

# What Are Clouds Without Water?

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I don't know about you but sometimes you can read the Bible for years, and then all of a sudden you come across something in scripture, and it's like you never read it before, like it's brand new; it pops out at you. A while back, I was reading two areas of scripture that were almost identical. Different authors, from about the same era, and the question was, what is God trying to tell us here? That's one of the first things that pops into my mind when reading scripture—what is God saying to us?

In this case, the connection was between certain writings of the Apostle Peter and of Jude. We know that Peter wrote his second epistle somewhere between 64 and 68 A.D. Jude, the half-brother of Christ, the brother of James, wrote his epistle about the same time. Some say as late as 80 A.D., but generally most agree that it was between 65 and 70 A.D., somewhere in there. There's no reliable record of where Peter was or Jude was when they wrote these letters—we just don't know. Here's the connection: Of the twenty-five verses in Jude, fifteen of them appear in Peter's second epistle, I wouldn't say exactly word for word, but close enough that they are so similar, it could not be a coincidence. It could be that whoever wrote the one first, the other saw it and was impressed by it, and then included it in his subsequent letter, or, it could be in knowing God, God could have inspired them each individually and separately to write about a common problem. God did so because He wanted it impressed on us that two separate authors wrote about the same exact thing, separately, addressing a common problem. The bottom line is, however that worked out, Peter and Jude are addressing the same phenomenon that was going on in the New Testament church about that time.

They were both concerned and warning about false teachers in the ecclesia, in attendance, who were there with the ecclesia. It happened then, and as we're going to see today, it is happening now. It has gone on continually to this day. The interesting thing is that both of them introduce a new term in the Bible that had not appeared before. This makes you scratch your head—they both use the same term to describe this phenomenon, so this term in itself must be important because it's repeated twice. God therefore wants the contents emphasized, otherwise why would He do that?

It's interesting that in 2 Peter 2, and in Jude, both authors will write about the present time for a verse or two, then they'll switch to the past, then they'll come back to the present time, then they'll go back again to the past. Jude, in one case, goes to the future. Keep that in mind as we go through. What we're going to do, still introducing the subject, is read Jude, so you can begin turning there (right before the book of Revelation) and then after that, we'll read 2 Peter 2. Note the terms that are used, the language that is used, and see when we get to 2 Peter, how similar they are. Jude, verse 3—in verses 3 and 4, Jude is referring to the present day—his present day.

**Jude, verse 3** *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* (KJV)

This indicates that he's introducing a problem. Verse 4.

4) *For there are certain men crept in unawares ...* (KJV)

The Jewish New Testament says *unnoticed*. They came in and it wasn't obvious what was going on.

4 continued) *... who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning ...* (KJV)

He uses the term *turning* in the King James; the Jewish New Testament says *perverting*,

4 continued) *... the grace of our God into lasciviousness ...* (KJV)

That's a King James term that means "filthiness" in the Greek.

4 continued) *... and [here's a big one] denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* (KJV)

Denying both—that's important. Now in verses 5 through 7, Jude goes back to the past.

5) *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this [apparently they had forgotten], how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.* (KJV)

He's reminding them; look, people died because of their deeds. He said, "destroyed those that believed not." Verse 6,

6) *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

7) *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh [homosexuality], are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* (KJV)

Then in verse 8, Jude comes back to the present.

8) *Likewise [meaning today] also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion [the NIV says "reject authority"], and speak evil of dignities.* (KJV)

In verse 9, Jude goes back to the past.

9) *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. (KJV)*

Proving that there is authority. Then in verse 10, Jude comes back to the present.

10) *But these [referring to those whom he is talking about, in his day] speak evil of those things which they know not: (KJV)*

Experience tells us that's primarily done through gossip. It can be done in other ways, of course—preaching from the pulpit it can be done, but it's most often through gossip.

10 continued) *... but what they know naturally [carnally], as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. (KJV)*

He's saying by their words, they are corrupting themselves. Now he goes back to the past in verse 11.

11) *Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core [Korah]. (KJV)*

In verses 12 and 13, Jude comes back now to the present.

