζωθέντα
whose fruit withereth without fruit twice dead plucked up by the roots
G5352 G175 G1364 G599 G1610

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 15:13 (Parallel theme): But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Proverbs 25:14 (Parallel theme): Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Ezekiel 34:8 (Parallel theme): As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

Philippians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Luke 8:6 (Parallel theme): And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Luke 21:34 (Parallel theme): And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Psalms 1:3 (Parallel theme): And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Mark 4:6 (Parallel theme): But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Matthew 13:6 (Parallel theme): And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.