

## The First Love

**Key Verses:** Rev 2:4-5 ~ *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” - NIV*

**Power Point:** We might do many activities for Christ but our love for those things must not take the place of importance over our love for Christ.

1. Rev 2:1-3 Although the letters were written to the churches the truths are timeless and applicable to the members of the church today.

- If Jesus wrote us a letter what would he say about our devotions, actions, relationships, faith and our walk?
- What things would be important to Him?

2. Rev 2:4-6, Jer 2:2 ~ Abandoning our first love happens quietly and gradually and at times by unnoticeable shifts of focus.

- What does Jesus mean by first love?

3. Rev 2:5 ~ Remember what a joy it was and what the Lord Jesus meant to us when we first met Him.

- Compare your walk with God when you first met Him and now. Is there a difference?

**Application:** Have you left your first love? God is calling you back to the place of first love. Activity isn't a sign of intimacy. It is important that when we work in kingdom business that we don't lose the right motivation - a true love for Jesus, the head of the church.

# The First Love Sunday January 10, 2010

If Jesus wrote us a letter what would he say? What would he say to each of us individually, about our devotion, our actions, our relationships, our faith, and our walk? What things would be important to Him? What would he say to the local church leadership?

The seven letters written to the seven churches in Asia, during the time of John's exile to the Island of Patmos, are the words of Christ expressing his love, concern, observations and admonition of the churches.

Although the letters were written to the churches that are addressed the truths are timeless and applicable not only to each local church but the members within the church.

Just as in the first century there existed the seven kinds of churches with different issues side by side so today there exist the different kinds of churches side-by-side and even members within the local church who can identify with one of the churches.

In the next few weeks we will take a look at the letters that Jesus dictated to John and hear what the Holy Spirit says to us today. Through the letters will be challenged, encouraged, motivated and brought to a place of reflection and change.

Each letter ends with a command to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and a promise to those who "overcome".

We already took a look at the last letter to the church in Laodecia today we will take a look at the first letter to the Church in Ephesus.

**Text:** Revelations 2:1-7

## **Background on Ephesus:**

It was the nearest city to the Island of Patmos where the Apostle John was exiled and it was well known for its learning, art, wealth and Greek-Roman mystery cult religions. It was a beautiful city with great temples, the most famous being the Temple to the Goddess Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

According to the tradition of the early church, Mary, Peter and Philip lived here over time and the apostle John lived in Ephesus in his old age.

## **The Church**

The church was established in Ephesus under the Apostle Paul's ministry.

He had witnessed in the Jewish synagogue for several months winning and forming a group of believers with which the church would be established.

It was in Ephesus that Paul found some of John the Baptists disciples and preached to them about Jesus and baptized them in water, laid hands on them to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:1-7)

It was in this city that God used Paul with miracles where the sick were healed and demons cast out. (Acts 19:8-12)

It was in Ephesus where the sons of Sceva a chief priest tried to cast out devils in Jesus name and where sent running for their lives stripped and wounded. (Acts 19:13-17)

### **Listen to how Luke writes about the revival which taking place in Ephesus:**

*Act 19:17-20 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

As a result of Paul's preaching people were turning away from false gods especially the Goddess Diana which was the Goddess of the Ephesians.

Demetrius a silversmith who made a living selling shrines of the Goddess Diana was angry cause his sales were down thanks to the revival stirred up strife and got the business and towns people to turn against Paul. (Acts 19:24-33)

God was moving and the church was growing in Ephesus.

Paul would set Timothy as the bishop or overseer of the local church in Ephesus.

Priscilla, Aquilla, and Apollos all had been in the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus is the only church of the seven to which an Epistle was written.

### **Listen to Paul's final words and warning to the elders of the church of Ephesus**

Read Acts 20:17-38

What a rich heritage the Church of Ephesus had. Paul, Timothy, Aquilla, Priscilla and Apollos had all blessed and spoken into the life of the church in Ephesus speaking to them about God's plan and purpose for them.

However approximately 37 years have gone by when Jesus writes the letter addressed to the Angel of the church.

*The church was called to be a light in a dark place, it was meant to affect the city and not the city it.*

### **Lets look at the Letter Jesus Writes to Ephesus**

#### **First the commendation:**

**Rev 2:1,2 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works..."**

Lets make sure we understand what Jesus means by "I know your works..."

When he uses this term he is referring to their history, background, trials, tribulations, problems, discouragement and all the activity of the church. HE KNOWS ALL THE DETAILS!

He stands in the midst of every church and sees and weighs all the motives of the heart.

Verse 2,3 and 6 **I know your works, your labors and your patience and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary...(6) Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

Jesus is saying is, you have a lot of activity, work hard and even have endurance and patience in the things you do for me. I appreciate that you have really done everything to watch out for wolves and won't tolerate their shenanigans and deceptions. You even live holy lives and hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

### **Who were the Nicolaitans?**

Some scholars say that there was a man by the name of Nicolaus of Antioch, who apostatized from the truth and formed a cult which taught (among other doctrines) that one must indulge in sin in order to understand it.

They gave themselves over to sensuality with the explanation that such sins did not touch the spirit. The church in Ephesus hated it. A little later on we will see that the church in Pergamos tolerated it.

### **The admonition**

Rev 2:4 **Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**

(AMP) But I have this [*one charge to make*] against you: that you have left (abandoned) the love that you had at first [*you have deserted Me, your first love*].

This is the only fault they have but it's pretty serious.

What does Jesus mean by first love?

**First means** – firstly in time, place order or importance

The bride was found painstakingly working for him with much activity but her love for other things took the place of importance over the love she had for Him. In the place of a bride loving Him he finds a slave working for him.

### **Listen to the Fathers description of first love:**

Jeremiah 2:2 (ESV) "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

**Illustrate:** Perhaps those who are married can relate with the Fathers description of first love.

Abandoning our first love happens quietly and by gradual and at times unnoticeable shifts of focus.

**Illustration of church activity:** Let illustrate how this shift can happen. A man or woman gives their life to Christ falls in love with Him and joins a local church. After a few years of being a Christian, that person becomes a leader in the church with very heavy responsibilities. But something happens along

the way. They begin to drift as a disciple and find themselves motivated and nourished by the organization or by desire to hold power. The first love has been abandoned and in its place is a diet of activity and church work that will never sustain the spiritual life.

Leaving first love shows that the work was done without a sense of intimacy and when it gets to this, the work becomes legalistic and eventually lifeless.

**Biblical example:** Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)

Activity is not a sign of intimacy anymore than a man who spends time working around the house and running back and forth doing many things for his wife is cultivating intimacy with her.

**The Exhortation:**

Rev 2:5 **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.**

We need to remember when we first came to Christ? What a joy it was and what the Lord Jesus meant to us?

Repent! Repentance means to turn back to Him, and it is the message for *believers*.

**"Or else I will come to you and will remove the lampstand from its place, unless you repent."**

Think of how many churches in our day have been practically closed. Once the crowds came, but they don't come anymore because the Word of God is no longer being taught.

Jesus is still watching the lamps!

**Promise:** Rev 2:7 **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'**

**Conclusion:** Like the Church of Ephesus we are always called back to the place of the first love. Activity isn't a sign of intimacy. It is important that when we work in kingdom business that we not lose the right motivation, a true love for the head of the church. Living Holy is more than just keeping moral standards it is a life of surrender and love to the King.