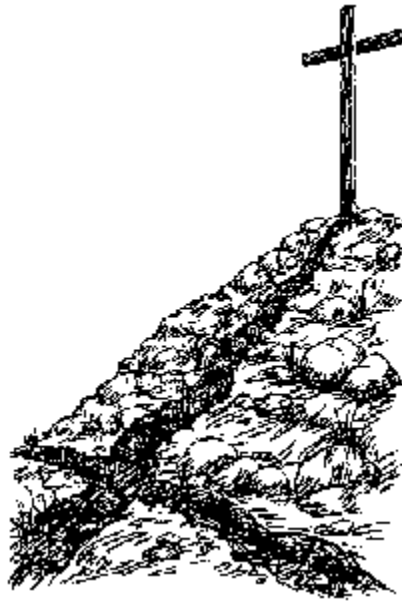


# First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

*Revelation 2:1-7 (KJV) "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; {2} 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: {3} And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. {4} Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. {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. {6} But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. {7} 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."*



Rock Hill Baptist Church  
605 Rock Hill Road  
Lexington, Tennessee  
38351

Brother David Buffaloe, Pastor  
[www.bibleteacher.org](http://www.bibleteacher.org)

## **Introduction**

When we read the Book of Revelation we find great and fascinating prophetic truths often only hinted at in other sections of the Bible. Interestingly, the Book of Revelations was written by a man (as he was led by the Holy Spirit of God – see 2 Peter 1:21) named John. This is the same John who wrote the Gospel of John – a Gospel primarily addressed to the Gentiles whom the

early predominantly Church sought to lead to Christ. This is also the same John who was the brother of James, the disciple whom Jesus loved – the same James that oversaw the Church at Jerusalem.

John is an interesting Apostle in that he is the only one who suffered a *natural death*, as opposed to the martyrdom that the other Apostles suffered. John wrote the Book of Revelation while he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos by Rome. While he suffered both the loss of his family and his home on this Island God brought cursing out of blessing, and revealed great things to John in this beloved Book.

Today we're not going to look at the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. Instead we're going to look at one of the seven messages God wrote through John to the established local church's of his day. These were not only letters to *specific local churches*, but they were also cautions to the Church of Christ in every generation. Each of these seven warnings (and remember, seven is a holy number, the *number of God* in the Scripture) outline a condition or a state that *any local church* can fall into. The *Church of Ephesus* is an example of a local church that has fallen away from its true purpose, a church that has *lost its*

*focus* and must repent – lest it lose its place of service.

In our day and age many local Churches have lost their focus, and have ceased to shine for Christ. This message is not only a warning to the Churches of our era, but it is also a warning to the Churches and Pastors of every local Church – a warning to me, direct from God. How do I know this? Very simply, our focal text today is addressed to *seven local churches* that were located in Asia, which are:

Ephesus	Sardis
Smyrna	Philadelphia
Pergamos	Laodicea
Thyatira	

But there were *four other local Churches in Asia*, which are:

Troas (Acts 20:5; 2 Corinthians 2:12)  
Miletus (Acts 20:17)  
Colosse (Colossians 1:2)  
Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13)

God only addresses *seven* instead of *eleven* Churches in Asia because these Churches *represent conditions that any local Church can*

*fall into.* The problem that Ephesus illustrates is summed up by our Lord's Words in verse 4:

*thou hast left thy first love....*

Let's see what this means. There are three things the Lord wants to show us in this Scripture. First:

## **1. Every Church Has A Senior Pastor, and He Is Christ**

Jesus Christ our Lord *sends and appoints* pastors to lead the local Church in *spiritual matters*.

Notice how our text starts out:

*Revelation 2:1 (KJV) "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;"*

The Lord addresses this warning to the “angel” of the Church. The text says “Unto the **angel** of the Church of Ephesus write”. Though the warning letter is to the **aggelos** {pronounced ang’-el-os}, and it is *literally* translated “angel”, here the word's meaning *or function* needs to be translated, which is *a messenger, or one who is sent by God to convey a message*.

