

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 3



*Contend
for the faith
which was
once delivered
to the saints
Jude 1:3*

EARMARKS OF APOSTATES

Scripture Text: Jude 4

In this lesson, Jude exposed the earmarks of the apostate elements that were working. This epistle and others have been preserved down through the years to help us understand these conditions when we see them developing. Jude has shown us that the only way to deal with apostasy is with truth. Truth is plain and pointed; it exposes wrong.

Ephesians 6:12 says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [or wicked spirits] in high places [another text says ‘heavenlies’].” In today’s society when one raises his voice against wrong or apostasy, he is quickly branded as having a bad spirit. In the light of our text, the one who promotes a teaching, a doctrine, or a stance contrary to the sound teaching of the Scriptures is the one with a bad spirit.

MEMORY VERSE: *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).*

Workers of Deceit

There are certain men crept in unawares. Here is the peril that prompted Jude to write this flaming epistle. Why such alarm? The danger to the church was coming from within! *Men* who were not actually in the church—the body of Christ—were being accepted as brethren in the congregation, making their influence and teachings dangerous.

In the original Greek language, the word *pareisdeuein* is used for the words *crept in unawares*. It describes the slow and subtle entry of new ways or ideas that seek to undermine and break down traditional values. It always indicates something evil coming into a society or a situation. This word represents a clever pleader who—by his logic, his argument, and his persuasive personality—wins the minds of a judge and jury. It is also used to portray an outlaw slipping back into a country from which he had been deported. **Jude 4** in The Amplified Bible reads, “For certain men have crept in stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door].” **John 10:1** states, “He that entereth not by the door [Jesus] . . . the same is a thief and a robber.”

Jesus spoke of apostasy in **Matthew 13:25** when he said, “But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.” The enemy’s introduction of deceitful *men* into the Christian community was as disastrous as tares being sown into a crop of wheat. Tares entwine their roots around wheat and when they are removed, the wheat is ripped up as well. This is how deadly it can be when people like that work in a congregation if the “wheat” is not truly “rooted and grounded” (**Ephesians 3:17**). **Matthew 15:13** says, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” So, the first earmark of apostates is that these people work slowly and undercover. If they were dealing truthfully, they would not have to work in such an underhanded manner.

Perverting God’s Grace

Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. The second earmark of a move made by an apostate is that it leans toward less godliness. It lowers the standard of holiness and makes provision for the flesh. This is always a sure indicator of apostasy!

Apostates do not outwardly appear to be *ungodly men* (this is a general term that includes women as well). This term is derived from the Greek word *abebes*, which means “one destitute of reverential awe toward God.” The reason these ones can accomplish such a deceptive work is that they do not tremble at *God’s Word*! Jesus

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said they are “like unto whited sepulchres” that “outwardly appear righteous unto men” (**Matthew 23:27-28**).

Concerning externals, these people are blameless, but “within they are full of extortion and excess” (**verse 25**). The Amplified Bible is more graphic: “Within they are full of extortion (prey, spoil, plunder) and grasping self-indulgence.”

The *men* who lacked the fear of *God* in Jude’s day took hold of that which was divine and began to alter it, over a period of time, to suit their own fleshly purposes. Through persistence, they began *turning the grace* (the strength, or power) *of our God into lasciviousness* (blatant immorality).

In the first century there were two groups of people known as the Antinomians and the Gnostics. These individuals embraced lawlessness. They taught that matter was wholly evil; therefore, the body being matter was evil—so man could not live holy—but the *grace* of *God* would cover any sin. This meant that man could sin as much as he wanted, because the more he sinned, the greater the *grace*. The Bible’s response to such a teaching is, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (**Romans 6:1-2**).

Denying the Lord

Denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The third earmark of apostates is denial. When the thought of *denying the only Lord God* is raised, people think it means to actually deny that He exists, but this is not what the Scripture text implies. How *do* ones deny *God*? **Titus 1:16** tells us that they profess to know Him; but really, in works they deny Him. The Amplified Bible says, “They profess to know God [to recognize, perceive and be acquainted with Him] but deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do.”

Christ is referred to as *our Lord Jesus Christ*. This phrase portrays the three offices of *Christ*. One, He is Sovereign of the universe and “Lord of all” (**Acts 10:36**). Two, He is *Jesus*, which means “Jehovah the Savior.” Three, He is *Christ*, or *Christos*, in Greek and *Messiah* in Hebrew, which means “The Anointed One,” the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The apostates in Jude’s day denied *Christ* lordship of their lives, refused His salvation and deliverance, and discarded Him as “The Anointed One.” They denied Him in works and substituted another gospel for the truth (**Galatians 1:6**). However, *God* is faithful. He has had a ministry to sound forth an alarm in every age of time. Whether we heed it or not in our day will determine our outcome.

JUST A THOUGHT

Failure may be an event; it need not be a person.