

## “THE LOVELESS CHURCH”

**INTRODUCTION:** The Book of Revelation is highly symbolical...

1. It is an *apocalyptic* book: full of visions, symbols, dreams, etc.

- a. Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation
- b. **Dennis Johnson:** ESV Study Bible; pp. 2455, 2456.

*The most important thing to know about the literary form of the book of Revelation is that it uses the technique of symbolism from start to finish. Instead of portraying characters and events directly, much of the time the author portrays them indirectly by means of symbols. For example, Jesus is portrayed as a lamb, churches are portrayed as lamps on lampstands, and Satan is portrayed as a dragon with seven heads and 10 horns. The symbols are sometimes familiar, and sometimes original and strange. Whenever a work of literature presents a preponderance of symbols instead of realistic details, readers should recognize the technique of symbolic reality, meaning that as they enter the work in their imaginations, information is presented primarily through symbols. The book of Revelation is one of the most sustained examples of symbolic reality in existence.*

c. In apocalyptic literature the use of *symbolic numbers* is often prevalent.

2. These symbolical numbers occur in the Book of Revelation:

- a. 1 = unity, oneness. The Number of God
- b. 2 = division, harmonious contrast, Revelation (OT and NT)
- c. 3 = Divine fullness (Trinity)
- d. 4 = the created earth (4 corners of the world, etc.)
- e. 6 = number of man (1 less than 7)
- f. 7 = divine perfection or completion (*used throughout scripture*)
- g. 10 = a complete course of time
- h. 12 = God’s people: 12 OT patriarchs; 12 apostles (the church)
- i. 40 = a generation, a time of testing or probation; period of judgment
- j. 70 = time for complete judgment of God’s people (e.g., Babylonian Captivity)

3. Revelation uses all these numbers and *multiplications* or *combinations* of them. For example:

- a. 1,000 = millennium (10 x 10 x 10 = 10 cubed = fullness of time)
- b. 12 x 12 = 144 (OT and NT church) x 1,000 = 144,000 = all God’s people
- c. 666 = three human powers = Satanic Trinity

4. Seven (7) is the key number in Revelation: in fact, the book’s outline is built around four sets of seven:

- a. Prologue (ch. 1:1-8)
  - b. Body of the book (1:9 – 22:5)
    - i. 7 churches
    - ii. 7 seals
    - iii. 7 trumpets
    - iv. 7 bowls
  - c. Epilogue (22:6-21)
  - d. *Simplified but reliable outline*
5. A more detailed outline reveals *seven sections*:
- a. Christ in the 7 churches (1-3)
  - b. Church's tribulation: 7 seals (4-7)
  - c. Church's protection and vindication: 7 trumpets (8-11)
  - d. Cosmic conflict: heart of the book (12-14)
  - e. God's wrath on the world: 7 bowls (15-16)
  - f. The Fall of Babylon/World (17-19)
  - g. The New Heaven and New Earth (20-22)
6. Roughly 7 *parallel sections* setting forth **Recapitulation**
- a. Recapitulation: same events repeated in different imagery
  - b. Repetition but with added emphasis/detail
  - c. The Church Age seen from 7 parallel perspectives
  - d. Each recapitulation: cosmic warfare between the two comings of Christ (incarnation and judgment)
  - e. From less clear...to more clear...
7. We begin tonight to look at the **first of seven sections** of the book and the **first set of sevens...**
- a. The 7 *churches of Revelation* in chapters 2 and 3
 

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."* (Rev. 1:10-11)
  - b. "*What the Spirit says to the Churches*"
  - c. Repeated 7 times: "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*"
8. **Note as well:** Each message to the seven churches has 7 *parts to it*:
- a. A salutation or greeting
  - b. A symbolic picture of Christ; a part of Revelation 1:8-20

- c. A commendation
- d. A condemnation (5 out of the 7)
- e. A warning to those rebuked
- f. An exhortation/instruction
- g. A promised reward

9. **Key:** 7 times Jesus says: *“He who overcomes”*

- a. Those who persevere and are victorious in the cosmic conflict
- b. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)*
- c. *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:9-14)*