Christ our Senior Pastor assigns *angels* or *pastors* to His local Churches to carry His message to its members. The letter is addressed *to the angel* (and by the way, pastors aren't called “angels” because they are sinless or infallible. Even Lucifer, that arch enemy of God, a perfect angel, fell. Pastors are called *angels* because they carry *God's message to the flock*, without compromise), who in turn was to share that message with the Flock. The Bible says:

*Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV) "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; { 12 } For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

There *were* four categories of messengers sent by Christ to the Church. The first two, **apostles** and **prophets** are *no longer with us*, for of their work the Scripture says:

*Ephesians 2:20 (KJV) "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"*

For the Bible clearly states that these functions were **foundational** to the Church of Christ. Once the foundation of a building is laid you go on to add the upper floors. Prophets and Apostles are no

longer with us – we have the complete revealed Word of God as our Apostolic Authority and our sole Word of Instruction. Today evangelists, pastors, and teachers *pass on the Word of God* to the local Church so that it will *grow* and be *built up*. Our Revelation text has even more truth for us:

*Revelation 2:1 (KJV)* "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;"

Jesus is the one depicted as “He that holds the seven stars in His right hand”. What does this mean? What are the “seven stars”? When we read our preceding Biblical context we receive our answer:

*Revelation 1:20 (KJV)* "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand ... are the angels of the seven churches"

The “seven stars” or aster {pronounced as-tare’} are the pastors of these local Churches. “Stars” illustrates the truth that these men of God are called *to reflect the light of God* on their congregations. Jesus holds the pastor of the local Church in His right hand. Again, this is

significant. The *right hand* of the King is a place of honor, but it is *also a place of accountability*. Too many pastors today want the place of honor but shirk the place of accountability when it comes to speaking the Word of God to their flocks.

Our Senior Pastor has my life in His right hand, and *holds* me there. He is my strength and my shield, and the One whom I must faithfully serve as I speak for Him in the midst of this congregation.

Our Senior Pastor holds me – but He also holds me accountable! The fact that He holds me gives me comfort – for I know that while my Beloved holds me, I shall be protected while I do His will. At the same time, however, my soul dreads my failures and my limitations. As the Apostle said:

*1 Corinthians 2:3-5 (KJV)* "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. {4} And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: {5} That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

He discharged his office *carefully and fearfully*, knowing that his example would either build the

Church properly or destroy it outright. If our faith is to stand, it must not stand *in the wisdom of man* but *in the power of God*.

Christ our Senior Pastor demands accountability of His assigned pastors, for we speak not for man but for God. Christ our Senior Pastor charges every pastor with *spiritual oversight of the flock*, and believe it or not:

*Luke 12:48 (KJV)* "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

holds the pastor *to a higher degree of accountability*.

Pray for me, that I will discharge my duties faithfully as Christ's under shepherd. Pray for all pastors, that we will all follow the Lord Jesus, our Senior Pastor, in leading our Churches.

**Application:** The Pastor of the local Church must remember that he is God's emissary on the earth. Those in areas of leadership in the local Church must understand that Christ will hold them accountable for how they perform their duties.

## 2. Our Senior Pastor Watches And Is Involved In Our Work

*Revelation 2:1-3 (KJV)* "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; {2} 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: {3} And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. ... "

The message the messenger, the *pastor* must pass along to the Church is that Jesus Christ our Chief Shepherd is *intimately involved* in all that we do and say as a Church. The Bible says of Jesus:

*who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

What are these "golden candlesticks"? Again, our immediate Biblical context tells us:

*Revelation 1:20 (KJV)* "The mystery of the seven ... golden candlesticks ... which thou sawest are the seven churches."

Is Jesus Christ involved in our Church, or does He stay at arm's length, allowing us to find our own way? Beloved, if the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want (Psalm 23), then *He must be in our*

*midst*. If the Lord is with us when two or three are gathered together in His name (**Matthew 18:20**), then *He must be in our midst*. How close is Jesus today? The text tells that our Savior:

*walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*

"Walketh" is the *Present Active Participle* of *peripateo* {pronounced per-ee-pat-eh'-o}, which means "He keeps on being occupied with, to pass in review, to inspect the troops".

Our Lord Jesus watches us constantly, accessing our growth and our function as a Church. Jesus said:

*(verse 2) I know thy works, and thy labour*

"I know what you have done with your hands {*ergon*}, I know *how hard you have struggled* to make things work {*kopos* {pronounced kop'-os}}".

Christ our Chief Shepherd has seen how hard we have struggled as a Church. He has been and continues to be in our midst, overseeing all that we do. Sometimes we as a Church struggles so hard to make it and, it seems, just before we reach our goal something interferes, something falls

down. Like Paul and Silas we are unjustly thrown into prison. Like Stephen, we are stoned outside the gate. Sometimes we have so much discouragement, and all our efforts seem to fall short of the mark.

Yet even as we struggled, Jesus our Senior Pastor says, "I know your works, your trials, your struggles". We cry out, "God, you anointed me to be king over Israel, but Saul chases me, striving for my life." Jesus says, "I know your works, your struggles, your labor – it is not in vain". We agonize, "Lord, I stood for you in front of the 400 messengers of Baal, and you vindicated me at the altar. Now Jezebel seeks my life, and I feel like running". Our Senior Pastor says, "Don't fear Jezebel, nor Baal, nor Ahaz, My Beloved. I know your works and your labor, and it will succeed". Our Lord has promised us:

*Galatians 6:9 (KJV) "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*

*2 Thessalonians 3:13 (KJV) "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."*

**Application:** Our Senior Pastor says *I know*. He does not know because someone told Him. His knowledge does not come secondhand through

priest or frocked clergy. No one had to write Him a report and send it on Heaven's telegraph to His Throne room, for when we meet Jesus walks in our midst.

