

## The Love we had at First – Revelation 2:1-7

Wouldn't it be nice if we could receive a letter addressed to us from God that tells us all we need to know to be the church He calls us to be in this world?

Wouldn't it be nice if He specifically said, "Do this", "Don't do that", "This will be the result if you do", & "This will be the result if you don't"?

What if He has already given us such a letter(s)? What if these 7 letters to the 7 churches in Revelation are truly intended for us today as well?

But what about contextual problems? Don't we live in a different day, with different challenges, w/ different methodologies? **The significance to the #7.**

**The number 7 in the book of Revelation represents completeness.**

These 7 letters, though addressed to specific churches, are intended to speak to all churches, of all times, about who the Church is called to be.

BRC may resemble 1 church over another, but every letter speaks truth to us. **Vs. 7 – "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."** Let us receive these letters as if they are truly meant for us!

There's a pattern to what Jesus says in these 7 letters that will guide us:

- **Commendation** – It's Jesus saying, "This is what you are doing well!"
- **Confrontation** – It's Jesus saying, "This is what I have against you!"
- **Command** – This is what you/we are called to do!
- **Counsel** – If we don't listen this is what will be the result!
- **Comfort** – If we do listen & respond rightly, this is what Jesus will do!

Today we look at the first letter - **"To the angel of the church in Ephesus..."**

Who/what is this angel? "Angel" could literally mean an angel, or a leader (pastor/elder) in that church, or the spirit of that congregation.

**"in Ephesus"** - What relevant information do we have about this city/church?

- It's cultural context & **it's long line of apostolic leadership.**

So what does Jesus have to say to this church here in **Revelation 2:1-7?**

**Commendation** – Their works are known. They toil & patiently endure for the sake of Christ. They have identified & rejected false prophets/teaching. They have not grown weary in standing up for the truth of the gospel!

**This is a truth-seeking church!** Focused on right thinking, right doctrine,

confronting falsehood/heresy & identifying those who are heretics.

This is commendable, even for the church today! **For the truth of Scripture is always under attack.** The identity of Jesus is questioned. There are still those who only seek to advance themselves under the disguise of religion.

**Confrontation – "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first." – Vs. 4** What is this love that Jesus is referring to?

Is it their love for God & Jesus Christ, or is it something else? **It makes more sense that it's their love for one another that has been lost.**

Sometimes in our pursuit of truth, we forget about love for our neighbor. **Remember that the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment is always tied to the 1<sup>st</sup>.** We can't love God as we ought, if we aren't loving our neighbor as we love ourselves.

It's why the Apostle Paul in his letter to this same church, included both teaching & application! He lays out the gospel, articulates the faith, reveals the mystery of it, but then he calls them to **"walk in love as Christ loved us..."** (Eph. 5:2).

What love does as a husband/wife, father/child, master/servant neighbor/enemy, matters. **To truly believe in something, will change how we live!**

New York Life Commercial – The Greek words for love:

- Philia – Affection that grows out of a friendship.
- Storge – Love that you have for a member of your family.
- Eros – The uncontrollable passion that urges us to say, "I love you."
- Agape – **Love as an action.** Love, with courage, sacrifice & strength.

Do we get it right, when it comes to how we love one another? We, like the Ephesians, are called to an "agape" love! **If we have lost it, let us repent!**

**Command – "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent & do the things you did at first." – "Love one another as I have loved you!"** John 15:12

**Counsel – "If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." – Vs. 5** Even right theology does not replace **love!**

**Comfort – "To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." – Vs. 7** To conquer is to **persevere!**

We, as a church, need to have a commitment to the truth of God, combined w/ fervent love for one another. **It's our only hope for true transformation!**

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