

## Christians within Post-Christianity – II Timothy 3:1-9; I Timothy 4:1-6

### I. Introduction:

- A. It is said by some that you and I are living in a “*post-modern,*” “*post-CHRISTIAN*” society.
1. Notice that I said “*post-CHRISTIAN*” **society** and not “*post-CHRISTIAN*” **era** – or period of time.
  2. These two phrases, especially the second one, are based on some **presumptions**.
  3. One of those assumptions is that **America** once **was** a **Christian society**.
    - a. I believe that is basically true – in the sense that it wasn’t founded by Muslims or Hindus.
    - b. In 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century America, there was a tip of the hat and nod of the head toward Christian principles and morality.
  4. Another assumption is that our **former** Christian society **no longer exists**.
    - a. That, again, is partially true, depending on a few definitions and experiences.
    - b. And yet the Lord has promised that His testimony would always be found in this world, even if in only a small remnant of people.
- B. Paul and other Apostles warned and prophesied two thousand years ago about today’s spiritual decline.
1. Some lengthy scriptures warn us of the work of atheists and agnostics – outside of God’s churches.
    - a. They include verses like **II Peter 3:3** – “*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?*”
    - b. And **I John 2:18** – “*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*”
  2. In addition to these and other passages, I’ve chosen to point you to **Timothy**, because Paul tells his young friend of the dangers which Christians face from **under** the **umbrella** of “*Christendom.*”
  3. These and others prophesy of today’s “*post-Christian culture.*”
- C. But what is the meaning of those words “*Post-Christian culture?*”
1. Just to get us going, here are a couple definitions which I pulled off the internet:
  2. “*Post-christianity is the situation in which Christianity is no longer the dominant civil religion of a society (which) has gradually assumed values, culture, and worldviews that are not necessarily Christian.*”
  3. And, “*Post-christianity is the loss of the primacy of the Christian worldview in public affairs, especially in the Western world where Christianity had previously flourished, in favor of alternative worldviews such as secularism, nationalism, environmentalism, neopaganism, and organized (sometimes militant) atheism.*”

### II. Okay, but more specifically, what are some of the more **PRACTICAL ATTRIBUTES** of Post-Christianity?

- A. We can see things both inside and outside churches which point to this “*post-Christianity.*”
1. Some of these are slight and only irksome.
  2. Such as, today’s use of the abbreviations of **CE** and **BCE**.
    - a. For millennia writers broke human history into halves: **BC** and **AD**.
    - b. **BC** referred to those years before Christ.
    - c. And **AD**, which is short for “*anno domini*” – “*the year of the Lord*” – points to those centuries since the incarnation of Christ.
  3. But rather than **BC** and **AD**, people of the “*post-Christian*” flavor speak of **CE** and **BCE** – the “*Current Era,*” and “*Before the Current Era.*”
  4. This is nothing more than a blatant desire to get rid of any references to Christ.
  5. As far as I am concerned it is just a slight a pain in the neck, but it **is** an example of “*post-Christianity.*”
- B. And how about the absence of what used to be called “*blue laws?*”
1. It used to be, whether a person was a “*born again Christian*” or not, the owner of the general store didn’t open his shop on Sunday. It was a day of rest if not actual worship.
  2. I remember when grocery stores first opened on Sunday. It was not that long ago.

