

Love Grows Cold

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Matthew 24:1-12

Jesus is teaching the disciples about two things in our text. We notice that the disciples asked him to answer two things in v. 3, “when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Jesus had just been talking about the destruction of the temple. The disciples probably viewed this as something that would happen when Jesus came back to set up His eternal kingdom, so they asked a two part question that, when answered, would tell them when the temple would be destroyed and what signs did they need to look for as precursors to His coming and the end of the world. I believe that Jesus answered both of these questions in His following statements.

Within the Lord’s explanation of what they were to look for, He draws a verbal picture of things that would be happening which fits well with the depraved nature of human kind. He tells of nations hating true believers, of betrayal among people professing Christianity, and of hatred among them. He tells of false prophets deceiving many. And then in verse 12 he tells of a trend among what is more than likely the religious community. He says, “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” He does not specify what kind of love will wax cold, but we may assume it would probably include every kind of love, but especially love for spiritual things, as iniquity swallowed up more and more of human society. I believe this describes the times that we are in. As we look at Christianity today and think about what the Lord would describe as love, it is easy to see that love for the things of God have cooled a lot at least in this century. We hear of religion being on the rise across the world, but when we look for Christ-like love, we don’t find it being on the rise. And there is no doubt that iniquity is on the rise. So, we want to look at Jesus statement and think about the two elements He draws our attention to; iniquity abounding, and love waxing cold.

I. What Are The Most Prominent Causes of Iniquity Abounding? (This Greek word for iniquity includes all kinds of wickedness, but especially violation of the law or lawlessness).

Note: Getting to a place where iniquity abounds is usually a creeping stepwise process that plagues a society of people. Steps are:

❖ **Twisting of divine truth to fit human philosophies**

- We notice nowadays that many things that were once the foundation stones of truth are now subjects for debate or interpretation; and are generally ignored.
 - Some examples:
 - “Thou shalt not kill”
 - ◆ There was a time in human societies that it was murder to kill any human, even a fetus; but now governments are funding abortion on demand. The United Nation supports abortions with its funding; the European Union has forced its 27 member states to fund abortion. The United States is funding abortion in many other countries throughout the world.

- **Lev. 19:32** “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man...”
 - ◆ there was a time when, in almost all societies, old people were respected and honored; but now we hear talk in the United States about death panels made up of government flunkies who will decide the life or death fate of the elderly in this country. This is not the only country who dishonor their elderly through cultural practices. It is becoming more widespread all the time.
 - **Luke 11:28** “...blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”
- There was a time when, in so-called “Christianized” societies, the bible was unequivocally revered as the Word of God; but now, it is considered by many to be just an interesting book about history and morals; and it is civilized for “Christians” to argue about the validity of the bible and whether its values are needed in today’s societies. It is also “intelligent” Christianity to tout “new and improved” versions of the bible that have many great truths purged out of them.
- “Thou shalt not steal”
 - ◆ In man’s earlier history, thieves and burglars were always brought before the law when caught, and penalties were imposed; but now, our Secretary of the Treasury can evade income taxes and nothing is done, millions of illegal aliens can rob the people of America by taking welfare and free medical services and nothing is done, Senators can take bribes and kickbacks and when it is exposed, they sometimes have to step down, but nothing else happens.
- ❖ **Situational Morality**
 - Re-translating the principles of God to fit the perversions of a human community leads inevitably to a social code we may call “situational morality,” or “situational ethics.”
 - People begin to interpret when and where a divine principle applies and how it applies in such situations.
 - So, theft is theft if you steal from a working man, but theft is not theft if you steal from a rich man and give it to a poor man (this is Robin Hood morality)
- ❖ Ultimately, this downward trend toward abounding iniquity results in **gross disobedience to God’s moral laws among human societies**
 - Lawlessness and loss of a moral code always begins with rebellion against, or despising of the moral law of the Creator of man.
 - When this is done, people in such a society will quickly find ways to ignore and defy law after law, and law keepers will find excuse after excuse for not enforcing the laws, principles, and moral codes of the land.
 - When this is the reality of a society, then lawlessness and wickedness, which is iniquity, will abound
 - This is called the domino effect.
 - Can be well illustrated by chronic arsenic poisoning

