

Christ in Prophecy

Revelation 19: Mike Norten on Revelation Issues

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Are you baffled by the book of Revelation? Does it frighten you? Do you wonder why in the world God included such a book in the Bible? Do you believe that no one can understand it? Well, stay tuned for an interview with a person who can help you understand it, and explain why it is important to understand it.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. My colleague, Nathan Jones, and I have as our very special guest today one of the trustees of this ministry, Michael Norten.

Nathan Jones: Hey, Michael, so good to have you back on man.

Michael Norten: Thanks for having me.

Nathan Jones: Oh, it is so good.

Michael Norten: Fantastic.

Nathan Jones: Well, your background is business, so just before we jump into the book of Revelation tell us why are qualified to teach us the book of Revelation.

Michael Norten: Well, ever since I graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary back in 1974 I've been teaching the Bible in various churches and various venues; and I concentrate on prophecy. I love teaching on prophecy. And I wrote a book called, *Unlocking the Secrets of the Feasts*.

Nathan Jones: Very good book.

Michael Norten: And I was astounded at how the feasts verify everything we've learned about prophecy, about His First Coming, Christ First Coming, and His Second Coming.

Nathan Jones: So, you are a seminary student. You've written a book, and you have been teaching since the 70's. I think that more than qualifies you to teach the book of Revelation.

Michael Norten: Thank you.

Dr. Reagan: I think so too. Well, Mike let me ask you a questions here, I want to jump quickly into the book of Revelation, take full advantage of our time. And there is no doubt that it is the least read book in the New Testament.

Michael Norten: Oh, yes.

Dr. Reagan: And why do you think that is?

Michael Norten: I believe it is a number of reasons. It is kind of out of sight, out of mind because the pastors and Sunday School teachers typical don't teach it. They may be intimidated by it, or the visions and the symbols it might frighten them a little bit, maybe. But people that are reading the Scriptures, a lot of times they will read the Bible for devotional purposes, and so they will gravitate to the Psalms, or the Gospels, or the Epistles. And when it comes to Revelation it is overwhelming with all these horrendous judgments, and then finding that humanity is being held accountable. And of course, Satan doesn't want us to know that judgment is coming. So, I believe those are the reasons that it might not be read.

Dr. Reagan: I think you are right on target with that. We have so many pastors who have even been to seminary, and the seminary just does not teach.

Michael Norten: Right.

Dr. Reagan: Even when they get into the books like Isaiah they don't get into the prophetic aspects of it. And so, I often have preachers just tell me, "Well, you know I am just Panmillennial; I believe it will all pan out in the end." And I have to bite my tongue because what I want to say is, "What you're admitting is you're lazy, you're not willing to get in here and really study it." Because there is a position here, it is not just it will all work out in the end. But I think a lot of people are scared of Revelation. They say, "Well, it is just full of bad news." But it only has good news for believers.

Nathan Jones: What a shame too because the book of Revelation has a bonified promise by God that you will be blessed if you read it right? Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near." So, Mike what do you think when anyone is approaching Revelation what is the key to understanding it?

Michael Norten: One of the things that we must remember is Revelation is revealing the person of Christ, and His power, and His plan.

Nathan Jones: Okay.

Michael Norten: And we shouldn't study it with an idea of allegorizing it.

Nathan Jones: No.

Michael Norten: We must take it for its natural meaning of the words. In fact Sir Isaac Newton loved to teach prophecy, and he got a lot of criticism because--I'll give you an example when he was teaching Isaiah 11, verse 14 where it says when the Jews come back to their homeland they will be flying over and swoop down onto the shoulder of the Philistines. And he would teach it literally. And they said, "Jews can't fly." He said, "Well, they will learn how to fly because it says they are going to fly." And sure, enough if you look at an ancient map of Philistia it looks like a shoulder, and right there at the top of the shoulder is Ben Gurion Airport. It was literally fulfilled. They swooped down onto the shoulder of the Philistines.

Nathan Jones: I love the golden rule of interpretation: If the plain sense makes sense, look for no other sense, lest you end up with nonsense. That is the key that Dr. Reagan has taught me since coming to Lamb & Lion Ministries, is that is how you interpret not only the book of Revelation but the Bible. Do you use that in your interpretation?