10. **Billy Graham:** *Approaching Hoofbeats; p. 44.*

*Although the form of each letter is practically the same, the content of each letter is different. He knew that every church was facing its own unique struggle to be His body in the world and so He addressed each church uniquely. He didn't mass-produce advice. Those distant hoofbeats, growing louder by the day, are the riders who would destroy the earth and all of us who live upon her. To face these riders, to make war upon death and bring new life—life in Christ—to the people of the earth, will require certain preliminary steps. That's why Christ began His vision with these seven short letters to the Christians in Asia. He knew what their future held. He knew the price they would have to pay in their war against evil. And He knew those churches were not prepared to pay that price. They were not yet strong enough to face the horsemen. He knew that unless they spent time and energy getting prepared, they would not survive those riders of death and destruction. He knew that unless they learned better how to overcome, they might themselves be overcome by the riders. So, in the letters are the clues that they and we must follow as we face the riders galloping down upon us. In the letters are His words of power that will help us overcome the destruction they would bring upon the earth.*

11. **Please know:** *We will follow this seven-part outline for each of the seven churches, beginning with the Church of Ephesus.*

*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

*“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to*

*you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’ (Revelation 2:1-7)*

## I. THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (2:1)

1. *“To the angel of the church in Ephesians write...”*
2. Again: There are **three** interpretations as to what *angelos* means in these seven addresses to the churches:
  - a. **First view:** literal “angels” (67 times in Revelation)
  - b. **Second view:** pastors or “messengers” (preachers) of the churches
  - c. **Third view:** the “spirit” of the church (its spiritual DNA)
  - d. Not impossible that it means all three: *Christ is speaking to the guardian angels of these churches, while their pastors “eavesdrop” via John’s letter, about the spiritual condition (DNA) of each of the seven churches.*
3. To whomever/whatever Jesus was speaking, He intended *us* to “hear” it, via the revelation of John!
4. The first church addressed is the church in *Ephesus*
  - a. A chief city of the Roman province of Asia (a first-city in political importance)
  - b. The Ephesians called themselves: *“The Supreme Metropolis of Asia”*
  - c. A commercial hub: located on the mouth of *Cayster River*, on a harbor, shipping center.
    - i. 3 main Roman roads converge at Ephesus.
    - ii. From the Euphrates, Galatia and Meander Valley
    - iii. **Wm. Barclay:** *“In commerce and wealth there were few cities to surpass Ephesus”*
  - d. A political force: *A free city* –
    - i. Granted the right to self-government
    - ii. An *Assize Town*: the governor’s court of justice
    - iii. Center of the *Pan-Ionian* games (coliseum for 25,000)
    - iv. The New York of Asia Minor
  - e. A religious center: *The Seat of Diana*
    - i. Center for the Imperial Cult: Caesar worship, with temples to Claudius, Julius Caesar, Domitian, and other Roman emperors
    - ii. Diana (Roman) = Artemis (Greek)
    - iii. Twin sister of Apollo; daughter of Zeus
    - iv. *Goddess of the hunt, wild animals, the wilderness, childbirth and fertility, virginity, young girls, the health of women, hunters, midwives*

v. **Wikipedia: Artemis**

*At three years old, Artemis, while sitting on the knee of her father, Zeus, asked him to grant her six wishes: to remain always a virgin; to have many names to set her apart from her brother Apollo; to be the Light Bringer; to have a bow and arrow and a knee-length tunic so that she could hunt; to have sixty "daughters of Okeanos", all nine years of age, to be her choir; and for twenty Nymphs as handmaidens to watch her dogs and bow while she rested. She wished for no city dedicated to her, but to rule the mountains, and for the ability to help women in the pains of childbirth. All of her companions remained virgins, and Artemis closely guarded her own chastity. Her symbols included the golden bow and arrow, the hunting dog, the stag, and the moon. Artemis visited Pan, the god of the forest, who gave her seven bitches and six dogs. She then captured six golden-horned deer to pull her chariot.*

