

9. Signs of the Times

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20.03.2009 20:55 - Обновлено 12.06.2010 08:56

9. THE GROWING COLD OF LOVE



Another very symptomatic sign of our times is the next one mentioned in this chapter of Matthew: that the love of many grows cold. This seems to be a definite characteristic of our times, to a quite greater degree than at any time in past history. One can see this in what can be called nihilism. People commit crimes for no particular reason, not for gain but just for a thrill because they do not have God inside them. In all kinds of places now, one can see the lack of normal human relationships in families, which produces cold people. It is this kind of people who, in a totalitarian society, are used as slave drives, working in the concentration camps and so forth.

Recently we had the tragedy in Jonestown, which was composed of American citizens. The people there were idealists who devoted themselves utterly to a cause. Although it's come out now that it was actually a communist commune, still the people were supposed to be Christians. The leader was a minister of the so-called Church of Christ, one of the mainline denominations. And yet these people, supposedly having some awareness of God and Christianity, coldly killed each other. Those who drank and administered the poison to their children did so with calm faces. There's no problem: that's just your duty, that's what you're told to do. This kind of coldness is what Christ is talking about. Any kind of normal human warmth has been abolished because Christ has gone out of the heart; God is gone. This is a frightful sign of our times. In fact, the very thing that happened in Jonestown is a warning because it looks as though much worse things are going to come. This is satan's work, quite obviously. [Next...](#) Just a year or two before that occurred, we heard of what happened in Cambodia. A small party of men—some ten or twenty altogether—took a whole country in their hands and killed off at least two million people quite ruthlessly, based on some abstract ideas. We're going to get back to the country, they said; therefore, everybody is to leave the cities. If you can't leave the city, you die. People in the hospitals had to go from their operating tables, and if they couldn't go, they died—they were shot and left in a ditch. Corpses were piled up in the cities—it was frightful.

This was the same kind of thing as what occurred in Jonestown: coldness based upon the idea—which looks idealistic—of bringing communism to earth. It turns out that Dostoyevsky was right. In his book *The Possessed*, written in the 1870s, there was a Russian character named Shigalov, a theoretician, who had an absolute theory of how communism could come to earth. He believed that the ideal state upon earth will be true communism. Unfortunately, he said, in order to make sixty million people happy, you have to kill a hundred million people. But those sixty million people will be happier than anyone else has ever been happy, and the hundred million people will be like fertilizer for the future world paradise. It so happens that in Russia there have been exactly a hundred million people missing since 1917, of which at least sixty

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million were killed by the Soviets themselves.

So this sign is very, very present in our times: that love grows cold. This occurs among Christians also, not just in the world at large.

Then another sign, which in our times has reached greater dimensions than every before, is that the Gospel is being preached in the whole world. This, of course, is true in that the very text of the Gospel is being spread in almost all the languages which are spoken on the earth now—at least a thousand languages, I think. Moreover, the Orthodox Gospel is being preached all over Africa now. We send our magazines to Uganda and Kenya, and receive letters back—very touching letters from young African boys who are converts to Orthodoxy. They have the utmost respect for their bishop; they go to seminary. It's obvious that a very Orthodox feeling is being given to these people in Africa. They are very simple people. Orthodoxy does not have to be complicated if there are very simple people to preach the Gospel to. It's only when others come in to challenge it and to say that the Scripture means something else, trying to give over-literal interpretation which mean doing away with priests and bishops, etc., that the people begin to get mixed up. If they're preached the Orthodox Gospel, simple people respond now in the same way that they've always responded in the past. The problem is, rather, with complicated people.