3. And back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the NFL didn't schedule the Superbowl on Sunday, and the NCAA would never play Final Four games on the Lord's Day.
  4. There weren't barn-raising and dances on the "*Sabbath*" – as Sunday was generally known back then.
  5. I am not saying that we should Pharisaically reintroduce Sunday closing laws, but I am saying that their disappearance is an indication of our "*post-Christian*" culture.
- C. Something we hear from time to time are the words: "*That may be true for you, but it is not true for me.*"
1. What utter nonsense. What is true is true, and what is false is false.
  2. Somehow the color grey has supplanted all the other colors, especially pushing black and white into positions of insignificance.
  3. Today in many schools a teenager can wear a t-shirt promoting violent games or rappers or worse.
    - a. But if he wears a shirt with a Bible verse, he must turn it inside out, covering the offensive message.
  4. And at his graduation, the valedictorian can extol the life of Ghandi or even Mohammed, but not Christ.
  5. Last year a local boy was punished by his school for saying that "*girls are girls*" and "*boys are boys.*"
  6. And why must we remove images of the Ten Commandments from our court rooms?
  7. It is because we live in a "*post-Christian society.*"
- D. After things like these, there are far more serious indications of this dynamic shift in culture.
1. For example, there is the public, and the legal flaunting, of **sexual deviance**.
  2. There are television shows with transvestite co-stars, and homosexual themes.
  3. They aren't just actors, they are the real thing. And then there are homosexual marriages.
  4. The first legal **homosexual marriage law** was in the Netherlands in the year 2000, and from there it has spread across the world. **It is only twenty-five years old.**
  5. No professing Christian in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would have countenanced this idea. It is "*Post-Christian.*"
- E. And so is the wide acceptance of the murder of unborn babies.
1. People killing people outside of war used to be called "*murder*" by those who accepted the Bible.
  2. Of course, **Pharaoh** didn't think so, and neither did Herod – both killing babies, but they weren't Christians.
  3. Now, people of the "*post-Christian culture*" apply the euphemistic terms "*euthanasia,*" "*abortion*" and "*women's reproductive rights*" to get around the morality of Biblical Christianity.
  4. I read recently, "*There are two kinds of people in the world: those who protect a woman's right to abort her child, and the freaks who are too dense or misguided to agree with them.*"
  5. The killing of the unborn and the murder of the old and feeble are "*post-Christian*" ideas.
- F. Then, somewhere between the irritating and absolutely horrendous, is the almost universal acceptance of "*evolution*" as the **explanation of life**, the explanation of human **behavior** and so many other things.
1. For eighteen hundred years, it was accepted as fact that God created all things, and then came sin.
  2. But now science (falsely so-called) has swept in and swept out those basic & important Christian doctrines.
- G. And that brings us to area of **religion**.
1. I recently read of a Baptist pastor who was teaching through **First Corinthians**.
  2. When he came to **chapter 5** and Paul's condemnation of the immoral man, some of the young people in this class looked puzzled.
  3. Paul described a man who was in an illicit affair with his stepmother. The pastor thought his people would be able to see the problem.
  4. Later when he talked to his young adult members, he was shocked to learn they were shocked that the Apostle suggested the man should be put out of the church.
  5. No one was quite ready to say that the man was behaving godly, but they weren't ready to agree with Paul.
  6. They thought that the offender should have been loved and perhaps instructed, but not expelled like some sort of criminal. Today's Christianity is "*post-Christian.*"

- H. I can't tell you how many times I have been out door-knocking and someone has told me that *"we all worship the same God."*
1. I read recently that *"many in our culture have been conditioned to sift all religious discussion through the colander of religious relativism, tolerance, and philosophical pluralism."*
    - a. *"Relativism"* is the idea that truth is relative to whatever moving standard people have.
    - b. And *"pluralism"* is the opinion that different truths are all true at the same time. But that is preposterous.
  2. I have been told that it is not nice to judge other people's wild religious opinions.
  3. Other people can judge me and my literal interpretation of the Bible, but I can't judge them.
  4. We live in a *"post-Christian culture."*
- I. It used to be that people professing to be Christians were expected to strive to be holy. No longer.
1. Now Christians can **live** like the world, **dress** like the world, **smell** like the world and **die** like the world.
    - a. Darren was telling us yesterday about a professing Baptist who was swearing like a sailor.
    - b. Today's Christianity is *"post-Christian."*
  2. It used to be that **the gospel** included a message about the **terrible wretchedness** of the sinner and that was followed by God's demand for **repentance**.
  3. This is not the gospel being preached in most churches today.
  4. It used to be that the **Saviour** was also the **sovereign God**, & He demanded **lordship** over His saints.
  5. Today's current easy-believism and the almost universal emphasis on God's love, to the exclusion of God's holy standards and judgments, are products of our *"post-Christian culture."*
- J. And today's talk about *"hate crimes"* include in their definition the condemnation of the sins which God condemns.
1. To tell the transvestite that he is a sinner in God's sight is called a *"hate crime"* by our current society.
  2. We can tell the straight person that he must be born again, but to say that to a homosexual is hatred.
  3. On and on I could go, but with these examples in mind, I'm sure you can see other reasons to say that ours is a *"post-Christian culture."*

