

Insights to the Book of Revelation Letters within the Letter

Introduction:

1. You can't buy food at most markets without coming face to face with pop prophecy.
2. Tabloid predictions of the weird, bizarre, and the ridiculous.
3. Why do people buy such stuff? It's because mankind seems to have an incredible interest in the future and unusual events.
4. Consequently, many are gullible guests of charlatans who dish out truth and error in palatable proportions, praying on unsuspecting souls.
5. Furthermore, some people are deliberately or demonically deceived.
6. Biblical prophecy is not like that.
7. ***2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"***
8. ***2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and his proposal for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete. Thoroughly equipped for every good work."***
9. As we approach the end time and fulfillment of the last days prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, we see important similarities, symmetry, and sequence.
10. Looking through their eyes, we can see history in advance.
11. We cringe at the efforts of evil at work in the Earth but rejoice as we see God's spiritual forces overruling world affairs with righteousness.

Philadelphia:

1. ***Revelation 3:7 "and to the messenger of the assembly in Philadelphia write"***
2. According to one account, it was originally established by King Attalus 11 Philadelphus of Pergamum in 189 BC
3. The city was founded with the expressed purpose of becoming an outpost of Hellenism – that is Greek culture and language.
4. Philadelphia was also very badly damaged and for many years following the earthquake, the residents continued to feel weaker tremors.
5. Almost nothing is known about the Jewish community in Philadelphia although it was thought that was not very different from the Jewish community in Smyrna, about which we know slightly more.
6. These are the only two congregations (Smyrna and Philadelphia) from the list of seven that receive all praise and no criticism.
7. ***Revelation 3:7 "He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens, and no one will shut, and who shuts, and no one opens says this"***
8. Christ describes Himself as holy and we should see this in light of the reference to the key of David, and the one who is able to open and close in such a way that no one would be able to reverse the action
9. ***Revelation 3:8 "I know your deed. Behold, I've put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied my name"***

10. Christ states that he kept close check on the life of the congregation in Philadelphia, he proceeded to say that using the key of David, he was going to open a door for them that no one would be able to shut.

11. After discussion, James the brother of Jesus, rules as follows: ***Acts 15:13-18 "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles of people for His name. With this the words of the prophets agree, and just as it is written, 'After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tent of David which has fallen and I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says The Lord, who made these things known from long ago?"***

12. The conversation of Roman pagans to Israel's God, according to ***Acts 15***, constitutes nothing less than the rebuilding of David's tent as God's house for all Nations.

13. The prophets of old imagined at time in the future when the House of David the '***tent of David***' would be merged with the House of God and would be open to all nations of the earth.

14. By drawing this connection, Jesus affirmed that this time had come.

15. ***You will open the door for the congregation in Philadelphia that no one could shut*** - it will be the door that welcomes gentile followers of the Jewish Christ into the tent of David.

16. ***Revelation 3:9 "Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie - I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you"***

17. To use the phrase that "*this is one of the most misunderstood verses in the whole Bible*" is to use a cliché, but it is actually true.

18. The *erroneous interpretation* so slightly simplified is as follows: The Jews, because of their unbelief and rejection of Jesus, are of the synagogue of Satan, and now Christians are the spiritual Jews. There will come a day when persecuted Christians will be triumphant, and the unbelieving Jews will submit to them.

19. It's clear that this is oversimplified but fairly accurate summary of the typical interpretation of these texts is an example of "*replacement theology*" or "*supersessionism*" at work.

20. What I have just mentioned is not the proper reading of this text - there are several factors to consider.

21. The word translated here as a "synagogue" is known today as a distinctly Jewish institution, but in antiquity this was a neutral word used for assemblies of all sorts of - secular or religious, Jewish, or pagan

22. "Synagogue of Satan" evokes an affiliation with the religion Judaism an "assembly of the adversary" is how it should be understood.

23. The synagogue of Satan is opposed to the mission and message of Christ.

24. Even most of the Roman persecution was an effort to appease the Jewish authorities.

25. Pilate's condemnation of ***Jesus (John 19:1-16)***, ***Paul's imprisonment*** by Roman governors ***Felix (Acts 24:27)*** and ***Festus (Acts 25:16)***.

