

8 Devenber_Jude 12-19_Fighting for the faith pt.3 Identifying religious deceivers with spiritual precision and responding decisively

Intro: Welcome back... Today, is our third sermon in Jude, next week will be our fourth and one. And if you missed any of them or if you watch them again, simply go to website and click the watch button there you will find this entire series.

By way of remembrance; in week one, we learned that the church is under attack. Apostates—people posing as Christians—have infiltrated the church and are actively working against God by spreading false doctrines. Because of this, we must protect sound doctrine.

In week two, we looked in more detail at the actions of these apostates and discovered that their treachery will not go unpunished. God will judge them.

This week, we'll focus on how to identify apostates and discuss how we can safeguard our church from their influence. I've titled this third installment:

Identifying religious deceivers with spiritual precision and responding decisively

To prepare you for today's message, imagine sitting in a radiologist's office. The doctor holds up an MRI or X-ray, pointing to a shadow or spot that, to you, seems insignificant. But to their trained eyes, it's a potential tumor—a warning sign of something that could threaten your life if left unchecked. A radiologist's ability to detect what others cannot see is not only impressive; it's life-saving. They spend years honing their skill because they understand the importance of identifying dangers that may be hiding in plain sight.

In the same way, Jude calls us to be spiritual radiologists in today's passage. The false teachers Jude describes are like unseen tumors in the body of Christ. They may appear harmless, even beneficial on the surface, but at their core, they are destructive and deadly.

[Jude 12-19](#) acts like an X-ray, helping us recognize the characteristics and intentions of these spiritual deceivers. It's a sobering reminder that not everyone who claims to represent Christ truly does.

So, let's dig into the text and...

Watch out for apostates—they can be hard to spot, so learn the signs. v12-13

Let's read v12 together...

12 These people are dangerous reefs at your love feasts as they eat with you without reverence. They are shepherds who only look after themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by winds; trees in late autumn—fruitless, twice dead and uprooted. 13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds; wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever.

There's a lot of vivid imagery in these verses, so like skilled radiologists, we're going to examine them quadrant by quadrant, phrase by phrase, to know exactly what to look for.

What's striking is that Jude helps us identify apostates not by their words, but by the consequences of their actions.

With that in mind, here are four key signs to watch for:

1) They lack respect. v12

In Jude's time, the church gathered for "*love feasts*" — sacred fellowship meals where they broke bread, encouraged each other, and celebrated God's work in their lives. These were special times, much like our 5th Sunday Prayer Walk meals or the upcoming "Open Table" here at BFC.

But apostates infiltrate these intimate settings without hesitation. They have no reverence for God or His people. They actively despise God, His Church, working to deceive others with false doctrines and ideologies.

Apostates are like hidden reefs beneath the ocean's surface. If a ship gets too close, it can tear a hole in the hull and sink. In the same way, apostates can damage your faith and disrupt the church if given the chance.

While the church is open to everyone, we must be discerning about who we allow to influence us. We need time to discern people's true motives before we let them get close.

I've learned this lesson the hard way. Not everyone who says "amen" or participates in church activities is genuinely for Christ. Some are like hidden reefs, only there to cause harm. So, love everyone, but guard your heart. The closer someone gets, the more they can either build you up or tear you down. [Proverbs 4:23](#) reminds us, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*" Loving others doesn't mean giving everyone unrestricted access to your life.

1) watch out for people that lack genuine respect for God, His Word, and His people. That's no.1, second...

2) They're selfish. v12

Jude warns us about apostates who infiltrate our "*love feasts*" and become selfish leaders. They don't stay as casual attendees—they move from visitors to insiders and then to positions of leadership. Jude calls them "*shepherds*," but they're "deceptionists", wolves in disguise.

I recently explained to a guest that membership @ BFC requires our Foundations class, a membership application, and an interview with the elders. As the elders are responsible for ensuring newcomers understand salvation before welcoming them into membership.

When church leaders rush decisions and allow unqualified people into leadership, harm follows. In Jude the church let a wolf in and, worse, made them a leader. This apostate now uses the church for their own gain, "**they only look out for themselves**".

Be leery of those eager to lead, but unwilling to serve. I once asked a new person to start as a greeter, even though they wanted to teach. They grumbled behind my back, became divisive, and sadly we had to ask them to leave. Impatience for promotion is a warning sign. Unqualified, impulsive people manipulate the church for personal gain.