12) *These [meaning those today, his day] are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you ... (KJV)*

Meaning, they are there to celebrate the Feasts of God. Then the NIV inserts the next word, shepherds. The King James does not.

12 continued) *... feeding themselves without fear: (KJV)*

In other words, they are there to get. They feed themselves. Now Jude introduces a new term. It's never been used in the Bible prior to this point.

12 continued) *... clouds they are without water ... (KJV)*

That's kind of an odd term—clouds without water; we'll get into that in just a minute.

12 continued) *... carried about of winds; [then he says] trees whose fruit withereth ... (KJV)*

Implying that if your fruit is withering, at least you had some fruit, which implies they were once converted but the fruit is withering and diminishing.

12 continued) ... *without fruit* [implying that some were never converted, they've had no fruit], *twice dead* ... (KJV)

Meaning these are headed to two deaths; a physical death and a spiritual death.

12 continued) ... *plucked up by the roots*; (KJV)

We'll see what that refers to, but I'll tell you in advance, it's a day of judgment—being pulled up by the roots to be judged. Verse 13.

13) *Raging waves of the sea* ... (KJV)

We've seen this—I've seen it, you've seen it—people who are against God, within the confines of the ecclesia, are often angry. They are often raging, often mad. Raging waves of the sea.

13 continued) ... *foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*. (KJV)

Then in verse 14, he goes back to the past.

14) *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints* ... (KJV)

Now Jude projects it into the future.

15) *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*. (KJV)

He's telling us, verse 15, a day of reckoning is coming—it's on the way. Then in verses 16 through 19, Jude comes back to the present.

16) *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts* [they're feeding themselves, gathering for themselves]; *and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage*. (KJV)

In other words, respecters of persons; the New Testament talks about that several times, as does Peter. We would say today, a toady or a bootlick—these are people who curry favor or kowtow in order to get what they want.

17) *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

18) *How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.*

19) *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, [this is important] having not the Spirit.* (KJV)

So they never had it originally or it's being diminished or being lost over time. Jude warns about false teachers and he introduces a new term to describe them: clouds without water. With this in mind (remember the dialogue, the narrative here) let's go to 2 Peter 2:1. As we go through this, notice the similarities, in the subject matter and even in the language that is used, because this is not a coincidence—at least it's not a coincidence in God's eyes. In verses 1 through 3, Peter, as Jude has done, starts off in the present day.

**2 Peter 2:1** *But there were false prophets also among the people [going back to the Old Testament or reading the scriptures], even as there shall be false teachers among you [the people who are receiving the letter and us today], who privily [the Philips translation says "subtly"] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them [Jude talked about God and Christ; Peter is talking about the Lord that bought them], and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

2) *And many [he says] shall follow [meaning this is a popular thing; it's not off in some isolated corner, it's notable within the ecclesia] their pernicious [in the New King James, "destructive"] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* (KJV)

The New King James says *because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

3) *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words [meaning insincere or dishonest words] make merchandise of you:* (KJV)

It's interesting, the English words "make merchandise" is one Greek word, and it means, basically, to buy and sell. So we're told these are going to buy and sell you.

3 continued) *... whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* (KJV)

He's implying a day of reckoning is coming. In verses 4 through 8, Peter goes into the past.

4) *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

5) *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

6) *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly;* (KJV)

An example—this is what happens if you live in an ungodly manner.

7) *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation [or conduct] of the wicked:*

8) *(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*

In verses 9 through 14, Peter comes back to the present.

9) *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: (KJV)*

They keep repeating that a day of judgment is coming.

10) *But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [the NIV says “despise authority”]. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities [the NIV says “heap abuse on celestial beings”].*

11) *Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.*

12) *But these [these false teachers], as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not [through gossip, it can be]; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*

13) *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings [the NIV says they’re “reveling in their pleasures”—in other words, the focus is on having a good time, but notice this] while they feast with you; (KJV)*

Meaning they’re elbow to elbow with God’s people.

