

## Cause and Effect

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**Matthew 24:12** And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Christ talks to His disciples about the end of things here in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew. I believe He has interwoven both immediate prophecy with long range prophecy in this talk. He is telling His disciples what to look for and expect as time rolls on and events occur. He shows them what to expect immediately, and at the same time He forecasts what they and successive generations are to expect between the time of this lecture and His return to earth. One of the evidences that He warns them to expect is contained in our verse. He talks here about cause and effect.

Cause and effect are well known subjects to most people. We see the results of the relationship between cause and effect every day we live. Because it has been very cold this past week, one of the effects has been that the ground has frozen. Another effect may have been that some of you know about some frozen water pipes (my freezer-less outside faucet down at the Palmer Rd. house froze this week). Because the earth rotates around the sun and tilts at the same time, the effect is that we have winter, summer, spring, fall. Cause and effect is about relationships among things. Using just the two illustrations here, we are able to see that for everything that occurs in our universe there is a cause that the Lord has set in motion or has allowed in the counsel of His wisdom. Causes always have an outcome. In other words, if there is something we call effect, there is an associated cause.

Our text speaks about a specific cause and effect. It states plainly that in the final days of man's history the presence and influence of iniquity will have the effect of turning the love of many cold. Applying this to what each of us witnesses around us, we can see this cause and effect in action. We see it in broken relationships between family members. We see it in things like road rage, violence between family members, many kinds of crimes being acted out (assault and battery, rape, some murders, theft from kinfolks or friends, child abuse, adult abuse [by children], etc.). "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The uniqueness of our era regarding love waxing cold is not that it is suddenly a new behavioral trait among humans. In every generation since Adam, there have been individuals whose love waxed cold, and some of these terrible effects have resulted. But, the uniqueness of what Jesus was talking about is contained in the word "many." The love of "many" shall wax cold. This is what is different in these end-times, and I don't believe this phenomenon is the result of a larger number of people on the earth.

We want to think about this characteristic of waning love in human cultures, societies, and groups today. Most of all, we want to contemplate waning love among the people of God, because that is the real concern we should have. Is this phenomenon applicable to the Lord's churches and its members today? I think it is. I think our Lord meant for us to be warned about it, because the impact of it was going to affect the work and fellowship of the saints.

### I. The Source of This Decline In The Love of Many

- "Because iniquity shall abound...." (Iniquity: Gr. Anomia [an-om-ee'-a] - illegality;

violation of the law)

> We need to notice first that Christ did not specify which laws are being increasingly broken, who those are that are breaking them, nor what kind of love will wax cold. Because He specified none of these by naming a certain kind of law, a certain class of people who would be breaking them, nor a specific kind of love that will wax cold, I think we need to understand it this way:

- 1) the breaking of all kinds of laws will occur; divine laws, man-made laws, and cultural and social laws (rules of decency among a group of humans in a specific culture, society, or community).
  - 2) the class of people in which this will occur will be every class of mankind from the mafia to the assemblies of the Lord's people, and
  - 3) the love spoken of will be every kind of love from the carnal affection between two people who have a contract of crime or licentiousness together, to the love shared among family members, to the kind of love that is supposed to exist among members of a church
- First, breaking the law and seeing the number of law breakers increasing will promote emotional coldness; (breaking laws of the land, or breaking the rules of God)
- > How this works as a result of the law breaking acts of others:
- Because law-breaking will suggest lack of moral or ethical foundation (when seen among those who share some kind of love) and people who believe in a set of ethics will almost unconsciously have less affection or respect even for close associates who break laws that they honor. Examples:
    - Because **general and societal law breaking will inspire distrust** (if all my neighbors are willing to break the law as the drop of a hat, then what is to keep them from stealing from me, destroying something of mine, doing damage to me to get gain, etc. Remember that the subject is love waxing cold
    - **Skepticism will rise**, and skepticism always cools affections
- > How this works in you as a result of your own law breaking:
- Law-breaking hardens the heart, because you are violating a set of rules that have meaning - that is, you violate your own conscience; then,
  - Hardened hearts love less (there is a kind of defensiveness that always accompanies a hardened heart)

## II. The Symptoms of This Decline In the Love of Many

- "...the love of many shall wax cold." We are looking for symptoms of love having waxed cold. The partial list of symptoms among professing Christians are:
- > Disappearance of concern and love for lost souls around us
  - > Even a hardness of heart toward the lost around us
  - > Decrease in love for fellow believers and church members
  - > Even a hardness of heart toward fellow believers and church members
  - > Decrease in love for the Word of God, reading the Word slows and slumps or may stop
  - > Listening to the Word fades; listening to the Word stops
  - > Decrease in love for attending church, carelessness in attending church, or stopping attending church
  - > Decrease in love for righteous living, carelessness about living holy, beginning to live worldly
  - > Substance abuse
  - > Family member abuse and/or domestic violence and broken homes

- > Disobedience to parents; disinterest in parents
- > Parental neglect of children's spiritual well being
- > Disinterest in children

### III. The Solution For This Decline In the Love of Many

- "...the love of many shall wax cold."
  - > Become conscious that this statement by our Lord says "**many,**" **not all.** (Interpretation: just because many experience a cold love, and show the fruit of it, you don't have to).
  - > Face iniquity for what it is as a threat to you
  - > In a lawless or law breaking society, there won't be much to steer you away from iniquity except what you find in yourself . Are we up to the task of riding herd over our own tendencies to lawlessness by the help and power of the Lord, or are we already entertaining a life style that leads us easily into law breaking?
  - > Be aware that the opportunity for breaking the laws of the land, for violating the decency rules of our society, or breaking the laws of God are an opportunity to show what the Sprit of God is able to do in you because of what Christ has done for you.
    - **Titus 2:14** Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem us from all iniquity**, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
    - **1Peter 2:12, 15** Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 15. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

### IV. Conclusion

We are entering a time when lawlessness is openly flaunted in our society by small and great. **The age of lawlessness has arrived.** Breaking the law is going to become a charge brought against you when charging you will benefit the lawless aspirations of those who interpret the law.

Living in such a law-breaking society means that there will be a multitude of opportunities to act out iniquity without having to fear any backlash from law enforcement. In this generation when there are state laws forbidding acts of perversion and acts of murder, you can do these things; if they are the "right" acts of perversion; if they are the "right" kinds of murder; and no one will arrest or charge you. This is a preview of things to come. In this environment, love of every kind is waxing cold. People are getting skeptical, cynical, suspicious, distrustful, and cold. In an environment like this, our personal ethics, morality, and faithfulness to the Lord are challenged.

Do we have the spiritual fortitude to reject lawlessness; or will we like many, accept lawlessness and add to the increasing emotional winter we are in...when the love of many has waxed cold?

Martin Luther King once wrote, "Evil prospers, when good men do nothing. ..." When love waxes cold, otherwise good people do nothing...or not enough. Love waxes cold when iniquity, or lawlessness, abounds.