

# Remember, Apostate Teachers Are Among Us

Our study tonight is in the book of Jude, and we are going to discover that the Holy Spirit urges us to remember the words of the apostles that apostate teachers are among us! We are in Jude 17-19 and this is the first part of Jude's final comments about apostate teachers. I want to start by reading this passage.

*But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. Jude 17-19 (NASB)*

There are three important points in these verses that we need to understand in order to grasp what Jude is trying to teach us.

1) **APOSTATES ARE AMONG US.** The first point is that the apostles had already warned believers that apostate teachers were among them. For Jude says, "Remember the words . . . . " But Jude does not mention that Jesus had also urged the crowd

at the Sermon on the Mount to beware of false prophets. Jude may have simply referred to some recent warnings made to the apostles. But listen to Jesus in Matthew 7:15.

*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Matthew 7:15 (NASB)*

Notice that Jesus describes false prophets and teachers or apostate teachers as being ravenous wolves inwardly. Jesus' point is that on the outside they look like sheep but they are not believers. They are unbelievers who teach the Word of God distorting what God wrote in the Bible in some way.

The apostles Paul and Peter also warned about false or apostate teachers. For example, the apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30 about false teachers with these words.

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not*

*sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:28-30 (NASB)*

Here Paul says, "Be on guard." In his warning he used the same description that Jesus used. False

teachers are wolves—dangerous wolves—and do not really care about the congregation. They would rather eat them. Paul adds that they use the congregation for personal gain and to create a great following. Their goal is not to accurately teach



Scripture. I knew a pastor some years ago who blatantly told me his goal was a one thousand member church. He designed his messages to grow the size of his church.

The apostle Peter also wrote a warning about false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1.

**But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Peter 2:1 (NASB)**

Once again notice the warning—false teachers operate secretly. Peter adds that they secretly introduce destructive heresies. Some of the most daring apostate teachers will deny Jesus. This is an interesting comment that reveals a teacher or pastor can be a false teacher or an apostate without denying the deity of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, most Christians think that the way a false teacher can be identified is that they deny Christ, but that is not necessarily true. Even demons believe Jesus is God and, yet, they are going to hell.

The apostle John has also warned us about false teachers in 1 John 4:1, 2:18-19, and 2 John 7. In 2 John 7 the apostle warns us that false teachers are so dangerous that we must not greet them or share a meal with them.

Jude's first point is that the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ have warned us about apostate teachers.

**2) APOSTATE TEACHERS ARE MOCKERS.** The second important point to notice in Jude 17-19 is that the mockers in verse 18 is another description of the false or apostate teachers.

**... mockers following after their own ungodly lusts. Jude 18 (NASB)**

The Greek word that is translated as “mockers” has the sense of mocking, scoffing, or rejecting biblical truths—doctrines! Jude is describing teachers and pastors who were already in the church, who rejected the historic biblical truths given to us by Christ and the apostles. As I have already said, usually we think that false teachers are easy to identify. Those who blatantly, openly, and daringly deny that the Bible is inspired, that Jesus is God, Christ was virgin born, salvation is by faith

alone, or that we are sinners are apostate teachers. That is, they mock the truth of the Bible. But that is not the message of Christ and the apostles.

One of the easiest ways for an apostate teacher to distort Scripture is to just avoid the parts of Scripture they do not like. For example, in Lamentations 2:14 Jeremiah said,

**Your prophets have seen for you  
False and foolish visions;  
And they have not exposed your iniquity...  
Lamentations 2:14 (NASB)**

Jeremiah was describing false prophets. Notice that he said that they did not expose the people's iniquity. They just did not talk about sin. They were selective in their teaching. The goal was to please the congregation and obtain approval.

The priests described in the book of Malachi were also guilty of being partial in their instruction! They selected only the positive passages in Scripture and ignored the ones dealing with sin. In Ezekiel 22:26 the priests of Israel were rebuked for not making a distinction between what was holy and evil. In Isaiah 30:10 we are told that the people asked the prophet Isaiah to speak only pleasant words. Listen to the people's request of the prophet Isaiah.

**...“You must not see visions”;  
And to the prophets, “You must not prophesy to us what is right,  
Speak to us pleasant words,  
Prophesy illusions.  
Isaiah 30:10 (NASB)**

We saw in 2 Peter 2:18-19 that false prophets told the people that they had freedom to do as they pleased. Be positive and avoid the negative! Be positive thinkers! If you think that such preaching is only a modern-day preaching style, it is not. It is an old trick of false teachers. People love it.

Just like the false prophets and priests of old, many pastors and teachers of today minimize or ignore sin and emphasize the positive. The standard is that sermons must be uplifting. So, the major and minor prophets are typically ignored because they deal with sin and death. A careful reading of the

New Testament epistles reveals that most of them are refuting false doctrine. All of 1 and 2 Corinthians is a rebuke of the believers at the church of Corinth that they are committing one sin after another. Yet, if you listen to the average Sunday morning sermons of today, they are consistently filled with the positive. How to have victory in the Christian life. How to be blessed by God. How to raise a godly family. How to have a happy marriage. Now there is nothing wrong with such messages, but a steady diet of that leaves the congregation with a distorted understanding of what God wrote in His book. The messages become focused on self. We start becoming consumed with ourselves and not God. Just avoid the truth that it may be God's will for you to suffer as righteous Job suffered. Avoid other parts of Scripture that we do not like to hear. These are examples of how false teachers mock Scripture! They do not respect all of it.