- vi. Artemis of the Ephesians: "The Lady of Ephesus"
- vii. Huge temple to Artemis in Ephesus: one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world
  - 425 feet long, 220 feet wide, 60 feet high, 127 pillars
  - Center: huge altar, velvet curtain, statue behind
  - A woman with multiple breasts (grotesque)
  - **Key:** at the base of the statue a symbol or sign the meaning of which no one knew!
  - Sculpted from a black – rock meteorite
  - Center for magic, sorcery, occult
- viii. The Temple of Artemis was an international bank.
- ix. Worship was ecstatic, hysterical, sexually perverted, with male and female temple prostitution, mutilation
- x. One ancient letter wrote:

*...the darkness of the approach to the altar of the temple was the darkness of vileness; the morals of the temple were worse than the morals of the beasts, for even promiscuous dogs do not mutilate each other. The inhabitants of Ephesus were fit only to be drowned, and the reason they could never laugh or smile was because they lived amidst such terrible uncleanness.*

5. The *Church of Ephesus* was in this huge city (250,000 people)
  - a. Established in 52 AD by Paul, who spent 3 years there (in total)
  - b. First three pastors: Paul, Timothy, John (and Mary, the mother of Jesus)
  - c. A church who turned Ephesus upside down

*About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with*

*hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”*

*When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. (Acts 19:23-29)*

d. Four epistles written to them: *Ephesians* and *1, 2, 3 John*

e. No church in all Christendom with a richer legacy, except, perhaps, Jerusalem or Rome

6. **Grant R. Osborne:** *Revelation: NIGNTC*; pp. 109-110.

*One of the amazing features of these letters is the extent to which each church is addressed through the history of the city in which it resides. It is hard to imagine more creative and rhetorically powerful letters than these. Each reader in the individual city is reminded of the extent to which they are part of this world, for their churches all too often resemble their cities. This builds on the New Testament pattern of teaching in which believers are called to be citizens of heaven more than earth, seeking heavenly more than earthly treasure, and considering themselves to be “aliens and strangers” on this earth.*

## II. THE CHRIST OF EPHEBUS (2:1b)

1. *“The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.”*

2. Meaning: a description taken from Revelation 1:12,13, 16, 20

*Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.*

*...and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.*

*In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*

*As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Rev. 1:12, 13, 16, 20)*

3. Here is the Christ-imagery for the Ephesian church: *Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church...not Ephesus!*

4. **Grant Osborne:** *Revelation: NIGNTC*: p. 111.

*The Ephesian church was proud of its position not only as “the metropolis of Asia” (as Ephesus was called) but also of its heritage as the mother church of the region. Therefore, it is natural that this be the first church addressed, not only for its status but also because the mail route for these letters would naturally begin there. Since Ephesus is the mother church, she must realize that Christ, not*

she, “holds the seven stars” and “walks among the lampstands.” There is no room for pride, for it is Christ alone who is sovereign, not any church.

5. Ephesus was a *proud* church. Jesus reminds them of what Paul wrote:

*For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*

6. This *pride* caused the root problem of Ephesus’ spiritual decline...

### III. THE COMMENDATION OF EPHESUS (2:2-3, 6)

1. *I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary...Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (Revelation 2:2-3, 6)*
2. Jesus *commends* the Ephesian church for four “works”
  - a. For their hard and persevering work: “*I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance...*”
  - b. For their orthodoxy: “*...and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false...*”
  - c. For their endurance under difficulty: “*...I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my namesake, and you have not grown weary.*”
  - d. For their hatred of heresy: “*Yet this you have; you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*”
    - i. Nicolaitans: a heretical group of whom we know nothing
    - ii. An early Gnostic departure (1-2-3 John)
3. Here was a busy church, diligent church, orthodox church and faithful church. *A mother church which set a grand example except for one thing only Jesus could see and know...*
4. **They had lost their love for Christ!**

### IV. THE CONDEMNATION OF EPHESUS (2:4)

1. “*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*”

