

The Overriding Concern of the Redeemed!

A doe, a deer, a female deer, had sight in only one eye because of an accident as a fawn. Since she was vulnerable if a predator approached on her blind side, the doe made a habit of grazing on a high cliff overlooking the sea. She kept her good eye landward scouting for predators, and her blind eye toward the ocean.

One day, a boat filled with sailors rowed past the cliff. A sailor spotted the doe, grabbed a bow, and shot her. As the doe lay dying, she gasped, "I assumed my enemies would come by land. I never thought to look out to sea."

The story I just told was one of Aesop's fables, and the moral of the story was:
Trouble comes from where we least expect it.

The reason I shared that story was that Aesop (620-560 B.C.) was one of the most famous citizens of the city named Sardis.

Born a slave in Thrace, the hunchbacked Aesop won his freedom, and Sardis' Famous King Croesus, of "rich as Croesus" fame and a great supporter of learning, was glad to have Aesop the great storyteller and advisor come to his city.

As we will see in a while, Croesus would have done well to pay attention to Aesop's fable of the One Eyed Doe.

We found out before this series on Revelation started that over 80% of you had not heard a message series on Sunday mornings in the Book of Revelation before.

I said I think that's good news for me, because for 80% of you, this will be the best Sunday morning series on Revelation you have ever heard!

But I think it's bad news for the body of Christ that so few preachers are preaching from Revelation these days. I'm not sure all of the reasons for that. But I do know why I was afraid to preach it-

First, I have never liked being around those Christians who talk too much about it! I have felt put off by their arrogance in insisting their interpretations were right and wasting people's time with conjecture about such things as who the Antichrist is.

Many times what people have confidently insisted is true about the details of the book haven't seemed so apparent to me as I read The Book of Revelation!

Secondly, I respect a lot of different conservative preachers from a lot of different denominations. The great number of approaches among evangelicals I respect to Revelation is overwhelming! They all make such compelling arguments!

And so I have avoided this assignment over the years! And it took a nudge for me to preach it! Thanks to Dr. Reed from DTS who suggested I do this as my Doctor of Ministry project! It's a chance to face my fear of this book head on!

Now here's a couple of very pleasant surprises to me as I have studied:

1. Revelation is a goldmine of encouragement to Christians as they face life!

Nearly everything I want my people to know as they face life's ups and downs is addressed in Revelation! Our prayers, our praise, our perseverance, our purity, our deeds, our witness all matter!

2. The overall issues about Revelation come into focus pretty quickly when you ask and answer a few big picture questions

I want to give you those questions now, for you to answer as you do your own study!

GO OVER End Times Views –Clarification Chart

Read Revelation 3:1-6 PRAY!

Things we know about Sardis:

- It was 30 miles South of Thyatira
- At one time it had been the capitol of the Kingdom of Lydia with Croesus as it's king
- It was a very wealthy city located on a trade route that ran east and west
- Much of its wealth had come through the textile, dye, and jewelry industries
- As the other cities we have seen in Revelation, most citizens worshipped idols and lived sinfully
- Luxurious living had led to moral decadence
- It had an acropolis like the one in Athens that rose 800 feet above the North section of Sardis
- It had a temple to Diana or Artemis equal to the size of the one in Ephesus (never finished)
- It's location also made it an important military
- The city was built on a steep hill 1500 feet above the valley floor and inaccessible on 3 sides
- The fourth side and entrance to the city was easily defendable
- In Croesus' time, the city was thought to be impregnable
- But in 549 B.C., after Croesus' death, Cyrus, King of the Persians found a way to capture it
- With Sardis only watching it's one entrance, Cyrus captured it by following a secret path up a cliff
- In a very similar way, the Persians lost Sardis to Antiochus and Greece in 218 B.C.
- By the time this letter was written, most of Sardis' glory was behind it
- Smyrna had beaten it out for the temple of Caesar

But there's one more key thing to know about Sardis!

Sardis had a huge necropolis (city of the dead).

This cemetery was said to have a "thousand hills" because it had hundreds of burial mounds visible on the skyline some seven miles away!

V. 1a Jesus is the One who gives the energizing Holy Spirit

In chapter one, verse four we learned that the seven spirits is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The number 7 speaks of fullness, in this case the fullness of the H.S.

The Sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2-5

Spirit of the Lord

Spirit of wisdom and understanding

Spirit of counsel and might

Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord

The Bible makes clear that when a person believes in Jesus Christ, they receive the indwelling Holy Spirit.