14) *Having eyes full of adultery ... (KJV)*

That can be taken spiritually, because if you’re going to commit adultery spiritually, then you’re going to go after false teachings or worship a false God.

14 continued) *... and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: (KJV)*

Then in verses 15 and 16, Peter goes back to the past.

15) *Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor [Beor], who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

16) *But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. (KJV)*

It's amazing how King James verbiage can come into the modern vernacular—it never ceases to amaze me. In verses 17 through 22, Peter concludes, now focusing on the present and introducing two new terms.

17) *These are wells without water*, [then he says, clouds, the implication being, clouds without water] *clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist [or gloom] of darkness is reserved for ever.*

18) *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them* [if you're "clean escaped" it meant your sins were forgiven and you've come out of that] *who live in error* [meaning, they've gone back to error].

19) *While they promise them liberty ...* (KJV)

When I read this, I can't help but remember back to the mid-'90s when we were promised that we didn't have to keep that strict old Sabbath; have fun with Christmas and Easter, we heard—you're free from all of that. That has happened in our lifetime.

19 continued) *... they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage* [into slavery].

20) *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.* (KJV)

Clearly indicating that these were once converted.

21) *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

22) *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* (KJV)

You take what Jude wrote and what Peter wrote and you cannot fail to see the similarities between those two epistles—you just can't. God inspires new terms that we've never heard before, which lead to our subject today. It's logical to ask, what are clouds without water? What are wells without water? What is the meaning for us today? What's the imperative, the importance of it today?

First point we're going to make:

## **1. Why does God describe these people as clouds, or wells, without water?**

What is He trying to get across? What is this describing—these two terms? You have to ask, what's the purpose of a cloud? A cloud is made of water vapor and a cloud brings rain to the earth. The wind blows the cloud, and at some point the water vapor

condenses and turns into water, and it rains and nourishes the earth. A cloud can't exist without water—that's the definition of a cloud. If there's no water, it's not a true cloud. It appears as a cloud but it cannot be a cloud because it has no water vapor in it.

This analogy reminds me of the mid-1980s, when two of the big hamburger franchises were in competition, fighting each other back and forth with commercials, and in one of the commercials, two older women (probably younger than I am now) were sitting in one of the franchises with their hamburgers, and one of them removed the bun and looked down at the meat patty, and the patty was about \*that\* big around (in other words, very small). She cried out, "Where's the beef?" That became a catch phrase for several years after, and in fact was included in the presidential race that year. She was saying, a hamburger is supposed to have beef—where's the beef? What God is saying is, a cloud is supposed to have water—where's the water? Where did it go?

Now what about wells without water? What is the purpose of a well? It's to store water for those in need, when water is needed. No one is nourished by a well that has no water. Without water, a well has no purpose; it can't fulfill its purpose. Therefore, it can't be a true well—it appears as one, but when you walk up to it and look down inside, there's no water—that's a cruel hoax. If you come upon it and you're thirsty, and have this anticipation and you look in—where's the beef; where's the water? It's not there.

We know in the scripture that God draws a clear analogy between water and His Holy Spirit. That's a sermon in itself. Jeremiah 2 talks about fountains of living waters. Other prophets talk about that. In John 4, when Christ met the Samaritan woman at the well, He said, the water I give you, God's Holy Spirit, results in everlasting life—a clear connection between the two. So therefore, in Jude and in 2 Peter, there is a tie-in between no water, no Holy Spirit. That's one of the points they are making. Therefore these clouds appear as true ministers and true brethren, but they are not.

Have you ever heard the term "all hat and no cattle"? If somebody walks up to you with a cowboy hat on and gives the appearance of being a cattleman, but when you look more closely, there's no livestock or cattle back there, then he's all hat but no cattle, meaning, he has the appearance of a cattleman but there's no cattle. Clouds without water—it has the appearance of a cloud, or it has the appearance of a well, but there's no water, none at all. We know that we cannot belong to the body of Christ without having God's Holy Spirit. As a reminder, let's go to Romans 8:9. If we want to be part of the ecclesia, it means we have to have something very important.

