

The Nicolaitans

Michael Heiss—December 10, 2016

Good morning, everyone! We're going to take a look at a group, or a movement if you want to put it that way, whose deeds God says He hates! He is really upset with them. He was at the beginning, and He still is.

- Who are these people?
- What is this group?

This group is found in one place in the Bible, twice in the same chapter. They're called the *Nicolaitans*! A fascinating group! You may think you know who and what they were, but let me tell you that it's far more widespread than that. That's an aspect to them that I was not fully aware of until just recently; mainly because I had not looked at it from the point of view of Hebraism.

In Rev. 2 & 3 we have the letters written to the seven churches.

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of the Ephesian church, write: 'These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands. I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars'" (vs 1-2).

He rebukes them, but He says, v 6: "But this you have: that **you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**" This was the Church at Ephesus, but they were not simply active in the Church of Ephesus.

Now we're talking to the Church in Pergamos, or Pergamum v 14: "But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. Moreover, **you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate**" (vs 14-15).

We will find that the Nicolaitans are also connected with those who eat meat sacrificed to idols.

How do we understand them? Take the word *Nicolaitans*, according to those who are knowledgeable in languages and word origins—etymologists—they break it down into two different words.

1. nico—to overcome, to rule, to dominate
2. laos—people

Which people? *We're talking about the Church of God!*

So, the Nicolaitans constitute a group who *dominate the people of God*. This is the first part of the Nicolaitans, because here is the beginning, the origins of a hierarchical clergy that is going to stand between God and His people. *God hates that!*

- don't you get between Me and My people
- don't you filter My words and thoughts
 - ✓ 'God says whatever *we* say He says'
 - ✓ 'the Bible says whatever *we* interpret it to mean'

God hates that! This is the first aspect of the Nicolaitans.

There is a second aspect to it, and this is what I really want to concentrate on. But before you can understand that, you have to understand the concept of Hebraism, the practice of taking a Hebrew word or phrase and writing it out in another language. In this case *Greek*.

We're going to take a Hebrew word or phrase and we're going to spell it in Greek. Let's take a look at *Nicolaitans* from Hebrew to Greek. We find out it come from the Hebrew 'nakl,' which means *to eat*. We're talking about eating meat sacrificed to idols and so forth. Let's see an example:

Isaiah 4:1: "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, '**We will eat** our own bread and wear our own clothing; only let us be called by your name. Take away our shame.'" That phrase is from the Hebrew 'nakl' or depending on whether it singular, masculine, feminine, plural, what have you.

This 'nakl' comes from the Hebrew translated into Greek: nicol' If you really take it for what it means, it means *let us eaters* or *we will eat what we will eat*.

- we will eat forbidden food
- we will eat no matter what anybody says that we should not eat

So, they were eating, in reality, food sacrificed to idols is what there were doing. They were compromising the Word of God, His instructions, in order to get along with the world. They were honoring Roman gods in order to have peace in the Roman world.

They had one foot in the Church as it were, and one foot out in the Greco-Roman world. God

says that He hates that! It's almost like Laodiceans. Remember what God said about them (Rev. 3). He says, 'I would that you were hot or cold, but you're neither. I would that you weren't even part of My Body—the Body of Christ—or that you were on fire for Me, that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart and might.'

But they were in between, so God said that He hated that. He says that it's all for nothing. You can't say, 'I'm a good person, I come to Church, but sometimes you just have to lie a little, sometimes you have to deceive, sometimes you just have to get along with the world.'

God would have none of it! He never did! But this is the Nicolaitans.

You said what you were going to eat... These were Gentiles. The Church, at first, was Jewish, for the first several decades it was almost entirely Jewish, but then came the opening of the Gospel to Cornelius by Peter. Then later on the Apostle Paul was called; he was Saul and became Paul. Then thousands upon thousands of people began coming into the Church.

Of course, a controversy arose, they have to keep the law, they've got to be Jews—you have to become a Jew first and then you can become a Christian—and keep all the law. That was finally resolved at the Jerusalem Conference, but notice what the Jerusalem Conference said about these Gentiles and what they were supposed to do. We'll see the decision that was made:

Acts 15:28: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: **to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality**; if you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell" (vs 28-29). What about 'thou shalt not murder, steal,' and so forth.

