



Apostasy & Apostates (Jude)

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“How do “I” know the Bible is always right? And if “I” am sophisticated enough to realize that I know nothing of the Bible without my own involvement via interpretation, I’ll also ask how I know which school, method, or technique of biblical interpretation is right. What makes a “good” interpretation good? And if an appeal is made to a written standard (book, doctrinal statement, etc.) or to common sense or to “scholarly principles of interpretation,” the same pesky “I” who liberated us from the authority of the church will ask, “Who sets the standard? Whose common sense? Which scholars and why? Don’t all these appeals to authorities and principles outside the Bible actually undermine the claim of ultimate biblical authority? Aren’t they just the new pope? – Brian McLaren, A Generous Orthodoxy pg133.¹

Under the inspiration of God, The Spirit, two men were moved late in the first century of the Christian church to address the critical concern of apostasy. During his ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke of the evil one sowing tares in the wheat field of the faith (Matt. 13:25-40). In his parable he explicitly spoke against “rooting out” the tares and, in so doing harm the growing wheat. By this it would appear tares are tares, and wheat is wheat, objectively. But subjectively, given that the tares represent human beings as does the wheat, the wheat might be influenced by the tare, to the detriment of the wheat.

Objectively, neither status will change.

To that concern, two writers pen their respective epistles: Peter, in my opinion, the first, and Jude, following. This explains the similarity in many of their statements (see 2 Peter 2:1-18 and Jude 1-16). In terms of the similarity, three plausible explanations present themselves: 1) Each was inspired separately by The Spirit, 2) Each copied from a now non-existent document and, 3) One copied from the other. Given Peter speaks of the danger in terms of the future (2 Peter 2:1), whereas Jude speaks in terms of the present (Jude 4), I lean toward Jude copying from Peter.

The concern is Apostasy. What, exactly, is Apostasy?

What’s At Stake?

Apostasy²: from the Greek. Apo-“from”; Stasis-“standing”. Bottom Line: Apostasy is a position away from the standing position. That is, an Apostate is committed to and teaches against the “standing”, the “ortho” opposition. (2 Tim. 2:15 “...correctly handling the word of truth...”).

What is heresy and is there a differentiation in the two?

Heresy³: from the Greek- *haíresis*, lit., an act of choosing. In contrast to the Apostate, who teaches against The Truth, the heretic, so called, deviates from The Truth, as received. For example, the Anabaptists of the 16th century were treated as Apostates when, in actuality, they were heretics in terms of the received position.

Jude asserts in this epistle his recipients “know” The Truth; they know the *orthos*, and he is simply reminding them (Jude 1:17). Given our humanity and Adam’s impact, we are prone to forget; prone to focus on externals to the exclusion of fundamentals; and prone to “let things lie”. Hence Jude’s alarming and confrontational tone.

It is as if Jude is issuing a “wakeup call”.

WHY

Why is apostasy such a concern?

Firstly, in the mind of Jude, the enemy is already in the camp in AD 66-69.

This enemy is teaching falsely. The enemy is not a ‘deviant’ theologically, but an apostate, one who teaches against The Truth.

Jude is clear on this point:

Jude 4b “...ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

When Peter wrote, the danger was in the future. For Jude, it was already at hand. One doesn’t ignore the presence of leaven. One must “purge it out” (Ezek. 20:38 & 1 Cor. 5:7). But, how to recognize the “leaven”!

Secondly, Jude brings to mind God’s historical method of handling such concerns. (Here, again, is an illustration of Jude’s use of *triplets* to make the point.)

IN THEIR PAST EXPERIENCE: (JUDE 5-7)

(vv.5-7) Now I desire to under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an

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example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 6And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds

Israel in the Exodus...refused to **believe!**

The Angelic host...refused to **submit**

Sodom & Gomorrah...**lived in license**, the natural outcome of the above.

Application: Do I believe? Am I submitted? Am I living out such submission?

Bottom Line: God is serious in terms of judging Apostasy

IN THEIR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE: (JUDE 8-10; 12-13; 16

Identifying characteristics:

Jude 8,-10, 12, 16

8Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 9But 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!" 10But 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. 12These 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; 13wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. 16These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

Dreamers: Defilers of the flesh/Defiant of authority/Denigrate Angelic authorities.

Revilers of what they do not know/destroyed by their own instincts.

Grumblers/faultfinders/arrogant/flatters

Specific examples, in principle:

Cain: Envy (Gen. 4)

Balaam: Covetousness, personally (Numbers 22-24) and enticer of others (Numbers 25 & Romans 1:32)

Korah: Rebellion, an unwillingness to submit (Numbers 16)

These remind one of John's warning in 1 John 2:15, 16:

15Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The end for such as these is, in the words of Jude: WOE (reminiscent of Jesus' pronouncements on the Pharisees in Matt. 23)

(vv.14-15)14It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

We are reminded of individual examples so as to prompt us to focus on the lives of these false teachers, i.e. their personal character. As John MacArthur says, "...This emphasis on character repeats the constant theme regarding false teachers-their personal corruption..."⁴

HOW

We are not only challenged to listen critically to what is said, but to observe critically suspending hasty assessment/judgment. As Ezekiel forewarned, "...with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness..." (Ezek. 33:31)

Jesus told us, "...by their fruits you will know them..." (Matt. 7:15-20)

Application: in this age of religious diversity and seeming wondrous acts of God's presence, am I a conscious fruit inspector?

¹ <http://prayer-warrior83.xanga.com/669670434/scary-quotes-from-the-emergent-church-movement-postmodern-christianity-or-outright-apostasy/>

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/apostasy>

³ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/heresy>

⁴ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible, (Thomas Nelson, 2006), page 1954