

Ungodly Character of Apostate Teachers, Part 1

Our study this evening is in the book of Jude starting with verse 8. I encourage you to open your Bibles and turn to the book of Jude. But before we look at verse 8, I want to review the opening verses of Jude. In verse 1 we are told that the book of Jude is written to Christians. This is an important starting point. It is also important to notice believers are going to be called to action.

PURPOSE OF JUDE. The call to action is given in verse 3. It says,

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. Jude 3 (NASB)

When Jude says, “the faith which was once for all handed down”, he is referring to the faith that had been communicated by Jesus and the apostles. This

becomes clear in verse 17 when Jude says,

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Jude 17 (NASB)

This verse helps us understand that “the faith” to which Jude

refers in verse 3 is the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Since Jesus Christ and the apostles endorsed the Old Testament, the faith also includes the Old Testament. So, Jude is calling us to contend earnestly for the faith. In other words, the entire Bible.

CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH. But notice in verse 3 that he wants us to do more than just remember the faith. The Greek word that is translated as “contend” in verse 3 has the idea of a struggle or a fight. To preserve the faith, believers will have to fight in order to prevent the faith from being distorted, twisted and destroyed. He is telling us that it will be a fight. In fact, the fight had already been raging when he wrote these words and the fight is continuing to this day.

CERTAIN PERSONS HAVE CREPT IN UNNOTICED. Verse 4 introduces us to those who are attempting to distort, twist and destroy the faith. Jude identifies them as a human enemy. He says they are individuals who have crept

into our churches unnoticed. Notice what he says,

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 4 (NASB)

Apostates	Verses
Are Tares	v. 4-7
Have A Superiority Attitude	v. 8-9
Understand Scripture Instinctively	v. 10
Are Rebellious and Unbelieving	v. 11

When he says “crept” in, he uses the Greek aorist tense, which means they are already in our churches. The Greek word for “unnoticed” refers to someone who sneaks in discreetly. We pointed out in a previous study that these “certain persons” are tares in the church. In Matthew 13:25-30, Jesus gave us the parable of the Tares and the Wheat. In that passage He explains that tares are sown in the churches by the Evil One—Satan. Tares are a weed that looks like wheat until both are full grown. Wheat is symbolic of true believers. Tares are in our churches. They look like Christians, but they are not. They were never Christians. So, we should not be surprised that Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:22-23 that,

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” Matthew 7:22-23

You see, many of these tares are self-deceived. Satan has sown them and he has deceived them into thinking they are believers. Other tares are not deceived. These tares know they are not real believers, but they want us to think they are. They appear to be fine, moral people. They look good. They may have a charismatic personality. Perhaps they desire a leadership position or to become a teacher—a position of status. The more evil tares want to not only deceive, but to mislead and gain a following. Jude is warning believers about these ungodly persons or apostates in the church. They may be the pastor, a church leader, an adult class leader, or a Bible study teacher. He says they are in our churches already. Watch out!

WARNING - GOD WILL SEVERELY JUDGE APOSTATES. In verses 5-7 apostates are warned that God will severely judge them. Jude reminds them and us that God even judged His own people—the Israelites—after they had experienced incredible miracles, witnessed fantastic wonders and enjoyed tremendous personal blessings as they left Egypt by crossing the Red Sea, eating manna in the wilderness, drinking water from rocks in the wilderness and watching smoke and fire on Mount Sinai when God visited Moses. Just imagine the

incredible experiences they had. Yet, everyone over the age of twenty years was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land because they did not believe in God, and their actions proved it. They were apostates.

In verse 6, Jude warns apostates that God did not show favoritism to His own angels either. He did not show them favoritism when they sinned as the result of unbelief. Even though these evil angels were created by God and had lived in heaven, God did not show them favoritism.

Verse 7 reminds apostate teachers that God did not spare five cities due to their sin. In all three examples, God did not show favoritism when the individuals sinned. Each time He punished unbelief. So Jude warns apostate teachers to stop their teaching or God will one day cast them into the lake of fire that burns forever and ever.

Our study begins in verse 8 and continues through verse 13. In this section, Jude describes the character of these apostate teachers. He starts by saying,

Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. Jude 8 (NASB)

Who are “these men” in verse 8? These are the apostate teachers. “In the same way” refers to the Israelites in verse 5, the angels in verse 6 and the inhabitants in verse 7. That is, the apostate teachers are like these three groups. Apostate teachers are like the unbelieving and rebellious Israelites, the unbelieving and rebellious angels and the unbelieving and rebellious citizens of the five cities God destroyed. As a result of their unbelief and sin, these apostates will defile their flesh, reject authority and not respect angels.

BY DREAMING. Verse 8 is about apostate teachers. We are told that they behave this way because they are dreaming. Now, what does Jude mean by this statement? The normal Greek word for “dreaming” is *onar*. But Jude uses a different Greek word for dreaming in this verse. The Greek word Jude uses has the sense of a “dream that reveals new truth” or a prophetic utterance—a prophecy. The root word occurs in Acts 2:17 with that sense. A good Old Testament example of a dream and a prophetic utterance is Deuteronomy 13:5.

