

Session 8 The God of Sardius-like Passion (Rev. 4:3)

I. REVIEW: THE NEED TO ENCOUNTER GOD’S BEAUTY

- A. Revelation 4 and 5 give us the highest revelation of God’s beauty in Scripture.
² I was in the Spirit and...Throne set in heaven, and One sat on the Throne. ³ He...was like a jasper and a sardius stone...there was a rainbow around the Throne...⁴ Around the Throne were 24 Thrones...I saw 24 elders...they had crowns...⁵ From the Throne proceeded lightnings, thunders, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning... ⁶ Before the Throne there was a sea of glass...around the Throne, were four living creatures... (Rev. 4:2-6)
- B. God gave us this passage to help us meditate on God’s majesty. Each detail is significant. We fill our thoughts of God by long and loving mediation on what God’s Word says about God.
⁵ I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty... (Ps. 145:5)
- C. It is not enough to study about God’s majesty, we must talk to God about it. Bible study must create an active dialogue in our heart with God. The power of God’s Word touches us as we declare it back to God. First, **we thank God** for His Throne. Second, **we ask God to reveal** (*release*) a spirit of revelation about the Throne (Eph. 1:17).

II. WHAT GOD FEELS LIKE: SARDIUS LIKE FIERY DESIRES

- ³ He who sat there was like a jasper (diamond like) and a sardius stone (deep red) in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald (green). (Rev. 4:3)*
- A. God did not describe Himself to John by human characteristics, but rather by His translucent brightness. What struck John was the color (light) that radiates from God’s countenance and Presence. His appearance is like a jasper and a sardius stone.
- B. John recorded what God looks like in His jasper like radiance, what He feels like in His sardius like fiery desires, and how He acts in His emerald rainbow of mercy.
- C. The sardius stone is a fiery red or ruby like gem. The word sardius is translated as carnelian by some. In the ancient world it was the gem that was used to engrave on. God has fiery desire and burning passion. God gave us insight into what He feels like.
²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous (passionate) God. (Deut. 4:24)
²³ ...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:23)
- D. This stone points to God’s passion as manifest in redemption or judgment. The fire of God’s desire is the same as His zeal to judge or remove all that hinders love. God’s desire is shown forth both in redeeming or punishing sinners, depending on their response to Him through Jesus. Note: the city of Sardis (area of modern-day Turkey) was named after this stone.

III. THE SARDIUS STONE IN SCRIPTURE

- A. There are three primary lists in Scripture that highlight the precious stones that speak of the beauty and majesty of God's countenance and radiance.
- B. The first list describes the 12 gems in the High Priest's breastplate. Each stone represented one of the 12 tribes of Israel. When the High Priest went before the altar, he represented the 12 tribes before God's Throne. Therefore, his breastplate and their jewels spoke living in nearness to God.

¹⁷ You shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius (tribe of Benjamin), a topaz, and an emerald...¹⁸ the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; ¹⁹ the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ²⁰ and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper (tribe of Reuben). (Ex. 28:17-20)

1. The first stone on the breastplate was the sardius stone. It represented the tribe of Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. The last stone was the jasper stone. It represented Reuben, Jacob's first born son.
 2. The two stones represented the first and the last of God's covenant people. Thus they are understood to represent all the other stones in between them.
- C. The second list describes the majesty around God's Throne as seen in Lucifer's garments before he rebelled against God. The king of Tyre was a prophetic picture of Satan's fall. There are nine stones mentioned. The sardius is first and the jasper is sixth. However, in the foundation stones in the New Jerusalem it is reversed, the jasper is first and the sardius is sixth (Rev. 21:19-20).

¹² "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering (garment): the sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. ¹⁴ "You were the anointed cherub who covers...you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. ¹⁵ You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. ¹⁶ ...You became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub.... ¹⁷ "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground." (Ezek. 28:12-17)

- D. The third list describes God's glory in the New Jerusalem. The stones in the New Jerusalem include the jasper (Rev. 4:3; 21:11, 18, 19) and the sardius stones (Rev. 4:3; 21:20).