*Revelation 2:2-3 (KJV)* "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: {3} And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

Jesus says, "I know you have been plagued with arrogant men who claimed to be *apostles*, but when their works were examined you found them to be the works of liars. I know that you have labored and done in My name and for My name. I know your tears, and your suffering. I know your heartache and loneliness. I know that feeling of defeat you have felt."

Jesus knows, and He loves you. And though it seems as if the struggle is for nothing, and that the battle might be lost, we have the promise of His Word:

*Hebrews 6:10 (KJV)* "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

God will not allow our work to go unrewarded. But there is a trap that we must – as the Church of Christ – avoid at all cost. And herein is the warning, and the third point of this sermon:

### **3. Our Senior Pastor Holds Us To "Purpose Driven" Standard**

*Revelation 2:4-5 (KJV)* "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. {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."

Today so many people chase after some "Purpose Driven" fad which caused unbelievable growth at Saddleback Church, or some other assembly of God's people. The Ephesian Church struggled hard to continue doing their duty for Jesus, even in the midst of terrible consequences. The Ephesians stood against the **Nicola'itans** (*followers of Nicolas*) who taught that a saved person was no longer bound to live holy before God. The **followers of Nicolas** are found in local churches all across America who teach the terrible humanistic doctrine of hedonism, that is, "If it feels good, do it". The Ephesian believers stood

strong against heresy, against false doctrine, against anything that stood as an offense to the Cross of Christ. But Jesus had *somewhat* against them. Why? Because they *left* or *abandoned* their first love.

*Revelation 2:4-5 (KJV)* "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. {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."

The word "left" is the Greek *aphiemi* {pronounced af-ee'-ay-mee} – and this is a very interesting word. The word means *to abandon* or *walk away from*. Jesus used the same word in:

*Matthew 6:12 (KJV)* "And forgive us our debts, as we *forgive our debtors*."

This word is often used in Scripture and translated into the English as "forgive", but it doesn't mean to forgive but *to abandon*, or the *divorce yourself from something*. A condition of our forgiveness, Jesus said, is that we do as God our Father does with us – we *walk away from* holding someone accountable for wronging us, just as *God walks away from* holding us accountable for wronging Him. This is the *good use* of *aphiemi*

{pronounced af-ee'-ay-mee}.

But as a Church, as Christ's Blood bought people, we are *never* to *aphiemi* {pronounced af-ee'-ay-mee} or *walk away from our first love*. Who is our First Love, dear Church? Who is our First Love? He is none other than Jesus Christ our Savior.

Every local Church is cautioned through this message to *remember our First Love*. It is possible for a Church to dot all the "i's" and cross all the "t's". It is possible for a Church to be a Bible believing, conservative, focused group of believers, and yet for that Church to dissatisfy our Beloved Savior.

How does one lose their First Love? We begin by working for God *according to the letter of the law* but *without loving Jesus*. We let our hearts become hardened as we *do our duty*, but forget the *reason we do our duty*. Like stale married couples we forget that day, with heart wildly beating, that we asked our bride to be our wife and she said "Yes". We forget that cry of our newborn held in the Father's arms for the first time, and forget the tenderness with which God embraced us and calmed our fears.

As a Church we are cautioned to never forget our

First Love, Jesus Christ our Savior. We work for Jesus because we love Him, and, as John said:

*1 John 4:19 (KJV) "We love him, because he first loved us."*

Our Beloved lovingly knows all the hairs of our head. He guarantees our preservation, our safety. He saved us with His nail scarred hands, and leads us through life's trials on pierced but precious feet!

The Church that serves Christ and one another *because* it loves Christ *first* is the Church whose light shall never be dimmed. Listen dearly Beloved:

We can have every program under the sun in our Church. We can have premier youth programs and pastors, outings, special events, plays, dramas, and every fad you can think of. We can have great bus ministries, and build great Cathedrals with mighty steeples that rival the most impressive buildings of the world. But if we walk away from our First Love, if we begin to operate *out of rote* instead of *for His glory*, we will cease to be a Church.

The Church is the Bride of Christ. The Church must love Christ, respond to Christ, and do what it does *for Christ*, not just for the sake of doing it.

