

Date : 27 November 2022
Theme : The Return of Christ Jesus
Topic : A warning before the Rapture: When love for Jesus grows cold
Passage : *Matthew 24:9-12*
Key verse : *...because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of most (many kjv) will grow cold... Matthew 24:12*

Introduction

When Jesus was asked regarding future events *Matthew 24:3*, He answered His disciples about...

- a moment when the temple would be destroyed.
- a season of unimaginable world turmoil and persecution
- the rise of false prophets and great falling from the faith
- a specific moment of defilement of the Temple
- world-threatening tribulation which would be cut short right before His return as King and Judge.

However, the most heart-breaking revelation among our Lord's statements is what will happen to *many* in His church.

• Many caught unawares.

...many will come in My Name...deceive many Matthew 24:5

...many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other... Matthew 24:10

...many false prophets will appear and deceive many people... Matthew 24:11

...because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of most (many kjv) will grow cold. Matthew 24:12

• Many caught in the cold wave.

There is coming an ominous cold *...the love of most will grow cold...Matthew 24:12* which our Lord Jesus foretells that is worse than pestilence which kills or persecution which threatens. It is a cold wave that oozes a poisonous gas in the church and sends a cold chill to the body of Christ.

• What is the context of this cold wave

The context of this evil chill of heart is before the Rapture; for our being Raptured or not depends on the state of our hearts. Cold love, Jesus says, comes from the increase of lawlessness – a spirit of lawlessness in our hearts that says...*I will not submit, I do not like people (or my parents) telling me what to do; even God...* The root of growing coldness of love in the church is a deep hostility to authority and lack of submission to each other. Lawlessness means we want our own law, a disregard of God's laws, His ways or His will. We want to create our own meaning and identity and create our own rules.

1. Why is our heart important to God?

a) God looks at our heart; He rejects outward appearances.

• God does not see as man sees. God told Samuel not to make the mistake of looking at a man's outward appearance. Earlier on, He had revealed to Samuel that He sought a man after God's own heart *1 Samuel 13:14*. The Lord looks into the heart of man. *1 Samuel 16:7*

- The heart is the spirit man within, the hidden springs of life. The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord searching all the inner depths of his heart. *Proverbs 20:27 (NASB)*
- The real you *...inner self...* *1 Peter 3:4*. The heart of the issue is the issue of the heart – seat of man's moral nature and spiritual life; desires, affections, power of reasoning, imagination, conscience, intentions, purpose, will, faith.

• God takes appropriate actions when He looks at our heart.

The Lord rejected Saul for his cowardly disobedience *1 Samuel 15:23*

He rejected all of David's older brothers who might have a kingly appearance: tall, handsome, well-built.

God chose the youngest instead, even David, who was not at all considered by his father.

b) The Lord Jesus vomits out lukewarm Christians

i) What is lukewarm love and why does it displease Christ so?

• Lukewarm love is not love. Like water that is neither hot nor cold. It is comfortable body temperature, but distasteful that Jesus said He would vomit out such immediately *Revelation 3:16*. He completely rejects lukewarm Christians. They are so offensive to Him that He leaves and stays out of their fellowship. Can Jesus live with such a person? Obviously not. The Laodicean church fell into this trap of being lukewarm. *Revelation 3:16*

- The very first commandment is to love God with all our heart, mind, strength and soul. This love is exclusive to Jesus. You cannot love God and money at the same level. Jesus must come first in our affection. The condition to seek Him first precedes His promise to give us what we ever need. *Matthew 6:33*.
- Lukewarm love is to give service to Jesus that is unenthusiastic, slack and slothful *Matthew 25:26*
...*I know your works...that you are neither cold or hot... Revelation 3:15*
- It is to be self-sufficient, living a life as if there is no need for Jesus
...*you say, I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing... Revelation 3:17*
 - Many times we live that way – we do not need Jesus for provision or protection.
 - We do not pray – we are fine without it
 - We do not surrender our resources – we think we acquire them by our ability.
 - We do not read God's Word – we think we know everything that we need to know.
- It is to persevere and endure hardness, like the Ephesian church, but they have left their first love *Revelation 2:3, 4*
 - Although the Ephesian church was commended for many good qualities, Jesus was not impressed simply because they had left their first love. To leave is to forsake or to neglect. To put Jesus first is to place Him above all others, first in degree. Love for Jesus must supersede all else, because He is Lord of all or not Lord at all.