Sadly, when a false teacher selectively teaches Scripture, he distorts its meaning. If the false teacher does not like some doctrines or parts of Scripture, he or she just ignores those parts. The result is that the congregation never hears all of Scripture taught and their theology becomes warped. They do not grow spiritually as they should, and God is not honored.

I was surprised on one occasion when a pastor told me that he did not teach doctrine because it was boring! What he really said was that God is boring since theology is the study of God. The false prophets and priests described in the Old and New Testaments emphasized the positive. They were partial in their teaching.

The result of such teaching was illustrated some years ago by the chairman of the leadership team in an good sized evangelical church when he announced to the congregation that parts of the New Testament did not apply today. He said portions are now archaic. That is a good example of blatant false teaching. One wonders if his conscience troubled him. That is, was he convicted by the Holy Spirit within? He mocked Scripture! Jude says false teachers mock Scripture and follow after their own ungodly lusts or desires.

So apostate teachers falsely teach Scripture by selectively teaching it. The more daring boldly and openly disagree with it. But how can this happen in a church? The answer is found in verse 19.

**3) APOSTATE TEACHERS ARE UNBELIEVERS.** Jude has reminded us that the apostles have warned us that apostate teachers mock Scripture. Next Jude reminds us that apostate teachers are not Christians. They are not believers. He has already said this in verses 12-13 when he said they are doubly dead. So, he is reminding us.

*These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. Jude 19 (NASB)*

*Cause Divisions.* Jude gives us three more descriptions of apostates. The first is that they cause divisions. The Greek word that is translated as “cause divisions” literally means “to make a distinction” or “to mark off.” The idea is that they feel superior and are willing to cause division by creating a confrontation over an issue or teaching. They twist it and emphasize it for personal gain. The result is division.

*Worldly-Minded.* Next, we are told the apostate is worldly-minded. The Greek word for “worldly-minded” has the idea of being a sensual person. The word is also translated as “natural man” in 1 Corinthians 2:14. That is, they are just a natural man—the Spirit is not teaching them. They are incapable of truly understanding Scripture.

*Devoid of the Spirit.* The next characteristic helps us understand why they are worldly-minded when we are told that they are devoid of the Spirit. The literal Greek text is that they “not have the Spirit.” They are unbelievers. They are going to hell. They were never spiritually alive. They are deceived by Satan. But they can appear to be real Christians on the outside. John MacArthur states,

*They were religious frauds who paid lip service to faith and spiritual life but denied such claims by their actions.<sup>1</sup>*

*Apostates Are Tares.* Several times already we have visited Christ's teaching about the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. The parable helps us understand how a tare can be in a church and be accepted as the pastor, a Bible study teacher or perhaps have some other responsibility. This is an import-

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur. 2 Peter & Jude. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Moody Publishers. 2005 .p. 199.

ant concept that many Christians fail to properly understand. Therefore, I want to examine this passage closer. The parable begins in Matthew 13:24.

Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’” Matthew 13:24-30

Now notice that Jesus says good seed was sown in the field and it produced wheat. Then an enemy sowed seed among the wheat. These seeds were tares—or actually weeds. Then the slaves of the landowner discovered the problem and reported it. The landowner told them to leave the suspected tares alone; otherwise, they might unknowingly uproot the wheat. Then the landowner explained that later at the time of harvest they would burn up the tares, or actually weeds.

The explanation of the parable is given later in verses 36-43 when Jesus’ disciples ask to understand the parable. Verse 37 gives Jesus’ explanation.

The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Matthew 13:37-39 (NASB)

Now here is the picture! Wheat symbolizes Christians or believers in Christ. The tares represent unbelievers. The tares look so much like wheat that it is impossible to know which is which—which ones are tares and which are the wheat. This

means it is difficult for Christians to know who the apostates or unbelievers in the church are. An apostate can be a ministry leader, a nursery worker, a Bible study leader, a church leader, or the pastor of the church. This passage is not describing only apostate teachers. An apostate is simply someone who has been in the church, knows about Christ and Scripture, and appears to be a Christian but is not real. They appear to be moral, godly people. This is not difficult to understand. You probably know an unbeliever who is more thoughtful, courteous, and polished in their behavior than some Christians, but they are not Christians. Tares are those who have been in the church, heard the gospel, and never became a Christian. This parable explains that the devil has placed them in our churches. The devil has deceived them into thinking they are a Christian.

Apostates are tares. Apostates look like the real thing. The Pharisees were apostate teachers. They are good examples of apostates. They knew Christ existed and knew the Old Testament. The Jews thought the Pharisees were godly men. They deceived everyone!

