

Synagogue of Satan

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The apostle John is credited with completing the book of Revelation around 90 CE on the Isle of Patmos, which is located in the Aegean Sea (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patmos>). On two occasions in this book, he refers to the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). The context in which this phrase is used involves discussions between Jesus Christ and seven angels who are responsible for different congregations of God's servants. In this study, we will examine some of the reasons for the phrase "synagogue of Satan" being used.

In the same chapters where the phrase "the synagogue of Satan" is used, John opens the discourse in the following manner.

And to the angel of **the church** in Smyrna write.... (Rev. 2:8a; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; emphasis added).

And to the angel of **the church** in Sardis write.... (Rev. 3:1a; emphasis added).

It appears to be intentional that John used "the church" in juxtaposition to "the synagogue"; so the meaning of both these words should be examined.

Synagogue (SGD 4864) – congregation, assembly, meeting place.

**Church (SGD 1577; Root #1537 and a derivative of # 2564)*

*The Greek word translated into the English word "church" is *ekklesia*, which means "to invite, call aloud, to be called out of, or away from"). Therefore, the word "church" denotes those who

are actively invited, or called by God the Father out of this present evil age to serve Him.

Grace (forgiveness) to you (who have repented of sin) and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Gal. 1:3-5; cf. Rom. 8:30; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In contrast, the word "synagogue" does not imply any action by Almighty God. Instead, it is something created by men to serve a need in the Jewish community as the following quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica confirms,

"The oldest dated evidence of a synagogue is from the 3rd century B.C.E., but synagogues doubtless have an older history. Some scholars think that the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 B.C.E. gave rise to synagogues after private homes were temporarily used for public worship and religious instruction."

Therefore, there is nothing inherently "righteous" about the use of the word "synagogue". It does not imply that Almighty God is involved with any activities associated with synagogues. In fact, synagogues were often used to teach the commandments of men rather than those of God.

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision (Jewish teachers), ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, **teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.** ¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." (Titus 1:10-12; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

... Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not **giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth** (Titus 1:13b; emphasis added).

Also, the Jewish religious teachers were adding to God's law while they taught in the synagogues.

But he (Christ) answered and said to them (Jewish religious leaders), "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ⁵But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple'- ⁶is released from honoring his father or mother.'" Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by (adding) your tradition. ⁷Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸*These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.* ⁹**And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**' (Mt. 15:3-9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; **you shall not add to it nor take away from it** (Dt. 12:32; emphasis added).

Therefore, it is appropriate that the apostle John used the word "synagogue" rather than "church" when describing the blasphemy of those who are associated with the works of Satan (Rev. 2:9). After all, Christ made it clear who influenced the teaching of the Jewish religious leaders.

I speak what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father (the devil; cf. Jn. 8:44). ³⁹They answered and said to him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you

would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father – God." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of myself, but He sent me." (Jn. 8:38-42; Ed. note in parenthesis).

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it (Jn. 8:44; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ encouraged the angel of the church in Smyrna by pointing out those things that were being done in accordance with God's will. However, there were some who claimed to represent God's truth but their teaching was actually synonymous with Satan's values, which are regarded as blasphemous.

I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich; cf. Rev. 3:18); and I know **the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan** (Rev. 2:9; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

By claiming to be "a Jew", in the context of authoritatively teaching God's truth, one must accurately explain why Jesus Christ had to come, and how he fulfilled the law of sacrifice. This is where Satan's followers fall into blasphemy even though they claim to understand God's will. In the next section of scripture, it is important to remember that whenever the apostle Paul uses the word "Jew" it also applies to Satan who

claims to know the will of God very well (Mt. 4:1-11).

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest (rely) on the law, and make your boast in God. ¹⁸and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness (2Cor. 11:12-15), ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, **having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.** ²¹You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? **You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?** (Rom. 2:17-21; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In other words, if Satan is an authority on God's will he ought to obey the word of God and not just preach about it.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, ²saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³Therefore whatever they tell you, that observe and do, but **do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do**" (Mt. 23:1-2; emphasis added).

From the beginning, Satan presented himself as someone who knew God very well and therefore should be held in high esteem (Gen. 3:1-5). Consequently, Satan's human "religious authorities" have the same objectives, and these leaders are in all the religious systems of this present evil age.

But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. ⁶They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' (Mt. 23:5-7).

Because Satan and his human religious leaders disobey God's law, they dishonor Him and cause serious harm to everyone under their influence. God regards this behavior as blasphemous.

You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴For **"The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,"** as it is written (Rom. 2:24; emphasis added).

The apostle Paul then continues to explain that the physical requirements associated with the law, including circumcision and animal sacrifice, were temporary but still necessary until Jesus Christ came to shed his blood so every repentant sinner could be forgiven and inherit everlasting life. He compared a repentant attitude to "circumcision of the heart" while stressing the serious nature of sin, which is contrary to the teaching of those associated with the synagogue of Satan.

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision (Rom. 2:25; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Therefore, circumcision is a temporary outward sign of righteousness but cannot be relied upon because our carnal human nature is fallible. We can claim to have a relationship with God through circumcision, and then break that relationship every time we sin. Therefore, a more permanent solution is required which involves trusting completely that Christ's shed blood will cover our sins, including those that are committed throughout our lives providing our "heart remains circumcised".