### III. This may be the society in which we live, but how does it actually AFFECT us.

- A. In no particular order, first, we are attacked with ***POST-Christian*** accusations.
1. But before I get to some of examples, I'd like to take you back to the Bible & the early history of Christianity.
  2. The **effects** of the modern *"POST-Christian culture"* are essentially the same as the response of the world to God's people in the *"PRE-Christian culture."*
  3. Just think about it.
  4. When Christ became incarnate, His world was a **dichotomy** of **secular religion** and the **Jewish religion**.
    - a. There were the Romans, with their Greek culture, and then there was the corrupted Hebrew culture.
    - b. Neither one was worth a second glance.
  5. And so from both sides came accusations and rebuke toward the doctrines of the Lord Jesus.
- B. What Christ brought to everyone's attention was **essentially NEW** to just about everyone.
1. It is not that it **should** have been **new**, because it was the same message God's prophets had been preaching for hundreds of years, but that society had forgotten those truths and killed those prophets.
  2. So Jesus repeated John's message of repentance, because the world lacked God's holiness.
  3. Of course, without the moving of the Holy Spirit, the *"pre-Christian culture"* didn't like that message.
  4. The people said of Christ and of His disciples, *"What is this new doctrine; this new teaching?"*
  5. They had never seen the power of the Holy Spirit before, and they responded in both love and fear.
  6. How many times did they pick up stones to kill Christ, & how many of Jesus' first disciples did they murder?
  7. As we have seen many times recently, the **disciples** were **forbidden to preach Christ** and the truth.
  8. The *"religion"* of Jesus in His day was just as foreign as Biblical Christianity is in today's world.

- C. What were the accusations against Christianity in Jesus day? They are similar to the accusations against us.
1. People said that the disciples were **unlearned** and **ignorant** men, unlike the leaders and respected teachers of the day.
  2. Christians refuse to acknowledge the scholars and scientists of both the “*pre-Christian*” and “*post-Christian*” societies, when those people are spouting obvious lies and inaccuracies.
  3. Christians even have the audacity to cite their own scholars and scientists, often even referring to the inerrant Word of God for explanations of life and exhortations on how to live life.
  4. The early Christians believed, and continue to believe, the fables which the “*post-Christian*” society has thrown out.
  5. For example, they believe in a six-day creation and a world-wide flood, because the Bible declares them, and because physical evidence proves them, while “*post-Christian*” PhDs and ThDs have rejected them.
- D. Not only are Bible Christians “*unlearned and ignorant,*” but even worse, they are “*narrow-minded.*”
1. The scribes and Pharisees were **not saying** that the disciples, like John & Peter, were **stupid** or **imbeciles**.
  2. They were accusing them of **non-conformity** – not drinking the cool-aide society was handing to everyone.
  3. The disciples were saying things like, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*”
  4. That is not only narrow-minded, but it is bigoted and generally unkind. Cruel, uncharitable, hateful, hurtful.
    - a. The “*post-Christian culture*” considers itself to be respectful toward others.
    - b. Except, of course, toward those who believe the Bible, disagreeing with them.
  5. The “*post-Christian culture*” permits the possibility of hundreds of saviours, which again is ridiculous.
  6. What is **our greatest sin**? Our greatest sin is that **we know the truth**, and thus, we have been set free.
- E. We are accused of telling people to **check their minds** at the front door before entering our church building.
1. Today’s Christians are accused of **intellectual suicide**, because we believe the Bible to be true.
  2. And because of this, our variety of Christianity is no longer useful.
  3. We live in a “*post-Christian society*” which doesn’t mind weak and liberal churches, but not the holy and literal variety.
- F. And our society is becoming more and more a **hostile** to Bible Christianity.
1. “*If you don’t bow before Nebuchadnezzar’s image, we will toss you into the burning fiery furnace.*”
  2. “*If you pray to a God which has not been authorized or approved by the government and modern science you’ll be cast into the lion’s den.*”
  3. Just as several Canadian pastors have been arrested for resisting their “*post-Christian*” society, it is very likely that I will be arrested one of these days.
  4. The clash between Christ’s truth and the world’s pseudo-intellectualism lead to Jesus’ crucifixion.
  5. When Stephen stood up for the truth in his evil society, he was murdered for it.
  6. “*Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience*” – **James 5:10.**

