

The Doctrine and Works of the Nicolaitans

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Today's message, if you peeked ahead on the website, is:

The Doctrine and Works of the Nicolaitans

It might not be a good title because I'm not good at coming up with those. You don't have turn there, but in the book of Revelation in chapter 2, the Apostle John was instructed to write letters to the 7 churches of God which were in Asia Minor. Following Christ's admonition to the Ephesian church—again it was the revelation of Jesus Christ unto John—John writes to Smyrna in verse 6.

Revelation 2:6 *But this thou hast, that thou hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* (KJV)

Later in verses 14 and 15, John writes to the church at Pergamos or Pergamon.

14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15) So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate ... (KJV)

We know that when God or Christ or scripture tells us things repeatedly, it's God's way of trying to get it through our thick heads that it's really important. It's not just trying to fill up space. Really quickly, some information on these 2 cities, just as a historical context that I got from the Zondervan Atlas of the Bible, speaking of Smyrna. It says:

"The second church addressed by John is in Smyrna, modern Izmir (in Turkey) located just 36 miles north of Ephesus. The Roman city was situated deep on a sheltered bay of the Aegean Sea on the western end of the Hermus river valley. It was the chief terminus or end point of major ancient roads that came from the east from Syria, India, and even China".

This is where the road ended and connected into the western world via the cities of Laodicea, Philadelphia and Sardis. After the death of Alexander, the Great, Smyrna grew in size and it was the first city in Asia Minor to establish a temple honoring Rome. This happened in 198 B.C. In 26 A.D. Tiberius granted it permission to establish a temple for worshipping the emperor. How magnanimous of him!

At the time, this was only the second city in Asia granted such an honor. The first being Pergamos and continuing on about Pergamos. This third city addressed by John is Pergamon. This is the only place in the Bible where Pergamos is mentioned. Pergamon

was a magnificent city that had a population of about 100,000 people in John's Day so about the size of Yakima. The upper city—the acropolis—rises about 900 feet around the surrounding plain. Excavations have located temples and altars dedicated to Zeus, Athena, Dionysus—which was a god of parties and drinking and debauchery—Demeter, and the emperor Trajan. The modern town of Bergama covers most of the lower city but significant remnants of Asklepiion, an ancient healing center and a variety of other structures are still visible. So, it was a medical place down there. The powerful city and its territory were willed to Rome after the death of Attalus III in 133 B.C. In 129 B.C., when Rome created the province of Asia, Pergamon became its early capital. In 29 B.C. it was the first city granted permission to establish a temple dedicated to a Roman Emperor named Augustus. Another humble person we have there. I hate to think if our politicians started setting up places to worship them but I guess we have presidential libraries don't we.

In Revelation 2:13 it is said that Satan has his throne there. It is not certain whether this refers to the fact that Pergamon was the center of emperor worship; Augustus and eventually Trajan and Caracalla were worshipped there. Or to the famous Zeus altar which is now reconstructed in Berlin, to the Asclepius, was an ancient healer who was also called a savior. Or to the fact it housed temples to at least 8 deities or possibly some combination of the above. Asclepius has a side note, is a figure from Greek mythology revered as the god of medicine and healing. He was initially depicted as a mortal physician but his skill in healing eventually lead to his deification. Asclepius' symbol—a staff with a serpent coiled around it—remains as a symbol of the medical profession to this day. What were the works of the Nicolaitans talking about? Some said this was eating of things sacrifice to idols and foreign occasion among the people. Some people even say there was a guy named Nicolas and these were just the people who followed Nicolas in doing these things. Scripture doesn't say. I say, as far as foreign occasion and such, it cannot be as the word in verse 15—moreover—implies an additional charge in addition to these things which were the teaching of Balaam.

The word *Nicolaitan* is Greek in origin. Its root words are *nikos* which means “victory”, where we get the term Nike from and *laos* meaning “the people”. The compound word can mean “victory over the people” or in converse it can be interpreted as “victory of the people”, from which you can see where there are a lot of connections in democracy and the people's party and that kind of stuff. Which is what we have, for example—the People's Republic of North Korea—which is neither for the people or of the people.

