

# Ungodly Character of Apostate Teachers, Part 2

Our study is in the book of Jude and we will be looking at verses 12-13. It is a very insightful passage about apostate teachers, and the principles that we are going to discover apply to every pastor and teacher situation. That is, the passage is actually about apostates, but has application to anyone who teaches the Word of God. But first I want to discuss a very common problem that occurs in the church. This will be background information for our study.

**LEAVING FEELING SPIRITUALLY EMPTY.** It is not uncommon for believers to leave a church service or a Bible study and feel spiritually empty. It has happened to me a number of times. We cannot blame the design of the building, the music that is sung, the choir, the musicians, the people around us, or the pastor's preaching style. In most churches those factors are well designed, planned and executed. The only reason some people go to church is to meet friends or to experience the great music. They cannot wait for the service to end so that they can go to lunch. Why? Because the preaching or teaching leaves them empty week after week.

There are two fundamental reasons why believers may feel empty after the Word of God has been taught that have to do with the listener. Notice that I said believers or Christians. I did not say unbelievers. The first four reasons will be drawn

from passages other than Jude. The last reason is found in our study, which is Jude 12-13.

**FIRST REASON—SOME BELIEVERS DO NOT FLEE SIN.** The first reason a believer may feel empty after the Word of God has been taught, is that they are not confessing their sins and fleeing sin. This is illustrated in Ezekiel 33:30-33. In this passage God is speaking to the prophet Ezekiel and says,

*But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the LORD.' They come to you*

*as people come and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Ezekiel 33:30-31*

Notice the people come

and listen, but the words go in one ear and out the other.

*Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not practice them. So, when it comes to pass — as surely it will — then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst. Ezekiel 33:32-36 (NASB)*



It is amazing that God uses the imagery of music. They like the music. They wanted to come to listen, but they learned nothing and did nothing!

In a situation like this, most pastors and teachers assume that their teaching was not simple enough, or their application was not strong enough. The concept was too complex, and the pastor needed to be more elementary. Therefore, they fill their sermons with the familiar stories and illustrations about biblical characters and personal stories, which are salted with humor that will win a crowd. But what is the spiritually redeeming value of shallow teaching of the Word of God? The tragedy is that the Word of God is minimized in favor of a sermon filled with personal stories. Where is the teaching of the Word of God?

Notice that God warned the prophet Ezekiel the seats may be filled but that does not mean the people will respond to the Word of the Lord. There was something wrong with those sitting and listening to the prophet Ezekiel. So, what was wrong with these people?

The answer is revealed in verse 30. Notice the words “your fellow citizens.” Those same three words are found only three times in the book of Ezekiel and all three times they occur in this chapter. They can be found in verses 12, 17, and 30. Now I want you to see what God says about these people who were listening to Ezekiel. Look at verse 17,

**Yet your fellow citizens say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right,’ when it is their own way that is not right. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them. Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways. Ezekiel 30:17-20 (NASB)**

Notice that God said Ezekiel’s fellow citizens were not righteous. They were committing iniquity. Now that there was their problem! They were either unbelievers or believers who were committing sin and not repenting. They enjoyed their sin and did not want to stop. Imagine, the people were listening to the prophet Ezekiel and leaving empty! There was nothing wrong with the prophet. The people had a problem and it was

sin!

Now turn to 1 Corinthians 3:1. I want to show you an example of what happens when a believer sins and does not repent of his or her sins. In this passage the apostle Paul rebukes the Corinthian Christians for not being spiritual. He writes this,

**And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NASB)**

Notice that Paul said that he could not speak to them as “spiritual men” but “as to infants.” He revealed that they did not understand what he was teaching. So, the apostle Paul had to give them milk and not solid food. I think we understand his illustration. Little babies drink milk because they cannot digest solid food. Eating solid food comes later as the baby is more mature and that food helps him or her to grow. Without the solid food, the child’s growth will be hindered.

