

Falling In Love With Jesus Again

Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

The Book of Revelation is a letter to the seven churches of Asia Minor, which is Turkey now. Much of the New Testament are letters. Jesus calls these churches by name in Revelation 1:11. Jesus has a word for each of these congregations. Revelation was written about 95 AD, about 65 years after the resurrection of Christ.

Jesus appears to John on the island of Patmos. John is on the island of Patmos because he wouldn't stop preaching about Jesus, and he wouldn't die. Every disciple, other than Judas and John, were martyred. John wasn't martyred, but they tried to martyr him. Tertullian tells us they put him in a cauldron of boiling oil, but he continued to preach and suffered no harm.

John wrote the book of John and 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. The first of the seven letters was to Ephesus, which was the church John attended. Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus.

John was the disciple that took care of Jesus' mother until she passed away. The average age of life expectancy in John's time was in the fifties. People didn't live very long then. John lived to be over a hundred years old.

There's a story that at the end of John's life that he could only say three words. When he was at the church at Ephesus where he attended, people said, "John's here, the last living disciple of Jesus. Please come tell us what was it like walking with Jesus? What was it like being with Jesus?" He would walk to the front and say three words, "Love one another," then he went and sat down. For the last several years of his life, they were the only three words he would say, "Love one another." If you remember, John is the only one who recorded Jesus saying at the Last Supper, "A new commandment I give you, love one another." (John 13:34) He talks about love in 1 John and 2 John

Ephesus was an important city Commercially. It was located on the Castor River, just a few miles inland from the Aegean Sea. It was noted for its magnificent harbor, and ships came to Ephesus from all over the known world to bring their goods and their wealth. It was the richest city in Asia Minor.

Why did he write a letter to these seven churches? He did it because they were on the most populous trade route of that day. The route begins in Ephesus and go up and over clockwise and that's the order of the letter. The seven letters are: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. They were major churches at that time, and the whole letter of revelation, the book of revelation, was read to them.

What does Jesus look like? The answer is obvious, "We don't know." None of us have ever seen Him. We don't know what Jesus actually looked like, but we can make some assumptions that when He walked upon this earth, He was probably in His early 30's when He began His ministry, and He would not have had long hair because the culture at that time would not have been that way for Him. It's fair to assume that Jesus had a beard. He spent a lot of time outdoors, so His skin tone would likely be darker, like an olive color. It is typical of those in the Mediterranean countries. From an analysis of skeletal remains, archeologists have firmly established that the average build of a Jewish male at the time of Jesus was 5'11" with an average weight of about 110 pounds.

The picture that we view in Revelation 1 is not the lowly Galilean of the Gospels, but rather this is the glorified risen Christ, the Almighty God who has eyes like a flame of fire that pierce and burn. The vision that we are about to see was the vision that John saw while he was in exile on the island of Patmos. "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, I was on the island that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:9

The most detailed book of prophecy was written by John while he was basically in prison. He was exiled on an island. The Apostle John enjoyed no immunity from tribulation. Great things can't come from insignificant beginnings. The insignificant beginning of John was that one day he was in his fishing boat and Jesus came along and said, "Follow Me," and John followed Him, and he followed Him all the way to the isle of Patmos, where he gave us this book of Revelation. The Bible says that he was banished to Patmos, a small, barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea. It was 10 miles long, 6 miles wide, located in about 70 miles south of Ephesus. Tacitus, the historian, describes this time of trial in these words, "The sea was thickly strewn with exiles, the crags were stained with the blood of victims."

It was in these dark circumstances on this island, isolated from loved ones and all kinds of human fellowship, that John received the most extensive revelation of future things that's ever been shown to any man. He was shut out from the world, but he was shut in with God. The place of his banishment became the place of the vision of divine glory. John's exile from the world gave him power over the world. He had nothing to lose. He had nothing left to give. *"He was punished for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."* And so, it seemed only logical on the part of those who wanted to destroy the church that if they could get rid of the influence of the leader, they could diminish the influence of the church. Even though John was the disciple that Jesus loved, he still became a particular participant in tribulation and suffering.

