



A LOVE LETTER TO EPHESUS

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Revelation 2:1-7 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The description that Jesus makes of Himself as He introduces this love letter to the Ephesian Church is based upon His characteristics He showed John in the first vision found in this book in Chapter 1.

Revelation 1:10-13 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: ...And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, ...

Revelation 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars...

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

John saw Jesus in the midst of seven candlesticks.

- These candlesticks were a very familiar picture in John's mind, being a Jew.
- They are referred to in the Old Testament as follows:

Exodus 25:31-32 And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:

The candlesticks were actually branches stemming out from the midst of the candlestick.

- And right there in the midst of the candlesticks, from where these candles or branches would stem, stood Jesus Christ.
- In this vision He gave to John He was positioned right where the branched candlesticks originated.
- He positioned himself as the VINE of the branches, as He indicated in John 15.

John 15:5-10 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me (or, "severed from me") ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye

keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Jesus is speaking about abiding in Him in conjunction with the thought of abiding in his love.

Obviously these two mean the single thought.

He changed his vocabulary somewhat, but speaking of abiding in Him and abiding in his love, means the same thing.

- So there is the picture of Christians as branches grafted into Jesus the vine.
- And Jesus spoke of it as also being plugged into His love.
- As we continue through this book of Revelation, we come to chapter Two.
- In Rev. 1:11, Jesus informed John that He was about to dictate letters to each of seven churches in Asia Minor, which were located on the mainland immediately beside the Island of Patmos where John was imprisoned on a slave camp.

Keep in mind that Jesus appeared to John in this glorious vision of Himself amidst these very seven churches that were like candlesticks stemming out from Him, while saying John would receive seven letters to give to these seven churches.

In other words, the churches that were symbolized as branches stemming out from Jesus were to be recipients of the letters Jesus would dictate to John after appearing to John in this vision.

- The first letter is to the church at Ephesus.
- The Ephesian church was listed first in Rev 1:11 by Jesus, and to it the first letter concerns.

Let's look at a portion of that first letter.

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Of all the characteristics with which Jesus appeared to John in the vision, Jesus points out two of them in His introductory thoughts to the Ephesian Church.

- He has the seven stars in His right hand.
- He walks amidst the seven candlesticks.

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Out of all the symbols strewn all over Jesus in the vision of chapter 1, only two of them were explained and interpreted. In Rev 1:20.

- And these are the very two points that Jesus notes in his introductory words to the Ephesian Church.

Seven stars in his right hand.

Seven candlesticks.

And we discover that the seven stars are the seven angels of those seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches, themselves.

Here is where John 15 comes into focus.

- We are the branches and He is the vine.
- The seven candlesticks shaped like branches are the seven churches.
- We are the church.
- As we continue with the letter to this church, notice what their situation was.

In verses 2 And 3 He commends them for their desire to work for God and for their labour and efforts.

- But in verse 4 He strikes at the reason for the letter.

He mentions they left their first love.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

And faithful to the thought in John 15, the vine and the branches, where Jesus said that if the branch did not abide in the vine, it would be cast away and thrown into the fire, Jesus says...

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

He would remove their candlestick out of its place.

- The candlesticks were customarily shaped like branches of a tree.
- And He would remove the candlestick, or remove the branch.
- Why?
- Because they left their first love.
- What is this “first love”?

We have to look in the Bible elsewhere in order to interpret the Bible, otherwise we can get into all sorts of nonsensical interpretations.

Jeremiah 2:1-3 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

One’s first love is the kindness of one’s youth, and the love of one’s espousals.

- A person is espoused when they are single and fall in love for the first real time with another person.

In this case, Israel fell in love with God long ago when the nation was young, and just delivered from the land of Egypt under Moses’ leadership.

Jeremiah 2:5-7 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

God said that he longed for the love that Israel showed towards Him when they left Egypt and were so enamored over how He brought them out and led them through the wilderness and took them into a plentiful land of milk and honey.

- God missed that love that burned in them so strongly for Him.
- It was their first love.
- It was their infatuation for Him, as a young person falls in love for the first time.
- This is the first love that Ephesus’ church lost.
- They continued in a lot of labour for God.
- They worked tirelessly.
- But those qualities were not the things that would determine if they remained connected to Jesus like a branch on a vine, grafted safely in Jesus.
- If they were, then the Lord would have never warned them about being removed from Him.
- But He said that although they laboured for God and worked furiously for the Lord, they lost the one thing that meant more than all of their work to Him — their first love for Jesus.
- When we forget love for the Lord, we’ve lost everything.
- It does not matter how much we work for God, nor how much we appear to be tirelessly in labour for His kingdom.

