

The Acts of the Apostates

Jude Overview

(preached Pine Grove 10/2/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

I doubt any of you know the name John Walker, but I assure that the FBI does.

John Walker is considered the biggest traitor in US history...

From the late 1960s to 1980s, John Walker provided 100s of classified documents to the Russia government in exchange for money and lots of it.

Walker was not a fan of communism...

He was not of Russian descent...

He was simply a man with access to Naval classified information and in a good bit of debt...

And when those two things met, Walker looked for ways to turn his inside information into profit...

And the way that he began as a Russian spy is not what you would imagine...

He didn't meet the KGB in a dark alley nor did he meet them in the deep woods...

He simply took a photo of some important American secret codes, drove his car to the Russian embassy in Washington DC, and asked to speak to someone...

And with that simple act in the late 60s, Walker began one the most damaging forms of espionage ever in US history...

And it went on for 2 decades and may have continued much longer had Walker not divorced his wife and she turn him in to the FBI...

Walker eventually pled guilty, and was sentenced to life in prison where he died in 2014 one year short of being eligible for parole.

One of Walker's accomplices in his spying ring was sentenced to 365 years in prison and fined \$410,000, which is second only to John Hansen, another American turned Russian spy who was sentenced to 15 life sentences.

Needless to say, our court systems have no sympathy for spies...

Treason and espionage have long prison sentences associated with them and it is for this reason....

People who betray their country from the inside are the worst kind of criminals and spies...

If a Russian sneaks in the country and makes off with some secret information, that's one thing...

When someone on the inside does it, it is much worse for the simple fact that they were trusted to remain loyal but betrayed their country...

The book of Jude is about betrayal from the inside...

Not betrayal from inside a nation but within the church...

Listen to verse 3-4 of Jude...

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the [c]saints. 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand [d]marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Since the very beginning of time, Satan has contended with God over the truth...

And often times, Satan attacks the truth from within....

For instance, Satan tempted Adam and Eve from within the garden of Eden...

Cain attacked Able from within...

Judas betrayed Jesus from within..

At times, attacks upon the truth and upon the people of God come from without, but the worst attacks are those that come from within your own ranks...

We label these people,...traitors, double crossers, back stabbers...

But the word that is most often used to describe traitors in the church is the word apostate....

An apostate is someone who poses as a Christian, but proves by his actions that he is not a Christian and actually seeks to lead others away from Christianity as well...

Judas is probably the most well-known apostate, but there have been others in the history of the church...

The Bible even describes a surge in apostates as the end of time nears....

People who claim to be Christians and look the part by have crept into Christianity to simple lead others away to hell....

Jesus described apostates as those who were part of the church but eventually leave the church and by leaving prove that they were never really part of the church to begin with...

1 John 2:19...

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 [d]it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Well, the book of Jude is a book concerned with apostates...

I have entitled it Acts of the Apostates, and it serves as a good bookend to the book of Acts, which is the book that describes the Acts of the Apostles...

Think about the NT in this way...

The gospels start the NT and they give us the birth and life and death of Jesus Christ...

The book of Revelation ends the NT and gives us the return of Jesus Christ...

And what is sandwiched in between the gospels and Revelation is the story of the church...

And the story of the church begins with the foundation of the church which was laid by the acts of the apostles...

The men like Peter, James, John, and Paul who talked with Christ and started the building of his church in the world...

And we read the book of Acts to see how the church was built upon the teaching of these men, and upon their persecution and faithfulness...

But guess what?

As soon as it was being built upon the truth of the gospel of Christ, men began to sneak into it to undermine the truth....

Peter, James, John, and Paul all battled false teachers...

We have seen that in the book of Galatians, which was one of the first NT books ever written...

And it has continued all throughout the church age...

And so the final book before the return of Christ in the book of Revelation is book about false teachers and false prophets and apostates....

And that is how God ordered the books of the NT because the church started with the acts of the apostles, but the end of the church age will be marked by the acts of the apostates...

And this should make sense to us for a couple of reasons...

First of all, look around today...

There are apostates everywhere...

There are even apostate religions everywhere....