But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death,

because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. Deuteronomy 13:5

Here the false prophet is described as dreaming dreams. Our next example is . . .

“Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,” declares the LORD, “and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 23:32 (NASB)

For the teraphim speak iniquity,
And the diviners see lying visions
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain. Zechariah 10:2

Jude is saying these apostate teachers believe they have received a “Word from the Lord.” The so-called inspired dreams permit them to do certain things that are in total violation of Scripture—the “faith once for all handed down to the saints.” They may even claim the Holy Spirit inspired them.

One apostate teacher, Robert Schuller, said years ago that he was sitting in his meditation garden waiting for God to speak to him and help him know what to preach the next Sunday morning. I thought to myself, “How about choosing a passage of Scripture, faithfully study it and then teach what God said in the passage?” He received his messages from his garden. This man was an apostate. Robert Schuller once stated that Jesus did not die for our sins on the cross. Instead, He died to give us a positive self-image. That statement is heresy! While he may never have claimed to obtain new information from God by dreams, he did invent his sermons.

Sadly, some Christians, while not being apostates, are like apostates in that they distort Scripture! A woman once told me that she was not going to believe the explanation I gave for 1 Corinthians 7:12-15. She said that she had been praying and felt that God had given her peace to ignore the passage and

instead to divorce her husband. She said God had spoken to her and given her peace. She was not interested in the meaning of the passage. Now she was not an apostate teacher, but she was apostate in the sense of “dreaming.” The apostate’s dreams, visions, or “Words from the Lord” give them an excuse to ignore Scripture and give approval to defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile angels.

DEFILE THE FLESH, REJECT AUTHORITY. The Greek word for defile, *miaino*, . . .

. . . has the meaning of “to pollute,” “to contaminate” or “to cause moral filth.”

And the word for “flesh” comes from the Greek word *sarx*. *Sarx* refers to the “flesh and blood” body. Therefore, to “defile the flesh” has the sense of sexual impurity. The message is that sexual sins defile the flesh, but the apostate enjoys the sexual thrill. So, he finds justification for his behavior and the behavior of others by twisting Scripture.

Today, the only sexual sin that is usually condemned by many professing Christians is adultery and maybe homosexuality. In the last 10-30 years, sexual sins that were once condemned by unbelievers are now approved even by some believers. Homosexuality and the porn industry have influenced the culture to grant approval to a wide range of sexual sins including bestiality. The church is quickly catching up. Many believe if it feels good, how can it be wrong? God made sex and the Song of Solomon describes sexual intercourse. So everything is okay! And apostate teachers are giving their approval. One apostate teacher now excuses the sin of adultery saying that God is merciful and would not want anyone to be unhappy. So, go ahead, file for divorce, commit adultery and you do not need to ask for forgiveness because grace covers your sin. God will forgive!

Apostate teachers also reject authority. The last statement in verse 8 is an example of apostates rejecting authority. They reject authority in a broad sense, and are willing to rebuke angels. It will become clear in the next verse that some apostates are so bold as to even rebuke Satan.

ILLUSTRATION OF THEIR PRIDE AND SENSE OF SUPERIORITY. Verse 9 illustrates the attitude of superiority that

they have over everyone! Apostates will even rebuke angels.

But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Jude 9 (NASB)

This is a reminder of Zechariah 3:1-2 where Christ, in an Old Testament theophany, rebuked Satan for accusing the high priest Joshua. Here in Jude, however, the situation is different. Michael, the archangel, refuses to rebuke Satan and, therefore, appeals to God to rebuke him. It demonstrates the humble attitude of this most powerful angel. Michael’s example of humility should put apostates and some of us to shame for our pride. Even angels refuse to rebuke Satan.

But apostate teachers will! I have heard some declare with a strong and demanding voice, “I rebuke you, Satan!” Or, “Satan, I bind you!” Or, in March of this year one apostate preacher declared that he had the office of a prophet and then spoke to the Coronavirus demanding that the virus respect his authority and leave the United States. That was an outrageous display of a spirit of superiority. But that illustrates verse 9. Apostates in their arrogance believe they are superior even over angels.

Jude 9 reveals a fact that Deuteronomy 34:4-7 does not reveal. Deuteronomy 34:4-7 describes Moses’ death and burial and Jude 9 reveals that Satan wanted the body of Moses. Why? We do not know! But Jude is not trying to explain the reason for the dispute. He is only trying to reveal that superior attitude of the apostate teacher.

ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF THE APOSTATE TEACHER. Our next verse is Jude 10.

But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Jude 10 (NASB)

There are two important points in this verse. First, we are told the apostate reviles the things they do not understand. That is, the apostate speaks against or denounces others and doctrines of Scripture because they do not even understand what they are teaching.

Why? The answer is given in the second part of the verse. They understand Scripture instinctively. They operate on instinct like animals and not with intelligence. Yet, they are dramatic and dynamic because it fills up his or her bottle of ego. Like milk poured into a bottle. And then we are told that their teaching will be used against them at the judgment to condemn them; by these things they are destroyed. Do you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37?