*1 John 4:19 (KJV) "We love him, because he first loved us."*

What we do, we do because we love Jesus. What we work for, we work for the love of our precious Savior. Our Beloved laid down His life for us:

*1 John 3:16 (KJV) "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*

Even so, we lay down our lives for one another.

*Ephesians 4:15-16 (NASB) "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."*

**Application:** The "Purpose Driven" standard of the Church is love, sacrificial love, love as Christ our Bridegroom loved. As long as we strive toward this goal we will serve our purpose, we will grow, we will be the light of Christ in this neighborhood and beyond.

**Children's Message:**  
**"Is Your Head Cold?"**

**Needed:**

1. Bottle or jar lids/ caps of various sizes
2. One jar with lid that fits

**Object Lesson:**

Unless we focus on Christ and Christian love as a Church, we will not prosper!

**Lesson:**

Ask the children if they brought "caps" or hats for their heads. Ask them why we wear caps or hats on a cold or windy day. Next tell them that you brought some caps for their heads – and begin to pass out the various caps and lids that you brought (bottle caps/ lids). Ask them if wearing these items on their heads will keep them from catching cold.

Tie this in to the purpose of the Church, the love of Christ, and love one toward another. Present the Gospel message for both the children, as well as the parents listening to the children's Sermon.

God Bless you all.

In the name of Jesus Christ:

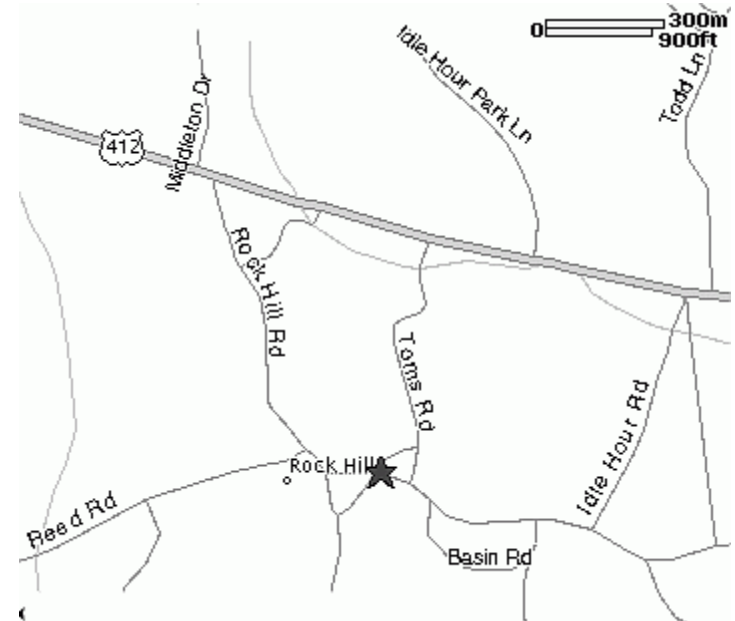
Brother David Buffaloe

On-line at:

<http://www.bibleteacher.org>

or call:

731-845-6104



**We are located on highway 412 East between  
Lexington, Tennessee and Parsons, Tennessee.  
Look for our sign!**

# *First Love*

## **Revelation 2:1-7**

### **Introduction**

Troas (Acts 20:5; 2 Corinthians 2:12)

Miletus (Acts 20:17)

Colosse (Colossians 1:2)

Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13)

### **1. Every Church Has A Senior Pastor, and He Is Christ**

**Revelation 2:1; Ephesians 4:11-12; Ephesians 2:20 ; Revelation 2:1; Revelation 1:20 ; 1 Corinthians 2:3-5 ; Luke 12:48**

**Application:** The Pastor of the local Church must remember that he is God's emissary on the earth. Those in areas of leadership in the local Church must understand that Christ will hold them accountable for how they perform their duties.

### **2. Our Senior Pastor Watches And Is Involved In Our Work**

**Revelation 2:1-3; Revelation 1:20 ; Psalm 23;**

**Matthew 18:20; Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13**

**Application:** Our Senior Pastor says *I know*. He does not know because someone told Him. His knowledge does not come secondhand through priest or frocked clergy. No one had to write Him a report and send it on Heaven's telegraph to His Throne room, for when we meet Jesus walks in our midst. **(Revelation 2:2-3; Hebrews 6:10)**

### **3. Our Senior Pastor Holds Us To "Purpose Driven" Standard**

**Revelation 2:4-5; Matthew 6:12 ; 1 John 4:19; 1 John 3:16; Ephesians 4:15-16**

**Application:** The "Purpose Driven" standard of the Church is love, sacrificial love, love as Christ our Bridegroom loved. As long as we strive toward this goal we will serve our purpose, we will grow, we will be the light of Christ in this neighborhood and beyond.