

Counterfeits and Reflectors

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: II Timothy 3:1-9.

B. Many signs have pointed towards the end times today.

II. "These last days."

A. This refers to the time after Jesus' death and resurrection. (Joel, Hebrews)

B. It is clear that the last days have grown to a period of 2000 years in duration.

C. During these times, there will be cycles of peril where all the conditions of the Scripture would be repeated.

D. It is not necessarily a prediction of the last days of the church but of the cycles before the end.

III. The character and cause of the times:

A. Holding the form of religion but denying the power of it.

1. The primary cause of these cycles is the hypocritical lives of Christians.

2. Immorality among the nations is caused by ignorance among Christians.

3. The results of this are an inner hardening of spirit.

4. An analysis.

a. Self-love.

1) This is a form of idolatry.

2) Paul says that Christians are here and have not really changed.

b. Lovers of money.

1) Money is a way of indulging self.

2) Prosperity can destroy the church.

c. Pride and arrogance.

d. Abusiveness.

e. Problems in the family life.

- f. Ungratefulness.
- g. Ungodliness, inhuman, and implacable.
- h. Failures in interpersonal relationships.
- i. Those that are treacherous.
- j. Those swollen with conceit.
- k. The religiously pretentious.

5. Why Christians displayed such terrible attitudes during the week: they deny the power of the word of the cross. (I Corinthians 1)

- a. Unwillingness to deny self is an unwillingness to experience life in God.
- b. We must practice what we preach.
- c. The Bible divides lives into four groups:
 - 1) The godless pagans who are not saved and know they are not saved.
 - 2) Those saved but unsure of it.
 - 3) The saved who know they are saved and are growing.
 - 4) Those who are unsaved and think they are—this is what is being confronted here.

B. The rise of strange cults embracing confusing concepts and immoral practices that are begun by hypocritical Christians.

- 1. This is the strategy of the devil—infiltrating the church with people who are not of the church.
 - a. Strange cults always emerge out of stress.
 - b. The fact of guilt cannot be escaped and these cults often deal with it inappropriately.
- 2. The devil also employs counterfeit faith.
 - a. Cults offer to do what only God in Christ can do giving peace
 - b. We are not to panic—the devil has his limits, and people who are led astray will become so empty that they will be open to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Application questions:

1. To what do the “last days” refer?

2. Which characteristic of holding a form of religion but denying its power challenges you the most? Explain.

3. How can you be ready to respond to the rise of strange teaching from the church during the “last days?”
