

Behold | Sermons through the Revelation

Sermon #8: Revelation 3:1-13 | Seven Letters for Seven Future Messenger, part 3

Our Previous Conclusion-

- In these four churches, there is nothing that directly fits with a theology of the age of grace, but everything fits in a *futuristic* interpretation.
- This gives hints that *all eyes should be on Turkey* for a future power-area in geo-political influence.
- If we apply the so-called “letters to the seven churches” directly to our churches today, we will create a mixture of works and grace, giving to neither their appropriate place.

Revelation 3:1-6 | To the Messenger at Sardis

- Commendations to the messenger: *none!*
- Complaints against the messenger:
 - The messenger had works (v. 1) but they were not **perfect before God** (v. 2).
 - If these apply today, how can we know our works are perfect before God?
 - If these apply today, are we *complete in Christ* or only complete in our perfect works?
 - The works are enough for this messenger to have a name for himself, but in God’s evaluation he is **dead**.
 - Whether in the age of the law or the age of grace, works should be done in honesty, not “for show.”
 - Compare Jesus’ words: Matthew 6:2-4, 23:5, 28-38.
 - Under the coming Kingdom offer, it is both works and relationship that matter. Compare Matthew 7:22-23.
- Commands to the messenger:
 - The messenger is to **be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain** (v. 2).
 - It would not be *too little too late* if he would begin to act now.
 - But he doesn’t have much time, for the **things that remain** are about **ready to die** (v. 2).
 - The messenger is to **remember how thou hast received...**(v. 3).
 - The word **how** is an adverb and should not be translated as *what*.
 - While we do not know **how** the messenger **received and heard**, there is certainly something that he had fallen from. Therefore, he is commanded to **hold fast, and repent**
- The Specific word to the church:

- There will be some in Sardis who **have not defiled their garments** and they will be rewarded, **for they are worthy**.
- Note that this is incompatible with the age of grace because the worthiness rests on the church member rather than on Christ.

- The general word to the churches: *overcome!* The one who does will not lose his **name out of the book of life**. To align this with the age of grace would require verbal gymnastics.

Revelation 3:7-13 | To the Messenger at Philadelphia

- Commendations to the messenger:
 - The messenger has **works** and *faithfulness* (v. 8).
 - He will be kept **from the hour of temptation which shall come...** (v. 10). – He will be safe through the Tribulation.
- Complaints against the messenger: *none*
- Commands to the messenger:
 - Go through the **open door**. Note that this is set before *the messenger*, and is not necessarily descriptive of the church (though we often hear talk of *the church of the open door*).
 - Prepare for **the synagogue of Satan** (fake Jews) to **worship before thy feet**. The exact meaning is unclear, but compare Isaiah 45:14.
 - **Hold fast** so that no one will **take thy crown** (v. 11).
- The general word to the church: The overcomers will be rewarded with eternal blessings.

A Sample of Evangelical Teaching

- From commentary on Sardis:
 - “their lack of Christian works bears witness that they are spiritually dead” – John Yeatts
 - “Christ seems to be saying that if we bear faithful witness for him in times of tribulation, he will witness to our faithfulness before God and the angels of heaven. In short, if we are true to Christ, he will be true to us.” – John Yeatts
 - “Christ does not ask these faithful few to leave the nominal majority but to maintain their presence as a witness. They may have a difficult time doing so, but Christ commends them as worthy of special praise. They will appear dressed in white one day, revealed as truly righteous.” – Kendell Easley
- From commentary on Philadelphia:
 - “The more obvious meaning is that he promises to protect (“keep”) these believers from the experience of his wrath (a post-tribulationist viewpoint). In John 17:15 Jesus had prayed, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them.” This uses the same Greek verb as is in 3:10 and is likewise used to support a post-tribulationist perspective.” – Kendell Easley