

FBC POWELL, 1-21-18 AM NOTES
"Discerning Apostates"
Jude 1:8-13
3 in Series, "Contending for the Faith"

Apostates—Those who fall away from the true faith, abandoning what they formerly **said** they believed.

1 John 2:19 (NASB) "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

I. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Conduct (v. 8)

A. Apostates Defile the Flesh (v. 8a)

2 Peter 2:18 (NASB) "For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error."

Jude 1:19 (NASB) "These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit."

Jeremiah 23:31-32 (NASB) ³¹ "Behold, I am against the prophets,' declares the Lord, 'who use their tongues and declare, '*The Lord declares.*' ³² '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."

B. Apostates Reject Authority (v. 8b)

C. Apostates Revile Angelic Majesties (vv. 8c-10)

2 Peter 2:10 (NASB) "And especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties."

"These heavenly beings who sang at God's good creation (Job 38:7) and, more importantly in [this] context, are the guardians and givers of God's perfect moral law (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2) are spoken to in evil tones by these lawless and rebellious [apostates]..."
—Danny Akin

Deuteronomy 34:5-6 (NASB) ⁵ "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. ⁶ And He [the Lord] buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day."

2 Kings 18:4b (NASB) "... He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it..."

Revelation 12:11a (NASB) says, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony..."

II. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Company (v. 11)

A. The Way of Cain (v. 11a)

B. The Error of Balaam (v. 11b)

C. The Rebellion of Korah (v. 11c)

III. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Character (vv. 12-13)

A. Hidden Reefs (v. 12a)

B. Clouds Without Water (v. 12b)

Proverbs 25:14 (NASB) “Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.”

C. Trees Without Fruit (v. 12c)

Psalms 1:3 (NASB) “Like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”

D. Waves of the Sea (v. 13a)

Isaiah 57:20-21 (NASB) ²⁰ “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. ²¹ ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

“From his heart’s murky caverns, the apostate is a raging wave. Before long, he will spew his foam—unrest and disquiet—leaving it on the beach of humanity. He is not at peace with himself and he doesn’t want to be at peace with you...Another reason apostates are so dangerous.”
—Adrian Rogers

E. Wandering Stars (v. 13b)

Sermon 3: Discerning Apostates

Jude 1:8-13

Many who are over sixty were likely glued to your television on November 18, 1978. The stunning news was coming in from Guyana in South America concerning the largest mass suicide in history – 909 people. It is not really accurate to call it a mass suicide since a third of those who died were children and several adults were forced at gunpoint to drink the poison

laced punch that was the means of death. Even though this tragedy happened in a little-known South American country, almost all the dead were from the United States. How did this happen? The victims were members of a cult started by a man named Jim Jones. The “church” Jones started in Indianapolis in the 1950’s (called *The People’s Temple*) looked legitimate from the outside. Jones (who was Caucasian) preached against racism and the church was integrated in a time when very few churches were. Things with *The People’s Temple* looked so good that some local authorities committed troubled youths who were wards of the court to their care. In 1965, Jones moved the church to San Francisco. Some things began to leak out about this “church” that made authorities somewhat suspicious. There were accusations of financial fraud, physical abuse, and mistreatment of children. With the pressure mounting, Jones moved his “church” to Guyana where he promised to build a socialist utopia. It was when US Congressman Leo Ryan traveled to Guyana to investigate the claims that had had been made against Jones and other “church” leaders that the evil mushroomed. The Congressman and four others with him were murdered and back at Jonestown (the name given to the settlement) everyone was ordered to the main pavilion and took part of what Jones called a *revolutionary act*. When officials of Guyana arrived at the compound they found over 900 people dead.

Jim Jones was an example (admittedly an extreme example) of an apostate. Last week we defined and described apostates as “those who fall away from the true faith, abandoning what they formerly *said* they believed.” An apostate is not someone who may be in error on a non-fundamental doctrine of the faith; an apostate denies some of the fundamental truths of biblical Christianity. Yet, they seek to deceive (as Jim Jones did) and have people think they are orthodox in their beliefs. Apostates are not people who once were true Christians and then turned from the faith. The “faith” of the apostate was phony from the beginning. John’s description in 1 John 2:19 would include apostates. 1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

Satan has and is still attacking the church from the outside, but his most effective tactics have been to attack the church from the inside. That tactic is what Jude is talking about when he says in Jude 1:4a: “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed...” The greatest threat to the church is not persecution from other religions; the greatest threats come from apostates who profess to be Christians, but in reality, are false teachers who seek to destroy the church from the inside.

Jude was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this short letter/epistle to “those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ” (verse 1). The purpose of writing this short epistle was “that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (verse 3). My goal in this message is two-fold: First, I want to equip you to recognize, to discern those who are apostates – false teachers (since they are so prevalent today).

Second, I want to equip you to obey the command in verse 3 to “contend earnestly for the faith.”

I. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Conduct (v. 8)

With the phrase, “in the same way” in verse 8, Jude is connecting the sexual immorality of Sodom in verse 7 with these “dreamers” in verse 8. Some of the most dangerous of the false teachers are those who reject the written Scriptures as their authority and appeal to their own dreams or imaginations as a source of revelation that is often elevated above the written Word of God that Jude calls in verse 3 “...the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” I call these false teachers described in verse 8 the “God told me” teachers. The defense for their

unbiblical teaching and often sinful behavior is that “God told me” whether through a dream, vision, or voices that they say literally spoke to them.

Let’s examine some specifics of the conduct of these apostates.

A. Apostates Defile the Flesh (v. 8a)

“Flesh” as it is used here refers to the body. The word “defile” means to stain, pollute, contaminate, or corrupt. When “defile” is connected to “flesh” it is almost always referring to sexual sin. Learn this, apostasy and immorality are often linked. 2 Peter 2:18 in a context of describing false teachers says, “For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error.” I am not saying that everyone involved in immorality is an apostate, but most apostates will eventually be involved in some variety of immorality. Why is that? It is the Holy Spirit who indwells every genuine believer that gives us the power to say “no” to sexual sin and all fleshly desires. These apostates are not saved. Jude 1:19 says of them, “These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.”

Listen carefully: claiming to have “a word from the Lord” through a dream or any other experience does not make legitimate what one says or does. In the Old Testament, false prophets were always making false claims about God speaking to them. Jeremiah 23:31-32: “Behold, I am against the prophets,’ declares the Lord, ‘who use their tongues and declare, ‘*The Lord declares.*’ ‘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.” Apostates defile the flesh.

B. Apostates Reject Authority (v. 8b)

The word “reject” in this context means to do away with something that has been established. The authority that is first rejected is the authority of the written Word of God. The apostates elevate their dreams, their visions, the voices they claim to have heard above the written Word of God interpreted by established principles of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation). The word translated “authority” comes from a word often translated “Lord.” In other words, apostates reject the Lordship of Christ. Apostates despise all submission to authority, including Christ’s authority.

C. Apostates Revile Angelic Majesties (v. 8c-10)

The word “revile” is from the Greek word *blasphemeo* which is the word from which we get “blaspheme.” It means to speak profanely of sacred matters, including God Himself. Peter says basically the same thing as Jude in 2 Peter 2:10: “and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.” Apostates speak with impious, disrespectful speech to “angelic majesties” (NASB), “celestial beings” (NIV), and “the glorious ones” (ESV).

Who are these angelic majesties, these celestial beings, these glorious ones? Some Bible scholars say this is speaking of all angelic beings (obedient angels and fallen angels or demons). That could be but, these apostates are actually in partnership with the fallen angels. I think it is speaking of the obedient angels. Danny Akin summarizes my view: “These heavenly beings who sang at God’s good creation (Job 38:7) and, more importantly in [this] context, are the guardians and givers of God’s perfect moral law (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2) are spoken to in

evil tones by these lawless and rebellious [apostates]...” [Danny Akin, Sermon transcript on Jude 8-10]

In verse 9, Jude further demonstrates the irreverence of these apostates by contrasting their behavior with that of Michael the archangel. The angel Michael seems to be the most powerful of the obedient angels. We are told in Daniel 10:13-21 and 12:1 that he is the protector of God’s people, the Jews. The events in verse 9 are not recorded anywhere else in Scripture. Here is my best attempt to explain verses 9-10. In these 2 verses Jude gives a contrast between the powerful obedient angel Michael and the head of the fallen angels, called the devil or Lucifer. The dispute is about the body of Moses. We are told what happened to Moses’ body in Deuteronomy 34:5-6: “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He [the Lord] buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.”

Why would the devil want the body of Moses? Likely it was to get it to the Israelites who would likely have worshipped it. With man’s tendency to worship relics like a supposed piece of the cross that Jesus was crucified on, Buddha’s tooth, or the shroud of Turin, it is not difficult to understand why Moses’ body would have been worshipped. Remember that Israel made an idol of the bronze serpent that God had Moses lift up in the wilderness for the healing of those who had been bitten by fatally poisonous snakes. 2 Kings 18:4b: “... He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it...” I remember being on a trip in North Vietnam about fifteen years ago and the local man we were with took us to a place deeply revered by the North Vietnamese people. It was a memorial where the body of Ho-Chi-Minh was put on display under a glass cover. He was the Communist revolutionary leader who was the First Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Vietnam. He died in 1969. The way he was treated by those at the memorial was nothing short of worship. This is likely why the devil wanted Moses’ body.

Michael is an archangel, a warrior angel, probably the most powerful of the angels, but unlike Satan, he knows his place in God’s plan. He is under the Lord’s authority. There is no swagger, no carnal puffing up of himself; he simply says to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you!” Beware of these so-called healers and those in “deliverance ministries” who go about barking out orders to the devil. Yes, in Christ we have the victory over him, but remember the archangel Michael who says, “The Lord rebuke you.” Beware of pride and arrogance in matters of spiritual warfare.