"In Him also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation- in Him when you believed- were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. He is the down payment of our inheritance, for the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory." -Ephesians 1:13-14

If you have trusted Jesus for salvation, you have the energizing presence of the Holy Spirit inside you, and you are spiritually alive. If you are not a Christian, you do not have the Spirit Jesus gives those who turn to Him inside you, and you are spiritually dead.

Before we go on we should note here again Jesus says He is the one who has the stars also.

Each of the first three chapters "stars" occurs in a context where it probably refers to the pastors of the churches. That is not true after this chapter!

V. 1b The danger of deception in our lives

As I meditated on these verses this week, I want you to know: all week long I have been heartbroken. These seven letters are present tense messages to us right now, just like the New Testament letters Paul wrote to seven churches are.

And this passage nails America. And it nails the church in America.

And I'll be honest with you- it nailed me also!

I heard recently that for every 1 person in America that thinks they are going to Hell after death, there are 120 people who think they are going to Heaven.

Do you think there are some people in America who are deceived?

Jesus said to the church in Sardis – you have a reputation, or name, of being alive, but you are dead. The citizens of Sardis were used to taking much for granted. They thought they had things coming to them because of what had happened in Sardis in days gone by. But they were deceived- Sardis was pitiful compared to what it had been.

Most Americans think they are entitled to go to Heaven because they view themselves as good people. They have impressed others, but here Jesus says He is not impressed with the reputation they have before others.

There was a time Jesus looked a man that thought he was going to Heaven in the eye and said to him, “unless you are born again, you will not see Heaven.”

If you are here this morning and have never received Jesus as Savior, you need to know that you will die in your sins and go to Hell if you don't receive Jesus.

Why not receive Him now? Sinner's Prayer

Oh, but it's also possible for those who have already become Christians to be deceived. And I am talking about myself.

I wonder how many of us have a good reputation before others but not God?

I did a lot of wondering about that for myself this week!

I think it's easy for Christians to fall in the trap of impressing other people even when their relationship with Jesus is growing dry.

The overriding concern of the redeemed is to impress God whether or not men are impressed!

We would experience revival again in America if men and women, boys and girls, started caring more about what impresses God then what impresses other people!

Well that brings us to the question, “what impresses God?”

V. 2 What does NOT impress God

Trying to please God by the works you do does not impress God. Jesus says in verse three, “I have not found your works complete before God.”

They were doing a lot of good things, things that impressed other people.

Right deeds done from wrong motives do not impress God!

“All our righteous acts are like a polluted garment.” -Isaiah 64:6

Have you ever unwittingly tried to clean a floor without realizing your bucket had dirty water in it? And even though you worked real hard trying to clean the floor, you just made it worse? That’s what happens when you do good external deeds with the wrong internal motivation.

Because they had lost the right motivation to serve God, they were on life support, but there was still hope!

V. 3 What DOES impress God

In verse two he had told them to “Be alert!” Satan is sneaking up the side cliff of your life and trying to steal your joy!

Don’t let Him! Strengthen what remains! But how?

Here in verse four he says, “Remember the faith you received and guard it, repenting of the things we add to it that steal our joy!”

I loved talking to the staff about this earlier in the week!

One of our staff members asked himself...
“Why did I start doing AWANA ministry? Because I wanted kids to know verses!
Now its just a chore, going through the motions.”

Why did I enter the ministry? Because I wanted to help hell bound sinners like I had been go to Heaven instead! I wanted to build Christians up with the truth of God’s Word and to equip them to minister in the world!

Remember: right internal motivation impresses God, and then overflows into right deeds.

Levels of Motivation to serve God:

**Higher: Love
 Hope
 Faith**

Gratitude

**If not careful, can lead to a “debtor’s ethic”
Back to ‘have to’ instead of ‘want to’**

**Lower: Guilt
 Obligation
 Fear**

If this is all, you walk in a FOG

V. 5 Two great promises to the overcomer:

1. White clothes!

Finer than any earthly cleaning could give them or any dye could produce!

As Revelation 7:14 says, “they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!”

2. A guaranteed place in the Book of Life!

Because of the cemetery there in Sardis they were more than familiar with death- it literally overshadowed them.

In ancient cities the names of citizens would be recorded in a register till their death; then their names were erased or marked out of the book of the living. Expositors 449

Jesus was saying, “You’ve put Christians’ bodies in that necropolis over there. And the keeper of the books of Sardis erased their name saying they are no longer alive. But I’m here to tell you they are very much alive, and I have never erased them from My book of life, and your name won’t get erased either!

Let’s Pray!