

Why the Book of Revelation Is Really a Romance Story

Like a car wreck on the expressway where everyone begins to slow down to get a glimpse of the tragedy that has happened, our nation is experiencing a slowdown in the midst of tragedy right now.

For the last four weeks, my wife, Marsha, and I have known what it feels like to be in the car wreck that is COVID-19, but also what it is like to experience the extraordinary outpouring of God's love from His people.

It reminds me of the book that I have been repeatedly reading almost every 72 hours for the last few weeks, the book of romance in the New Testament. This is going to shock you, but please slow down and take time to realize that I am referring to the book of Revelation.

Continually reading this book has given me some unique insight into this part of Scripture, especially a part of this extraordinary book that has been overlooked in the church for too long. The book of Revelation is a book of romance. From start to finish, it tells the story of the war in the heavenlies for the love of the bride of Christ. It is our love story.

If you have ever doubted Christ's love for you, open up Revelation 1. Just when it seems there is nothing more Christ could do to demonstrate His great love for us—what could surpass His torture and death for our sake?—we get this glimpse of Jesus' unrelenting pursuit of our hearts. From the start, John, being led by the Holy Spirit, shows us the love and zeal of the glorious groom, the one who was dead but is alive with fire in His eyes. We often connect fire to fear and judgment, but instead, the fire in Jesus' eyes is passion for

His church.

Revelation 2 and 3 begin to describe us, His bride, through Jesus' address to the seven churches of Asia Minor, and suffice it to say, the portrait is less than flattering. Beginning with the first church, which has fallen out of love with Christ, and ending with the seventh church, which is neither hot nor cold but lukewarm, God shows us the immaturity of the bride. The description in Chapter 1 of the groom's unceasing, red-hot love for His bride stands in stark contrast to her tepid affection in Chapter 3.

Can you imagine getting ready for your wedding ceremony and the celebration that will follow, all while knowing that your spouse-to-be doesn't return your affections? She doesn't dislike you, but she doesn't love you passionately, either. Her greatest redeeming factor is that she is simply there—but in body only. Her heart is not there; her life is not there. You still love her ardently, but complacency and cowardice have turned her into little more than a shell.

When we think of it this way, it's no wonder Jesus says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

This statement about lukewarmness being distasteful to Him is not a rejection. Quite the opposite. While a human groom would take the hint, so to speak, and cancel the wedding, our heavenly groom continues His pursuit.

And it is transformative. The perfect *agape* love of God changes us for the better, so much so that in Revelation 19 when we see the bride again, she is dressed in fine white linen, ready—and excited—for the marriage supper with her groom. The power of Jesus has been revealed in her, and she has been able to withstand all that hell has belched out.

This is our story. How beautiful.

Is God at the center of the church? Or is He on the outside of the church, ever knocking on the door? Does anyone have the heart to pay attention to the glorious groom, who is courting us faithfully?

Has Jesus been the only true love of our hearts, or is He an afterthought?

Do we have a form of godliness but deny the power of the Holy Spirit that is speaking to us in this moment of crisis?

To those who have an ear, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the church! Jesus is walking among the churches, preparing His bride. Will we allow His love to transform us? Will we make Him our first love, and our daily motivation for all that we do?

I believe God is bringing a great awakening to our nation and to the world. If that happens, it will be because of a bride who is filled with the Holy Spirit and has become the witness to a lost, dying and a disintegrating world that Jesus is alive.

You're beautiful. I see Jesus in you.

Have a great week! {eoa}

Mikel French has challenged spiritual awakening all across America, where many celebrations extended into multiple weeks, and has conducted celebrations in France, Sweden, Russia, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Germany, South Africa, Malawi, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Haiti, Japan, Singapore, India and Thailand. He conducted an outreach celebration in Manila, Philippines, reaching 200,000 teenagers with the book of hope. Through the generous support of partners, he has presented the message of Jesus Christ to millions of people in the nation of Russia through televised citywide soul-winning celebrations. Mikel considers it an honor to assist in conducting the annual pastor's conference,

where thousands of pastors from Russia's 11 time zones come for training, teaching and equipping. Mikel and his wife, Marsha, reside in Tulsa, Oklahoma.