- If we do not have that heart that beats for Him, Himself, then He'd just as soon have you cease all your labour and have nothing to do with Him at all.

Luke 10:38-42 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Martha did much labour and was shocked at the laziness Mary showed when Mary sat at Jesus' feet, soaking up all the words of the Lord she could get.

- Martha was concerned about so many things, however Jesus told her that really only one thing was absolutely necessary.
- Mary chose THAT one thing.
- Mary was on target.
- Mary sat at Jesus' feet in absolute infatuation with Jesus and His word.
- Mary loved JESUS.
- Mary put aside the other things that could be done later.
- The work had to be done, yes.
- But something had to be done before this work was done.
- Something was necessary above all the other things in their lives.
- JESUS, HIMSELF, and HIS WORD.
- The Ephesian Church became a Martha.
- It laboured and it worked for God.
- But it left the most important thing behind... loving Jesus.

Jesus said they had fallen.

They must repent and do the first works.

“FIRST” (GREEK : "PROTOS" - from word "PRO" – “before and above”) here means “first in rank,” and “the principal thing.”

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first {PROTOS} works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first (PROTON - AS FIRST PLACE) the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

And when Jesus said that He would remove their candlestick from its place if they did not repent, we see the identical thought in John 15 with the vine and the branches.

As much as Jesus said we must abide in Him, He changed His vocabulary and said this:

John 15:10-12 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

We must abide IN HIS LOVE.

- Hold on to our first love for Jesus!

As much as a branch is broken off and cast away if it does not abide in Jesus, or does not abide in His love, Jesus said He would remove the branch candlestick of the entire Ephesian church congregation out of its place in Jesus if they did not get back their FIRST LOVE.

- He doesn't want you to go to Heaven just so that you can enjoy streets of gold and fancy buildings.
- He wants you to be with Him forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Paul did not say that we would meet the Lord in the air only to enjoy heavenly glories and blow our minds in what it's like to live in heaven forever.

- There was one thing that Paul locked onto and expressed instinctively when the thought of meeting Jesus came into his heart.
- He would be with the Lord forever!
- That was the first and only thing mentioned in any number of thoughts of meeting Jesus in the air!

If you're not turned onto to this type of preaching that stresses love for Jesus above all else, and you'd rather hear me slam other religions or brag about how much you do for the church or herald your name in the bulletin for everyone to read, you need to stop loving yourself so much and change priorities right now and start to fall in love with Jesus all over again!

Lock onto Him right now!

This also tells us a note of recommendation for those who want to be true Christians, and be with Him forever in glory, that one must plunge right into love for Jesus Christ above all else.

- You have a choice of where you are going to put your heart.
- Where your heart is, there will your treasure be also.

Jesus would not say that if we could not choose what it is in life that we love the most.

YOU CHOOSE WHAT YOU LOVE.

- Some people make some bad choices.
- The reason Jesus said this is because many people are going to choose poorly.

Instead of choosing Jesus, and Heaven, they will choose pleasures of this life.

- They may choose deceitfulness of riches.
- All of that is only like washing pots and pans compared to sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His word!
- **LOVE IS NOT A FEELING, ITS AN ACT OF YOUR WILL.**
- When you fall in love with Jesus, nobody can intimidate you from serving Him.

Luke 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

This is saying that we must choose between them and Christ if we have to leave Christ in order to have them.

Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

This does not mean to love our families less, but simply to love Jesus more.

- Or we're not worthy of Jesus.
- And that is the reason He said He'd break us away from Himself.
- When you are in love with Jesus, baptism in Jesus' name will be a priority in your life.
- Your intimidation of what thoughts people who are close to you will think will drop away, for you love Jesus more than those people.
- You still love those people, but not as much as you love Jesus.
- There's much work for God to be done, but we must first make sure our hearts are right before Him before we do any work for Him.

Mark 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first {PROTOS} of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Ephesus left their first love.

- They ceased to love God as first commandment above all others.
- The root of all problems in Christians' walks with God is not a lack of initiative.
- It's a lack of love for Jesus.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words:

You think you're no good because you fail Him.

- You're forgetting LOVE FOR HIM.
 - Put John 15, and its words of abiding in Him to be able to produce fruit, and abiding in his love, and you get the thought that without loving Him, you can do nothing.
 - And if you think you're not performing well and are therefore useless to Him, you simply have not involved love for Him in your religion.
 - Love for Jesus is the missing part of your equation.
 - As much as a branch will produce fruit if it abides in the vine, you will live a strong Christian life if you LOVE JESUS.
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