#### IV. What should be our ANSWER to this Post-Christian mind-set?

- A. Our reply should be the same as that of Paul and Christ Jesus.
1. Peter and John, in their “*pre-Christian society*” were **prototypes** for us in our “*post-Christian society.*”
  2. We don’t see any of the Apostles backing down, despite the backlash and lashing of their backs.
  3. Peter said, “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*” We **must** obey God. We have no choice.
  4. We see Stephen, as when he saw the rapid deterioration of things around him, ramping up his expression of the truth and his warnings against them.
  5. And we also see his victory down the road produced by his standing in the face of that opposition & death.

- B. How should we answer the “*post-Christian*” mind-set?
1. What we must do is **live the holy lives** we have been commanded to live.
  2. We can't afford to let the culture of the world into our lives or to let it dictate how we are to live.
  3. And for our grandchildren, we can't let the “*post-Modern,*” “*post Christian*” philosophies into our church.
  4. God's heroes have always **chosen to suffer affliction** with other children of God, rather than to enjoy peace with an ungodly world.
  5. They **purposed** in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with any portion of society's goodies.
- C. Like Christ and the Apostles, we must challenge the world around us.
1. We must learn God's Word, really learning what it says and then plant our feet in those eternal precepts.
  2. The Sadducees of Jesus' day were the educated, liberal minded, progressive thinkers of the period.
  3. They were the forerunners of today's “*post-Christian*” elite.
  4. Those are the people who need to be resisted – but with the love and patience of the Lord Jesus.
  5. And we must be prepared to die, like Stephen.
- D. We must continue to do those special things with which we have been commissioned.
1. For example, we must **continue to preach** – instant **in season** and in **today's post season**.
  2. The world **needs** to hear the truth; it **must be** told the truth, whether or not it wants to hear it.
  3. The only real answer for the problems of “*post-Christianity*” begins with the hated gospel of Christ.
  4. The Lord Jesus has told us, “*Go ye into all the world and make disciples.*”
  5. And as we heard this morning, when we put our cosy little church first – before the Lord and His glory – we give evidence of a growing “*post-Christian*” influence in our midst.
  6. There will be lots of churches in the “*post-Christian*” society, but they will not be the churches of Christ.
  7. We must “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” setting ourselves apart from the “*approved churches.*”
- E. Perhaps above everything else, in this day, we must **embrace** the **sovereign God** in all His glory and authority.
1. Despite what the world may do to us, like Stephen, we not victims.
  2. We are the victors, through the omnipotent, sovereign God in whom we can do all things.
  3. So why not make that a part of our creed, our watchword, our battle cry.
    - a. At one point in the “*pre-Christian*” world, the battle cry was “*the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*”
    - b. Today it needs to be “*The Lord (Jehovah) shall reign for ever and ever.*”
    - c. “*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*”
- F. I hope it can be said of us – as it was with those Christians in the “*pre-Christian*” era –
1. “*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*”
  2. Those people were not known as Christians because they had the face of Jesus tattooed on their arms.
  3. They were not known as God's saints because over their ragged jeans & tank-tops they wore gold crosses.
  4. They were known as Jesus' disciples because they were **filled with joy** in the midst of opposition – **filled with love** for each other – and for the Lord and for the lost – and their lives were clearly spent striving for God's standard of holiness.
- G. In this “*post-Christian*” society, as things get worse and worse, and as the road gets more and more rough, we must simply look toward heaven and watch for the soon coming King, while we continue to serve Him here below.
1. This opposition toward the Lord will soon come to an end, even as Jesus told the high priest.
  2. Christ Jesus will soon come “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel.*”

3. In the mean time, we must stand by the stuff, wearing the armor of God, and with the Sword of the Spirit in our hands.
  4. We have a tremendous responsibility, and the fact that these are last days in some ways makes our responsibilities greater.
  5. In these last days, we need to stand like Stephen – like the Apostles and the rest of the early saints.
- H. Applying *1 Peter 5:4* a little more widely than it was originally intended... *“And when the chief Shepard shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*