

JUDE: PROTECTION FROM APOSTACY
II. Readily Discernible Characteristics Of Apostates
(Jude 4)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul predicted that people in general would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived as the world drifted further into apostasy, cf. 2 Timothy 3:13; 4:3-4. Rising deception naturally coincides with a drop in trust wrought by the effects of people who have been painfully deceived, and a lack in trust in society tends to break down human institutions, the bedrock of society itself.
- B. The Epistle of Jude addresses the problem of apostasy (Jude 3b), and Jude 4 exposes the characteristics of the apostates believers faced in Jude's era. We thus view Jude 4 for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Readily Discernible Characteristics Of Apostates, Jude 4.

- A. After urging his readers to contend for the body of truth that had once-for-all been delivered to the saints, Jude gave a brief summary of the apostates who were then troubling the Christian Church in Jude 4.
- B. As we noted in our introduction, these characteristics have proved to be invaluable in not only discerning the heretical Gnostics of Jude's era, but of discerning apostates throughout Church History. We thus view Jude 4 in depth for insight and application in our era (as follows):
 - 1. Apostates may deceptively try to infiltrate the Church to mislead weak believers, Jude 4a:
 - a. The KJV phrase "crept in unawares" translates the Greek verb *pareisodusan* from the root *pareisduo*, "slip in secretly, steal in" (Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, 1968, p. 344.
 - b. Jesus similarly predicted that in the whole period of time between His postponement of His Millennial Kingdom and His Second Coming to establish it, Satan would plant unbelievers likened to "tares" in amid groups of true believers ("wheat") to try to thwart the discipling of people, cf. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-39a.
 - c. We need to watch for parties that present themselves as true believers when they are actually apostates!
 - 2. Scripture long ago predicted the arrival of apostates and their final judgment, Jude 4b:
 - a. The KJV phrase "before of old ordained to this condemnation" is better translated by the NIV that exchanges "ordained" for "written," the Greek participle being *prographamenois*, the perfect passive participle of *prographo*, "to write beforehand" (Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt. Lex. to the Grk. N. T., 1993, p. 390; Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 379) The perfect tense refers to prophetic Scripture that *permanently* predicted as God's divinely-inspired Word the arrival and condemnation of such apostates.
 - b. Jude may have referred to Isaiah 8:19-22 and Jeremiah 5:13-14 (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 920), and New Testament passages applicable for us would also include 2 Timothy 4:2-5; 3:13; Acts 20:28-29.
 - c. We need to watch for parties who fit the description of prophetic Scripture on their beliefs and actions.
 - 3. Apostates may be characteristically impious and irreverent, Jude 4c:
 - a. The KJV term "ungodly men" translates the Greek adjective *asebes*, "impious, irreverent," Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 63; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 - b. In Jude's era, the apostates disrespected human and divine authority (Jude 8, 11, 18), Ibid., p. 918.
 - c. We need to watch out for apostates who are insubordinate to divine and human authorities.
 - 4. Apostates may in some way violate the grace of God, Jude 4d:
 - a. The heretical Gnostics on Jude's day believed that the material world was evil, so they thought one could justly indulge in the body's lusts, becoming grossly immoral and gluttonous, Ibid.
 - b. Jude noted that these apostates turned the unmerited favor of God into "lasciviousness" (KJV), or "lustfulness," what accurately translates the Greek noun *aselgeia*, Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 63.
 - c. We need to watch out for apostates who exchange God's grace for works or license, either way, and Acts 15:1-2, 7-11 illustrates the abuse of exchanging grace for works and Galatians 5:13-16 for license.
 - 5. Apostates historically have always denied the Deity, Incarnation or Authority of Christ, Jude 4e: Jude uses the noun *despotes* rendered "master, lord" (Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 102), what in this context implies the deity and divine authority of the Lord Jesus along with His Incarnation as God come in the flesh.

Lesson: *Jude summed the characteristics of the apostates in his era as being (1) deceptive infiltrators, (2) predicted by Bible prophecy, (3) irreverent, (4) violators of God's grace and (5) deniers of the divine Person and authority of Christ, characteristics that have proved to be applicable in identifying apostates down through Church History.*

Application: *May we use Jude 4 as a quick, comprehensive test in discerning apostates for our edification.*