**Romans 8:9** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [or the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit], he is none of his. (KJV)*

Very important. The bottom line is that clouds without water are not true ministers, they are not true brethren. It happened in the New Testament church and it continues to this day. Remember Peter started off—2 Peter 2:1, there shall be false teachers among you. Shepherds feeding themselves, Jude said, in verse 12. The fact is, you don't have



to be an elder to be a false teacher. We teach often by our example. Remember they crept in unawares—Jude 3—and they feast with you. 2 Peter 2:13 and Jude 1:12. Both Peter and Jude tell us that these individuals do not have the Holy Spirit. At least they might have had it but they're not exercising it, or it is diminished, or it has been lost entirely. So their description of clouds without water is very appropriate. They give the appearance of one thing, but they are not.

That leads to the next point:

## **2. We have to ask the question, who are these clouds without water?**

Who are they? I remember, more than thirty-five years ago, we were living in Lubbock, Texas, and I went on a visit with the minister there whom I highly respected (he's dead now) but we went to visit a lady, of whom it could be said, wherever she went there was disruption—there was turmoil, there was trouble, there was upset, there was disruption. So we went to visit her. We had to tell her that she couldn't attend. On the way back we were talking about her and the situation, and he said, she's a plant. I thought, in my mind, a plant is a piece of vegetation—it's a flower, it's a bush or something like that—and he saw the confusion on my face and said, these are people planted into the church by Satan. They are planted into the church—not that they are a plant but they are planted into the church by Satan. I've never forgotten that concept. It's in the Bible, I should have recognized it, but he pointed it out to me. Let's go to the Bible and see—Matthew 13. Christ is speaking another parable to His disciples. Verses 10 and 11 tell us He is talking to the disciples but we'll pick it up in verse 24.

**Matthew 13:24** *Another parable put he [Christ] forth unto them [His disciples], saying [now He's describing the Kingdom], The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

25) *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

26) *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

27) *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

28) *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?*

29) *But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

30) *Let both grow together until the harvest: (KJV)*

So we see an enemy has planted false wheat, and it's obviously referring to Satan, as we'll see in a second. Before the plants reach maturity, as they are starting, it's difficult to tell them apart. But as they grow and as time goes on, it becomes easier to tell the tares from the wheat—why?—because of the fruit that they develop. They look different to the eye.

30 continued) ... *and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 36.

36) *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

37) *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*

38) *The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

39) *The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

40) *As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (KJV)*

Jude talked about that, Peter talked about that. We see here that Satan plants people into the ecclesia to destroy it and to destroy us. That's his goal. Remember the parable of the sheepfold in John 10—we won't turn there—but the thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy, and that's exactly what is happening here in Matthew 13. God allows it as a test to the church and as a test to us as individuals. With that in mind, let's go to 2 Corinthians 11 and see that Paul also addresses this very problem. We'll begin in verse 3. I'm going to read this out of the New King James. Paul is addressing this same problem.

**2 Corinthians 11:3** *But I fear [he says, I'm worried about you], lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

4) *For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!*

13) [Sound familiar?] *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.*

14) *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

15) *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (NKJV)*

Looking back over the decades, I think it's obvious that some of the highest ranking have been plants and some of the highest ranking today could be plants. It's something that we have to be careful about and we have to watch, and we'll see how we do that in just a bit. Remember, in addition to the plants put there by Satan, some have lost God's Spirit—had it but lost it—2 Peter 2:20-21. He said they have escaped the pollutions of the world and if they are entangled therein, their end is worse than their beginning. It could be people who have God's Spirit, but it remains dormant because they are not

allowing God's Spirit to lead them. Let's go to Romans 8:14 and see that. It's not enough to have God's Holy Spirit—it comes as a grain of a mustard seed. We have to allow that Spirit to lead us, we have to exercise it, we have to put it to use—that's critical. In Romans 8:14, we're told,

**Romans 8:14** *For as many as are led [it doesn't say as many as just have it] by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