In verse 10 Jude describes the apostates as men who revile the things which they do not understand. This is a dangerous situation – arrogance in dealing with the demonic, taunting the devil. These pompous apostates reject authority and revile things they do not understand. Our authority for spiritual warfare is in God and not ourselves. In our own strength and phony authority, Satan laughs at puny man. Michael knew the source of his authority. We overcome this powerful enemy as Revelation 12:11a: says, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony...” Their testimony is that ultimate power and authority is in God alone!

II. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Company (v. 11)

In verse 11, we meet three men that illustrate three examples of how apostasy is manifested. In pattern of life, apostates keep company with one of the three men used as examples in verse 11.

A. The Way of Cain (v. 11a)

What is the way of Cain? We learn about Cain in Genesis 4. The way of Cain is the way of jealousy, hate, and murder. Cain was the first child of Adam and Eve. He was conceived and born after the fall into sin. He was born with the same sin nature we were born with and thus needed a savior. God had certainly explained the way of faith evidenced by a blood sacrifice for the covering of sin until the final blood sacrifice was given by God the Son, Jesus Christ. The fact that Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable evidences the fact that God had instructed them in what is acceptable. Cain was arrogant and self-centered. He brought the sacrifice he wanted to bring – the best of his crops. However, there was no blood sacrifice. Apostates, like Cain choose their own way to come to God. He was rejected, and his anger boiled over that his brother Abel's blood sacrifice was accepted. Apostates are self-centered and unbroken before God. They walk in the way of Cain trusting in their own works and their own way.

B. The Error of Balaam (v. 11b)

We are told about Balaam in Numbers 22-24. What is the "error of Balaam"? He was a prophet for profit! The enemies of Israel tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel. He was hired for pay to apply his prophetic trade. While the Lord prevented him from putting a curse on the Israelites, he devised a way to get them to bring a curse upon themselves by leading them into sexual sin. Balaam was a profiteering preacher. "Gold was his god and money was his master." [Danny Aiken sermon]

Any "ministry" that is all about money is an apostate ministry. Ministry is about bringing the lost to Christ and caring for God's people; it is not about making money. For Balaam, people were a means to his end and in Numbers 31:8 - God killed him for it.

C. The Rebellion of Korah (v. 11c)

Numbers 16 records the history of this man Korah who was motivated by his pride. He was a Levite who rejected the God ordained spiritual authority of Moses and Aaron. This apostate, his household and all his followers were destroyed by God. The ground simply opened and swallowed them up. The apostates that Jude is exposing have rebellious hearts and are not submitted to the Lord's way. They have rejected God ordained authority.

III. Apostates Are Discerned by Their Character (v. 12-13)

Jude now provides five illustrations from the world of nature to expose the true character of apostates, to expose those who "creep in unaware" into the churches and seek to deceive, derail, and destroy the "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." These five pictures of apostates that creep in unaware are to be hung in the gallery of your mind so that you might be discerning and not be at all influenced by their lies.

A. Hidden Reefs (v. 12a)

The word translated "reefs" is literally "a sunken rock." Like a rock just under the water's surface can damage and sink a boat, these apostates can sink a church, or at least lots of unsuspecting members of a church. These apostates are dishonest. Pretending to be full of love, they are actually full of deceit. They hide their true colors until they have the trust of others. They do much damage in the Christ's church. Our elders may be thought by some to be "control freaks." I am not apologizing for being vigilant about who teaches or "ministers" to our Lifegroups,

collects money for some cause, etc. We want to be vigilant to care for the flock God has given us. Apostates are slick. They are deceivers like a large reef or rock just under the surface.

B. Clouds Without Water (v. 12b)

Apostates promise much and deliver nothing. In an arid land, Jude's original readers knew exactly what he was referring to. The clouds bring promise of refreshing rain, but they are empty. Adrian Rogers calls them "pompous religious windbags." Apostates often fit this description. Beware of pious talk without a life to back it up. These apostates are described in Proverbs 25:14: "*Like* clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely."

C. Trees Without Fruit (v. 12c)

These false teachers are barren, spiritually destitute, and without true fruit. A Christian is as Psalms 1:3 says, "like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers." Not so apostates! They are dead trees taking up space in the garden. An apostate can imitate Christianity but cannot bear fruit.

D. Waves of the Sea (v. 13a)

We see a description of these apostates in Isaiah 57:20-21: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" Often as in Isaiah 57:20-21, the sea is a symbol for those who do not know God.

E. Wandering Stars (v. 13b)

A wandering star is one that has lost its orbit. People in that day charted their course by the stars. If you charted your course by a wandering star, you would be hopelessly lost. A good sea captain knew to ignore wandering stars.

Conclusion

What a contrast apostates are to Jesus. He is the rock of our salvation, He will return with the clouds, to catch up those who are His to ever be with Him. He is the tree of life; He leads us to the still waters, and He is the dependable bright and morning star, the light of the world.