Tares are not very concerned about sin, except for the consequences of their sins. They want a good marriage, a happy life and a good job. Church has become a social club—a ritual that they enjoy. Some may want to do something in the church because it is a position of honor. They may enjoy teaching just like the public-school teacher who teaches at the local high school or university. The tare may enjoy the church because of the music, the love of the congregation, or the charisma of the pastor. The church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 was an apostate church. If you read closely, you will discover that there were no Christians in that church. Jesus was standing outside, knocking on the church door, wanting inside. The church at Sardis had a reputation that it was alive but was dead. If you read the passage, notice that only a few believers remained in that church. There are churches like that today. They are filled with activity and warmth, but with few believers. In the last fifteen years, atheists now have established churches for themselves. A church building means nothing!

You might be surprised at my next example. There is a conference that is held for pastors every year in California. In the early years, when I used to attend, it was not unusual for men who were already pastors to discover they were not a Christian

while attending the conference. It was there that they finally humbly repented of their sins, accepted Christ as their Savior, and submitted to Him as Lord. Before that, being a pastor for them was a job with a salary. It was wonderful news to hear that some pastors became Christians. Yet, the sad thought was what did they teach without the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

*Example of Apostates—Israelites In The Wilderness.* Now let us dig a little deeper. The book of Jude has already given us some examples of apostates from the Old Testament. In verses 5-7 Jude taught that some Israelites, some of the angels, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and five other cities close by were apostates. It is obvious that the nation of Israel saw God's miracles and heard Moses' teachings. They witnessed the ten plagues that were brought upon the Egyptians. They walked across the Red Sea on dry ground, drank water from a rock, ate manna for forty years and saw the fire, smoke and lightning on Mount Sinai when God talked with Moses. Just read Hebrews 12:18-21. It describes what the people experienced when Moses was on Mount Sinai. Yet even though they had experienced all of God's miracles and heard the Law taught by Moses, those over twenty years of age refused to believe, and, consequently, died in the wilderness. They experienced God and His miracles, but they never believed.

We could imagine they enjoyed going to church to meet with their friends and listen to the great worship band for thirty minutes. But the pastor needs to keep his sermons short! Jude helps us understand that apostate teachers are not just teachers and pastors. Apostates can also sit in the church service but never repent of their sins, believe in Christ, or submit themselves in obedience to Christ. Apostate teachers are simply apostates who want to teach. They may look good, but be careful of their distorted teaching.

*Examples of Apostate Teachers—The Priests In Malachi.* The book of Malachi gives us another example of apostate teachers or priests. In the first chapter, we quickly learn that the priests of Israel did not love God. They were not committed to the Lord God. In Malachi 1:6, God asked a question,

**“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise**

**My name. But you say, “How have we despised Your name?”**

**Malachi 1:6 (NASB)**

Here God warned the priests of Israel that they despised Him. But the priests arrogantly countered with, “Prove it! We are innocent.” The conversation continues like this throughout the book. Malachi 2:1-9 also reveals that the priests selectively ignored parts of Scripture. They were false priests and God rebuked them.

Then in Malachi 3:16, we discover that the priests to whom God was speaking were not believers! Verse 16 refers to a different group—the believing remnant. It says,

**Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another . . . Malachi 3:16 (NASB)**

This means the priests were apostate priests—apostate teachers. Malachi 4:1 announces judgment on them.

**CONCLUSION.** Finally, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 warns us that a massive apostasy will only become worse before the antichrist is revealed. This means that our churches will become worse. True worship will become empty worship that pleases the crowd. It will be devoid of the Spirit and truth. It is already happening, and we can see it.

Today, believers often choose a church for that which is not important. Nowhere in Scripture can we find God urging us to choose a church for its size, music, the charisma of the pastor, friends, or for any other reason. But the constant theme of Scripture is that doctrine and the teaching of Scripture must be the motivating reason for selecting a pastor or a Bible teacher. It is the only way to become a father in the faith who knows God.

Sadly, pastors have trained their congregations to accept an anemic pulpit fit only for very new Christians. That was not true decades ago. But today it is. It is rare to find a pastor who seriously teaches through the Bible. Consequently, congregations do not know their Bibles very well. They do not know the theme and message of the books of the Bible because pastors preach topically. Consequently, we have opened the door to false teaching in the church. It has occurred because believers do not know what to look for and do not remember the warn-

ing of Christ and the apostles. If we look at Revelation 2:20, we are told that apostasy was already occurring in the early church of Thyatira. The church was tolerating a false prophetess called Jezebel. Don't miss the word "tolerating." That means they allowed it to occur.

What is the solution? We have discovered the first part of the answer in this study. Remember that a) apostate teachers are among us, b) apostate teachers are mockers of Scripture

and c) false teachers are unbelievers who do not have the Holy Spirit. In our next study, Jude will provide us with more guidance.

I rejoice for this reminder. When I hear someone falsely teaching Scripture, I wonder how could they be so wrong? Jude says, "Remember!" This should help us stay on a straight course.