Being led means yielding to God. We have to say, God, You lead me. Not my will, Your will. I've got my forehead on the floor and my hands on the floor, and I'm submitting to You, and You just tell me what You want me to do, and I'll do it. That is allowing God's Spirit to lead us—not getting in the way, not being a stumbling block to what God wants to accomplish through us. So Jude and Peter are telling us that there are ungodly, carnal, human beings among the ecclesia, who are not spiritually minded. Their minds are on other things, physical things, selfish things. Remember (I'm summarizing now, putting the two accounts together), they walk after the flesh—Jude 4, Jude 8, 2 Peter 2:10. They're focused on pleasure—2 Peter 2:13. They speak what they don't know—Jude 10, 2 Peter 2:12. They have ungodly deeds—Jude 15. They are covetous—Jude 3, 2 Peter 2:3. They use fake, untrue words—2 Peter 2:3.

Who are these clouds without water? They are plants by Satan or they are those who have either lost God's Holy Spirit or who are allowing God's Holy Spirit to fade away through lack of exercise, and in both cases, they are a test from God to see if we're going to follow them or if we are going to follow Him.

That leads to the third point:

### **3. Clouds without water bring heresy and hypocrisy into the church.**

That's what Peter says and that's what Jude says. Remember what Peter said in the very beginning: false teachers among you shall privately bring in damnable heresies. 2 Peter 2:1—they're going to bring heresies into the church. We're told they crept in unawares, unnoticed—2 Peter 2:4. So when you come in unnoticed, and you pretend to be one thing but you're really something else, that's the definition of hypocrisy. You're pretending to be one thing, but are actually something else. They speak evil of things they don't know—Jude 10, 2 Peter 2:12.

Historically in the greater church, as we look back over the years, it has become a blood sport to assassinate other people's character through gossip. We've experienced it, I have to admit I've participated over the years—no more, but we've all done it. We've participated in that—attacking people or labeling people whom we don't even know. We repeat something about someone we've never met, or don't even know. Satan provokes some to be attracted to these hypocrisies and these heresies. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:30—Paul is weighing in again on this narrative. Paul is warning Timothy, saying, you need to look down the road because this is going to happen, and it's happening today, too.

**2 Timothy 4:3** *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

4) *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth [they will stop their ears up and will not want to hear it], and shall be turned unto fables [untruths].* (KJV)

So whether it involves being eager to hear some tidbit of gossip about somebody, then not verifying it and repeating it to other people (about somebody they don't even know), or spreading false doctrine without studying into it to see whether it's true or false, it's the same result. Peter says because of these clouds without water, the way of truth will be evil spoken of. Think about that—the way of truth, because of these clouds without water, will be evil spoken of. Because of their heresy, because of their hypocrisy. People might say, this is God's church, that can't happen in God's church. It already has. I remember a couple of decades ago, a minister was caught in a massage parlor—it made national news and reflected horribly on the church. A minister was caught running drugs—I mentioned that before. It made the local and regional papers, again bringing disrepute on the church, blaspheming the church. A minister convicted—not too long ago, five or six years ago—of tax evasion and embezzlement. That made the news, bringing the church into disrepute because of hypocrisy, because of heresy.

What about when Peter warned that these clouds without water will make merchandise of the brethren? That was in 2 Peter 2:3. Buying and selling—what about that? Does that happen in the church? What about the church getting into a financial crisis of their own making and then asking people to cash in their savings and send it into headquarters, to bail them out? Is that making merchandise? Telling brethren (this has happened not too long ago) to cash in their retirement or get a second mortgage on their home and send it in to a guy—has that happened? Ministers telling brethren and family members that they can't associate with other people who belong to another group. Is that making merchandise? We've seen it with our own eyes, that clouds without water make merchandise of God's people and have done so down through the millennia. Better be careful about those who do such things—better be careful. Bringing heresy and hypocrisy in our midst.

