

## **REVELATION (CH. 2)**

The goal of the messages of Jesus to the seven first-century churches was to challenge, encourage, warn and build up believers and churches throughout church history including our day of 2020.

The value of these messages for churches today includes: 1). A revelation of what Jesus Himself **loves** and **values** in His churches as well as what He **hates** and **condemns**. 2). Identifies the consequences of **disobedience** and **spiritual neglect** as well as the **rewards** of spiritual alertness, diligence and **faithfulness to Christ**. 3). **A standard** by which any church or individual may judge their “**true**” spiritual condition in relation to God. 4). An example of Satan’s methods for attacking and working against the Church and individual Christians (Judges 3:7).

How can the Church and “you” avoid spiritual decline and the resulting judgment by Christ? (a) First and most importantly churches (you) must be **willing** to “*hear what His Spirit says*” (2:5-7, 16-17, 21), which means they (you) must **listen** and **respond with obedience** to God’s “direct” message. The Word of Jesus Christ must always be the Church’s **guide** (1:1-5). (b) Churches (you) must continually **examine** their (your) spiritual condition in relation to God and **His standards**. When necessary, they (you) must **correct** their (your) actions and their (your) degree of toleration of worldly and immoral beliefs and behavior among their members (2:4, 14-15, 20; 20:1-3, 14-17). Spiritual decline can be **stopped** and **corrected** in any church or individual if there is **sincere repentance** and a sincere return to the **original love**, truth, purity and power of Jesus Christ and his biblical revelation (2:5-7, 16-17; 3:1-3, 15-22).

### **DO NOT CONFUSE THE CHURCH WITH A BUILDING, IT’S YOU!**

#### **The Church of Ephesus: Lost First Love (Revelation 2:1-7; Acts 20:29-31)**

**Ephesus:** This great city was also world-famous as a religious, cultural, and economic center of the region. Ephesus had the famous temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with immoral sex. The temple to Diana in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was supported by 127 pillars, each pillar 60 feet tall, and it was adorned with great sculptures. Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan.

*Revelation 2:1-7 “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: 2 “I know your works, your labor, 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; 3 and you have persevered and have patience and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 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. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. :7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.””*

This congregation is praised for patient endurance and for rightly rejecting false apostles. Despite such an excellent beginning, Ephesus had abandoned its first love of God. **They were drifting into coldness and routine religiosity, a mindless obedience to rules and doctrines.**

**Jesus' "same" rebuke needs to be taken seriously today by every church.** Sound doctrine and service are extremely important, but they must be "grounded/rooted" in a **deep love for Jesus**. Jesus instructs His Church which He is the Head is to remember those early days when they came to faith, their need to repent, and conduct themselves with the same love they had for Him in the beginning. **Stay Passion Driven!** Jesus promises a reward to the victor (*one who overcomes*) Paradise, i.e., heaven!

**Notice the Church of Ephesus was a Bible based Church. They love the Doctrines of God. But they lost the personal intimate (love) relationship between themselves and God through Jesus Christ. (vs. 2)**

James 1:22-24 "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."*

James 1:2-4 "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*"

**Nevertheless** [a powerful word] **I have this against you**, that you have **left** your **first love**. (vs.4)

Nevertheless, means that all the good in the Ephesian church did not cancel out the bad Jesus is about to describe.

(GK) *aphiemi*; to neglect, to slowly drift away or to let slip, abandoned, to tolerate that which breaks the love (singularity)

They have left – not lost – their first love. The distinction between leaving and losing is important. Something can be lost by accident, but leaving is a deliberate act, though it may happen slowly through negligence. As well, when you lose something you don't know where to find it; but when you leave something, you know where to find it.

"*Loving God, Loving People, Serving the World*" is BCF's Mission Statement based on Matthew 22:36-40.

As Christians, we are told to love God and to love one another. Did they leave their love for God? Did they leave their love for one another? Probably both, because the two loves go together. You can't say you love God and not love His family, and you can't really love His family without first loving Him. **THERE IS ALWAYS A COST IN LOVE and FOLLOWING JESUS EVEN AND ESPECIALLY DURING A COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

FIRST LOVE: It isn't that you should have the exact same "newborn" excitement you had when everything was brand new in the Christian life, but the newness **should transition into a depth that makes the first love even stronger.**

"... *repent and do the first works*." If you have lost your first love, Jesus said; "*repent*." This is not for you to feel sorry. It means to change your direction toward Jesus. It is an "urgent appeal for instant change your attitude and conduct, *before it is too late*." (vs.5)

What are some of the first works?

- Remember how you used to spend time in His Word?
- Remember how you used to pray?
- Remember the joy in getting together with other Christians?
- Remember how excited you were about telling others about Jesus?

**EXTREMELY IMPORTANT: First Love...have you experience it?** If not, today is your day, repent of your sins invite Jesus into your heart and life and experience a love like no other. (And Paradise where God is awaits you!)

**What say you? Do you fit into this Church?**