

5. Three Musketeers of Downfall

Hollywood made movies about the infamous Three Musketeers who risked their lives to protect the king from the evil ones. It was about courage, strength and dedication.

But sadly we see tonight the Three Musketeers of downfall. These downfall three musketeers could care less about the King of kings. As a matter of fact, the two of them had direct conversations with God Himself. Instead of being courageous, they were cowards, instead of being powerful in God's strength, they were weak to temptations of evil, and instead of being dedicated to the King, they turn their backs to Him and ended up paying their consequences with the ultimate prices.

Jude 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Whenever the Bible says, "Woe to them!", they might as well hang it up. Because God's judgement is waiting for them.

Matt. 23:13-15 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

A. THE MUSKETEER #1 - CAIN

First, the false teachers followed "the way of Cain" by endorsing a religion that offers God the fruit of human works rather than the innocent blood of a substitutionary sacrifice.

Hebr. 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Hebr. 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Cain's story is found in Genesis 4. Each of the sons of Adam and Eve brought an offering to the Lord. Cain (being a farmer) brought an offering from his harvest. Abel (being a shepherd) brought an offering from his flocks. The difference in the offerings was not between meat and vegetable, but between faith and unbelief.

I wouldn't be surprised that Cain and Abel were taught how to bring sacrifices to God since they were kids by Adam and Eve. Because their mom and dad watched how God killed an animal to cover their nakedness of sin.

Cain's sacrifice was undoubtedly more visually pleasing than the carcass of a dead lamb. But it was offered without faith, and therefore unacceptable to God. We can give to God of whatever we have, or whatever we are, but it must be offered in faith. Rich people's money vs. a widow's mite

The bottom line of this case is that Cain did whatever pleased himself instead of God in worship. It is called as "Self-styled worship". Why would God gave the pacific

ways bring sacrifices to the tabernacle if it didn't matter to Him? It has to be His way, no other way.

But remember that Cain's lack was not in works, but in faith - he need only believe upon the Lord with all his heart. The way of Cain: unbelief, empty religion; leading to jealousy, persecution of those truly godly, and murderous anger. There is no greater curse on the earth than empty, vain religion. They are the ones who have a form of godliness, but deny the power of God (2 Tim 3:5).

Many Christians are deathly afraid of "secular humanism" or atheism as their enemies. Yes, they are. But I believe that dead religion send more people to hell than anything else! The biggest enemy of Christianity is not satan, because he already lost the battle against Jesus. The biggest enemy of Christianity is dead orthodoxy. Knowing the virgin birth of Jesus, knowing the deity of Jesus and knowing all the right doctrines of Christianity, yet not believing and not following. I am glad that I am not in their shoes.

B. THE MUSKETEER #2- BALAAM

I think that Balaam is the most interesting character in the whole Bible. Because no other man in human race ever have carried a conversation with a donkey.

2Pet. 2:15-16 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

Some people say they don't struggle with temptations. Because when temptations come, they just give into the temptations. Balaam is a case in point. He was a godly man and had relationship with God. God spoke through this man and whomever Balaam blessed, God blessed them. But when Balak the Moabites, came with money, he didn't fight against the temptation. He embraced the temptation.

Balaam's story is in Numbers chapters 22-25 and 31. Israel advanced to Moab, after they defeated the Amorites. King Balak of Moab panics; seeks the help of Balaam. The first delegation from Balak arrives. God tells Balaam to have nothing to do with them. Remember God's initial words to Balaam: *"You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."*

Another, more prestigious delegation comes, with great riches. Balaam wants to go with them. God allows him to - Balaam had lusted after the riches and prestige offered to him, God gave him over to his own sin.

God tries to warn and stop Balaam on the way to see Balak, yet his heart is still to serve Balak. So God allows him to continue. Balaam even ignores a talking donkey!

Balaam know that he has done wrong, but he continues on. When God says, "No", we must take it as a no. Otherwise, He might just give us what our sinful hearts want! I thank God for the times when I wanted to sin, but God kept the opportunity far from me.

Balaam prophesies over Israel four times, but each time he blesses Israel instead of cursing them. Later Balaam's counsel to Balak, "Get Israel to commit fornication

and idolatry, and God will curse them for you." Balak did just that, and because of the immorality of Israel, God brought a plague of judgment upon Israel that killed 24,000.

Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins: deliberately leading others into sin - and for money. The greedy error of Balaam: he was willing to sell out everything for money.

Many Christians who would never deny Christ under persecution might deny Him if offered a million dollars.

Think of the scandals brought upon Christianity because some leaders have followed the error of Balaam. Almost always, a false teacher is in it for the money; maybe not to make a rich living, but an easy one. Beware of covetousness! 30 pieces of silver helped put Jesus on the cross!

C. THE MUSKETEER #2- KORAH

Korah's story is found in Numbers 16.

Num. 16:3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

Korah and his followers resented the authority that God had granted to Moses and Aaron. They didn't want to accept Moses as a God-ordained mediator, even as many reject Christ as the only Mediator between God and men.

Moses fell on his face, then proposed a test: *"Each side takes censurs (for incense) and come before the Lord, and let the Lord pick between us."*

God told Moses to get away. Then the ground opened up and swallowed Korah and his people, and fire came down from heaven and torched all of his supporters.

Korah had his own God-appointed sphere of ministry, yet was not content with it - he wanted the authority of Moses.

Gal. 6:3-5 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.

We need to work hard to fulfill everything that God has called us to be, yet let's not try to be what God has not called us to be. The rebellion of Korah was also a rejection of God's appointed leaders, as many people reject the God's appointed Mediator, Jesus. The cult religion teachers were teaching people to reject the only way of salvation through Jesus. And they are still doing it.

How do we respond to authority in the church? If something needs to be said to the leadership, "In what spirit do you say it?" Many deceivers follow the rebellion of Korah, they won't come out and say "you don't need Jesus," But they will tell us, "You need this therapy" or "this new thing" or whatever - anything but really coming to Jesus with our need.

D. APPLICATIONS

No matter how reasonable its words or winsome its ways, apostasy is diametrically opposed to Christ.

Instead of the way of Christ, there is the way of Cain with self-styled worship.

Instead of the truth of Christ, there is the error of Balaam's greed. Instead of the life of Christ, there is the death of Korah's rebellion.

Whether it comes from self-styled religion or greed or pride, anything other than God's ways is damnable. Only His way or nothing!