Paul is explaining why these Corinthian believers were not able to understand his teaching. He said,

**For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?**

They were not dealing with their sin! If we read the book of 1 Corinthians, we will learn they were complaining, fighting and filing lawsuits against one another. One member of the church was engaging in sexual sin. The church was tolerating sexual sins. Wives were not submissive to their husbands. Couples were denying one another sexual rights. Many believers were gluttons at the Lord’s table and the list of sins continues.

What is the point? Just like the “fellow citizens” in the book of Ezekiel, the Corinthians did not understand what the apostle Paul was teaching because of their sins! As a result, they were not experiencing spiritual blessing. They were spiritually dry—a spiritual desert because they were more interested in their lustful desires!

**SECOND REASON — SOME BELIEVERS DO NOT KNOW**

**SCRIPTURE.** A second reason a believer may feel empty after the Word of God is taught is that he or she has a limited knowledge of Scripture. That is the message of Hebrews 5:11-14.

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:11-14 (NASB)

Here we are told that a Christian who is always fed spiritual milk, rather than spiritual meat, will not grow in their understanding of Scripture. They will remain spiritual infants. Their spiritual life will be stunted. The sad truth is that it will be hard for them to understand the deeper truths of God and Scripture and they will not understand the difference between right and wrong. The writer of Hebrews said he could NOT explain to them a more difficult concept in theology—Melchizedek—because they only had an elementary knowledge of the Bible. Having only an elementary knowledge of Scripture is another reason why believers will feel empty after the Word of God has been taught.

**THIRD REASON — THE TEACHER IS NOT FLEEING SIN.** The third reason believers may feel empty after the Word of God is taught is that their teacher is not fleeing sin. While it is possible that his teaching is poorly organized and his presentation is illogical, studies have shown that some of the most effective pastors and teachers in the country have very poor sermon delivery. In hermeneutics it is called poor delivery mechanics. That is, God can use a man in spite of his imperfections. Paul reveals that God used him even though he was not eloquent.

Therefore, the third reason believers will feel empty after the Word of God is that the pastor or teacher is not repenting and confessing his sins. Why is the pastor's or teacher's sin an issue? Because the Holy Spirit will not give him insight into the meaning of Scripture, nor will the Holy Spirit empower

him. Ephesians 4:30 tells us that our sin grieves the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Holy Spirit is not free to help the pastor or teacher or to empower him. He will be like an inflated tire. He will look good on the outside but there is nothing inside but air.

An excellent example is found in Micah 3. Verse 5 reveals that the Lord—Yahweh—is speaking. In verse 6, Yahweh warns the false prophets. He says,

- 6 Therefore it will be night for you — without vision,  
And darkness for you — without divination.  
The sun will go down on the prophets,  
And the day will become dark over them.
- 7 The seers will be ashamed  
And the diviners will be embarrassed.  
Indeed, they will all cover their mouths  
Because there is no answer from God.

In verse 8, the prophet Micah speaks,

- 8 On the other hand I am filled with power —  
With the Spirit of the LORD —  
And with justice and courage  
To make known to Jacob his rebellious act,  
Even to Israel his sin.

Notice that Micah says he is filled with the Spirit. The other prophets were not filled with the Holy Spirit. Micah adds that since he is filled with the Spirit, he confronts people about their sins.

This reveals that a Spirit filled pastor or Spirit filled teacher will teach truth. He will confront sin. God will guide him in his teaching.

I know a man who was a pastor. He is an illustration of a pastor who willfully sinned, so much that he disqualified himself from the ministry. His knowledge of Scripture was shallow. The main points of his messages were always the same—Sunday after Sunday—week-after-week and month after month. His stated goal was to have a mega-church. His teaching of Scripture was always shallow. As a result, people were leaving the so-called “worship service” spiritually empty.

I know another pastor. My wife and I sat under his teaching for several years. We became friends. Sometime during the last year we began to sense a spiritual emptiness in the pulpit. Something was wrong. So, I reached out to him and he informed me that he had not opened his Bible one time during the last twelve months except when he preached on Sunday morning. Then I understood why his pulpit ministry was so spiritually dry.