The fourth point:

#### **4. Clouds without water are self-centered and narcissistic.**

Jude, verse 12, says they feed themselves. In verses 16 and 18, it says they walk after their own lusts. In 2 Peter 2:3, and in verse 14, it says they are covetous, again getting for the self. 2 Peter 2:10 says they are self-willed; they want their way rather than God's way. With that in mind let's go to John 12:42. There were many people in the hierarchy of the Jewish community who believed in Christ but they would not act on their belief. This explains why.

**John 12:42** *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him [on Christ]; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:*

43) [Here's the reason] *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* (KJV)

Today all of us are being tested to see whose praise we love more—the praise of men or the praise of God? We're being tested this very day. Remember regarding selfishness and narcissism, Peter said they despise government and reject authority—2 Peter 2:10, and Jude 8. That's all part of being self-centered; if you reject authority then you make yourself the boss, and that's being self-centered. There were mockers in the last times—Jude 18. Mockers of the truth but also mockers of those who teach the truth within the church. Paul again gets in and adds to the narrative in 2 Timothy 3:1; let's go there. This is a problem that Jude addressed, Peter addressed, and Paul addressed—he didn't use the term clouds without water, but Paul addressed the same problem, and it exists today. Notice how many of these are selfish and narcissistic.

**2 Timothy 3:1** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2) *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters [they brag about their own selves], proud [of themselves], blasphemers [meaning they put themselves ahead of God's word] ...* (KJV)

You see, all of these are narcissistic. Peter said they revel in their pleasures—2 Peter, chapter 2, verse 13. We see that people can put fellowship, summer camps, winter outings—all of the perks of the church—sometimes people put them before God Almighty. Clouds without water are in the church to serve themselves. Having a respect of persons, Jude said, in verse 16. We've seen it in the church. We've seen people politic to get rank and to get recognition—we've seen that. When I walked in the church it was there. It was no different than the military; I felt right at home. People elevate themselves to get power, to get recognition, to get authority, and we read about it in the beginning of Acts, with Ananias and Sapphira, and it continues to this day—nothing new under the sun. Let's go to Romans 16:17; Paul weighs in again on this subject, about being narcissistic and selfish, having brethren who are among us and that is their motive. Not serving others, not serving God, but serving themselves.

**Romans 16:17** *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.* (KJV)

Let's just stop there. We know that doctrine has been perverted from the time this was written, starting then, carrying through the 300s A.D., when the Catholic Church coalesced and the trinity was injected into it, and it has happened down through the centuries to this day. Paul is warning them about that.

18) *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* (KJV)

In other words, people that don't look into it. People that just let it blow past and don't give it a second thought. The work of these individuals—clouds without water, wells without water—are the work of men and not of God. Building edifices to honor themselves or their organization, looking to numbers to honor themselves—the number of attendees, the number of Feast sites, the number of TV stations, the number of booklets printed, and on and on it goes. Looking to exalt a man or an administration or an organization. Clouds without water are self-centered, are narcissistic, they are not God-centered. Something we should keep in mind and pay attention to.

The fifth and last point, and this is the big one:

### **5. Clouds without water deny the true God and Jesus Christ.**

They deny the true God and Jesus Christ. Jude said in verse 4, denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter said in 2 Peter 2:1—the very first verse—denying the Lord that bought them. So clouds without water deny God and deny Christ. How do they do that? Let's evaluate that for a second. How do clouds without water deny God and deny Jesus Christ? As far as God is concerned, they deny the power and the authority of Almighty God. The word itself, Almighty, tells you there is no power above what the Almighty God has, or the Most High God has. We can deny God by denying who He is and what He has done. We're diminishing who He is and what He has done. Denying the power of God's Spirit—the Holy Spirit—which is the shared nature of God and Christ. Denying the power of the Holy Spirit to change us, from the old person to the new person. People say, that's just the way I am—the old Christian thing—accept me as I am, take me as I am; no, God isn't going to do that. We're going to have to change ourselves to be like Jesus Christ and follow in His footsteps. Philippians 2 has something to say about that.