For instance, if you asked a Jehovahs Witness, a Mormon or even a Catholic if they were Christians, what would they tell you?

They would say that they are Christian churches, but the truth is that they are not because of their view of Christ and salvation...

They are false religions led by false teachers, but the danger is that they pose as true teachers of the true Christianity...

But second, growing apostasy should come as no surprise to us because the truth is always under attack...

It is amazing to me that in 2016, the truth about a situation is no longer important...

The facts no longer matter...

You can give someone the truth and they simply respond with “I don’t want to hear that” or “I don’t believe that.”

And though that make shock us, it has always been this way...

The truth has always been assaulted by Satan and his demons...

It started in the garden; it continued with the teaching of Christ, and it remains today...

And who is the guarder of truth?

Well, it is the church...

In fact, the church is described as a pillar of truth in the world....

Therefore those in the church should be lovers, protectors, and sharers of the truth...

That is our job, yet Satan is so clever that he sneaks his workers into the church, gives them a smile, and enables them to attack the truth from within, and Jude is fed up with this strategy....

So he writes a letter to the church to tell them to stand firm in the truth and be on the lookout for these apostates...

And instead of telling us what they teach, Jude is simple going to tell us what apostates look like and do...

And that is brilliant because the attacks on the truth can change from week to week, but the traitors always have a few things in common...

And were are going to see some of their characteristics tonight in the book of Jude...

This is another short book...

It the #4 in length in the NT behind 2nd and 3rd John and Philemon...

It was written most likely in the late 60s AD....

I would put it around 68-69 AD before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD...

It was written to the church in general, and it was written by a man named Jude...

Which is short for Judas...

And obviously this isn't Judas Iscariot, but I do find it ironic that a book on apostasy was written by a man with the same name as the world's great apostate...

Maybe God was trying to redeem the name Judas, but I don't think it worked since you don't hear of too many babies being names Judas these days...

Jude or Judas was a common name in this era, but it seems best to see this Judas or Jude as the half brother of Christ...

We know that James was written by Jesus' half brother James who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem...

But we know that James had brothers and sisters that were born to his mother Mary and Joseph, and we find out in verse 1 that Jude was the brother of James...

So, it seems best to see Jude as a half brother of Jesus..

And the year would be the late 60s AD, and most of the apostles except John would have been martyred by now...

It is quite likely that Peter has also been killed by now,
and Jude sits down under the inspiration of God and
writes a letter to the church...

Let me read verses 1-4.....

I have called this first section....

I. Contend for the Truth (1-4)

1 [a]Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of [b]James,

To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the [c]saints. 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand [d]marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Judas had sat down to write an encouraging letter to the church about their unity in salvation, but the Holy Spirit had directed Jude's letter to be a call to the church to battle for the truth..

And it is possible that the death of Peter may have been the motivation of such a letter...

Jude was watching the truth be destroyed before the eyes..

The men who had the truth of the gospel so precious in their hands were now being killed for that truth...

And maybe he, like many of us today, were wondering what would the church look like in 20 or 30 years...

And so, he sat down to write to the church to tell them to fight for the truth...

And he identifies where the battle must be concentrated...

It must be fought within the church against those in the church who are trying to destroy the truth from within...

And let me make a note here...

This is why the battle for the truth within the church is so much more important than the battle outside of the church...

Look, the world lies under the power of the evil one...

Unsaved people take unsaved action...

And though I pray that the truth goes forward in the world, it won't happen because unbelievers put no value on the truth...

However, when the truth is assaulted in the church, we all should take notice....

It amazes me but Christians moan and groan over Christianity being thrown out of the public square...

No prayer in schools...

No display of the 10 commandments...

No recognition of biblical values in society...

And they point the finger to liberal politicians and evil government officials...

But when you point a finger at the world, you have 3 pointing back at you...

Christianity left the public square simply because Christians allowed biblical Christianity to leave the church first...

The 1960s, 70s and 80s were marked by the rise of liberalism in the church...

This is not the same as political liberalism...