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (on an ongoing basis) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1Jn. 1:7-10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Paul emphasized that if someone is uncircumcised but strives to keep the "righteous requirements of the law" that individual is regarded as "spiritually circumcised".

Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code (of animal sacrifice) and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? (Rom. 2:26-27; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As circumcision is an outward sign it can be very misleading, just as those in Satan's synagogue can mislead anyone who comes into contact with them because they appear to be "righteous" and "knowledgeable" regarding God's word.

For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly**, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart (genuine ongoing attitude of repentance for sins that may be committed), in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God (Rom. 2:28-29; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Many of the religious leaders during the time of Jesus Christ appeared righteous on the outside, but inwardly they were doing things contrary to God's will.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence (Majority Text-*unrighteousness*). ²⁶Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸Even so **you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness** (M. 23:25-28; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

From the previous scriptures on this subject, it should be apparent there is little difference between the synagogue of Satan and the hypocrisy associated with those who are in positions of religious authority, regardless of which belief system they represent because they are all lawless to one degree or another.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' ³¹Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of your father's guilt. ³³**Serpents, offspring of vipers!** How can you escape the condemnation of hell (Gr. *gehenna*; garbage dump outside Jerusalem where dead bodies of criminals were burned)? (Mt. 23:29-33; emphasis added).

It was not coincidental that Christ compared these religious authorities to "serpents". He was making a direct connection with "that serpent of old" who is also in charge of the synagogue of Satan.

So the great dragon was cast out, **that serpent of old**, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12:9; emphasis added).

Because Satan is manipulating the religious systems of this present evil age, he is behind the murders and torture of God's faithful servants throughout man's history.

Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes; **some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city**, ³⁵that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and altar (Mt. 23:34-35; emphasis added).

Just as the center of Jewish worship was eventually destroyed (Mt. 24:1-2), so shall the synagogue of Satan. This is prophesied by John in the book of Revelation and it is clearly associated with killing God's faithful servants.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many *waters* (symbol of nations), ²with whom the kings of the earth committed *fornication* (against God's law and commandments)." ³So he carried me away in the Spirit into the *wilderness* (symbol of Satan's realm). And I saw a woman (symbol of a religious congregation) sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having *seven heads and ten horns* (symbol of religious/political authority). ⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her

fornication. ⁵And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶And **I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus...** (Rev. 17:1-6a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

So Babylon is a metaphor for the religious headquarters of Satan's synagogue which influences this entire present evil age and is behind the persecutions of God's faithful servants. The leader of Babylon is compared to Shebna who acted as a comptroller for King Hezekiah. Shebna did not trust that God would protect the nation of Judah against the Assyrian king. Instead, he decided to take matters into his own hands and began manipulating events to suit his own purpose.

Thus says the Lord God of hosts: "Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say: ¹⁶What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? ¹⁷Indeed, **the Lord will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you.** ¹⁸**He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die**, and there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house. ¹⁹**So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down**" (Isa. 22:15-19; cf. Isa. 14:12-21; emphasis added)

This action of removing Shebna's responsibilities is similar to what will occur when Christ returns to remove Satan's influence.

Then I (John) saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the

dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-2; Ed. note in parenthesis).

After the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released for a short period of time and regroup for a final attack against God's faithful servants. During this final battle, he will be killed and await the second resurrection (Rev. 20:7-10). This second resurrection is also referred to as "The Great White Throne Judgment" when everyone who was part of the synagogue of Satan will have a last opportunity to repent of the sins they committed during their previous life (Rev. 20:11-14). Part of this process will involve everyone from the synagogue of Satan coming into contact with God's true servants, and admitting that these people were correctly teaching and living in accordance with God's law and commandments.

Indeed I will make **those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie** – indeed **I will make them come and worship** (SGD 4352: show respect by prostrating oneself) **before your feet, and to know that I have loved you** (Rev. 3:9; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

In summary, everyone who has lived a life contrary to God's law and commandments is considered part of the synagogue of Satan, no matter how actively they participated in this congregation. This is because there are only two choices to make. Choice one is to obey Almighty God. Choice two is to reject God's governance in one's life. Even if this rejection is passive or neglectful, the end result is the same.... you are still considered part of the synagogue of Satan. This is not a new understanding, it was the same message taught during the First Covenant.

Then Elijah came to all the people, and said, **"How long will you falter between two**

opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal (chief pagan god), then follow him." But the people answered him not a word (1Kgs. 18:21; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

The wisest man who lived, other than Jesus Christ, knew the main reason human beings were placed on this earth. It is to learn that God's way of life is the only one that leads to true happiness, peace, and prosperity. Solomon said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil" (Eccl. 12:12-14). Therefore, each person is either part of the "church of the **living** God" (1Tim. 3:15), or the "synagogue of Satan". In reality, the synagogue of Satan is the "synagogue of the **dead** god" (2Cor. 4:4) because Satan is awaiting his death, and the same fate awaits everyone that follows his value system (Rom. 16:20; Mal. 4:3).

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