These two pastors illustrate what happens when a pastor is in sin and is not growing in the Word of God. His teaching will be the old and familiar stories and will lack power.

**FOURTH REASON — THE TEACHER IS AN UNBELIEVER.** A fourth reason believers may feel empty after the Word of God is taught is that the teacher is an unbeliever. This includes the apostate. As a result, he will not know and understand the Bible. The apostate will be different than the sinning pastor or teacher because he will teach more error and frequently the application will be wrong. What he teaches, anyone could have taught and still sounded biblical. He is just a man without the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 teaches us that a man or woman needs the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture. Here is the passage.

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (NASB)*

Notice that the passage says one of the reasons the Holy Spirit is given to believers is so they can know the things of God that are in Scripture. God wants believers to understand Scripture! But the apostate or sinning pastor or teacher cannot and will not understand Scripture because the Holy Spirit is not in him (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13).

**THE APOSTATE—SHORT REVIEW.** Now let us look at Jude 12-13. This study will give us more insight into the apostate teacher.

We have learned in our previous studies that the book of Jude is a warning to believers about apostate teachers. Apos-

tate teachers are tares. They were never believers even though they have been in the church. At some point and for some reason, the apostate willfully rebelled and started teaching false doctrine.

In verse 3 the apostle Jude warns believers to contend for the faith—to fight to preserve the truth taught by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the prophets. In verse 4 we are warned that apostate teachers are already in our churches and are teaching error. Verses 5-7 reveal that God will judge them and send them to hell. Verses 8-9 taught us that they feel superior to other people, including the angels.

Verse 10 told us that their understanding of Scripture is at an instinctive level. They read the words of the Bible, but they have difficulty understanding the true meaning of what they read. Their knowledge is superficial. Remember that 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 says the natural man or unbeliever cannot and does not understand spiritual truth. The apostate seems religious. He may speak loudly and be dynamic, but he is spiritually empty.

In verse 11 we learned that the apostate is like Cain, Balaam and Korah. They are rebellious and unbelieving. We made the point that rebellion is a symptom of unbelief. This brings us now to our study which in verse 12-13.

**APOSTATES ARE SPIRITUALLY EMPTY.** Verse 10 revealed that the apostate teacher is spiritually bankrupt because the Holy Spirit is not dwelling within him. There is nothing in his spiritual bank to offer anyone. He does not have a spiritual ten-dollar bill, twenty-dollar bill, a spiritual fifty-dollar bill or a one-hundred-dollar bill to give. He offers only dirty, damaged, bent pennies. He is like a car without gasoline or an electric stove without any electricity. He is like an electric washing machine without water or electricity.

Therefore, we should not expect anything spiritual from him and that is exactly the message of verses 12-13.

*These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. Jude 12 (NASB)*

Notice that each illustration in these two verses is borrowed from nature.

**APOSTATES—HIDDEN REEFS.** First, we are told apostates are like hidden reefs during a love feast. He combines two interesting illustrations. Hidden reefs destroy boats if the boat gets too close to the shore and love feasts are shared by close friends. When Jude combines both thoughts together, he is teaching us that apostates are dangerous because they care only about themselves.

The Greek word that Jude uses for “caring” is *poimaino*. It is usually translated as “to shepherd,” “to care” or “to tend.” That is, apostates pastor themselves. He is a pastor to himself. He shepherds himself and not the others at the love feast. He is a false shepherd and dangerous. The church will have the appearance of religion but degenerate into a social club that is spiritually empty.

**APOSTATES—WATERLESS CLOUDS.** Clouds without water, carried along with winds – Here we are told apostates are like a water cloud without any water. The key word, without water, in this illustration is found in both Matthew 12:43 and Luke 11:24-26. In these two passages, the same Greek word refers to waterless places. This is where demons like to live. Jude may be trying to tell us that the apostate teacher is working for and with the evil one.