This is Christian liberalism, where the inerrancy and authority of the Bible was attacked and the liberals won because most Christians cannot defend the truth with two hands and a flashlight because most Christians don't know their Bibles...

And when Biblical Christianity left the church, it is naturally going to leave the culture, and it has rapidly departed...

People wonder why I don't preach about politics and current events....

Look, we have lost those battles....

Politics is a lost cause and the culture war is a lost cause right now because Christians lost the battle for truth with the church years ago...

And we are continuing to lose it, and the more the battle is lost in the church, the more the coming generations in the culture will suffer....

The reason I battle for truth inside the church is because the church has the power to change the culture...

As the health of the church goes, so goes the health of culture around the church..

I hope Christians look at this election and realize that neither candidate offers hope...

And I pray that Christians look within the church to find hope, and stop fighting a losing battle in the culture for the truth but instead try to battle for truth inside the church...

Everyday, I try to read about issues of truth within the church and I try to keep you informed of what is going on there....

We have to contend for the truth inside the church today if we have any hope for a bright future for our children and grandchildren tomorrow...

And it all starts with you taking the time to read your Bible and get a grasp on what real Christianity looks like in the Bible...

And then to go out and fight and warn your neighbor and your family about apostates in the church in hopes that they will avoid them and the destruction they bring...

Now, let's leave this first section and move to second 2, which begins in verse 5....

I call this....

II. Consider the Enemies of the Truth (5-16)

In this section, Jude literally goes through a history of apostasy in the Bible...

He starts with the false prophets of Israel who worked from within to lead the people to worship a golden calf...

He then talks about angels in heaven who departed the true faith and came to earth as demons...

He describes Sodom and Gomorrah as apostate cities full of people who had denied faith in God...

Then in verse 10, we get our first characteristic description of a false teacher and apostate...

10 But these men revile the things which they do not understand;

What does an apostate look like?

#1- He is arrogant about his knowledge, but he actually has no understanding of spiritual things.

Apostates try to make you feel little with their knowledge, but the truth is that they don't know either...

But to protect their reputation, they are brash and bold with others...

Let's finish this verse to get a second characteristic of apostates...

and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are [j]destroyed.

Characteristic #2 - They are controlled by animal instinct and not the Spirit of God.

Animals are instinctive and impulsive, and so are apostates...

They lack self-control...

What their flesh sees and wants, they go after...

Then let's read verses 11 to 13 to get a couple more character traits of false teachers...

11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay [k]they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are the men who are [l]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, [m]doubly

dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own [n]shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the [o]black darkness has been reserved forever.

Two more characteristics here; the third characteristic of an apostate is in verse 12...

#3 - They care only for themselves.

That makes perfect sense...

Men that are driven by their ego do things only for their pleasure...

#4 - They are outwardly sinful

Look at verse 13, they cast up their own shame like foam...

In other words, they do nothing to hide their sin...

They may even sin publicly and brag about it...

They have no humility and no desire to even hide their sin...

Let's skip down to verse 16 to get our final few characteristics...

16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; [q]they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

#5 - They are grumblers who love to find fault with others.

Apostates never do anything wrong...

In fact, they are right and the whole world is wrong...

Nothing is their fault...

Is there is a problem, it must be someone else's fault because they would never do that...

#6 - They speak kindly but only to pull you to their side.

Look what Jude writes at the end of verse 16...

They speak flattering words not out of kindness, but only because they want to gain an advantage over the hearer...

Those are the characteristics of an apostate false teacher...

Arrogant, driven by animal instincts, self centered, sin outwardly, grumblers and flatterers.

Now that we know what they look like, the question is how do we react to them when we see them?

How do we protect ourselves from their influence?

How do we save others from their false teaching?

Well, Jude is glad you asked...

He has some help for you in the next set of verses...

Contend for the truth...

Consider the enemies of truth...

And next...

III. Concentrate on the Word of Truth (17-23)

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, [r]worldly-minded, [s]devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

The first weapon against apostates is know that they are coming...

Now, this may sound like common sense to most Christians, but it isn't at all..

There are so many Christians who think that everybody with a smile and the name of Jesus on their lips is a good Christian teacher, but that simply isn't the case...

