

Doom of error
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There are those who hold the teaching of Balaam, and doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The name Nicolaus, founder of the Nicolaitans, is derived from two Greek words, *nikan* translates to conquer and *laos* translates people. Balaam is derived from two Hebrew words *bela* translates to conquer and *ha'am* translates people. The two names are the same, Nicolaus being of Greek origin and Balaam of Hebrew origin. Both describe an evil influential teacher who has won an evil victory over the people, and subjugated them to poisonous heresy.

What is the story of Balaam? The Israelites were seduced into illegal and sacrilegious unions with Moabite women, and into the worship of Baal-peor, a seduction which ruined the whole of Israel destroying her as a nation. In Hebrew history, Balaam stood as an evil man who seduced the people into immorality and sin.

Text: Numbers 25: 1-5 ASV

And Israel abode in Shittim; and the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab: for they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel. And Jehovah said unto Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up unto Jehovah before the sun, that the fierce anger of Jehovah may turn away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that have joined themselves unto Baal-peor.

Text: Numbers 31: 16 ASV

These caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Jehovah.

What does church history say about the Nicolaitans. Nicolaus a

proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6: 5 ASV), was one of seven deacons. He departed from correct doctrine, and led a life of self-indulgence teaching immorality; loose living with indifference to food and life. The Nicolaitans failed to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication (Acts 15: 29 ASV). They confused Christian liberty with unchristian licence. They were the kind of people whom Paul urged not to use their liberty as an occasion for the flesh; for ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. (Galatians 5: 13 ASV).

Nicolaitans were those who wished to compromise with the world; they were not prepared to be different; they were not prepared to make the great decision; they wished to have the best of both worlds. They were the most dangerous of all heretics from a practical point of view. They sought to persuade Christians there is nothing wrong with prudent conformity to the world's standards, and urged the church to use a cautious policy of compromise with the practices and morals of the world. If their teaching had been successful, the result would have been that the world would have changed Christianity, and Christianity would not have changed the world!

John, instructed to write of things he saw, things which are, things which shall come to pass; the mystery of the seven stars in the right hand of the first and the last, the Living one; who was dead, and am alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and Hades, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of seven churches. The seven candlesticks are seven churches (Revelation 1: 17-20 ASV). In books sent to Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is addressed.

It is written, be holy; for I am holy (I Peter 1: 16 ASV). Holy translates sanctified or consecrated which means different or separate. The man who is not prepared to be different need not start on the Christian way

at all. Temple was different from all other buildings. The sabbath is different from all other days. The Lord's Day is different from all other days. Jehovah Elohim is different from men. Immanuel, translates God with us; Jesus Christ is different. The christian is different from other men. Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you (II Corinthians 6: 17 ASV).

The fault of the Nicolaitans is they sought to adjust Christianity to the level of the world rather than lift the world to the level of Christianity. Following a policy of compromise to save themselves from trouble they were afraid and unwilling to face.

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that 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. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches (Revelation 2: 12-17 ASV).

Wrath of the Risen Christ is not directed against the whole church. It is directed against those misleading, deceiving and seducing the church. The wrath of Christ is hottest against those who lead others astray. He threatens to make war against them with the sword of His mouth.

What is the sword of Christ? The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the

thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4: 12 ASV). In the Word there is conviction of sin; in it a man is confronted with the truth, and is thereby confronted with his failure to know and obey the truth. In the Word is invitation; it convicts a man of sin and then invites him back, not to the judgment, but to the love of Jehovah Elohim. In the Word there is salvation; it convicts a man of sin, it leads him to the Cross, and it assures him there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we may be saved (Acts 4: 12 ASV).

The conquest of Christ and His power; to him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna (Revelation 2: 17 ASV). Hidden manna must be the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. John tells us the Jews said to Jesus their fathers had eaten manna in the wilderness, so receiving bread to eat. John goes on to tell, Jesus said God alone could give the true bread from heaven; and then He made the great claim: I am the bread of life (John 6: 31-35 ASV). If the hidden manna and the bread of life are the same, then the hidden manna is not only bread of the Sacrament; it stands for nothing less than Christ, who is the bread of life, and this is a promise that Christ will give to him who is faithful, nothing less than Himself.

When thou art fallen, repent; else I come and move thy candlestick out of its place (Revelation 2: 5 ASV). Jesus threatened to remove their recognized place in Heaven. Deemed a church on the earth, they would not be recognized in Heaven. Such is the case today. Some fellowships are no longer registered in Heaven! These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever (Jude 1: 12-13 ASV). We must be recognized in Heaven if we are to function in the kingdom of God.