2. Where is this evil chill of heart seen today?

...many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many. ...because iniquity (lawlessness nkjv) shall abound... Matthew 24:12

- a) In the church when the love of Christian waxes cold, does it surprise us how nauseous we are to Jesus? When love declines, what cold preaching we have; all music and noise, but conveys no melody in the heart to God; no praying and no giving.
False teachers of heresy will lead astray *many* in the church as well.
- b) What are the distressing signs of lawlessness today?
This happens when we have no plan to honour God's laws or respect God's rule in our lives. The Word of God is not honoured by those who have no plans to keep their covenant to love Jesus as Lord or to remain faithful to the covenant. These are respectable people but whose ways are faithless. (Faithfulness has to do with covenant keeping. Faithlessness, with covenant breaking).
- While there is lawlessness outside, it is lawlessness in the church that is most disgusting to Jesus. *2 Timothy 3:2-5* give this list.
- Self-absorbed
 - *lovers of themselves* (self-seeking)
 - *lovers of money* (rather than God)
 - Boastful pride (I.me)
 - *boastful* (empty pretences)
 - *arrogance* (contempt for others)
 - *abusive* (blasphemous, disregard for God, contempt for men)
 - *disobedient to their parents* (no respect for authority)
 - Entitled crudeness
 - *ungrateful* (sense of entitlement)
 - *unholy* (honour things that are shameful, shame things that are honourable, profane)
 - *unloving* (without family love, indifference to welfare of others)
 - Self-promoting
 - *implacable* (disagreeable, irreconcilable, unbending, no team spirit)
 - *slanders* (malicious gossip, promote self, demean others)
 - *without self-control* (impulsively wild, entitled people unwillingly to work hard)
 - Fierce
 - *brutal* (savage)
 - *haters of good*, not lovers of the good (honour wicked, resist truth)
 - *treacherous* (betrayal, promote self)
 - *rash* (self-focus will cause destruction to others without thought of the future)

- pleasure seeking
 - *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*
- show of religion (not biblical)
 - *having a form of godliness but denying its power*

3. What serious action is needed on our part?

If the love of many may wax cold, how can we consider ourselves as being not in danger among the many? How shall we watch our steps lest we fall?

- a) Join the company of the few people... *who have not soiled their clothes... Revelation 3:4*
 - the vitality of the church seldom lies in the many, but always among the few.
Hebrews 10:24,25 commands that we do not get into the habit of not meeting.
- b) Be a faithful servant to give food in God's household ... *who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Master has put in charge of the servants in His household to give them their food at the proper time... Matthew 24:45*. It is taking responsibility to serve the household of faith.

As servants of Jesus, we have been assigned to feed others in His household. We are to do so with diligence, working with full awareness that our Master will return anytime, even though we may not know the exact time.

- c) Be a re-productive servant
 - The Parable of the Talents *Matthew 25:14-30*
 - The man travelling to a far country is Jesus
 - The servants represent us
 - The talents are money or resources delivered to us according to our individual ability.
 - Two of the servants put their talents to work and doubled their God-given resources.
The 3rd servant did nothing with his one talent. Then came the Day of accounting.
 - i) The first and second servants settled their accounts with the Master by showing what they had produced. The Master was happy with them and commended them. *Well done, good and faithful servant!* They accomplished what they were supposed to do for they were faithful to the Master, neither skiving nor transferring the wealth to their own accounts. They had carried out the FEW things required by the Master. The Lord rewarded each with possessions many times the value of their output and with fulness of joy.
 - ii) The 3rd servant did nothing. Why? He had no love for His Master and did not trust Him. The words he used on His Master revealed an absence of covenant relationship.
 - *...a hard man... Matthew 25:24(a)* = hard hearted, the same word used to describe Pharaoh who refused to release the Israel slaves requested by Moses.
 - *Reaping what you have not sown... Matthew 25:24(b)*
He accused His Master, instead of acknowledging Him as the Lord and he, as servant, whose duty it was to obey.
 - iii) The Master took away the talent from him and gave it to the most productive servant.
The Master's verdict: The real reason for his failure to be productive was his heart of wickedness/evil and laziness. ... *You wicked, lazy servant! Matthew 25:26*

Therefore, the Lord expects us to take His commands seriously. The servant who did not obey was cast into outer darkness, the place of condemnation. He had refused to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ over His life. He cannot expect to be welcomed into Christ's Kingdom at the Rapture.

Application

- Awareness of the condition of our hearts will prompt us to correct ourselves.
 - Do you think you will be taken up at the Rapture?
 - Yes
 - No
 - On what basis is your confidence based?
Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts. Proverbs 21:2
- What do you consider the biggest obstacle for you to be Raptured?
And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. Matthew 24:12
 - lawlessness
 - love grown cold
 - left first love
 - lukewarm, neither hot or cold
- What change do you wish to see? (See Point 3 above)
...he who stands firm to the end will be saved... Matthew 24:13
Our Lord Jesus reminds His disciples of their personal responsibility at the end times.
 - Learn from faithful servants (Point 3a)
Names: (a) _____ (b) _____
 - Be a faithful servant to give food in God's household (Point 3b)
 - Be a productive servant without complaining (Point 3c)