Michael Norten: Oh, definitely. Definitely. And because it makes clear because this is a revelation, not a secret.

Nathan Jones: An unveiling.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, it is an unveiling, that's the whole thing.

Michael Norten: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: God wants us to understand it.

Michael Norten: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Reagan: People think you have to have a PhD in Hermeneutics, whatever that is, in order to understand the book of Revelation. The First Coming prophecies meant what they said. Why shouldn't the Second Coming mean what they say?

Michael Norten: Exactly. And one of the things that helped me is Revelation chapter 1, verse 19, when God gave John the outline. He said, "Write down the things that you've seen." Well, we know that was the revealing of the glory of Jesus.

Nathan Jones: Chapter 1.

Michael Norten: In chapter 1, and then, "Write the things that are." Well, we know that is the churches, and the seven letters to the seven churches in chapter 2 and 3.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Michael Norten: And then, "Write the things which will happen after these things." From 4-22 that's all about the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom, and Eternity.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I am glad you mentioned that because that is one of the keys to understanding the book, yes. It has an index right there.

Michael Norten: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: You know Henry Morris who was best known for his teaching on Creationism, he wrote a commentary on the book of Revelation. And at the very beginning he said, "The reason I am writing this book is because people tell me that the book of Revelation is hard to understand." He said, "It is not hard to understand. It is hard to believe." He said, "If you believe it, you will understand it." You know you take for example Revelation chapter 4 I believe it is, 5, no 7, chapter 7 he starts off by talking about 144,000 Jews who are going to be sealed by God as servants during the Tribulation. And 85% of the commentaries today say that is the Church. But that is because of Replacement Theology. How can it be the Jews when God has replaced the Jews and has no purpose left for the Jews? So, we allegorize it and say it is the Church.

Michael Norten: And they mention all the different tribes.

Dr. Reagan: I know it is mentioned by tribes and everything else. I don't know what God would have to do to convince us He is talking about 144,000 Jews.

Nathan Jones: Well, what do you do about the symbols? Because clearly there are definite symbols; there is the red dragon, and the woman and the child. How do you interpret the symbols in Revelation?

Michael Norten: Well, one of the things that is helpful to me is if you just read a little further it will interpret the symbols for you.

Nathan Jones: Revelation tells you what the symbols mean. Or like the woman for instance you have to go back to the Old Testament to the story of Joseph to understand the vision that was being seen.

Michael Norten: And that's why we need to really understand the Old Testament, to really understand the New.

Dr. Reagan: Hey, that is another key to understanding Revelation.

Michael Norten: Right and I tell Jews, I tell them, I say, "You know the New Testament is a Jewish book, but God has been so kind to us Gentiles to allow us to read it."

Dr. Reagan: There you go. Well, people don't understand how important it is to know the Old Testament in order to understand the book of Revelation. There are over 300 references in the book of Revelation to the Old Testament, not a single one of them is identified, not a one. For example, in Revelation chapter 1 the theme of the whole book is given in verse 7, "Behold, He," speaking of Jesus, "is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So, amen." That is a direct quotation of two Old Testament prophecies, but it doesn't identify it. Not one prophecy is identified. Like in Matthew. where Matthew says, "As it said in so in so, as it said in so in so, as it said in so in so." Not here. But there's hundreds of prophecies from the Old Testament there. And you can't understand the book of Revelation unless you know the Old Testament.

Michael Norten: I was having lunch with an Orthodox Jewish gentleman, and I was trying to let him know about Yeshua. And all he said, "Well." And I said, "Zechariah talks a lot about Him." And he says, "Well, I'll read it myself and I'll determine. But I am going to have to read it in the Hebrew." I said, "Okay, and I pulled out my Hebrew Bible and gave it to him." And he goes, "You a Gentile! You have a Hebrew Bible." And so, he started reading it while we were having lunch. He pointed out every verse that pointed to Jesus.

Nathan Jones: Wow, especially Isaiah 53. What do you think about the seven letters? You talked about in Revelation chapter 2 & 3 there are seven letters given to seven churches. Are they literal interpretations? Are they symbolic of something? Do they have multiple meanings? How do you interpret the seven?

Dr. Reagan: And do they have any relevance to us today?

Nathan Jones: Yeah.