2. **NASB:** *“You have lost your first love”*
3. How can this be? Easy: *Once we take pride in being a “first” church or a “big” church, or a “flagship” church, we soon fall in love with ourselves, our famous pastors, our legacy, our accomplishments, our growth, size and influence. We are self-enamored. And a self-enamored man/woman/church has only self as first love! Jesus has been displaced from first place.*
4. **Application:** That is what I found at Christ Covenant when I came here in August of 2006...
  - a. Boasting about all we’d supposedly done, as if we had done it in our own power
  - b. I heard more about Harry Reeder than I did Jesus Christ
  - c. A personality-driven church evaluated only by its “successes”
  - d. A people at odds, spiteful, angry with each other
  - e. Cold worship, poor giving, shallow faith but much big boasting!
  - f. All the while, in our foyer, hung the words:  
*That in all things Christ might have the preeminence.”* (Colossians 1:18)
5. **Fact of life you need to know:** Once Jesus is no longer the first love of your life, then the loves of your life begin to die – love for your wife, your family, your church, your nation – until only love of self and anger at others remains!
6. *Scary thought:* And all the time you can be orthodox, busy and apparently a church faithful to God’s Word.
7. How can you tell? There are four key signs: Your strengths without love...
  - a. Hard work: *duty without devotion to God*
  - b. Orthodoxy: *doctrine without discipleship*
  - c. Perseverance: *endurance without energy*
  - d. Conservative Views: *conservatism without compassion*
  - e. **Going through the motions with no joy in Christ’s love**
  - f. *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* (1 Peter 1:8-9)
8. **By the way:** I am seeing the signs that Christ Covenant is falling in love with Jesus Christ once again...
  - a. Less talk about Harry, Tom, Mike, and more real celebration of Jesus Christ
  - b. Joy in worship and humility under God’s Word
  - c. Less bragging and more prayer
  - d. Less condemnation of others and more mercy and service
  - e. Sweet fellowship among the saints
  - f. **Shalom:** *the peace of God returning to us*

9. **Jesus Christ has come to us again and brought us back to Himself. He has “saved us” yet another time...from ourselves!**

V. THE EXHORTATION TO EPHESUS (2:5a)

1. *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first...”*
2. Three basic “R’s” for spiritual renewal
  - a. **Remember:** The love you once had for Jesus,
  - b. **Repent:** of the pride and sin that got in the way,
  - c. **Return:** to the basics of spiritual life with God.
3. **Do you remember** how much passionate love you had for Jesus Christ when you were first converted?
4. What happened: *Only one thing! It all boils down to one thing! You began to put yourself and your interests first...ahead of your love for Jesus!*
  - a. A spouse, children, a loved one (boyfriend/girlfriend)
  - b. A job or career...or ministry (church!)

- c. Home...hobbies...recreation...portfolio... retirement
  - d. *Comfort for self over commitment to Christ*
5. **Just as a marriage can go “stale” and lead to divorce between a man and his wife, so our love for Jesus as the Bride of Christ (Church) can grow cold and die as well.**
  6. **“Marriage Renewal” is the key: *doing the “first things” to recapture the “first love.”* **Seven First Things...**
    - a. Time in God’s Word and simple prayer
    - b. Sabbath keeping (morning and evening)
    - c. Sacrificial giving to Christ (church)
    - d. Service to Jesus by serving others
    - e. Simplicity of lifestyle: uncluttering your life
    - f. Forsaking your “pet sins” (accountability to do so)
    - g. Sharing your love for Jesus with others (witnessing)**
  7. **You need to know this:** There are people in our church who are not pleased with me because I do not have a clear “*strategic plan*” for the church. In fact and indeed I do! I have made it explicitly clear, and I am working that plan diligently and deliberately. I inherited a church that had lost its first love. What we *do not* need is another 20-page “master plan” to keep us busy in self-absorbed work. What I need to do *first* is to lead you back to your *first love*. So...I have focused (and will continue to focus) on basic “*first things*” our church needed to recover.
    - a. A pulpit that preaches the Word and exalts Christ
    - b. Worship that glorifies God and follows the Word
    - c. Stewardship giving sacrificially to our church
    - d. A multi-generational church body that is a genuine church family
    - e. Mercy ministry, compassion, outreach to loved ones
    - f. A sound, coordinated, loving and united pastoral staff
    - g. Officers united behind and excited about a Purpose Statement and Vision for the church
  8. *This has **not** been easy, but God is blessing it, and we as a church are falling more in love with Christ (those still interested in boastful busyness are leaving!).*
  9. As we do *first things*, with the right heart, our *first love* returns. Others can continue to play church somewhere else!
  10. Does that sound...harsh? Look at what Jesus says next...

