



Topic: Resurrected Jesus and His Church. Bible Scriptures: Revelation 2:1-5 John 17:26 John 14:16-17
Ephesians 1:15 Ephesians 4:15-16 Matthew 5:16

In His Hands

How Jesus represents Himself is one of the keys to applying correct meaning to the book of the Revelation of Jesus, especially to His letter to the 7 churches.

Turn with me to **Revelation 2:1** *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.'*

What a wonderful picture. Jesus is the one who holds the seven stars or the seven angels or messengers of God to the churches in His right hand. The Eternal One who walks amongst the midst of these seven golden lampstands. Which represents the completed perfect church when Christ returns. In the letter to the church in Ephesus Jesus is emphasising He walks amongst His people. He is reminding His church He is the centre of the church and Jesus is the founder and head and the reason for the churches existence.

Jesus in fact is 'all powerful', everywhere, and all knowing. Not only does He see the outward things, the things we do, but also see our heart and the reasons why we do what we do.

By His Spirit, Jesus heals the broken heart, softens the hardened heart and changes our hearts desires if we let Him.

Praise to the church

Verse 2-3 *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.'*

Jesus says I know your works, your labour...



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What is...your labour?

In the original language of the Bible the definition for labour is: Any product or anything accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind. Whatever good works the church in Ephesus has done has been noted, but has their labour been effective?

In summary the church of Ephesus has rejected evil, has tested some apostles as liars, persevered, has patience, laboured for Jesus and not become weary.

All sounds great.

Correction to the church

Verse 4 *'Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.'*

Jesus reaches into the heart. The church in Ephesus had left their first love.

Remember at the beginning of this letter Jesus said His presence is with them, His essence, His Spirit walking amongst them. He's holding the angel of the church in His right hand. The right hand is symbolic of power.

*He is holding them with all His might and creative power over all things.
Holding them, sustaining them, in His love.*

He reminds them who He is, what He has done, what He is doing and going to do.

Lost their first love

Yet their intimate relationship with Jesus has been lost. They have lost their first love. Not by Jesus. Jesus' love never changes, because Jesus says, I am amongst you. I'm holding you. I am with you. The closeness of their relationship with Jesus has been lost by the church themselves. They have lost their revelation of Jesus and His love for them, which as a result they have lost their love of others. In fact the church had lost its effectiveness.



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Tho they labour, persevere, test the apostles and do all those good things, they labour in vain because they have lost their first love.

Their love for Christ is no longer the first thing they seek; they no longer have to show the great love or intensity of His Spirit. They no longer have a revelation of His presence in their midst, even tho He is there. Nor do they have a reality of how much Jesus loves them.

Instead of their relationship with Jesus having first place in their life, the works for Jesus have taken first place. The works for Jesus have in fact replaced Jesus. Yes they left their first love.

Love to be perfected needs to be received and reciprocated. Christ's love for us is complete when we know God's love for us, receive His love and as a result of His work and love in us and through us, we love others in Christ's love. As we love others Christ's love is then complete.

What is this love?

The original language for this word love has two meanings 1: brotherly love, affection, good will, love or kindness and the second is a continual love feast.

Both are intertwined. A continual love feast with the Living God then produces the outworking of brotherly love. If we forget the first thing and not in continual love feast receiving God's love, reciprocating God's love, letting God's love transform us, dwell in us and work through us then we cannot love. Then we are doing the good deeds towards others out of our flesh and not out of God's love. That doesn't bring glory to God because people just see our human effort. The church in this world exists to be a witness of Jesus to bring glory to God, so that the world may know Him.

The true and pure love of God is in continuous fellowship, a continual love feast. Jesus is saying remember me first. I am the source of your life. Spend time with me in my presence.



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Let us journey together in this life, one with each other, in fellowship together. Receiving my love, knowing of my love, letting my love flow freely through you to others, transforming hearts and minds. That is what Jesus is pleading with His church for. Let me be your first love.