If God loves you, that doesn't mean you won't go through tribulation. God loves us. He always has. He always will. You're going to have trouble. The only difference is now you know that God's going to help you through it. We don't get a pass from tribulation just because we're Christians. You don't get a pass because you're a pastor either. Tribulation follows us, and the Bible tells us that's the way it is.

"Not only that, but we also glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now, hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit he has given us." Roman 5:3-5

"In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

When we shine the light on Jesus, everything is right. The candlestick is not the light, but the bearer of the light. There is no inherent light in a candlestick. If you don't put light in it, it's not going to have any light. You light the candle. It doesn't have any light of its own. The light is the Lord's, not the church's, and the purpose of the light is to bring glory to the Father who is in heaven. We light up Jesus so that the Father will be glorified.

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

All of the letters have four parts: commendation, correction, counsel and crown.

- Commendation: "This is what you're doing well."
- Correction: "This is what you need to change."
- Counsel: "This is how you need to change it."
- Crown: "This is your reward."

These messages were not just for these churches, but for all churches of all time. All of them end with, either at the last line or close to the last of the letter, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches."* Anyone who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

The Lord has something personal to say to each of these churches. He comes to this church talking about His presence among them. This was a church that desperately needed to recognize the presence of the Lord in their midst.

The whole book of Revelation is to all the seven churches. "*John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.*" Revelation 1:4

The revelation of Jesus Christ is for all seven churches.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia." Revelation 1:11

"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." Revelation 1:20

John sees Jesus in the middle of seven golden lamp stands, and He has seven stars in His right hand. The seven lamp stands are the seven churches. Jesus is reminding us that we're not the light, but we are a lamp stand to hold the light. "You don't light a light," Jesus said, "and put it under a basket. You put it on a lamp stand." (Matthew 5:5) So the higher the church holds the light, the more people are going to come to Christ.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

1. The Commendation.

Jesus examines their reputation. Jesus begins His remarks to this church by talking about all that is right with this congregation. They had a lot going for them, and the Lord lets them know that He has seen all the good they are doing in His Name.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary." Revelation 2:1-3

- He Commends Their Service.

Jesus uses three words to describe the activity of this church.

deeds – This word means "*that which is accomplished.*" This church has accomplished much for the glory of the Lord. They have been working, and Jesus has seen it all.

hard work – This word means "*a beating.*" It speaks of "*intense work coupled with toil and trouble.*" It tells that this church was serving the Lord fervently. They were literally working their fingers to the bone.

perseverance – This word means "*steadfast endurance.*" It tells us that this church was working in spite of persecution. The people in Ephesus did not appreciate these people or their zeal for the Lord and they opposed them publicly and physically, but this church endured the opposition and persecution

- He Commends Their Separation.

"cannot tolerate wicked people"

The immorality and evil that defined their world was not a part of their lives. They took a stand on the side of morality, and they lived differently than the world around them.

God still demands that we be separate from this evil world. In our walk, our talk, our dress, our choices of entertainment, and in every area of life, we are commanded to be different from the lost world around us.

- He Commends Their Standards.

These people are praised because they held fast to correct doctrine. When people passed through their town claiming to be men of God, they put them to the test.

They are also commended because of their stand against the “*Nicolaitans*.” No one knows for sure who these people were, but there are a couple of possibilities. The word comes from two Greek words; “*Nikao*” – “*To Conquer*” and “*Laos*” – “*The People*.”

The Nicolaitans were a group of people who wanted to run the show and keep the people under their control.

The Ephesian believers refused to allow false doctrine to exist in their fellowship. They placed every teaching alongside the Word of God.

- He Commends Their Steadfastness.

“have not grown weary.” This is a church that has been carrying the load, enduring much affliction and opposition, laboring to the point of exhaustion, and they have done so without any signs of weariness. They were a very steadfast congregation.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

2. The Correction

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” Revelation 2:4

Jesus exposes the reality.

- His Disappointment

While they look good on the surface, there are problems in the heart that must be dealt with. Jesus let them know that this is a personal matter. He is grieved by the problems He sees in this church.

Jesus sees what we do, but He also sees what we are. He is able to look beneath the surface of our lives and see the condition of our hearts. When He finds error and sin in our hearts, it grieves Him.

