

Paul's Exhortations To Timothy

"As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus when I was going into Macedonia that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God, which is in faith, so do I now" (1 Tim. 1:3f).

As was last shown, nowhere in Luke's accounts of Paul's travels when likely Timothy was or had been with him in Ephesus would those circumstances coincide with the account here, leaving the conclusion this visit of Paul is not revealed in Acts. Other's accounts of Paul's travels (even before his second letter to Corinth) show Paul to have made ocean voyages and had been shipwrecked but which accounts Luke does not record. From these opening words, Paul had at some time left Timothy in Ephesus to continue to work in that city, but when?

Timothy was to charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine. Disciples are commanded to be constant in teaching the doctrine of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). Different ideas rise up from time to time, troubling brethren. Some years before the letter to Timothy Paul warned Ephesians elders that *"after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock and from among your own selves, shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:28-30). Just what the nature of that different doctrine was, Paul did not reveal. In this epistle Paul wrote of two men, Alexander and Hymenaeus, whom he had delivered to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20). Hymenaeus is mentioned once more (now in company with Philetus) as one who taught that the resurrection was past already, overthrowing the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Possibly (but not certainly) these were the men in Ephesus whom Timothy was to beware of. If they were, then at least one doctrine taught at Ephesus was error about the resurrection.

Timothy was to warn brethren against giving attention to fables (1:3). Paul warns against fables four times in his letters to young preachers, here and then in 4:7, 2 Tim. 4:4, and Titus 1:14. No other New Testament writer warns against fables except Peter (2 Pet. 1:16). Vines defines *"fables"* *"primarily signifies speech, conversations ... hence, a story, narrative, fable, fiction. The word is used of Gnostic errors and of Jewish and profane fables and genealogies ..."* (W.E. Vines, *Dict. of N.T. Words*, Vol. 2, p. 67). The inclusion of the fable "Bel and the Dragon" was appended by some to Daniel is a classic example of ancient fables. A more modern one would be the

Mormon's story of Joseph Smith finding "golden plates" from which he "translated" the "Book of Mormon."

Paul warned against "*endless genealogies*." The Jews delighted in being able to trace their lineage back to Abraham. Because God had promised Abraham and David that the Messiah would come of their lineage, it was necessary to be able to trace Christ's genealogy to them so that it could be shown God fulfilled His promise, but family ties are no longer important. Paul said, "*If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise*" (Gal. 3:29).

These designated things contribute nothing beneficial to the work of God and, as Paul wrote, they minister questionings and strife rather than a ministration of faith. We have enough of questionings without adding to it by added things of no true value! We must abide in the doctrine of Christ, knowing that if we embrace a different doctrine we will condemn ourselves; if we go beyond the doctrine of Christ we will not have God (2 Tim. 3:25; 2 John 9).

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