

The Book of 2 Timothy
Lesson 4 - 2 Timothy 3:1-9
Prescription for a Healthy Church
Rejecters of Truth

Paul now looks down through the years and with the eyes of the prophet tells us what to expect. This chapter is his prophetic appeal to Timothy, his charge in the light of the future of the church. “The last days” is a period of time that actually began with the life and ministry of Christ on earth. However, the New Testament indicates that “the last days” refers particularly to the state of the church before the coming of Christ. These shall be “perilous” times, that is, “difficult, hard to deal with.” We are in those days now! Self-love will be the hallmark of the last days. This self-love will lead to a grasping attitude and a boastful spirit. True affection will almost disappear; unnatural affection will prevail.

Verses 5–8 indicate that there will be plenty of religion in the last days, but it will be a mere imitation, a form of godliness without the life-changing power of God. The departing from the faith that Paul predicted in 2 Thess. 2 is upon us today, yet there is still plenty of religion! The Bible continues to be a national best-seller, yet the crime rate increases and problems multiply. True Christians are in the minority. These false teachers of Paul’s day preyed especially upon women.

Paul compared the apostate teachers to the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres, who opposed Moses by imitating what he did. Satan is an imitator, and his imitation gospel and church will spread in the last days. But just as Moses overcame these imitators by the power of God coming in great judgment, so Christ will ultimately overcome these latter-day deceivers. “*From such turn away!*” warns Paul (vs. 5).

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and answer the following questions:

1. What does Paul predict will happen in the last days?

2. List the characteristics of the people in those times (See 3:2-5). Define each one.

3. For each of these vices write down a word or phrase that describes its opposite, “the trait a Christian should have”.

4. What does it mean to love God rather than self or pleasure? How does loving God affect what a person does?

5. The definition of Godliness is: “a personal attitude toward God that results in actions that are pleasing to God,” “devotion in action.” How might the power of godliness enable you to grow less attached to things of this life and more attached to your love for God?

6. The picture that Paul paints in verses 2-5 bears a striking resemblance to what we see in our world today. What are some ways that you see this godless mindset in our society?

Read 2 Timothy 3:6-9 and answer the following questions:

7. What kind of influence do these men have over some women? (See 3:6) In what sense do such men “make captives” of women?

8. Give some current examples of the type of men who have this kind of influence over women.

9. What does it mean to be “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth”?

10. Where is the ultimate truth found?

11. What is a corrupt mind?

12. Compare Paul’s description of a corrupt people in 2 Tim. 3:2-8 to another in Rom. 1:28-32. How are they similar and how are they different?

13. What kind of mind should a believer have? (See Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:1-3).

Counterfeit Christianity

Whenever people accept the truth of God and begin practicing it, counterfeits soon surface. That's what Paul found at Ephesus, and what he warns Timothy about (2 Tim. 3:8-9). He mentions two characters, Jannes and Jambres, whose names mean "he who seduces" and "he who is rebellious." Neither name is in the Old Testament, but Jewish legend held that these were the names of two Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses' demand of Pharaoh to free the Israelites. They tried to duplicate the miracles of Moses in an attempt to discredit him. But God showed that Moses' authority was more powerful (Ex. 7:11-12, 22).

Paul faced a similar experience at Ephesus. For two years he taught the message of Christ there, in a culture heavily steeped in pagan idolatry and occultism. God confirmed His teaching through powerful miracles and the release of many from evil spirits. But local exorcists attempted to duplicate the miracles. Their scheme backfired, however to the benefit of the gospel.

Counterfeits to the truth of Christ abound today, as Paul predicted they would. If we effectively communicate the gospel to friends and coworkers, we can virtually count on the fact that competing systems and worldviews will soon appear. That's why we must "*continue in the things you have learned and been assured of,*" basing our lives and our witness on the firm foundation of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14-17).