

Seoul Grace Community  
Revelation: A Study of Seven Churches  
"Your First Love"  
Revelation 2:1-7  
July 10, 2016

**1. Introduction**

- a. Jesus speaks directly to 7 churches in order to bring them back into a right relationship with him again
  - i. What does it mean to be the church?
  - ii. What should we be aware of? Cautious about?
  - iii. Jesus is writing love letters to the churches—asking them to remember him again and not simply go through the motions
  - iv. He speaks to seven churches in seven unique situations
- b. The first letter is to the church in Ephesus
  - i. Ephesus was the fourth largest city in known civilization at this time (Rome, Alexandria and Antioch were bigger) and was a major financial center because it rested on a waterway. It was home to many banks and had large reservoirs of money.
  - ii. It was honored by Rome with the official title of being a center for emperor worship. Its citizens also worshipped Artemis, the goddess of fertility.
  - iii. The city was religiously pluralistic, financially secure, and home to many different cultures and people groups.
  - iv. As for the church in Ephesus, we know it was founded by Paul on a brief visit, nurtured by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18) then it grew wildly under Paul's leadership for 2 years (Acts 19).
  - v. The church was founded by Paul, pastored by Timothy and John, home to Mary the mother of Jesus, and was situated in the center of the Christian movement at that time. It would seem that they were in a perfect position to have the best church possible.
  - vi. And Revelation 2:2-3 agree with this—the church was doing good works, working hard, persevering under persecution for not worshipping the emperor and Artemis, they were holding to true doctrines and staying faithful to God.
- c. Yet he holds against them the fact that they have forsaken their first love. (v. 4)
  - i. This is chilling and alarming.
  - ii. What marks out a true Christian is this holding of love, specifically "first love"

**2. "First Love" Defined (What is "First Love?")**

- a. In the bible there are many characterizations of our relationship to God.
  - i. Revelation is rather unique in its use of the bridegroom imagery between us (the church) and Jesus—he gets spousal authority over us
  - ii. He asks for a "first love" where we are enraptured by Jesus
  - iii. He wants romance, so to speak—deep spiritual intimacy like you have when you first start to fall in love with someone
  - iv. This is "head turning" love
    - 1. This is why he says remember (v. 5) like a spouse calling out another.
    - 2. Jesus wants this type of all-out love relationship
  - v. First Love is a love that puts Jesus at the center—in our "beds" so to speak (hence the groom/bridegroom imagery used throughout Revelation)

**3. "First Love" Lost (How did we lose our "First Love?")**

- a. Because of our hearts and the passions/desires we embrace instead of Jesus
- b. What was the church in Ephesus' problem?
  - i. Jesus isn't turning their heads anymore.
  - ii. They are a thriving church—but Jesus is no longer passionate in their hearts—he's not as attractive anymore.
- c. They got out of bed with Jesus and got into bed with "church"—doing the religious motions rather than centering their passion and focus on Jesus as they had done in the beginning

- i. "Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you will get neither."-C.S. Lewis *The Joyful Christian*
- ii. "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."-C.S. Lewis *The Weight of Glory*

**4. "First Love" Found (How do we retrieve our "First Love?")**

- a. He wants us to rejoice, remember and repent (v. 5) and then we get to eat of the tree of life (v. 7).
  - i. Look to the promise made to the church in Ephesus and made to us today. In v. 7, Jesus promises that the church could eat of the tree of life in paradise.
  - ii. Most commentators agree that the tree of life signifies Jesus and that he has granted clear, free access to the only God who will never abandon us.
  - iii. How do we get this? Rev. 1:7 is a direct allusion back to Genesis 3 when the tree in the middle of the garden represented man's desire to be like God-to be his own source of comfort, security and hope.
  - iv. And, like us, Adam and Eve chose to be their own god-to try and rule their own life in their own way based on their own conditions to "get into bed" with something else (their own sense of glory and entitlement)
  - v. And God put a flaming sword between them and the tree in the middle of the garden-a flaming sword of judgment that barred them access to the very place they were made to live-their true home in the presence of God!
- b. And now in Revelation, Jesus is granting this church free access yet again to this tree, to himself, to God. How? What happened to the sword? The flaming sword that "banished" Adam and Eve from the garden is now gone!
  - i. Matthew 27-the sky grows dark, rocks are split, the curtain is torn in two. He knew that the ultimate flaming sword of God's judgment would fall on him, he would lose his life, and he would find it.
  - ii. Jesus, in the greatest act of love, took that flaming sword for you and me.
  - iii. It's this promise, this reality, this love that must constantly enrapture our hearts
  - iv. Or we'll always be like the Ephesian church prone to begin to do good works without the motivation of a love so deep that Jesus would take the sword and the cross for us.
- c. A "first love," rekindled again and again by preaching the gospel to our hearts over and over (we deserve the flaming sword, yet Jesus took it for us) will make us ravished by him
  - i. "Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy ;  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me." –John Donne *Holy Sonnets*