

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE LAPSE OF LOVE

By: C. D. Cole

"Thou hast left thy first love," Revelation 2:4.

The passage before us reveals the earthly objects of heaven's concern. Heaven is not so much concerned with the world's financial or political or educational centers, but with the churches of Christ. Heaven's concern is for spiritual rather than material interests on this earth.

We have heaven's judgment of the condition of Christ's churches. This series of messages revealing the condition of the churches of Christ in the first century show us that heaven's judgment alone can be trusted. Human judgment, no doubt, would give a different answer. To be practical, and know, what heaven's judgment is of the churches today, we must compare present conditions with the conditions in the first century and wherein our faults are like theirs we must take warning, and wherein our virtues are like theirs, we can find comfort in Christ's commendation. In getting this message to our hearts, we will consider Christ, the church at Ephesus, its condition, its correction, and its rewards.

The Christ...

...as author of this message. This message is from Him who is the faithful and true witness. It is the faithful testimony of the One who knows the truth about the churches.

The Christ...as the inspector and judge of the churches. He shows what is wrong with the churches and what is needed. Whatever He sees worthy of

commendation, He commends, and whatever He sees to condemn, He does not fail to condemn. And in infinite wisdom He judges the motives as well as the outward conduct. He reads the heart and mind; He knows the spirit in which all is done. *"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord,"* I Corinthians 4:3-4.

The Christ...as present with the churches. He is seen holding the angels in His right hand and walking among the churches. He is no distant spectator; He is not telling what He has heard; He is not repeating a rumor; He is not spreading harmful gossip about the churches. He has intimate firsthand knowledge of the churches He describes.

The Church

He is writing to a particular church. He is not describing kingdom conditions but the state of a particular church. He is not describing things in general, but He is very particular.

The church in Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the great cities of that day. It had one of the seven wonders of the world; the temple of Diana. It was saturated with pagan religion.

The church. It had a great history, and its present condition was in striking contrast with its past.

Its past. It had been a church of earnest people and faithful preachers. It had enjoyed the labors of the apostle Paul, the

eloquent Apollos, the faithful Timothy, and the beloved John.

Its present. Its present was not as good as its past. It was not wholly bad. There are things to commend, and there is one thing to condemn.

The commendation. The church is commended for three things:

a. Its works. *"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience,"* Revelation 2:2. It was not a dead church in the sense of inactivity. There are many such as that today; doing nothing, not even disturbing the devil. Too dead to be persecuted. But the Ephesians were toilsome and tireless workers. They toiled at their works and endured in their toil. They did not give up. They kept going. And their works were done for Christ's sake. They had not forgotten Him.

b. Its discipline. It was strict. *"And know thou canst not bear them which are evil,"* Revelation 2:2. Spurgeon: "They would not put up with unclean living." They opposed evil among prominent members. *"And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars...But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans,"* Revelation 2:2, 6.

(Continued on Page 3)

THE WORD MADE FLESH

By: C. D. Cole

It is generally conceded that the exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown; not even the year to say nothing of the month and day. The important thing is that the Saviour was born.

As he lay in the manger cradle in Bethlehem, the angel announced His birth to shepherds as they kept their flock by night. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," Luke 2:9-11.

The greatest announcement to ever fall on human ears is the announcement of a Saviour. A Saviour is our deepest need, for we are all sinners. Not vicious, not criminals, but sinners.

It is of great importance that we have the right Saviour. There are many religions offering many Saviours, but there is only one true Saviour. A man's Saviour is the person or thing he trusts for salvation. The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous. Some trust a church, but the church is not the Saviour. And some trust a priest or a preacher, but these are not Saviours.

We ought to be very particular and very careful what we trust for salvation. There are two things I want to know about the person or object I trust for salvation: (1) Is he able to save me, and (2) Is he willing to save me? When I use these two tests, I find only one person can qualify as my Saviour; the Lord Jesus Christ.

In His word He says He is willing to save. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. He never turned anybody away who came to Him. And I believe He is able to save. I believe He is able to save because of who he is; Jesus Christ is God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," John 1:1. Because of what He did on the cross: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath

he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Hebrews 9:26. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed," I Peter 2:24. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified", Hebrews 10:14. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," I Peter 3:18. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Galatians 3:13. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," II Corinthians 5:21. Because of what God says about Him: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," I John 5:9-12.

Mr. Moody was once dealing with a lost man, urging him to trust the Lord Jesus Christ. The man said, I can't believe. And Mr. Moody replied, Can't believe whom? But the man kept repeating, I can't believe. And Mr. Moody kept saying, Can't believe whom? This shows us how foolish unbelief is.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son," I John 5:9. God's testimony is greater than men's for it is absolute truth. Men may not always tell the truth, but God never lies. God's testimony is great-

er than men's in matter or what it is about. Men testify about things not very important, but God's testimony is about His Son. God has gone on record as saying that eternal life is in His Son. God's testimony is greater because of the fatal results of rejecting it. We may reject human testimony without reaping very much harm, but to reject God's testimony about His Son is fatal. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life", I John 5:12. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36.

The life we have in Christ is eternal life, a life that cannot be lost, a life that is not affected by disease and physical death.

Man is more than a physical being, and he has more than a body to think of. Man is a moral being; a being accountable to God; and as a sinner, man is dead in trespasses and sins; and without a real Saviour, he will experience the second death in the lake of fire. Life and death stand not for existence and nonexistence, but for conditions of existence. Death is the result of separation. The body without the spirit is dead, but it is still in existence. Moral death is the separation of the soul from God. And to have moral life is to be brought back to God. Christ suffered the just for the unjust to bring

us to God, and when we trust Christ for salvation we have life before God. To live before God means to be justified and not condemned for our sins. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Romans 8:1. The Bible says that we are all sinners because the first Adam sinned. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...Therefore as by the offense on one judgment came upon all men to

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condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

If what Christ did in obedience unto death is what makes me righteous before God, than I will trust Him and Him alone. If what I did could make one righteous, than he would have to trust me to become righteous.

THE LAPSE OF LOVE **(Continued from Page 1)**

c. Its persecution. It was persecuted. *"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted,"* Revelation 2:3. They suffered in patience.

The condemnation. *"Thou hast left thy first love."* The church was still busy but its love for Christ had waned. It was still zealous in discipline but its love for Christ had cooled. It was still unpopular with the world but its love for Christ had lapsed. This shows what a church may be and have and yet not love Christ as it ought—works done from a sense of duty to Christ but not out of love for Christ. Works that are not a glad service.

The Correction

Remember. *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen,"* Revelation 2:5. Their lapse of love is called a fall. Memory plays an important part in the affairs of the heart. Let your mind go back to the days soon after your conversion. Remember the joy when you first found the Lord, or were found of Him. Remember the joy you had in the Bible; in prayer; in church worship.

You did not know much but you

loved much. There can be knowledge without love. With some the more they know the less they love. *"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth,"* I Corinthians 8:1.

Repent. Churches need to repent as well as lost sinners. Saints need to repent. This is not a question of salvation. Churches need to change their mind and put more love into their works. The church at Ephesus was working for and serving Christ without love. Let us beware that we do not lapse in our love for Christ.

I have read of a wife from whose life her husband's love has gone.

"Her hair is gray and face pale, her eyes have lost their luster through scalding tears. She has everything a husband can give but love. That is gone and home is a hell. Her eyes blaze as she says to her husband: What do I care about your silks and diamonds and silver and mansion? I would go back to the cottage where you found me and put on the calico I used to wear, I would walk the bare floors like a queen, if I could only have back the love you gave me which made earth a heaven to my soul." All is hollow mockery without love.