Michael Norten: Definitely have relevance because all the challenges that those churches had, they, you know leaving their first love, and having false teachers, and the persecutions they were experiencing. They are having those today. And pastors who have had the courage to teach on Revelation have put together incredible messages from those letters.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, applying them to today.

Michael Norten: Applying today.

Nathan Jones: Well, like Ephesus, right? That was the first, that was the legalistic church. Smyrna the persecuted church. Pergamum the liberal church. Thyatira the pagan church. Sardis the dead church. Philadelphia the alive church. And Laodicea the apathetic church. Each one of those, like you said, had a problem and then Jesus said how you can fix that, and I will bless you if you overcome that problem. Totally applicable today.

Michael Norten: Yeah, you can find an example of each one of those churches today.

Nathan Jones: Excellent.

Michael Norten: And some have a mix.

Nathan Jones: Now, do you think that they also represent time periods within the Church history?

Michael Norten: Well, you know a lot of people do not like, or they discount the idea of the Church Ages because they say that is a prophetic view. I think it more a typological view would be more accurate because the First Century couldn't have read those letters and knew what was going on with the Church Ages. But you can look back and see how they do show the Church Ages even from the names of the meanings of the church, the names of those churches. And Dr. Pentecost was the first one to relay that to me. He's the one that wrote, "Things to Come."

Dr. Reagan: Very quickly we don't have much time left in this segment. There are many people who say that the three sets of judgments in the book of Revelation are circular, they are describing the same thing over and over.

Michael Norten: Those are so different. They are consecutive. They number them. And you take the Seal Judgments, the Seventh Seal, the silence in Heaven, oh, my goodness they are showing there are going to be more intense. That Seventh Seal becomes the Seven Trumpets. And then you see they are different, and they are more intense. And then you come to the Seventh Trumpet and they unfold as the Seven Bowl Judgments in rapid succession like a grand finality.

Dr. Reagan: Plus, you've got one-fourth killed in the Seals. You have another third killed in the--how can that be the same thing?

Michael Norten: I know you add them up and it comes out to be half of the population.

Nathan Jones: Plus, the Trumpet Judgments release demonic hordes, and you don't see those in the other series.

Michael Norten: And in the Bowl Judgments they are so rapid succession it is like a grand finale of a fire work show. It is just one after another. It's just incredible. It's totally different.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, we are going to pause here for a moment, when we come back we are going to throw some more questions at Mike about the book of Revelation.

Part 2

Nathan Jones: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview with Michael Norten who is a businessman, a Bible teacher, and trustee of this ministry. He teaches the book of Revelation frequently and that's why we are discussing that with him today. Michael, you mentioned the Tribulation. Can you tell us what it is as Revelation describes, and what its purpose is?

Michael Norten: Well, we know that the seven year Tribulation, is the Seventieth Week in Daniel that read about in Daniel 9.

Nathan Jones: Meaning?

Michael Norten: That's the countdown of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel, of course that is another subject all together.

Nathan Jones: Daniel prophesied 483 years until the Messiah came, which was accurate.

Dr. Reagan: 490, yeah.

Nathan Jones: 490, but then there's the seven that have yet to happen.

Michael Norten: Right, there was a gap, because after Christ was crucified then the Temple was destroyed.

Dr. Reagan: God called a time out.

Nathan Jones: Yeah, the Church Age, right?

Michael Norten: Yeah, it's a time out. And we are waiting. Well, what happened to the Seventieth Week? And I use a lot of multimedia in my teaching. And I have different people ask me, "Well, what happened to the Seventieth Week? What happened to the Seventieth Week?" And I even have a homeless gentleman holding up a cardboard that says, "Any information on the Seventieth Week would be helpful. God bless."

Nathan Jones: So, that's a seven year time period that you say is the Tribulation.

Michael Norten: Yes, that's the Tribulation. Now, the Tribulation, remember in Revelation 5 the scroll, the Seventh Seal scroll.

Nathan Jones: That Jesus opens.

Michael Norten: We know because of history and of culture that is land deed for inheritance. And so, what we lost in the Garden through the first Adam we gained back through the second Adam; Jesus. Now, when you have land, when you inherit land what is the first thing you do? You clean out the underbrush, you throw out the trash and get the garbage out of there. Make it really nice and inhabitable and make it beautiful. Well, that is what Christ is doing at the Tribulation. He is cleaning out the wickedness, and punishing the wickedness, and He's bringing one last call to salvation to those in the Tribulation to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

Nathan Jones: Jeremiah 30:7 calls it the time of Jacob's Trouble.