The promise to the church

Jesus declared His love over His disciples in John 15 and prayed to the Father that they have His love when He was about to lay down His life in chapter 17. Let us read the prayer that Jesus said just before He went to cross. Jesus reveals the love of the Father.

John 17:26 *'And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'*

God's love is sacrificial love and the greatest example of that love is Jesus on the cross. His love is unmerited, unwavering and unending. God is the origin of this love. For God Himself is this love and God so loves. One who truly knows God and has received His Son Jesus as Lord and Savior can experience this love. Which is the Father's will.

This love overwhelms. It encompasses the mind, the emotions the physical body and spirit. Every aspect of our life including the will of the individual is transformed by the power of this love because it comes from God.

The first love is the first commandment, to love God. Love God with all your heart and mind and soul. That's not possible without the revelation of God's love. That's not possible without God's love dwelling within.

It is a work of the Spirit. The outworking of this first love, of receiving of God's love more and more each day, knowing the fullness of God's love, experiencing God's love is love for others.



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*Revelation of God's love for us, by His Spirit is out worked as intimacy,
unity and love with God and others.*

At the beginning of Jesus' prayer in John 14 He promises the Holy Spirit is forever. He never takes away His Spirit. He says He is forever.

John 14:16-17 *'And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.'*

When we receive Jesus we receive His Spirit forever. He never takes away His presence. It is a promise. He is faithful and true.

The fruit

This is a promise that Jesus fulfills. We simply are willing to surrender and receive. Paul tells us, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love"* in **Galatians 5:22**. It is only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we can have the love of Christ and that we can come into a revelation of the love God has for us. But it is a daily journey. Each day there is more of Him. His love is the first thing. This type of Godly love compels us to look for unmet needs of others and changes our hearts desires, so that the world may see Him. They may see Him in us and through us and be drawn to Him.

With the Spirit of Christ within us and upon us, we stand and live in Him. We walk in His love and the revelation of it, empowered to love other. That is the natural outworking of the Spirit within, because God is love and the fruit of Spirit is love. God loves us. God loves the lost. God loves everybody.



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Instruction to the church

Verse 5 *'Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.'*

Whilst the labour the church in Ephesus is doing it for Jesus' sake it has no value. Even if they are 'good things' they have no eternal value, nor effective because their light is not shining. The light of Jesus is not shining. The Holy Spirit is not working in and through them. Without love everything is meaningless. Without the transforming power of His love they are not surrendered to the will of the Father. They are not bringing glory to the Father and letting Him change them. Therefore the world cannot see God in His people.

Change your mind

Jesus says repent which means change your mind. In changing your mind your actions and priorities will be changed. Jesus is saying make our relationship together, spending time together your first priority. Let me change you, let me feed you and pour my love on you. Let me and my presence that is with you be effective in you and through you. Jesus is saying I'm holding you, but you are letting me be effective in and through you, to reach this dying world. With my light, my revelation of who I am and what I have done to the glory of our Father.

Remember me...Jesus is saying remember me; remember how when you first heard about me you burnt your magic books. Remember how I told you to grow in your relationship with me, and my love for you each and every day. To be rooted in my love and know how much I love you. Let me outwork this in and through you. Spend time with me in my presence, listening to me. Remember who you are in me. Let all my goodness flow down upon you, in you and through you. Jesus is saying do you remember? The place of hunger for me and the revelation of my love for you, that is the place from where you have fallen.



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A generation earlier the same church the Apostle Paul praised them for their love in **Ephesians 1:15** and for Jesus Christ in **Ephesians 6:24**. Although they were also strongly commanded to grow up in love in **Ephesians 4:2** and **Ephesians 4:15-16** it is clear they did not listen to the warnings. Yet Jesus is dwelling in and amongst them and upholding them in His right hand. Again He is reminding them they are accepted in the beloved.