But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12:36-37 (NASB)

By their teaching they will be destroyed!

Why do they not understand spiritual things? They do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them to help them understand biblical truth. They read the text and reach a wrong conclusion. The words are understood and sound good from human perspective and logic, but their conclusions are wrong. They seek the sensational to draw a crowd. What is worse, they do not seek to accurately teach what God has said. They have a different goal. They use the Bible as a tool to gain a following and sound spiritual. Consequently, they will be destroyed for twisting, bending, and mutilating Scripture. It will be used against them at the judgment.

WOE TO THEM - THREE ILLUSTRATIONS OF PREVIOUS APOSTATES. Our next verse is verse 11. It contains the only “Woe” in the book of Jude. Then Jude gives us three illustrations of past apostates.

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Jude 11 (NASB)

The Greek word for “Woe” means “horror” or “disaster.” This statement reveals how great the condemnation will be for apostates. They should enjoy the praise and cheers they receive from their deceived congregations in this life, because eternity will be hell. Notice the woe is actually announced on Old Testament individuals: Cain, Balaam and Korah. But it applies to

the apostates of our times too!

THE APOSTATE CAIN. The first apostate is Cain. We are told that the apostate teachers “have gone the way of Cain.” The question we are concerned with is what is the meaning of “have gone the way of Cain”? Therefore, let’s turn to Genesis 4:1 and review what happened.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.” Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Genesis 4:1-8 (NASB)

So, what happened? In summary, Abel offered an animal sacrifice, but Cain offered something grown from the ground—fruit, vegetable, wheat, or something else. But God did not like what Cain offered. The strong implication of the passage is that Cain knew that he should have offered an animal sacrifice but refused to do it. Out of pride He wanted God to accept HIS offering! I say pride because pride is the root problem of all sin.

The second major point we need to see from this passage is that God urged Cain to not sin, but Cain rejected God’s warning to not let sin control him and he sinned anyway. The third major point is that Cain murdered Abel. So, what is the “way of Cain”? I believe the most important event in this account is that he rejected God, and, therefore, His advice. Oh, he did reject God’s advice, but imagine God paying you a personal visit and urging you to not sin, but you then sin anyway! His character was so evil that he rejected God and then murdered

his brother.

1 John 3:12 says that Cain’s deeds were evil because he was of the evil one!

Not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. 1 John 3:12 (NASB)

Hebrews 11:4 praises Abel for being righteous. The obvious implication is that Cain was not righteous. He was evil.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. Hebrews 11:4 (NASB)

On judgment day God will not need to ask Cain about his attitudes or motives. His behavior has already revealed his heart. He was an evil man who deserves hell and that is what he will get. The point is: apostates are evil and their deeds prove it. The same is true for each one of us. Your behavior reveals the real you! Your heart reveals who is most important in your life.

THE APOSTATE BALAAM. The second apostate is Balaam. This time we are told exactly why he is mentioned. He is an example of an apostate who seeks money. He could be a pastor, a priest, a missionary who is “in it for the money.” That is why he is in ministry. The apostate is not in the ministry because he seeks to serve God. He is there because he is serving himself. He wants to be his own boss and rake in the money, like a man in a forest raking leaves in his front yard. The more wealth he accumulates, the better.

THE APOSTATE KORAH. The third example of an apostate is Korah. Numbers 16:1 tells us that Korah was the son of Levi. He was in the line of Levitical priests. Numbers 16:1-3 tells us that he enlisted his brothers Dathan and Abiram along with 250 other men to rebel against Moses. It is obvious in Numbers 16:3 that they challenged Moses’ leadership. Why did they do this? The answer is given in Numbers 16:8-11 where it is revealed that Korah was angry because he was not made a priest. The conflict grew worse and due to his rebel-

lions confrontation against Moses, the Lord God caused the ground to open. It swallowed Korah, his brothers and all 250 people. Eventually, 14,700 died because many people joined the protest. God crushed these unbelieving Israelites. The first message is that God does not appreciate rebellion in a church against His leaders and Moses was His leader. The second message is that Korah did not honor God's appointment of Moses. Since Korah wanted to be a priest, he believed Moses should have let him be a priest.

Apostates are like Korah. If they are not considered to be important in the church, then they are angry and will cause trouble. The apostate wants power, the status of being number one, and to have a significant following. Such a person can become a trouble maker.

CONCLUSION. Now if you think there was not a great deal of personal application in this passage, then you missed the message of Jude 8-13. The passage is trying to help us iden-

tify apostate teachers who might be in your church - a church leader or Bible study teacher. Remember Jude has warned us. They are in our churches. We have discovered what we are to look for. The primary application was not written to challenge you about your relationship with God, unless you are an apostate.

But if you are a believer, you have been challenged to defend the faith once for all handed down to the saints. God wants you to be able to identify apostate teachers and flee them! Why? Think about all the individuals who followed Korah in his rebellion. God killed all of them for following Korah. The same is true of those who followed Jezebel in Revelation 2:20-23. God warned them of coming punishment.

The message for believers is that we must identify the apostate teacher and either remove him or flee him!