

2 Timothy 3 • Disciple of Heaven or Earth?

Introduction

The common trait of false prophets, false teachers, and false believers is that they never really let go of the things of this earth in favor of the things of heaven. In fact, their true goal is to get as much as they can from this earth, whether it be money, sensuality, power, etc. Essentially they are a disciple of the this earth, this world system. The contrasting characteristic of the true prophet, true teacher, and true believer is their embracing of God's Word to the point of being transformed—what we call “sanctified”—into a disciple of heaven, a disciple of one's future life, not this one.

¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.

[Read v.1-9]

Q: In verses 1-7, who do you think Paul is writing about: society in general or some other group?

A: It seems that he's talking about Christians who are Christians in name only (nominalism). There are two reasons for this: (1) they are coming in the name of truth, and (2) verse 8 describes a purely religious community; in fact, the community of the chosen people. These appear to be religious types, and may generally be thought of as Christian hucksters or con artists. They are false teachers and false prophets.

Q: How does Paul know these things about the end times?

A: Probably through direct revelation from the Lord. The same thing happened to Moses just before he was about to leave the earth.

“The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.”

—Deuteronomy 31:16

It appears that the Lord has told Paul what will happen in the future, and that is why Paul is so adamant about convincing Timothy to stand firm, even in the midst of incredible opposition. This period of time is also called “the apostasy”.

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”

—2 Thessalonians 2:3

This is a time when those who appear to be Christians will fall away, and even those who are genuine Christians will be deceived and led astray.

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.”

—Matthew 24:24

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,”

—1 Timothy 4:1

Application: In what way does the description of verses 2-5 align with the Christian religion today, or does it?

2 Timothy 3 • Disciple of Heaven or Earth?, Page 1 of 4

⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

[Read v.5]

Q: What is the meaning of verse 5, "...holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...." Do you believe Paul is talking about the charismatic gifts?

A: It could be referring to the sign gifts such as tongues, prophecy and healing. But more than likely, it refers to the Gospel's power to bring about sanctification.

⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[Read v.6-7]

Q: How do verses 6-7 relate to 1 Timothy 2:14? What incrimination does Paul give to men?

A: There appears to be a teaching that, *in general*, women are more apt to be deceived when it comes to discerning spiritual truth. (The legacy of Eve.) However, one must remember that verses 2-5 speak directly about men, who, like Adam, choose evil in spite of full knowledge, which is the greater sin.

⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.

[Read v.8-9]

Q: In verse 8, who were Jannes and Jambres, and to what specific incident is Paul referring?

A: Jannes and Jambres are the traditional names of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh. The word "depraved" in verse 8 is a very strong word meaning "utterly depraved." The folly of the false teachers will be exposed, as was the two magicians'.

¹⁰Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! ¹²Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. ¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

[Read v.10-17]

Point: Paul now contrasts the characteristics of the true believer to the false as just outlined.

Q: What are the 9 things listed that Timothy followed concerning Paul (vv. 10-11)?

A: "...teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings..." There are 9 fruits of the Spirit listed and these are, depending on how you read it, 9 qualifications stated for elder and deacon.

Application: Could these 9 things be a test of **your** discipleship?

Q: What is the irony in verse 11, and how is this backed up in verse 12?

A: Paul states that the Lord delivered him **out of** the persecutions, not **from** the persecutions.

Application: Globally and locally, how are Christians persecuted today? Do Christians in America suffer persecution? Should it concern us if we've **NEVER** been persecuted?

2 Timothy 3 • Disciple of Heaven or Earth?, Page 2 of 4

¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

[Read v.13]

Q: Even though it was Eve who was deceived in the garden (1 Timothy 2:14, “And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”), does Paul believe that only women are capable of being deceived?

A: Absolutely not. In fact, Paul adds here that men and women are quite capable of being deceivers. Who else is called “the deceiver”? Satan.

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

–2 John 7

Application: How do you know when you’re being deceived? How will you be able to tell the difference between someone who is telling the truth and someone who is a deceiver? (Hint: Matthew 7:15-17, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.”)

¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

[Read v.14]

Q: What are the two things Paul instructs Timothy to do to keep from being deceived?

A: First “...continue in the things you have learned and have become convinced of...,” and second, know “from whom you have learned them.” That is, hold fast to that which you know to be true, and always remember the source from which you heard it.

Application: How is this teaching applicable to parenting? To you as a child of the Father?

¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[Read v.15]

Q: Upon what final source is Timothy to depend? What application can we make today?

A: Obviously, Timothy’s mother being a devout Jewish woman who was converted to Christianity—she had taught him well the Old Testament. For us, the final source of authority and guidance in the Word of God, both the OT and the NT. They are able to give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ.

Application: What applications are there here individually and as parents?

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

[Read v.16-17]

Q: In verse 16, what is the meaning of “inspired”? That is, how is Scripture inspired? And, what parts of Scripture are inspired?

A: The most commonly accepted “theory” of inspiration comes from B. B. Warfield, that the writer is “superintended” by the Holy Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit, using the writers own style, experiences and background, gives him the thoughts that are from God. This verse says that *all* Scripture is “*inspired*”, or “God-breathed”.

Q: Do you believe that Paul’s writings were believed to be inspired at the time he lived?

A: See 2 Peter 3:14-16. Paul’s letters are put alongside “*the rest of the Scriptures.*”

“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

—2 Peter 3:14-16

Q: In verses 16-17, what is Scripture profitable for, and for what purpose?

A: Teaching, reproof (refuting), correction, and training in righteousness. The purpose is that the person of God may be totally equipped for every good work.

Application: Why is Scripture necessary for the Christian to do a “good work”?

Final Application: Name 10 reasons the disciple of Jesus should know the Word of God.