So, watch out for people who are only in it for themselves. And those who are untethered and fruitless... That's the 3rd way to spot apostates

3) They're untethered and fruitless. v12

Jude describes them as "**waterless clouds carried along by winds**." These individuals refuse to submit to church leadership or discipleship. They drift from place to place, seeking validation and attempting to position themselves as leaders. Their goal isn't to edify the church but to exploit it. Like con artists, they gain trust only to manipulate and deceive.

They can't stay in one place too long because doing so would expose their true nature. This is all too common in the American church. Leaders caught in scandal are often quietly moved or allowed to "reinvent" themselves elsewhere, escaping accountability and leaving the flock vulnerable to further abuse.

On the surface, their work may look impressive—flashy, exciting, and passionate. Large donations and eager followers follow them. But when God weighs their fruit, it is clear: their efforts have amounted to nothing.

Jude calls them "**trees in late autumn—fruitless, twice dead, uprooted**." These apostates produce no fruit. Not one soul is saved. Not one person's faith in Jesus is deepened. Why? Because their doctrine is built on lies. They're Spiritually dead, leading others to death.

These apostates are recognizable by their refusal to sit under sound doctrine and leadership, moving from place to place, leaving only death, hurt, and decay as their calling card. They are untethered and fruitless. That's our third mark of apostasy. And now, let's move to the fourth...

4) They churn up chaos. v13

[Jude 13](#) says...

13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds...

In verse 13, Jude uses a vivid natural metaphor to illustrate his point. The "**wild waves of the sea**" refer to storm waves that churn the ocean, stirring up algae blooms and debris. When these blooms reach the shore, they begin to decompose.

As the waves crash against the land, they agitate the decaying matter, creating foam that spreads across the shore—a messy, unpleasant reminder of the chaos the waves have caused.

Similarly, apostates churn up shameful deeds, leaving behind a trail of decay and disorder. To such individuals, chaos isn't an accident; it's their way of life. There's always some new allegation against them, a provocative statement they've made, or another fire they've ignited.

They're perpetually defending themselves, playing the victim - never owning guilt, who refuse to take responsibility. They carry themselves as though they are above God's moral law, all the while leaving destruction in their wake.

Worse yet, they produce imitators—mini-me's who perpetuate the same chaos and deception. Everything they touch eventually falls apart.

An example of unchecked leadership causing turmoil is the controversy surrounding Hillsong Church, which has faced criticism for “twisting the scriptures” and leadership failures for decades. Brian Houston's father, Frank, was found guilty of child abuse, with accusations that Brian covered it up.

Later, Brian himself resigned due to allegations of misconduct, including inappropriate behavior towards women. Carl Lentz, once a prominent pastor of (Hill Song New York), was also dismissed for infidelity. These issues created a culture of scandal, eroding trust and leaving deep spiritual wounds within the church and beyond that is still being experienced today.

There's a saying that was taught to me as a boy, that I think would serve us well. As a means to warn me for doing bad stuff, my grandma would always say Doug, “**Fat meat is greasy**”. IOW you don't have to touch something to find out that you shouldn't be touching it or that it's bad for you. Fat meat is always greasy”.

These people that are surrounded in drama and chaos are not of God, “*they are wandering stars for who the blackness of darkness is reserved forever*”. They are guilty before the Lord who will be punished for their abuses.

Don't get caught in their mess, you don't have experience them to know that they aren't good for you. You don't have to get close to them. Look at the mess they make, all the drama they keep churned up.

Therefore, watch out for apostates—look for their identifying marks: their lack of respect, selfishness, nomadic fruitlessness, and their tendency to churn up chaos.

But identifying them is only half the battle, what you do next is vitally important. Once identified, avoid them at all cost. That's the only logical course of action.

Avoid apostates at all costs, lest you get swept up with them in judgment. v14-16

“14 It was about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied: “Look! The Lord comes with tens of thousands of his holy ones

15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly concerning all the ungodly acts that they have done in an ungodly way, and concerning all the harsh things ungodly sinners have said against him.”

16 These people are discontented grumblers, living according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage.”

Before unpacking the judgment in verses 14–16, we need to clarify Enoch's prophecy and its place in the New Testament. Enoch was a real historical figure, the father of Methuselah, and part of Jesus' genealogy ([Luke 3:37](#)), confirming his significance.

In Jewish tradition, Enoch is celebrated as a man of great faith ([Hebrews 11:5](#)), walking with God and being taken to heaven without experiencing death. Though the Book of Enoch is not part of the biblical canon, Jude saw its prophecy as accurate and authoritative.

Jude's reference to Enoch's prophecy serves to reinforce his warning in [Jude 4](#) about future judgment. He concludes his letter with the same theme: those who rebel against God and refuse to repent face certain judgment.