Michael Norten: Yes.

Nathan Jones: You also hear the Day of the Lord, or the Last Days or the End Times, that's all the Tribulation?

Michael Norten: Yes, and that's why he calls it the day of trouble because He's getting the Jews that are back in the land ready to receive their Messiah. As Zechariah 12 says, "They will look up and see Him whom they have pierced." And all of Israel will be saved.

Nathan Jones: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, there are many purposes of the Tribulation, many, but the fundamental purpose is to fulfill all the prophecies that were made in Daniel chapter 9, in verse 24 where he says six things He is going to accomplish among the Jewish people. And He's going to wrap them up during that time.

Michael Norten: It's a wrap up.

Dr. Reagan: So, although there are many purposes like pouring out wrath upon rebellious Gentile nations, one of those purposes is to bring a Jewish remnant to salvation.

Michael Norten: Definitely.

Dr. Reagan: They are going to bring them to the end of themselves. And as you said they are going to turn to the Lord and repent. And they are going to cry out, "Baruch Haba B'shem Adonia" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." In fact, Jesus said I will not come back until the Jews say that. So, that is when He's going to return.

Michael Norten: Awesome.

Nathan Jones: Michael, the second purpose that I believe, like you said Jesus is cleaning up and He's preparing for something and that is, you referred to it earlier, the Millennial Kingdom, the thousand year reign of Christ. Do you believe it is a literal thousand years, or is that just figurative?

Michael Norten: It's definitely a thousand years because in Revelation 20 it mentions six times that it's a thousand years.

Nathan Jones: Six time.

Dr. Reagan: How many times would God have to mention that?

Michael Norten: It's amazing. And the thing is all of the numbers that are listed in Revelation are exact numbers, they are not figurative. So, it has been promised to David in 2 Samuel 7 that the Messiah would reign physically on His throne.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, this is not a new revelation, all through the Old Testament we are talking about the reign of Jesus. In fact, the book of Isaiah is all about the reign of Jesus. The book of Revelation is primarily about the Tribulation. But what do you say, Michael, to the fact that the vast majority of all professing Christians on planet earth today do not believe that Jesus is coming back to reign on this earth? The Catholic Church says, "No." Most of your Protestant denominations say, "No." They say that Jesus is reigning right now that we are in the Millennium now and have been in it since the Cross. What do you say about that?

Michael Norten: That is ridiculous because one of the characteristics of the Millennium, of course this is in the future, it has been promised in the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham. And it was promised to Moses. It has been promised to David. And even Mary, the mother of Jesus, was promised that kingdom. And they're always looking for the kingdom. And one characteristic of the kingdom is Satan will be bound for a thousand years; and Satan is not bound now.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, but Amillennialist say he is. They say he was bound at the Cross. And that because of that he is not as active, they say it is relative. He's not as active as he otherwise could because he is restrained by the Holy Spirit. But he is restrained they say.

Michael Norten: Well, I hate to see wickedness any worse than it is today.

Dr. Reagan: Isn't that the truth? He is always gnawing on my leg for sure.

Nathan Jones: Well, Satan is bound for a thousand years but one of the references of the six ones you mentioned in Revelation 20 is that he gets to the end and it says at the end of the thousand years he is released for a while. Why would God release Satan?

Michael Norten: That is a really great question. And a lot of churches ask me that question. And the reason for that is he is exposing the heart of man. The thing about the Kingdom that is quite fascinating is we have a perfect environment, a perfect government, a perfect leader and even with that at the end when Satan comes to deceive them at the end many people will decide to rebel against God. And that shows us that the issue is not the environment.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Michael Norten: It's the heart of Man.

Dr. Reagan: It is a complete repudiation of Humanism, which believes in the goodness of Man.

Michael Norten: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: Now, that is an important point. I want to go back though to Amillennialism for a moment, because again this is the majority viewpoint by far in the Church today. And I think we need to really take a look at it here. You know, Arnold Fruchtenbaum who is a Messianic Jewish scholar he always says, "If we are living in the Millennium now, I'm living in the ghetto part of it." It says the world is going to be flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice. And they say, "Well, the Gospel is doing that." But you look at the world, and the world is in absolute rebellion against God. You have to spiritualize everything in the book of Revelation to take the position that we are in the Millennium now.