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysolite, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. (Rev. 21:19-20)

IV. THE PASSIONATE GOD CREATED US WITH A NEED TO BE WHOLEHEARTED

- A. Our wholehearted God loves and gives Himself to us with all His heart. He designed us to be like Him. We were created with a longing to be wholehearted and passionate. If we have nothing to die for, then we have nothing to live for. We cannot function properly until we passionately give our heart to God. We long to love God without defilement or compromise. We soar to the heights of our human potential only when we fully love God.
- B. Jesus prophesied that God would have a people who love Him with all of their strength.
³⁷ *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart..." (Mt. 22:37)*
- C. God created us for love. He will empower us to receive and then give His affections back to Him which overflows for others. Our greatest reward is to feel and receive love, and then to overflow in love for others. We carry this reward within our hearts. Our desire for God is His gift to us. God measures our success not by how big our ministry is, but by how big our heart is. In other words, it is how much we have grown in the anointing to receive and return God's love.

V. THE CHRISTIAN PARADIGM OF GOD

- A. The Christian paradigm of God is a God with deep feelings of love. The revelation of God as a Father was a new idea in religious history (see William Barclay's comments on Heb. 4). To the Jewish tradition, the primary idea of God, emphasized the fact that **He was holy** in the sense of being totally separate from sin. They did not think of a holy God as sharing human experience. They thought of Him as being incapable of sharing it just because He was God. He was in every sense above sharing the human dilemma by the very definition of being God.
- B. The Greek philosophers saw God as emotionally distant from humans. The most prominent Greek thinkers were the Stoics. They saw the main attribute of God as being *apatheia*, by which they meant God's inability to feel anything. They reasoned that if God felt something then He would be influenced by what He felt, thus He could possibly be controlled by it. The stoics argued that those who felt sorrow or joy were vulnerable to being hurt and thus controlled by those they had feelings for. Therefore, the one who brought joy or pain must, at least for that moment, be greater than the one they impacted. If you feel for someone then you might possibly be hurt by them. Therefore, in that limited sense they control us.
- C. The stoic believed that no person was able to affect God's emotions for that would make that person greater than God for that moment. They reasoned that by the definition of who God is, He can't feel emotions or He would be controlled. They believed in a God completely beyond all feeling. To them God, could not be sad or glad by what humans did. He was completely indifferent in order to be the God who controls all.
- D. A well respected Greek philosopher named Plutarch, preached that it was blasphemous to think of God as lowering Himself to be concerned and impacted by the affairs of this lower world.

- E. Another Greek school was called the Epicureans. They believed that the gods lived in eternal joy and bliss. They lived in the intermediate world or in the spaces between the worlds. Thus, the gods were not aware of any events that occurred in the world below. They were totally detached from humans and their affairs as they lived in great happiness and glory.
- F. The Jews had a paradigm of a **holy God** driven by religious rules; the Stoics, had a paradigm of **feelingless gods**; the Epicureans, believed in completely **detached gods**. Into that context of the history of religious thought came the Christian paradigm of a God who deliberately embraced every human experience. This was an incredible new idea of a God who had deliberately undergone every human experience, and deliberately subjected Himself to pain and weakness.
- G. It was inconceivable to the religious mindset of the first century that a holy God wrapped Himself in the garments of humanity and then experienced God's wrath on a cross.
- H. It is difficult to fully realize how dramatic the Christian paradigm of God is. For century after century the human race had been deceived with the idea of the untouchable God. Jesus came as the One who had gone through everything that we go through.
- I. Two significant implications that Jesus emphasized was a God who felt passionate desire for His people, and who had the quality of sympathetic understanding or mercy.

VI. THE RAVISHED HEART OF GOD

⁹ *You have **ravished** My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have **ravished** My heart (Song 4:9).*

- A. Religion has taught the Church that we are not to concern ourselves with experiencing God's pleasure for us. Some have reduced the message of holiness to gritting one's teeth to try harder. The revelation of God's heart being ravished equips us for 100-fold obedience.
- B. A working definition of the ravished heart of God is: **To overcome with emotions of joy or delight. Unusually attractive, pleasing or striking** (Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary). A summary of the Hebrew definition and its English equivalent of the word "ravished" is **to overwhelm with emotions of delight because of one who is unusually beautiful or pleasing.**
- C. God describes His heart as overcome with emotions of delight for His people. He feels delight even toward immature believers. Many find difficulty in grasping the reality of a passionate God.
¹⁰ *I am my Beloved's, and **His desire is toward me.** (Song 7:10)*
- D. Salvation is more than a legal exchange effecting our position before God. Salvation includes the exchange of deep affections between our heart and God's. An intellectual understanding of the legal aspects alone is not enough. Why? Because we will never have more passion for God than we understand He has for us. As God communicates His longing and affections for us, then we respond in a similar way. As John said, We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

VII. GOD’S CAPACITY FOR BURNING AFFECTION

- A. God’s capacity for burning affection is one of the most unique aspects of His character. To be deeply loved and to deeply love in return is unique to the human spirit. This distinguishes us from the most exalted angels. Nothing in Scripture describes angels as having the capacity for affection. They have joy, but never are described as having affections.
- B. This capacity for affection brings us to unimaginable heights in God’s glory, but it can also be dangerous and result in our ruin. These powerful affections can bring us to agonizing depths of perversion, if we resist God’s grace.