Jude declares, *“The Lord comes with tens of thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all..”* Jesus is returning—not as a helpless babe in a manger. Not as the Messiah who saves. But as a conquering King. He will be accompanied by countless angels, and their mission is clear: execute divine judgment. The time for repentance is over. There will be no second chances.

The first time Jesus came, He came to save. For those who place their faith in Him, salvation is secured. But when He returns, He will come as Judge, Jury, and Executioner. Those who chose rebellion over Him will face God's unrelenting wrath. No escape.

Because of the finality of God's judgment, and all the warnings about the dangers of associating with apostates, the best course of action is to avoid them entirely. You know what they look like. You know their tricks. Why risk it?

In [Amos 3:3](#), God asks a rhetorical question... *“Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”* If you're in a relationship with someone, allowing them to speak into your life, you're showing devotion to them. As children of the Most High, why risk association with evil? Why risk being led astray?

God has already decided. He will judge them. If you've been walking with someone who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ—if you, living in the light, have been walking in darkness—it's time to break that connection. Don't get caught up in their mess.

Just like we avoided each other during covid pandemic out fear of getting sick, Apostates are to be avoided at all cost. Why risk God associating you with them? Why risk being influenced by them? The danger is too great and the cost is too high. So, Avoid them, and once you do...

Trust God to deal with apostates, but stay vigilant - don't let them creep back in your life or the church. v17-19

"17 But you, dear friends, remember what was predicted by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. 18 They told you, "In the end time there will be scoffers living according to their own ungodly desires." 19 These people create divisions and are worldly, not having the Spirit."

The book of Jude was written about 30 years after Jesus' resurrection, at a time when the Church was already under siege. This threat was not new; it was present even during Jesus' ministry. In [Matthew 24:4](#), Jesus warns His disciples, "Do not let anyone deceive you."

The apostles—both the original disciples and the Apostle Paul—were fully aware of this danger. They responded urgently, warning the Church about apostates and gospel profiteers—individuals who infiltrated Christianity, pretending to belong to Christ, but were agents of Satan.

This is important for two reasons:

What we face today is not new. God has not been caught off guard by this. Be encouraged, knows what's going on and has the power to deal with it. Just like the HIV/AIDS epidemic once seemed like a death sentence, apostasy is treatable.

We are called to live for Jesus, despite the presence of apostates. As we saw in verse 17, they will remain until Jesus returns to judge them. So, what should we do?

First, as true followers of Jesus Christ, we must trust God to deal with the apostates. He has declared He will punish them. Some are already experiencing His discipline. So, we can take heart, knowing God is in control.

At the same time, we must stay vigilant. ...**Don't let apostates creep back into your life or the Church**. Which I would argue is worse than when they got in the first time. There are some who will knowingly let apostates back in, showing them pity, thinking that this time is going to be different.

All of us who have dated as adults can probably think of a time when we got involved with the wrong person. They put us through the wringer—nothing but drama, pain, and frustration. Some of you may have even had to pursue legal action to escape the chaos.

You longed to get that person out of your life. You probably prayed a desperate 911 prayer, "Lord, if You get this crazy man out of my life, I promise I'll straighten myself up and do right," or "Lord, if You remove this crazy girl from my life and keep her from keying my car or showing up at my job, I'll come back to church."

The relationship was so toxic, so unhealthy, that you needed divine intervention. And when God came through, you vowed, "Never again! I'll never go back." And soon after being delivered, you got lonely or started feeling sorry for them.

You ignored the red flags and let them back into your life, only to reinfect yourself with their destructive ways again. It's the same with apostates. After God delivers you from their influence, don't make the mistake of inviting them back in.

Don't be that person. If you do, you're no different from the apostates—and in some ways, you're worse. Why? Because you know better. You called out to God to deliver you from them and he has. Don't take His grace for granted by letting them back in. **Stand firm, trust God to deal with them, and guard your heart against deceivers.**

Conclusion:

So where do we go from here? It's one thing to hear a message of warning like this and agree, but it's a totally different thing to do something with it. You now know what to look for, your eye has been trained to root out apostasy. And you've been warned away from exposing yourself to it. And that God is the only one capable of helping you deal with apostates and their deceptions.

Ask the HS to run a full body scan for apostasy and whatever turns up on your Spiritual MRI. Whatever He tells you to do. Commit your heart to doing it. B/c the worst thing any of us can do is nothing, turning a blind eye like there's nothing wrong, risking chaos and destruction.