- His Diagnosis

Jesus looks at these people whom He loves and for whom He died and tells them that they simply do not love Him like they used to. *“have left their first love.”* They still have love, but the deep, fervent, burning love that filled them with a passion to serve Him has left their hearts. They love their church; but they do not love Him like they used to. They love their doctrine; but they have lost their passion for Jesus. They love their work; but

they are not motivated in that work by a passionate love for Jesus. They are busy, but their hearts no longer burn for Him.

The Christian life is basically a love affair with the Lord Jesus Christ. Getting saved is falling in love with Him. Growing in salvation is falling deeper in love with Him. This love is the motive for all we do in His Name. Love is supposed to grow!

Would Jesus say to us, “*You don’t love me like you used to?*”

What is this *first love*?

Love Is Fervent! It is *emotional*. It moves the heart. It is not cold, dead, dusty, and dry. It is alive and vibrant.

It is *extravagant*. Love will make you spend money for things you can’t afford. Mary offered her alabaster box of ointment because of her love for Jesus. Real love never draws lines! Real love will give anything at any time for the object of that love. Can you remember when Jesus had absolute control of your heart and you could not tell Him no?

Does this describe your love for Him? Do you serve Him because you love Him, or do you do it from a sense of duty? It is possible to labor without love; but it is impossible to love without labor. You can work and not be in love with the Lord.

The church of Ephesus was active in the Lord’s work, but they were serving out of a sense of duty and not out of a fervent love for Him. They had become like Martha in Luke 10:38-42. She labored, but not out of love.

The correction is to return to Your First Love.

3. The Counsel

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” Revelation 2:5

Jesus explains the remedy. Jesus has not come to hurt them. He has come to help them! He offers a *word of commendation*, and now He speaks a *word of correction*. He tells them how they can fix what is wrong.

- Remembering

Jesus calls on these people to look back. He wants them to remember that moment when they came to know Him. He wants them to reflect on what He did for them. He wants them to recall all the excitement and emotion of those early days with Him. He wants them to look back to a time when their love for Him motivated everything they did.

- Repenting

The word “*repent*” speaks of “*a change of mind that leads to a change of action.*” Jesus is telling these people that they need to repent of the sin of not loving Him like they should. They need to search their hearts and change their attitude toward the Lord. Change the way you’re living and do the first works.

- Repeating

“do the first works.” They are told to start doing the things they used to do once again. We need to get back to the reading the Bible, back to praying, back to witnessing, and back to praising His name. We need to get back to the things that marked us when we were deeply in love with Jesus.

- Worship
- Word
- Witness

When we first got saved, we just wanted to spend time in the presence of God. Worship includes prayer, praise, and communion. We wanted to get to know God. We wanted to be in His presence. Then life gets busy. All of a sudden, we feel like we've left our first love.

The second is the Word. Maybe you're on a daily Bible reading program and try to read a chapter in the Old Testament, a chapter in the New Testament, and a Psalm every day. Have you ever opened up the Bible to read your daily Bible reading, and you think to yourself, "Oh, I've read this passage before." And then the next thought, which is from the enemy by the way, is, "You know, you're running a little late, so you could skip Bible reading today."

Have never had a nutritious meal, like one of your favorite, best-tasting, but nutritious meals placed in front of you, and you thought to yourself, "Oh, I've had this before, so I don't need to eat today." You don't think that, do you? You eat it anyway, even though you've eaten it before, because your body needs nutrition. Right? So when you open your Bible to a passage you've read before, read it anyway because your soul needs nutrition. Read it anyway.

When we got saved, we felt like we witnessed to everybody all the time. As we grew in the Lord, we kinda got away from that. You can with sincerity, work Jesus into your conversation. Share how you gave God control of your life, and now you really see everything as a blessing.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 2:7

4. The Crown

"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."
Revelation 2:7

“Overcomer” means *“to carry off the victory.”* Some in the church of Ephesus will hear the message and heed the message. These people will seek the Lord's face, fall in love with Him again, and be restored to that place of intimacy and fellowship. This reward is available to all who will seek it.