VIII. JESUS’ REVELATION OF HIS “SARDIUS LIKE PASSION”

- A. At the Last Supper (Jn.13-17), Jesus prepared His disciples for the pressures of disappointment, persecution, and temptation that were soon to come. On His last evening with them, He spoke of God's desire for them. He also told them that they would all deny Him that night (Mt.26:31). Jesus affirmed His love to weak, yet sincere believers, not to mature apostles.
- B. Jesus emphasized that the measure of God's loving desire for them was no less than the measure of love that the Father has for the Son:
 - 1. The "measure of the Father's loving affection" of Jesus is the standard of the Son's affection for us. Jesus declared, "as the Father loved Me, I also have love you."
⁹ As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you... (Jn. 15:9)
 - 2. The "measure of the Father's loving affection" of Jesus is equal to the Father's affection for us. The Father loves the Church as He loves Jesus.
²³ That the world may know You...have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:23)
 - 3. The "measure of the Father's loving affection" of Jesus will be the quality of affection imparted to the church. Jesus prayed that we would love Him like the Father loved Him.
²⁶ I have declared to them Your name (personality/emotional make up)...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them... (Jn. 17:26)
- C. The knowledge of God’s emotional makeup is vital to a strong foundation in grace. The glory of the gospel flourishes as we understand the extravagant passions in God's sardius like personality.
- D. It is essential to know what He has done for us on the cross and what He will do for us in the coming revival or even eternity. We need to know how He feels, or why He does what He does.
- E. Why is God ravished for us? It is the nature of His heart to be “ravished”. His personality defines what true beauty is. Holy emotion fills His holy heart.

IX. RADIANT AND RUDDY

¹⁰ *My Beloved is white (radiant, NIV) and ruddy (red), chief among ten thousand. (Song 5:10)*

- A. God's glory seen as jasper and sardius radiance taken together, point to God's perfections. The jasper stone or diamond like radiance speaks of His beauty and truth. The sardius stone pictures His love. The One on the Throne is filled with the light of truth and the fire of passion.
- B. White and ruddy, are the two different colors that the Bride highlights in Song 5:10. There's no other that possesses both, except for Him. He is both the lion and the lamb at the same time. He perfectly expresses all elements of His personality without any contradiction. He serves in the meekness of a lamb and He roars in the authority of a lion.
- C. He is incomparably superior to all people or is "chief among ten thousand." Chief can be translated "distinguished" as in the margin of the NKJ, a "banner that distinguishes." In other words, He is one that stands out as a banner is lifted up. Jesus is "distinguished as a banner among a multitude." He is the One that stands out among the masses. A large banner (flag) in a marching army is the center of attention. The phrase ten thousand means incomparable greatness. Chief among 10,000 is a metaphor saying He is the greatest of all. He has no rival. The number 10,000 is not to be understood as literal. It means an extremely large number. Nobody else could compare to Him is the point.

X. THE HOLY ROMANCE OF THE GOSPEL

- A. The gospel brings us into what I call the "holy romance of the gospel." This is a descriptive term that I use, but it is not a biblical term. The words Trinity and Rapture are not biblical terms, but they describe biblical truths.
- B. When I speak of holy romance, I speak of a heart exhilarated in holy love from Jesus and therefore, back to Jesus and then others. The experience of God's love causes us to love Him more than our lives. When Paul reflected on his sacrifices for God, he testified that what he gave up was rubbish when compared to the glory of knowing Jesus.

¹¹ *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)*

- C. This is the epitome of what I mean by holy romance. Some fall into serious error, by bringing sexual overtones into their spiritual relationship with Jesus, in the name of holy romance. This is Satan's counterfeit to undermine the development of love that is defined by 100-fold obedience to Jesus in holiness. There is no sacrifice too great when our heart is set on fire by His love.

²¹ *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us...?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn. 14:21-23)*