**Nicolaitans**

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Revelation 2:6, “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

**Now there are two thoughts on what the Nicolaitanes were. It is said by some that they were a group of apostates who had as their founder, Nicholas of Antioch, a proselyte, who became one of the seven deacons at Jerusalem.**

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**But the problem about this belief is that it is not true. There is absolutely no history for it. It is at best tradition. To adopt such a view would make the church age of Ephesus absolutely historical with no bearing upon today. This is not true, for whatever starts in the early church must continue in every age until it is finally blessed and exalted by God or destroyed as an unclean thing in the lake of fire.…..**

**What are these Nicolaitanes? The word comes from two Greek words. Nikao, which means to conquer, and Laos, which means the laity. In plain fact, somebody was doing something in that early church which was conquering the laity. If the laity were being conquered, then it must have been some “authority” there doing it.**

What was it that God hated that was happening in that church? What was going on then, and is now going on today, is exactly what the word Nicolaitane means. The people were being subjected somehow in a way that was absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

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So this Nicolaitane group remained a part of the first age, doing their deeds. The deeds were hated, but the people were not rendered impotent. Thus we see seeds in Ephesus that will continue and will become a doctrine that will go right up to, and into, the lake of fire.

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But see what was happening back there. That false vine was getting a hold and it was teaching that rulership by man was right. It taught that the church had to be governed. It taught a control over the people, but instead of doing it God’s way, they simply took authority and vested all the spiritual power in their own hands and came out with a holy priesthood standing between God and the people. They went right back to the old Aaronic system. They became antichrist for they disposed of His mediatorship and imposed their own. God hated that. The Ephesians hated that and any true believer will hate it too. We would have to be stone blind not to see that same thing at work all through the ages and right now it is the worst of all. What it was, was organization. That separated the people. God’s people are supposed to be one. By ONE Spirit are they ALL baptized into one body and EVERYONE is to be moved upon by the Holy Ghost and EVERYONE is to participate in the worship of God. But men wanted the preeminence, so they took over control, and bishops became archbishops, and with imposing titles they by-passed the Word of God and taught their own doctrines. They got the people to obey them until the time came that their way of worship did not in any way at all resemble the early days after Pentecost. These deeds were the beginning of apostolic succession. From apostolic succession it was one easy and quick step to “church membership” as the means of saving grace. The Word was reduced to a creed. Antichrist by his spirit was predominating the church.

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**Difference between 1Timothy 3 and Ephesians 4:11**

You will recall that I brought out in the Ephesian Age that the word, Nicolaitane, comes from two Greek words: Nikao which means to conquer, and Lao which means the laity. Nicolaitane means, “to conquer the laity.” Now why is this such a terrible thing? It is terrible because God has never placed His church in the hands of an elected leadership which moves with political mindedness. He has placed His church in the care of God-ordained, Spirit-filled, Word-living men who lead the people through feeding them the Word. He has not separated the people into classes so that the masses are led by a holy priesthood. It is true that the leadership must be holy, but then so must be the whole congregation. Further, there is no place in the Word where priests or ministers or such mediate between God and the people, nor is there a place where they are separated in their worship of the Lord. God wants all to love and serve Him together. Nicolaitanism destroys those precepts and instead separates the ministers from the people and makes the leaders overlords instead of servants. **Now this doctrine actually started as a deed in the first age. It appears that the problem lay in two words: “elders” (presbyters) and “overseers” (bishops). Though Scripture shows that there are several elders in each church, some began (Ignatius among them) to teach that the idea of a bishop was one of preeminence or authority and control over the elders. Now the truth of the matter is the word “elder” signifies who the person is, while the word “bishop” signifies the office of the same man. The elder is the man. Bishop is the office of the man. “Elder” always has and always will refer simply to a man’s chronological age in the Lord. He is an elder, not because he is elected or ordained, etcetera, but because he IS OLDER. He is more seasoned, trained, not a novice, reliable because of experience and long standing proof of his Christian experience. But no, the bishops did not stick to the epistles of Paul, but rather they went to Paul’s account of the time he called the elders from Ephesus to Miletus in Acts 20. In verse 17 the record states, “elders” were called and then in verse 28 they are called overseers (bishops). And these bishops, (no doubt political minded and anxious for power) insisted that Paul had given the meaning that “overseers” were more than the local elder with official capacity only in his own church. To them a bishop was now one with extended authority over many local leaders. Such a concept was neither Scriptural nor historical, yet even a man of the stature of Polycarp leaned toward such organization. Thus, that which started as a deed in the first age was made a literal doctrine and so it is today. Bishops still claim power to control men and deal with them as they desire, placing them where they so will in the ministry. This denies the leadership of the Holy Ghost Who said,** “Separate Me Paul and Barnabus for the work whereunto I have called them.” This is anti-Word and anti-Christ. Matthew 20:25-28, “But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matthew 23:8-9, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, Which is in heaven.”

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7 One young man that they had found, was not exactly qualified (not because that he wasn’t the right type of man), one that was suggested by one of the honorable man of our trustee board. **But as the pastor and I came together, and I asked the age of the young man, he was in his early twenties. Honorable, just, and a real man, but find out that he was a single man. The Bible requires a deacon to be a married man. He must be the husband of one wife.**

8 And then another man which was a very honorable man, very qualified for the job and would have made a loyal man, as a brother suggested him. Then after investigating the case, that the brother had just recently come into this Faith, his wife doesn’t believe in It. Then that disqualified the man at the office. **Because he must have all his family in subjection, they must be also in the Faith, because it would be a conflict.**

58-0720E - "The Placing Of Deacons"

Rev. William Marrion Branham

The city of Ephesus was one of the three greatest cities of Asia. It was often called the third city of Christian faith, with Jerusalem first, and Antioch second. It was a very rich city. The government was Roman but the language was Greek. Historians believe that John, Mary, Peter, Andrew and Philip were all buried in this beautiful city. **Paul, who founded the true faith in this city, pastored here only about three years;** but when he was absent from the flock he was continually, prayerfully, mindful of them. Timothy was its first bishop. I Timothy 1:1-3, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, Which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

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**How it comes**

That is exactly how the first church age started, and it will get worse and worse, until the Holy Spirit is completely rejected and God must destroy the people.

See how it started out in the early church. It was called deeds. Then it became a doctrine. It became the standard. It became the unbending way. It finally took over and God was pushed aside. Oh, it started so small, so quietly, so inoffensively. It looked so good. It seemed so sound. Then it caught a hold, and like a python, it squeezed out the very breath and killed all the spirituality there was in the church. Oh, that false vine is subtle. It is like an angel of light until it gets a hold on you. Now I want to say that I believe in leadership. But it is not the leadership of men I believe in. I believe in the leadership of the Holy Ghost coming through the Word. I believe also, that God has set men in the church, men who are gifted by the Spirit; and they will keep the church in order. I believe that. I believe also that the church is ruled over by men that God sends to take charge. But that rule is BY THE WORD, so that it is not men really ruling but the SPIRIT OF GOD, for the Word and Spirit are ONE. Hebrews 13:7, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

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