Michael Norten: And the thing that amazes me is why would they not look forward to this great news? This is our great hope that has been promised to all the prophets.

Dr. Reagan: It has been promised to the Jewish people, too.

Michael Norten: Yes. And see one of the things that we must remember is during the Reformation they were trying to hammer out salvation, and the meaning of salvation, and the truth of salvation and the Gospel, and they did a great job with that. They were not concerned about prophecy as much as it is today. But now prophecy, we know we are in the end times, and it's very, very important.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you know the very last words Jesus spoke to His disciples had to do with the Millennium. They said, "When are we going to have the Kingdom? When are you going to establish it?" He said, "It's not for you to know." He didn't say, "Oh, come on fellas, when are you going to get the point? There is not going to be any Kingdom. I'm not going to come back and reign. Come on fellas."

Michael Norten: Why come back if He isn't going to reign?

Nathan Jones: And then you see the resurrection of Post-Millennialism; this idea that the Church will conquer the world and then hand the keys to the Kingdom to Jesus. Which, where does that come from?

Dr. Reagan: Well, that was the view of the Church at the beginning of the 20th Century. And then World War I, and World War II, and all just completely destroyed Post-Millennialism, and now it's come back.

Nathan Jones: It's so sad, it's come back.

Dr. Reagan: Because it is based upon a belief in the increasing goodness of Mankind; he is going to become better and better, and better until finally he establishes the Kingdom, and then Jesus will come later on.

Nathan Jones: But Revelation shatters the view, right?

Michael Norten: Oh, yeah.

Nathan Jones: I mean when you see how bad each, how Mankind they are shaking their fist at God, and crying out for the wrath of the Lamb to go away, or God will judge them and turn to Him. But when it gets to the end we get to Revelation chapter 21 & 22 and that is the Eternal State.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, what does it say about Eternity?

Michael Norten: Oh, that is so incredible. It explains that there is no more Satan. No more death. No more pain. No more suffering. All the old will be gone. And we will have a New Heaven and a New Earth. And the New Jerusalem will be coming, and land on the earth and have a footprint about the size of half of the United States. It will be incredible and be so beautiful. The Jews here recently have been shocked because they've been starting to read the prophets now, and they noticed that not all of the, in Hebrew, Jerusalem being spelled out in the plural form. They noticed that even in Jeremiah he'll have it sometimes listed in the dual form, because the plural means the majesty of Jerusalem and all, but the dual is more specific. So, I checked with my contacts in Israel to find out what is there take on it? And they said the Rabbis have decided that there are two Jerusalems; one on earth, and one in heaven. That one in heaven is going to be the one that is going to come down, and God will dwell with His people forever.

Dr. Reagan: Do you have a favorite verse in the book of Revelation?

Michael Norten: Oh, well, he mentioned Revelation 1:3 because of the blessing. And I knew, I understood the reading and the listening, I understood that. But heeding? How do you heed prophecy? I had to check with Peter, and he gave some clue on that. In chapter 3 of his second letter he said in order to heed to prophecy this is what you do, be sure to walk in holiness and

keep watching, and understand the end times, and continue to grow in the knowledge and the grace of Jesus Christ, that's how you heed prophecy.

Dr. Reagan: One of my favorite verses in Revelation is 19 verse 10 which says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Michael Norten: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: He is the focus of the book of Revelation. We have very little time left. I have to ask you one last question. Do you believe we are living in the season of the Lord's return?

Michael Norten: Definitely, in fact, you all have done a great job in explaining the convergence, all the signs are happening at the same time. All coming together.

Part 3

Nathan Jones: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview of Michael Norten, one of this ministry's trustees. Michael, it's been great hearing you teach on Revelation. If someone wants to bring you in to their church or Bible study how would they get in touch with you?

Michael Norten: Well, the best way would be with my e-mail address: mnorten@icloud.com.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, thank you very much. Glad to have you with us. Well, folks that is our program for today. I hope our program has been blessing to you and I hope the Lord willing that you will be back with us next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program