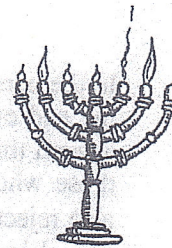


Journey Through Revelation



LESSON 3 . . . When You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' (Revelation 2:1-7)

NOTES

In chapters 2 and 3 of *Revelation*, Jesus—through the Apostle John—sends messages to seven churches in Asia Minor, which is now western Turkey (see map on page 10). These seven churches are significant in several ways. First, they were actual churches in the cities mentioned, but they were not the most prominent churches of their day. Only two are previously mentioned in the New Testament. What are they (Ephesians 1:1b & Colossians 2:1b)?

Next, these seven churches represent seven spiritual conditions that will remain true of churches until Jesus returns. So, you need to discover which church is most like your church. Also, they represent seven kinds of Christians—one of which is much like you. Therefore, in this study you also need to find yourself in these churches.

The first church Jesus addresses is in Ephesus. The characteristics of this church reveal what to do **when you've lost that lovin' feelin'**.

Recognize the condition (2:1-4, 6).

The Lord Jesus tells John: *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write* (2:1a). As mentioned earlier, the word translated *angel* (ANGELOS, ung'-el-os) means messenger and probably refers to the pastor of the church. In the first century, Ephesus was much like New York City today. It was one of the largest and most prominent cities in the ancient world, with an estimated population of at least 250,000. Ephesus was a world-famous seaport city, making it a mecca for trade. It was also the location of the temple of Artemis (or Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Ephesus was a huge, prosperous, idolatrous, and immoral city.

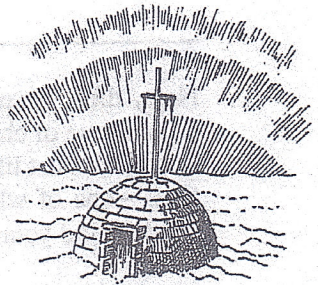
To this church, Jesus identifies Himself: *These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand* (2:1b). As we learned earlier, the word *stars* refers to the *angels*, or pastors, of the seven churches (1:20). It is through the pastor that the *light* of God's Word (Psa. 119:105) is to be delivered to the churches.

Jesus says He *walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks* (2:1c). As also stated in Lesson 2, what do the *candlesticks* represent (1:20)?

In the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus walks among His churches, examining and evaluating them. Our Lord commends the church at Ephesus for several things: their *labour* (hard work), their *patience*, their intolerance of those who *are evil*, and their identification of false *apostles* (2:2). They also rejected *the deeds of the Nicolaitans* (2:6), who practiced idolatry and sexual immorality (2:14). False teachers were a problem in the Ephesian church, just as Paul had predicted to the Ephesian elders some forty years earlier. In his farewell address, what does Paul tell them (Acts 20:30)?

The church at Ephesus looked great from the outside, but the keen, penetrating, and flaming eyes of our Lord (1:14) find fault. Therefore, He says He holds something against them: *thou hast left thy first love* (2:4).

It has been about forty years since Paul established this church and then stayed about three years leading it (Acts 19). Most of the church are now second-generation believers. Though they have retained their pure doctrine and have continued working hard in the church, they have *left their first love*—Christ. In other words, they are doing the same things, but not because of their *love* for Christ; it is all mechanical and habitual. Quoting Isaiah, how does Jesus describe this condition in Matthew 15:8?



Sometimes it's easy to go through the motions of serving the Lord. You can go to Bible study each week, attend worship services, tithe, and even teach a Bible class. Yet, it may all be just a religious show. What warning does Jesus give about doing righteous things just to be seen by others (Matthew 6:1b)?

If you've lost that lovin' feelin', **recognize the condition** and then . . .

Remember when you first believed (2:5a).

Jesus says to the Ephesian church: *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen* (2:5a). Forgetfulness is often the cause of losing your first love. *Remember when you first believed?* You were so excited and passionate about your Savior. *Remember when your prayer time was always uplifting?* *Remember when you couldn't wait to go to worship services because*

you were so encouraged and refreshed every time? The Lord knows how forgetful we are. That's why Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper. After taking the bread and praying, Jesus gives it to His disciples (Lk 22:19a-c). As He does this, what does He say (Lk 22:19d-e)?

I didn't grow up attending church. I vividly remember the first Lord's Supper I participated in after becoming a Christian at age nineteen. The pastor, Bud Jenkins, did a great job as he quoted the words of Jesus before serving. I was so moved, I almost trembled. I also remember a seminary church history course in which the professor told about Martin Luther leading his first Lord's Supper. Luther was so moved and overwhelmed he began to tremble and another priest had to take over the service.

What about you? Are you still moved by things in church that used to touch you? The book of Hebrews tells us to *call to remembrance the former days . . . after ye were illuminated* (10:32a-b).

If you've lost that lovin' feelin', **recognize the condition, remember when you first believed**, and then . . .

Repent and return (2:5b-d &7).

Jesus says it like this: *repent, and do the first works* (2:5b). The word translated *repent* (METANOEO, meta-no-eh'-oh) means a change of mind followed by a change in behavior. It is a change for the better.

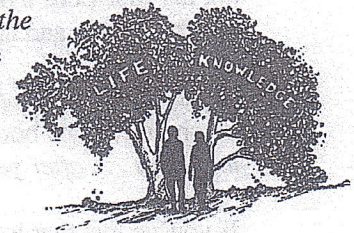
To *repent* means we confess and forsake our sin of just "playing church" or mechanically serving the Lord. We must rededicate our lives to our first love—Jesus Christ—asking God to reignite our spiritual passion. We need to tell the Lord we want our "spiritual honeymoon" with Him to never end. Basically, we need to pray what prayer of King David, recorded in Psalm 51:12a?

Jesus also gives a stern warning to those who refuse to *repent* of forsaking their *first love*. He says: *or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent* (2:5c-d). This means the church would cease to be a church. The church in Ephesus evidently did not heed Jesus' warning. The city of Ephesus today is nothing but ruins, and the immediate area is uninhabited. The *candlestick* has been removed. The future of our individual churches, as well as the church as a whole, depends on our being faithful to our *first love*, Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, our Lord says: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches* (2:7). In a broad sense, *what the Spirit saith* is what is written in the Bible. How does 2 Peter 1:21b describe divine inspiration?

The Bible is the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Bible says: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God* (2 Tim. 3:16a). The Bible—all of it—is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Bible is *what the Spirit saith*.

Jesus concludes His words to the church at Ephesus by saying: *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God* (2:7b). The *tree of life* is first mentioned as being in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22) and last referred to as a part of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2). It represents eternal life. *Him that overcometh* refers to all true Christians. How does 1 John 5:4a express this fact?



One of the seven churches represents you. Is it the church at Ephesus? If so, you've lost that lovin' feelin'. Therefore, **recognize the condition, remember when you first believed, then repent and return.**