The centre

Jesus is saying I am to be the centre of it all. I am the centre of it all and the reason for your existence. I am the one who holds you in my right hand and walks in your midst. The one, who made you holy and is perfecting you, loves you, died for you and for the lost. Remember.

Let us read what Jesus says will be the result if they do not change their mind and return to their first love.

Revelation 2:5 *'...or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.'*

The church, the body of Christ is in this world damaged by evil as a witness of Jesus, who He is, what He has done, is doing and will do. The church has been given Jesus' power and authority, the keys to His Kingdom and His Spirit in a revelation of His love.

The light to the world

It is important to understand when Jesus says the removal of their lampstand He is not talking about their salvation as Jesus has given His Spirit forever. The lampstand is symbolic of the churches light, or revelation, or effectiveness of shining brightly pointing to Jesus in this dark world damaged by evil. Jesus is saying your light is removed, as you are no longer an effective witness of me. Your light is so that the world will see me, to see the glory of our Father. Your light is I within you, oneness with you. Journeying together, me as your first priority receiving of my love, knowing of my love, living in the revelation of my love to the glory of our Father.



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Matthew 5:16 *'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'*

So Jesus is stating a fact. If He is not their first priority they have lost their first love then their light and effectiveness to the world has gone. I think back to another time when Jesus walked the earth as a man and He linked light with works.

The promise fulfilled in Jesus

Jesus gives a promise. *"... I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

Jesus promises a special closeness that will never go away, to live in the midst of the Paradise of God. Eternal life in our resurrected bodies is our future inheritance. Yet now each day, as we put Him first, we have intimacy with Jesus, intimacy with God.

Conclusion

Therefore the first work is a revelation of God's love in Jesus, a receiving of His love in who Jesus is, what He has done and will do. It is then as we live in His love, surrendered to our Father's will that the out working of His love is to love Him and to love others.

This is the heart of God. This is the witness of the church.

This is the light of the church - the revelation of God's love.

Jesus is with us eternally, but some part of the church (the body of Christ throughout history) has lost sight of Jesus. They cannot feel Him, cannot hear Him, do not spend time with Him, don't have a close and intimate personal relationship with Him, nor see evidence of Him working in their life. There is no transformation, they do not have any fruits, therefore the world cannot see Jesus in those who say they are His. Some of the church throughout all history is doing church without Jesus. Doing church having lost their revelation of Jesus' love for them and the lost.



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Taking away the candlestick is the churches 'light unto the world' as the witness of Jesus, the power and effectiveness of their witness, because the world sees the human works and not Jesus. The world does not see any transformation or difference between the light and the darkness. As such Jesus is stating a fact. You have forgotten your first love, you are doing church and life in your own strength, and then your light or witness of me to the world will go. If there is no closeness with Jesus, there is no time coming into God's presence first each and every day, then our light will be less and less to the world. There is no transformation in our hearts and minds and therefore as a result, no evidence of God's love.

God's unconditional, undeserved, unending love in Jesus for us is to be a light that shines unto the world, to the glory of the Father, so that they may know Him.

Even tho an aspect of the church have lost their first love, because of Jesus' unending love He still holds them in His nail pierced right hand. He still upholds them and walking amongst them. Even with them in their time of rejection.

Today Jesus walks amongst us, even when we don't feel Him. Yes even when we fail Him, fail His people and fail the lost.

Paul urged the church in Ephesus and to us today to grow in love. Jesus is saying the same to us today, grow in my love, receive my love. Grow in my underserved and unearned favour and in the knowledge of Me and our Father. Be surrendered to our Father's will every part of your life.

The Holy Spirit will transform us each day. Our work is to be surrendered to our Father's will every part of our life receiving of His love more and more each day, letting His Spirit transform us. The Holy Spirit will produce much fruit in and through us. The greatest of these is love. Love for God. Love for others, to the glory of the Father.

The church is to be a light shining in this dark world pointing to Jesus. Jesus says, *'I hold you in my right hand, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am with you. Remember my love.'*