II. What Are The Most Prominent Evidences of Love Waxing Cold?

- ❖ Little Care For Lost Souls
 - Witnessing declines

- Prayer for salvation of others declines
- Living as a witness declines
- ❖ Neglect and Cheapening of Religious Principles
 - Including church attendance and commitment
 - And personal prayer
 - And standing for pure doctrine
 - And holy living
 - And practical love for fellow-believers
 - And Pursuing personal priorities over the Lord's priorities
- ❖ A Rise of Profanity In The Lives of God's People
 - Thinking like the world
 - Living like the world
 - Talking like the world

III. What is the Relationship Between Iniquity Abounding and Love of Many Waxing Cold?

- ❖ We need to understand what happens when iniquity abounds in order to understand why it is the catalyst that brings a decline in love. (Illustrate: you can see water turning into ice when you see a cold front move in and drop the temperatures below 32 degrees. You know it is the cold that causes it, but you don't know the inner workings of how that happens unless you study how cold air saps the energy out of molecules and causes them to get sluggish and stop moving, thus water freezes because of an inner action upon its molecules by the cold. In the same way, abounding iniquity has a depressing impact on human societies.). Some things that are the cause:
 - People seeing wrongdoers going unpunished (and form the wrong opinion about it)
 - **Psalms 37:35** "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree."
 - **Psalms 73:4-5** "For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm. 5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men."
 - **Psalms 73:12-14** Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. 13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."
 - Wrongdoing unpunished builds resentment, doubt and schism which depresses love
- ❖ People seeing wrongdoers rewarded (and developing the wrong attitude about it)
 - **Psalms 73:3** For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked
 - **Psalms 73:7** Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.
 - People may get resentful causing hardness and smothering of love.
 - People may forget Psa. 37:16 "A little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked."
 - Iniquity rewarded causes the same thing as iniquity unpunished; people are filled with a sense that the universe, or at least the society is unfair, and love waxes cold
- ❖ People seeing upright defenders of morality slammed (and become offended that they seem to have no champion)
 - **Matthew 18:6** "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were

- drowned in the depth of the sea.”
- **Luke 18:7-8** “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”
 - When people who try to do right are abused and despised, there is a great temptation to quit doing right, to quit upholding right. This in itself stifles the expressions of love.
 - ❖ People being tempted to go the easy route of lawlessness because of criticism and for reward
 - When people are criticized for being sticklers about doing right they are tempted to think it is better to forget about standing up for legality and truth.
 - **Isaiah 59:14** And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.
 - When the human heart observes others becoming famous and rich for being lawless, and the lines have become blurred in their society because truth about wrong and right has been twisted, they are encouraged to follow the same path
 - They tend to forget **Proverbs 4:14** Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*.
 - Not upholding fundamental law, especially the moral law of God, and abandoning lawful paths quenches the ability to feel or exercise love by loading the person with guilt and building a defensive attitude
 - ❖ People doubting God’s intent to punish iniquity and reward righteousness (which is certain)
 - **Romans 2:6** (God) “Who will render to every man according to his deeds....”
 - **Psalms 37:38** “...transgressors shall be destroyed together....”
 - **Psalms 58:11** “...Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”
 - **Proverbs 11:18** “...to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward.”
 - ❖ People becoming resentful of the wicked (in other words, they resent the unbeliever who might otherwise provoke mercy and pity from them, and a love for their souls)
 - ❖ People may begin to resent God and His processes, which will truly stifle love’s growth.
 - ❖ I close with this comment: The Lord said that in the end iniquity would abound and the love of many would wax cold...but **He never said we had to be among that many.**