26. Christians were considered a sect of Judaism, they were exempt from the required observance of certain aspects of Roman state religion.

27. However, as Christians were expelled from synagogues and denounced by the Jewish leadership, Rome began to see Christianity as a new religion that did not have these same exemptions.

28. By their persecution of the true people of God, these unbelieving Jews had become a synagogue of Satan
29. Second, Jesus actually told the Philadelphian believers, that people who were saying and doing these things were not Jews.
30. If they were not Jews, who were they? They were most likely pagan or ex pagans who had just embarked on the path of becoming Jews.
31. The third expulsion by Emperor Claudius stemmed from political subversiveness: *“He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus”*
32. The assemblies were numbers of God fearers, non-Jews, former pagans, who joined the faith through recognition of Jesus as Messiah.
33. The group of people, led by overzealous converts to Jewish ancestral ways of life, and who, until recently, were not members of the Jewish people, were most likely the ones behind the persecution
34. ***Revelation 3:10 “Because you have kept the word of my perseverance., I will also keep you from the hour of testing, that which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth”***
35. ***Revelation 3:11-13 “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and it will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and my new name. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”***
36. People among the nations of the world who joined the Jesus movement not as Jews, but as members of the nations, would be fully brought in and treated as first class citizens of the Kingdom of Israel's God.

Laodicea:

1. ***Revelation 3:14 “To the messenger of the assembly at Laodicea write The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this”***
2. The reference to Jesus Christ being the beginning of creation of God should be taken to refer to the Jewish concept of Logos or Memrah (Word) that is present in a dominant way in ***John 1***
3. It has long been mistakenly thought that the idea expressed in John's prologue are unique to Christianity and was erroneously believed that the statement in ***John 1:1*** the Logos (word) constituted nothing less than a groundbreaking departure from Judaism.
4. It's not until ***verse 14, “and the word became flesh”*** at any innovative idea, though not contradictory to Judaism, was introduced.
5. Jesus, as he addresses his followers in Laodicea is identifying himself with the instrument of God at the creation of the world, the Logos, the word of God - this was a thoroughly Jewish idea in the 1st century.
6. Laodicea was originally built as a fortress, even though it had one significant deficiency because all of its water supply had to come by underground aqueduct from springs located at least 2 miles away.
7. Several characteristics of the city of can be seen through Jesus' address to the assembly located there.

8. It was the banking and financial center for Asia Minor as well as the center of the clothing industry mass producing inexpensive outdoor wool garments.
9. Laodicea was also a medical center of the ancient world
10. they boasted a disproportionately large Jewish population and there were at least 7000 male Jews residing in the relatively small city.
11. In 62 BC, Flaccus, the governor of the province, became alarmed at the amount of currency that the Jews were exporting in payment of the temple tax that was made by every male Jew and so imposed an embargo on the export of currency.
12. ***Revelation 3:15-16 "your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot, I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew out of my mouth"***
13. Here he was referring to the cities of Hierapolis and Colossae.
14. ***Revelation 3:17-19 "because you say I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourselves, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, therefore, be zealous and repent."***
15. A careful reading of Jesus' admonition reveals that this assembly had become focused on riches and wealth, with pride and spiritual complacency being the result.
16. They had invested their valuables in the wrong bank.
17. ***Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door, knock.; If anyone. Here is my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him, and he with me"***
18. ***Leviticus 18:24 "Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled"***
19. ***Revelation 21- 22 "He who overcomes I will grant him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. He was an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assembly"***
20. Gentile followers of the Jewish Christ were encouraged to join the Jewish coalition as sojourners with Israel; that is, not as Jews, but as the nations alongside Israel.
21. This means that for Gentile followers of Jesus, there are not many options.
22. They could either join Jewish people through proselyte conversion which was culturally taboo, or they could conform to the rules and practices of pagan Rome.
23. A third option was to learn how to live holy and righteous lives as the nations in the Roman world while worshipping the Christ.
24. This was not easy and a very new development - in fact, it was extraordinarily difficult because it placed people in the margins as the Gentile believers were at that time
25. But the reward offered was so incredibly great.