Jesus warned the disciples that false teachers were coming...

Paul wanted the church that they were coming..

Peter warned the church that they were coming..

And Jude simply say they are here, but we aren't surprised because Jesus said they would come...

And then the remedy to false teachers is simply this in verse 20 and 21....

#1- Build yourself up in the faith.

How do you accomplish that?

Learn about the Christian faith...

Read and study the Scriptures.

Sit under biblical teaching and preaching.

Take advantage of every opportunity to learn the word of God.

Your life is should be a constant building up of biblical knowledge....

You lay a foundation at salvation and you put brick upon brick as you read the Word of God and hear the Word of God...

#2 - Pray.

So much is accomplished through Bible reading and prayer...

The first helps your knowledge.

The second helps relationship..

#3 - Stay in the love of God.

We all know that the Bible teaches that nothing separates the believer from the love of God...

Yet, our love for God grows as we walk in obedience to Him...

As we remain in his will, we show our love for Him and we put ourselves in a place of blessing and protection from false teachers...

Christians who live in disobedience to God become victims of false teachers...

Finally, the fourth way to protect yourself from apostates is this...

#4 - Look forward to Christ's return.

False teachers lead people astray with promises of a better life in this world...

It is no accident that famous false teachers of today promise your best life now.....

Because that is their focus and that is where
undiscerning Christians have their eyes set...

If you want your best life now, false teachers will
promise to give it...

IF you want the best life in eternity, you have your eyes
set on heaven waiting on Jesus to return...

A heavenly mindset and patience will protect you from
the schemes of false teachers....

One final section to see...

Christians are called to contend of the truth, to consider
the enemies of the truth, to concentrate on the word of
truth...

And all of that leads to a.....

IV. Call to Worship the God of Truth (24-25)

Verse 24...

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and [t]forever. Amen.

The great ending to this letter is a call to worship...

And in the context of false teachers and apostates, how should that lead us to worship the Lord?

We worship Him because he has the power to keep us from stumbling into following false teachers..

Let's be clear here...

All of those things of the previous section will help your fight against false teachers,...

Knowing the Scriptures..

Keeping a regular prayer life..

Living in obedience...

And looking for Christ...

But in the end, we are all dependent upon the Lord to protect us from being led astray by apostate teachers...

And Jude writes that God has the power to keep us on the right path even in the midst of increasing false teaching....

And because of that, God must be praised and that is exactly what Jude does and leads us to do in these final two verses...

Conclusion

So what is the summary of the book of Jude?

It serves as a great reminder to us to stay diligent in 2016 in our battle for the truth..

And there are far more enemies today than even Jude imagined...

Not only is the culture around us corrupt, the church is still corrupt on the inside as well,....

Corrupt even to the point that entire apostate religions have risen out of the church...

And it is our job, not just my job, to battle for the truth with our neighbors and even within the church...

I want to end our overview by taking you to a verse that I skipped over, but is very important for you to understand and practice...

That shows a need for the whole church to battle for the truth, but to never lose our compassion for people who are trapped in false religions..

Let's finish with Jude 22-23 so that we don't let our righteous anger toward false teachers take away our compassion for their victims...

22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

The thing to keep in mind as we see apostasy spreading is this....

Let us battle the spreaders of it, but let us show mercy to those caught in its trap...

In other words, tell your Catholic friend that salvation is not by works but by faith alone in Christ alone...

Tell the Mormon you know that Jesus is God and that works are useless....

Tell your friend who loves the smiling preachers on TV that the best life they are offering to them is nothing compared to the life to come...

And that they are being led astray by a false teacher that they will follow all the way to hell if they don't repent and believe the true gospel...

And let all this be done with compassion and mercy on our part...

Because if not of the grace of God, we could find ourselves trapped under some apostate teacher ourself...

Be committed to truth...

Be on the lookout for false teachers..

Be a student of the Scriptures..

Be a person of prayer...

Be looking for Christ...

But be compassionate and merciful to those under false teaching and try to snatch them from flames of judgment.

Let us pray.