## VI. THE WARNING TO EPHESUS (2:6b)

1. “...*if not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*”

2. The **lampstand**: double symbolism:

a. The Holy Spirit Himself

*From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God...*

(Revelation 4:5)

b. Local churches: little lampstands

*As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:20)*

c. Symbolism: *churches filled with the Holy Spirit and the light of the Gospel (Word) – the Light of Christ!*

3. **Gist**: If a church will not repent of self-love, return to Christ, and do the first things to recapture your first love, then Jesus will remove the Holy Spirit and gospel light from that church.
4. **Fact of life**: Charlotte, NC is full of big, rich, popular, “successful” churches (in man’s eyes) without the Holy Spirit, the Gospel light or the love of Jesus.
5. In fact, *most* churches in America are churches without light – Spirit, Word, Christ’s love.
6. So, this is **not** an idle threat.

VII. THE PROMISE TO EPHESUS (2:7)

1. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’ (Revelation 2:7)*
2. “*The Tree of Life*” = from Genesis 2 and 3

*And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:8-9)*

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:15-17)*

*Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)*

3. Here is a promise of *eternal life* in “*the paradise of God*” (the New Heaven and New Earth) for those who love Jesus first of all and follow Him with heartfelt devotion.
4. **Contrast:** The symbol for the City of Ephesus was a Palm Tree which the Ephesians called “*The Tree of Life*”
5. The Charge: You must choose between the life your world offers you and the one God offers you. Your “first love” will guide your decision.
6. Who goes to heaven? *Those who love Jesus!*

**CONCLUSION:** The Book of Revelation has seven messages to seven churches...

1. And each message sets forth **one essential characteristic** of a true church of Christ.
2. **John Stott:** *Revelation: The Triumph of Christ (John Stott Bible Studies; p. 16).*  
*The risen Lord reveals himself as the chief pastor of his flock. Patrolling, inspecting and supervising his churches, he has intimate knowledge of them and is able to pinpoint the seven marks that he would like every church to display: love for him, willingness to suffer for him, truth of doctrine, holiness of life, commitment to mission, sincerity and wholeheartedness in everything.*
3. Here is the *first mark* of a church that has the *first things* in place and in practice: *A first love for Jesus.*
4. **I cannot** stress enough how important it is for us as a body of believers at Christ Covenant Church to “*do the things we did at first.*” So I’ll list them again....
  - a. Spend time in God’s Word and in prayer
  - b. Keep the Sabbath by going to church morning and evening
  - c. Give sacrificially to Christ Covenant Church
  - d. Serve Jesus in some ministry at our church
  - e. Maintain a simple lifestyle: an uncluttered life
  - f. Forsake your pet sins (earnestness)
  - g. Share your life for Jesus with others
5. **I also ask you** to support me 100% as I attempt to lead us, as a church body, back to a first love for Christ and maintain our first love for Him.
  - a. *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Col. 1:18)*
  - b. A pulpit that preaches the Word and exalts Christ
  - c. Worship that is Biblical and glorifying to God
  - d. Stewardship: tithes, FP’s, special projects
  - e. A multigenerational church that is a genuine spiritual family

- f. Outreach: mercy ministry, missions, bringing others to Christ Covenant Church
- g. A sound, coordinated, loving and united pastoral staff
- h. Officers united behind a shared vision for the church

#### *OUR PURPOSE*

*Christ Covenant Church is a reformed congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America committed to making Disciples who worship God, grow in community, love Others and serve the world. (Purpose Statement)*

6. The easiest thing to do in life is to lose your first love: *To take Jesus for granted and turn your heart to yourself.*

*I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:1-3)*

7. Heed the words to Ephesus!

- a. *Remember...repent...return to first things*
- b. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...*
- c. *To the one who overcomes...*

8. The Holy Spirit has been speaking to the churches for over 2,000 years. And this is His first lesson: *Do not lose your first love or you will lose your eternal life!*

9. **By the way**, about 30 years prior to the Book of Revelation, Paul wrote a letter to the Church in Ephesus. He ended it in a most fascinating way...

*Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. (Ephesians 6:23-24)*

10. I wonder if the Spirit already knew about losing our first love?