

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 ἄνυδροι) 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 δις 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	G5216	G4694	
			G26			
συνευωχούμενοι,	ἀφόβως	ἑαυτοὺς	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.