

God's News In The News

Week One Hundred Sixty-Five

Last Days Challenge: Overcoming The End-Times Chill

A Chilling Warning

And the love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness and iniquity... (Matt 24:12, AMPC)

Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. (Matt 24:12, NASB)

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold... (Matt 24:12, NIV)

For many others, the overwhelming spread of evil will do them in—nothing left of their love but a mound of ashes. (Matt 24:12, TMG)

Whenever I focus on a warning about the end times like this one in **Matthew 24** I try to make sure I don't read anything into it that isn't there. And I try to see what the various translations do with these points. The four translations above have several points highlighted with lawlessness and wickedness being the cause of love waning or literally growing cold. The evil that multiplies in an overwhelming fashion is too much for many people and it creates a condition of a heart that beats slower and loses strength because the temperature is dropping all around it. The original language helps us to understand the process. The word for this coldness is *psuchó* (*psoo'-kho*) and can mean *to breathe cool by blowing, to grow cold, 'spiritual energy blighted or chilled by a malign or poisonous wind'* and it points to the outward wind of things around us beating on us like a deadly wind chill factor on a deep winter night. Interestingly, this word is only used here in the Bible.

Where Is This Chilling Wind Coming From?

Then you will be tortured and killed and hated all over the world because you are mine, 10 and many of you shall fall back into sin and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and lead many astray. (Matt 24:9-11, TLB)

These preceding verses help give us more of the prophetic picture. We read about torture, persecution, and intense hatred of believers, often from inside the Body of Christ. We see people betraying each other as they fall back into their lives of sin before they were saved. And then we read about false prophets showing up and leading people away from Him. Add that to the overall environment of wickedness and evil from outside the church and then the complicity of religious leaders inside the church falling in line with things clearly prohibited by the Bible and failing to preach the whole counsel of God and these verses mirror much of what we see around us today.

It's Been Bad Before

The case can be made that things were like this before the Flood and in Sodom and Gomorrah. And we read about ancient civilizations that were really wicked like Babylon and the people in the promised land when Israel took that land. The disciples surely thought that Rome fit the bill and may have thought that they were living in that environment, especially when the Christian persecutions began. World powers have risen and fallen that made it hard for believers to stay on fire for Jesus before, so some would question how today is any worse than those times. And their arguments seem to back that assertion up as they cite example after example of dark times in the history of the church. This line of reasoning misses one big point: Jesus was warning His people about a time in the future where these things would happen, a time right before He would come back where the atmosphere would be the most intense it has even been. In light of this, yes the examples of past evil days were bad, but this time would be worse still if that was possible. It is like He was telling us that those previous times were foreshadows of things to come, but right before He returns things would pale in comparison to them.

The Greatest Persecution Is Yet To Come

For there will be persecution such as the world has never before seen in all its history and will never see again. (Matt 24:21, TLB)

Jesus, who was fully God, is telling us that He saw the days we live in and that no other period in time will see the persecution coming. This phrasing is not complex. We don't need to parse it over and over again and look for some hidden meaning. While a lot of commentators point to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the fulfillment of these verses, the full context of this Olivet Discourse describes a future time well beyond that moment in time. John, who wrote **Revelation** was alive when this happened and saw much worse things yet to happen that agree with what Jesus was describing. The totality of what Jesus told His disciples could only point to a worldwide coldness and persecution that would envelope the entire globe, something that has never happened before in all of history. Unfortunately, that isn't the kind of thing that makes us feel all good, does it? In America, we have seen very few times like this and many generations have lived in relative peace and comfort. My parents generation lived in arguably the most prosperous and comfortable period of any country in the history of the world. And yet, the cracks in land of the free and home of the brave are becoming larger and larger as we descend into a country that exports more filth and leads the world in sex trafficking. None of this bodes well for the Church, who is called to be the salt and light in our world as they champion lifestyles that God abhors and shrinks from calling sin what it is.

Well, Thanks For The Uplifting Message

And you may think there is no upside to all of this, right? I didn't go down this road to leave you depressed and hopeless. Far from it, I want us to realize that in the darkest time the world has ever seen, the Gospel will prosper and actually already is prospering. Paul the apostle told us that where sin abounds, grace abounds even more. And even in the end times rendition given by Jesus we see these two major points:

13 But those enduring to the end shall be saved.

14 "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it, and then, finally, the end will come. (Matt 24:13-14, TLB)

I like how *The Message* version translates these verses:

"Staying with it—that's what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry, and you'll be saved. All during this time, the good news—the Message of the kingdom—will be preached all over the world, a witness staked out in every country. And then the end will come. (Matt 24:13-14)

You see, for those who are looking for a silver lining here, for the Gospel to reach every corner of the earth, God's protection and provision must be evident. And Jesus knew that if His people take the chilling winds of evil and resist it, He will give them hearts of fire. The antidote for a cold heart is Holy Spirit living in us and then us doing the works of Him who sent us. In every example of dark times, we can find fires of revival stirring in His people. And that folks is very, very good news!