We also deny Christ by ignoring His words and His example. Remember Paul says we should have the mind of Christ, so if we don't have the mind of Christ, we don't seek His mind, we're saying, I don't want Christ's mind, so we deny Christ. We deny Christ, the fact that He is servant of all—I gave a sermon on that a while back—Christ is the servant of all of us. He gave His life for us, He serves us, the foot washing is an example of that, and if we deny His words, and if we ourselves don't become servants, then we're saying, I'm not going to pay any attention to that example because I don't want to be a servant, I want to exalt myself. We deny Christ when we hate our enemies, because Christ said, love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you. If we don't do that, then we're denying Christ.

Christ said, love your enemies. If we don't love our enemies, we're denying the words of Christ, thereby we're denying Jesus Christ. When Christ says don't return evil with evil—rather than return evil with evil, turn the other cheek, give the guy your coat, walk the extra mile. If we don't do that, then we deny Jesus Christ. We can also deny Christ by saying He is a created being. We have been accused of that. We do not teach that—never have taught it because none of us believe it and yet we are accused of that.

There are those who teach that Christ is a created being—that is denying Jesus Christ—you can't go there. Let's go to Titus 1:15. Talking about the big one, among the clouds without water, which is that they deny the true God and they deny His Son.

**Titus 1:15** *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.* (KJV)

Here's the key scripture.

16) *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him [they deny God because they don't do what God says—pretty simple], being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* (KJV)

Clouds without water can put human things in front of God, or an administration or a man in front of God—serving an administration or a man instead of serving God or serving Jesus Christ. Putting church tradition before truth in scripture is a way of denying God and Jesus Christ—plain and simple. If you put church tradition before God, then you're making the church a work of men and God withdraws. Just like the Pharisees. They put their tradition before Jesus Christ, they denied Jesus Christ. We're going to see how that works in my next sermon. We're going to talk about the Pharisees and what they were really like and see some parallels for today. All of the above—whatever you put before God, whatever we put before God—is idolatry. Exodus 20 says so; you shall have no other gods before Me, you shall not serve them. If we put anything before God—a man, an administration, a tradition—that's exactly what we're doing. We're serving humans rather than God.

We see that clouds without water are not here, are not in the ecclesia, to do the will of God and Christ. God is not in the forefront of their mind, pleasing God is not in the forefront of their mind, they use human reasoning rather than just simply seeking God's will. We all just need to get out of the way, stand aside, let God do what He's going to do, and then we follow. We tag along. We do what He wants, that's what God wants of us, that's what we need to do. Too often human beings can seek their will then they become at cross purposes with God and frustrate what God is trying to do. If that happens, what God will do is withdraw from them, and we're told He can raise up stones to replace any of us, and He will raise up stones to do His will. Stones that want to do His will, that want to proclaim God, not deny God, proclaim Christ, not deny Christ. Clouds without water put anything before God.

Let's summarize. We shouldn't be surprised when we see the conduct and the example of those without water. It shouldn't surprise us because they have been planted. Ungodly deeds, ungodly words, attempting to bring heresy into the church, attempting to exalt the self, spreading lies, gossiping, preaching falsehood and all of that. We're told by God that there will be many clouds without water. 2 Peter 2:2 says many shall follow their destructive ways. I remember the Feast attendance in 1986 was over 186,000. It went up from there for a couple of years. As I recall it topped out at over 200,000 in the late '80s. Where are they today? Some of them have died of course, but there have

been tens of thousands that have just disappeared. Were they wells without water, clouds without water—apparently so. Let's go to Matthew 7:13 and 14. This is a reminder, certainly to me, to all of us—Christ wants us to be reminded. Christ is speaking here. I'll read this out of the New King James. This is the path we're walking, and it's not easy.

**Matthew 7:13** *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. (KJV)*

That's the same Greek word that Peter used in 2 Peter 2:2, when he said, many shall follow their destructive ways—same word.

14) *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (KJV)*

That's a scary thought and the only way we're going to find it is to put God and Christ first. That's the only way that's going to happen. How can we identify clouds and wells without water? Verse 15 tells us.

15) *“Beware of false prophets [just what Peter said], who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

16) *You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?*

17) *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

18) *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*

19) *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (KJV)*

Both Peter and Jude talked about that—a time of judgment.