At the time of Constantine and the time of the apostles there were several periods where people would get together and establish a doctrine of the church to canonize the Bible and these were mainly broken up into 7 economical councils. There were also various other synods. Just to define what an economical synod might be, this is a quote from a paper you can find online. The title is a little lengthy so you might want to pause and rewind later to get it. The Seven Economical Counsels of the Undivided Church: Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees Together with the Canons of all the Local Synods Which Have Received Economical Acceptance Edited with Notes Gathered from the Writings of the Greatest Scholars by Henry R. Percival, Madd 1899. It's when this was

written and you could tell they were far more literate than we are today just by that being the title of his 1400-page paper. We would call that a book nowadays. In it, he defines an economical synod may be defined as a synod, the decrees of which have found acceptance by the church in the whole world. So, the Catholic church—the unified church, is universal. It is not necessary to make a council economical that the number of bishops should be large. There were but 325 bishops at Nice—the Niceans—and 150 at the first synod of Constantinople. It is not necessary that it be assembled with the intention of being economical, such as was the case with the first synod of Constantinople. Neither is it necessary that all parts of the world should be represented or that even the bishops of such parts have been invited. So, they didn't feel that everyone had to be there, you could just invite whoever the authority was and that was usually the Pope or the Emperor, which we have already seen the characters of the emperors and their worshiping of themselves. In fact, Constantine built Constantinople or whatever you want to call it, for that very reason. All that is necessary said its decrees was to find economical acceptance afterwards, and an economical character to be universally recognized. All "economical" means is, from a Greek word, meaning "world" or "worldwide". With the imposition of a universal Catholic church government by Constantine's conventions and those which followed in the decades and centuries afterwards, it can easily be characterized as a victory over the people. Again, not everybody was invited. Or a victory of the people in that the economical councils from the different churches from around the Roman Empire would send electors who deliberated and voted on which creeds and doctrines they would enforce and which they would oppress. These representative councils, after contentious debates and intrigues to do away with the Judaizing traditions such as scriptural holy days, the 7th day Sabbath and other of God's laws, were in favor of more palatable traditions and local teachings rooted in the mystery cults stressed in Christian niceties.

But there's only one reliable place for doctrine, as we all know. If you turn to Galatians 1:11, we can find where the original preachers of the Gospel got their gospel. You could see where it was rooted.

Galatians 1:11 *But I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. (AFT)*

The translation I'm using is the Fred Coulter "Faithful Translation", but that's not an endorsement or anything against—I just happen to like his translation of the Greek, it's pretty modern English.

12) Because neither did I received it from man, neither was I taught it by man;; rather, it was by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13) For you heard of my former conduct when I was in Judaism, how I was excessively persecuting the church of God, and was destroying it:

14) and I was advancing in Judaism far beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15) But when it pleased God, Who selected me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace,

- 16) To reveal His own Son in me, in order that I might preach Him as the Gospel among the Gentiles; I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood:*
17) Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus ... (AFT)

Arabia is a vast, inhospitable place today and 2000 years ago, it was largely the same thing. In fact, among some of the Arabian traders it was a closely guarded secret where all the watering holes were. Family secrets that the Midianites would keep to themselves so that way the Nabataeans and such could move their trade goods through there but armies would just be swallowed up and that's why you didn't see the Syrians, Babylonians, Persians, or even the Romans go in there too often. They would send small sortie in and say it's not worth it. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 2. Mind you, Paul was one of the foremost educated people in both Greek and Hebrew and Jewish tradition and Jewish histories. So, this isn't a foolish man we're talking about—not some back woods fella.

- 1 Corinthians 2:1** *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.*
2) For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (KJV)

So, Paul wasn't there preaching saying, I have these documents, I have this education. He's only preaching to them Jesus Christ and Him crucified—the gospel.

- 3) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling*
4) And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
5) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God
6) Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:
7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
8) Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
10) But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.
12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.
13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14) *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (KJV)*

Looking at Colossians 2:1 we find a lot more of Paul.

Colossians 2:1 *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, [which I know is a location but we truly are in Laodicea now I believe, as far as the eras we are living in] and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*

2) That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4) And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5) For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6) As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8) Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9) For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11) In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12) Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15) And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16) Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (KJV)

We have to hold each other accountable and we must ensure that we are not looking outward but looking inward to our fellow brethren who we should hold in higher esteem than ourselves.

18) Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels [or the worship of saints; the term angels just means a servant or minister], intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19) And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God.
(KJV)

You don't have to turn there, but really quickly in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul states:

1 Corinthians 11:3 *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*
(KJV)

Then continuing in Colossians 2:20.

Colossians 2:20 *Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,*
21) (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
22) Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? (KJV)

Just a side note, you look around online and you can see all kinds of diets out there. The Atkins diet, the Keto diet, the vegans, carnivores—everything, every spectrum. If you have something you like you can find a diet for it. You can even probably find some people who say you should eat chocolate cake and sugar all week. People don't know everything. God knows everything. The truth is, as long as you're eating the things that God says to eat, abstaining from the things God says don't eat and pray to God, it can all work out in the end. If you're diabetic or have dietary issues, then you have to obey those too because that's God's judgment on you personally in a way to lead you towards other things, I think.

23) Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. (KJV)

There's self-flagellation where people would whip themselves and wear wool shirts and all kinds of things to punish their bodies. None of that is actually going to bring you closer to God. The Hindu's, I think, have all these people that are known to go sit on a pole somewhere and just sit there and soak up the wisdom, I guess. They have people coming and feeding them all the time. You see the cartoon of the man on top of a hill and get up there and ask a question. Truth is, that man probably doesn't even know his way off the hill let alone what's going on around it. Continuing in Colossians 3:1.

Colossians 3:1 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (KJV)*

We have to remember that Christ wasn't, He is sitting at the right hand of God.

2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

- 4) *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*
- 5) *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*
- 6) *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*
- 7) *In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*
- 8) *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. (KJV)*

As a former soldier, that's a real hard one for me. Every once in a while—especially if I smash my finger with a hammer—something foul slips out. That's not excusable, it's just something I have to work on myself. Nobody is perfect, we all come from various levels of sin.

- 9) *Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*
- 10) *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*
- 11) *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*
- 12) *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;*
- 13) *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*
- 14) *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*
- 15) *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*
- 16) *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*
- 17) *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (KJV)*

Turn to James 1:18, James being the brother of Jesus. You don't really see him bragging about it in the Bible. That would be a hard thing. I always had to deal with my siblings getting their good report cards with A's and B's and my parents instead would instead get pages of absentee reports on me. No report card until these absences are cleared up. Maybe I was just being protected from the education system. God chooses us from the womb and such.

James 1:18 *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (KJV)*

A kind of Firstfruits because Christ is the First of the Firstfruits.

19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (KJV)

In fact, you can see Moses learn that lesson quite painfully. It's why he wasn't allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

21) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23) For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24) For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was.

25) But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26) If any man among you seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (KJV)

Turn to 1 John 2:12. John who was the apostle whom Christ loved.

1 John 2:12 *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

13) I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14) I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

15) Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17) And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abides forever.

18) Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (KJV)

I'm not saying it's ending next week but we are in the last times. John was in the last times. We are in the last times. We don't know if we have tomorrow guaranteed to us.

19) *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*
 20) *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*
 21) *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*
 22) *Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son.*
 23) *Whosoever denies the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledges the Son hath the Father also.*
 24) *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*
 25) *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*
 26) *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.*
 27) *But the anointing which ye have received of him abides in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*
 (KJV)

We need to use each other and the Spirit in us to instruct us. I'm not saying everyone should go start off with their own doctrines but I am saying that we do have what we had from the beginning—we have the scriptures of God, we have the Spirit of God and we have the Son of God sitting at His right hand who is our High Priest and if we pray and ask and meditate and keep asking, then He won't give us a stone for a fish or a serpent for a fish.

My closing statement is just this: The church of God is not a democracy. Nor does any man of flesh and bone sit upon the throne of judgment of the church. It is Christ through the Holy Spirit that leads us to the Father who told us of His Kingdom which He is preparing, even now. We must remain steadfast, remain rooted in the truth of His word, led by His Holy Spirit, not of the wayward reasonings that drive men back and forth between tyranny and anarchy.