They didn't worry about that because these were God-fearers and they were attending synagogues and they were hearing Moses preached on a regular basis. The apostles didn't need to tell them about that, but they did emphasize these four things. Why? *Because these four conditions is what they faced almost every day in the Greco-Roman world!*

If you wanted to eat meat, about your only source were the pagan temples where meat was sacrificed to the gods; eating food, the animals that had been strangled, drinking the blood. This was common in the Greco-Roman world. Fornication and sexual licentiousness: the Greek world and the Roman world was rife with that.

So, these were the four items that God says, through His Church, 'You Gentiles who are coming in, cease from these, and you will do well!'

But look what the Nicolaitans were doing, Revelation 2:14—to the Church of Pergamos: "But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, **to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.**" Here were the Nicolaitans who were doing this.

They would say, 'We're at services, we're honoring God. But, you see, we're getting along in the Roman world. If we're so persecuted we can't worship God, so therefore, we have to honor these Roman gods, and we have to participate in these temple rites. But of course, we're coming back to church, we're attending services, we're listening to Moses being preached.'

What does God say? Verse 16: "Repent!..." He says, 'I'll have none of that! You are not to that!' But they were doing it, and spiritually, as well.

To the Church of Thyatira, v 18: "And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: 'These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass.'"

Verse 20: "But I have a few things against you, because **you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants** into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols."

You had these seven churches, they were contemporary and on a mail route. But also, they're indicative the Church down through the ages. Here we have an indication that eating things sacrificed to idols and fornication is more than just physical fornication, or more than just eating meats that were sacrificed to literal idols. It's *spiritual!*

Revelation 17:1: "And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials came and spoke with me, saying to me, 'Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication...'" (vs 1-2).

This isn't literal sexual fornication. This is *mindset, belief system, a way of life, following the great whore and listening to her doctrines, her beliefs!*

"...and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (v 2)—the wine of her doctrine.

Verse 4: "And the woman *was* clothed in purple and scarlet, and *was* adorned with gold and

pearls and precious stones; *and* she had a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominations and *the* filthiness of her fornication.” In this case we’re talking about *belief! doctrines!*

The Nicolaitans today would be those who may belong to a church—any church. ‘Oh, yes, I praise the Lord, I believe in Jesus as my savior.’ Of course, once he’s out of services, who knows what he’s doing. *All kinds of activities that are not of God!* Ostensively, yes, but one foot in the Church, but one foot out there in the modern world.

God says to ‘repent, I will have none of it!’

So, these are the Nicolaitans and they are different, they really are! They wanted to compromise with the Roman world like people today want to compromise with the system: entertainment, activities.... ‘You know, sometimes on the Sabbath I have to spend time doing this or that, but I’ll be in services tomorrow, I really will. I pray and I pay my tithes and offerings. See, I’m a good person.’

Well, yes and no! Yes, it’s good that you’re coming to services and acknowledge God. But God says, ‘Wait a minute, hold it! Come out of her My people! Come out of her! I’m not going to have any of this, you are either with Me or not. You are either wholeheartedly My sons and daughters, or you are not. None of this saying one thing, but then eating meats sacrificed to idols; this is false doctrines and compromising with My instructions.’

These are Nicolaitans! I say to you that we’ve got millions of them today! Lots of us are Nicolaitans. Hopefully we’re not Nicolaitans. But out there, there are a lot of them. God warns and says to not be that way.

In fact, He has a pun in a way; only God would think of putting it this way:

Revelation 2:7: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the Tree of Life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God.”

Look at the comparison: He says, ‘Don’t eat meat sacrificed to idols, whether physical or spiritual in the sense of false doctrine. If you will stop eating that stuff, which I say to you not to eat of it, I in turn will allow you to eat of the Tree of Life. If you give up that food—which is not really food at all; it leads to death—and come to Me, I will give you the Tree of Life. I will give you food that will cause you to live for evermore.’

God knows that we cannot have a Roman ride indefinitely. Sooner or later, if you have one foot in the Church with God, and one foot in the

world, you’re going to go all to one or to the other. You cannot forever make that Roman ride. You cannot forever have split loyalties. It just won’t work!

Unless you repent and come out of that world with both feet with God, you’re going to slide out of God’s way and into the world. You just will!

For us it is simple. ***We need to make sure that we are not Nicolaitans!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 2:1-2, 6, 14-15
- 2) Isaiah 4:1
- 3) Acts 15:28-29
- 4) Revelation 2:14, 16, 18, 20
- 5) Revelation 17:1-2, 4
- 6) Revelation 2:7

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