20) *Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (KJV)*

The Bible tells us that only God knows the heart. We can't know another person's heart but we can observe their fruits, and their fruits tell us what's inside and what their motives are. We just have to look at the fruits and ask the question. Are the fruits of the Holy Spirit there? Do we see the fruits of the Holy Spirit or do we see something else? Do we see the love of Christ in someone, following in Christ's footsteps? Do we see that, every time we meet with them and talk with them? That tells us something.

Why did God inspire Peter and Jude to come up with these new terms—clouds without water, wells without water? Because they graphically depict some who are among the ecclesia. It's a graphic description—they appear to be clouds but there's no water. All hat, no cattle. They graphically depict that state, either by Satan planting them or by gradually allowing the Holy Spirit to diminish in them by not exercising the Holy Spirit, and then at some point, the Spirit just goes away. You see the result in either case because there is no fruit—no growth. No becoming like God the Father or Jesus Christ.



It's prophesied that there will be many in the last days. This is precisely why we have divisions. I have people writing me—it happens several times a month—saying, some day, we're all going to be back together. Before Christ comes we're going to all come back together, we're going to sit around the campfire, hold hands, sing "Kumbaya", and all will be well. That's not what the Bible says.

Let's go to 1 Corinthians 11:19. I'm going to read this out of the NIV. Paul is speaking very plainly here—with absolute clarity.

**1 Corinthians 11:19** *No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. (KJV)*

Which of you are legitimate—the Greek word "approval" is *dokimos*; it means coinage, it means legitimate coinage. Paul is saying there have to be differences to show who are legitimate Christians, legitimate brethren, legitimate ministers. If there are false brethren—plants—mixed in with converted people with God's Holy Spirit, do you think there's going to be some differences between them? Of course. Do you think anything is going to change between now and Christ returning? Satan is not going to say, I'm not going to plant anymore, I'm not going to provoke people anymore, I'll give you a pass. No, he's not going to say that, he's not going to do that. As long as you have plants or those without God's Spirit mixed in, in a group who do have God's Spirit, you are going to have division. You're going to have controversy, you're going to have issues, because two can't walk together unless they be agreed, and Satan and Christ are not going to walk together. That's just not going to happen. There will be differences within the church. There will be divisions right up to the end because God is watching who we put first.

Why did God inspire these two New Testament writers, who didn't live together—they weren't in the same town, they didn't write at exactly the same time, maybe within a few years of each other—why did God inspire them to say essentially the same thing? When something is repeated in the Bible it's important, so God inspired them to write these things as a warning to each one of us to put God first, to exercise His Spirit. In contrast to clouds without water, here's what we should be doing—we'll close with two scriptures. This is in contrast—clouds without water. Let's go to Deuteronomy 10 and begin in verse 12. This was true in the Old Testament, it is true today, this is something that is consistently true throughout the Bible. It is something we can count on. It is absolute truth.

**Deuteronomy 10:12** *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him [obey because you want to, not because you have to], and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul [life] ... (KJV)*

Who do we serve? Beginning in verse 17, I'll read out of the New King James—just the first part.

17) *For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God mighty and awesome ... (NKJV)*

That's who we should serve. Let's go forward to Joshua 24. Joshua had the unenviable job of walking in Moses's footsteps. I can't imagine what that would be like, with this unruly group of Israelites, and then he has to inherit Moses's job—oh, what a job! I just wouldn't want that job at all. In Joshua 24, verse 15, he is speaking to the elders of Israel.

**Joshua 24:15** *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD [if that's a bad thing to you guys], choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house ... (KJV)*

He's saying, I don't care what you guys do, this is what I'm going to do, and my house is going to do,

15 continued) *... we will serve the LORD [Yahweh]. (KJV)*

That applies to us. If we do that—if we serve God with all of our heart, love Him with all of our being, then we can become clouds filled with water, wells filled with water, and that water isn't just H<sub>2</sub>O, it's clouds and wells with living water that leads to eternal life.