They are empty clouds since they do not have the Holy Spirit. Their teaching is empty and they not growing spiritually because they are spiritually dead. You will rarely hear any new truth from the Bible in their teaching about God or hear them admit they were convicted of some sin— because they do not have spiritual life and sin is not important to them. Because they are waterless clouds, they cannot offer spiritual water. So, those who listen to them will be spiritually dry and parched.

Let me give you an example. Revelation 3:1-6 is about the church in Sardis. In verse 1 we read,

*I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Revelation 3:1 (NASB)*

This church was just a waterless cloud. It looked great on the outside. Maybe it was a big church with wonderful music, but

it did not provide any spiritual water. But people will attend such a church! Now let me make a point.

I believe God allows apostates to exist in order to draw away tares from faithful, God-honoring churches. Apostates serve a purpose. Yet, God hates them because they distort what God has spoken in Scripture and can lead the faithful astray.

**APOSTATES—AUTUMN TREES WITHOUT FRUIT.** Here we are told the apostate produces no spiritual fruit. He is barren. This reminds us of Matthew 7:12-14 where we are told that we will know apostates—false teachers—by their fruit. This illustration says they are spiritually dead.

The phrase ‘dead and uprooted’ is actually reversed in the Greek text. The Greek word actually reads “uprooted and dead.” Apostates are barren because they are like an uprooted tree. They are not receiving any spiritual nutrients from the ground. Jude adds they are just spiritually dead.

Revelation 3:14-22 has a good description of an apostate church that is taught by an apostate. It is the church at Laodicea. Most believers think that verse 16 describes complacent Christians. We often hear preachers use this passage to challenge believers to not be complacent. Verse 20 is often used as an invitation to children to open the door of their hearts to Jesus. It is a nice thought, but believers miss the point that Jesus is knocking on the church door—not on the door of a person’s heart. The point is that there are no believers in this church, everyone is dead. That is the ultimate result of an apostate pastor. A church will be filled with unbelievers who do nothing because there is no life inside!

**APOSTATES—WILD WAVES, CASTING THEIR SHAME.** Notice the apostate’s “shame” is like foam. This means the apostate’s behavior may be accepted by the world, even praised by the world, but his behavior is appalling to spiritual believers. Apostates are shameless. They violate the high qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 that elders or pastors must be above reproach.

**APOSTATES—WANDERING STARS.** In order to understand this statement, we must remember that stars do not wander. They have fixed orbits and appear to the eye stationary in the sky. I believe Jude is telling us that apostates are like a star that is no longer stable. It is wobbling in its orbit and will eventually spin-off. We could say they will crash and burn. I

believe that is why Jude says,

*...for whom the black darkness is reserved forever.*

**CONCLUSION.** I want to encourage you that if you are constantly feeling empty after a church service or a Bible study, the first person you must evaluate is yourself. Here are three areas to consider in your own life before you conclude that your pastor is the problem.

First, are you confessing your sins and fleeing sin? (I Corinthians 3:1) Consider sins such as gossip, lack of forgiveness, or complaining. Notice the importance of fleeing sin in order to have spiritual understanding. Unconfessed sin blunts the work of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

Second, you can be spiritual but not be a mature believer.

A mature believer is one who knows Scripture. We discovered that in Hebrews 5:11-14. 1 John 2:12-14 also teaches us the same principle.

Third, are you spending time in the Word of God so that you understand what is being taught? Once again, remember Hebrews 5:11-14. You need to be on a diet of meat and not the old, familiar diet of milk.

Fourth, are you spending time in prayer for yourself and others? God has commanded that you pray for others.

If you suspect that he is a false teacher, remember the other characteristics of an apostate in the previous studies. Use them along with what you learned in this lesson to help you make the correct decision. If you conclude your pastor or a teacher is an apostate, either speak to your church leaders and, if necessary, find another church.