

Is the Spirit of the Nicolaitans Alive and Well in the Church Today?

by Michael K. Lake, Th.D.

I usually spend some of my free time on the weekends in the Word of God. I am finding that, as the moral light in both the world and the institutionalized church grows dim, the Word of God has become more precious in my life!

This weekend, the Holy Spirit led me to begin reading through the Book of Revelation. As I was reading, the word “Nicolaitans” jumped off the page. Although the text remained unaltered in my bible, it was as if the Holy Spirit had highlighted, underlined, and used **bold** letters on the word. I knew that I had to dig a little deeper to find what God wanted to show me.

Let’s take a look at what Jesus said about the Nicolaitans:

Revelation 2:6 (KJV)

⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

What is interesting is that Jesus places this commendation right in the middle of a stern rebuke for leaving their first love.

Revelation 2:1-7 (KJV)

¹ Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. ⁴ Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. ⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

In fact, the letter to the Church of Ephesus is a “commend, commend, rebuke (get it right or else), and commend” narrative. Doesn’t it make you wonder about what narrative the Church of America would receive if the Book of Revelation was being written today?

Anyway, let's focus back on the Nicolaitans. There is much debate on who they were and what they were teaching. I want to take a look at several biblical authorities and extrapolate vital information from their works that we can use today.

The first resource that I want to examine is the study notes in the New Pilgrim Student Bible. We find on page 1775 in the notes on the Book of Revelation:

2:6 Nicolaitans. We have no certain information about these people. The word "Nicolaitans" comes from two Greek words, meaning "to conquer" and "the people." It seems to indicate that there were some church leaders even in these early days who wanted to hold office and get power over the people. They distinguished between themselves and the people as "the clergy" and "the laity."¹

Although I do understand where they are coming from in their study notes, I do not believe that the concepts of "clergy" and "laity" had yet found their way into the Church. Since the Church in Ephesus was commended for testing those that said they were apostles and were not, it would seem that the Ephesians were still strong in their understanding of the five-fold ministry (taught to them by the Apostle Paul in Eph. 4:11-12, as he drew from the synagogal model of leadership).

Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV)

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

There may be something more that we can learn from their notes.

There is a doctrine that is making its rounds in many Christian circles today. Most know this teaching as "Dominion Theology" or "the Manifested Sons of God." This theology believes that the true Church will take over the world (and all governments), bring all evil under its feet, and then hand a conquered world over to Jesus when He returns. In my opinion, one cannot honestly read the Book of Revelation and come to that conclusion.

Regardless of our eschatological views on the timing of the rapture and the return of Christ, we must see in God's Word that only Messiah will conquer the antichrist and his ungodly army. It is the task of the Messiah alone to kosher this planet as it is referred to throughout Scripture as "the Day of the LORD," not "the Day of the Bride." Jesus is the One riding on a white horse and destroys the armies of the antichrist with the word of His mouth.

I do believe that the Church is called to be light and salt in the earth, which includes the political arena. It takes a special calling to be a preserving influence in an area so corrupted by the influences of Babylon and the Spirit of this World. We need to keep our politicians (especially Christian ones) in our prayers.

I believe the greatest task in the life of the believer is to take dominion over his own flesh and carnal nature. He is called of God to bring even every thought into subjection of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). We are almost continually bombarded with headlines that have ministers falling into sin that are involved in Dominion theology. It seems to me that they are losing the greater struggle from within!

Many also confuse the army in the Book of Joel as the Body of Christ. There are two separate groups in Joel 2.

Joel 2:1-11 (KJV)

¹ Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is nigh at hand*; ² A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; *there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.* ³ A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land *is* as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. ⁴ The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. ⁵ Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. ⁶ Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. ⁷ They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: ⁸ Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and *when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.* ⁹ They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. ¹⁰ The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: ¹¹ And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Although the Scriptures call this army “his army,” we need to realize that God called Nebuchadnezzar “a servant of God.”

Jeremiah 27:6-8 (KJV)

⁶ And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. ⁷ And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. ⁸ And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of

the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

God used Nebuchadnezzar and his armies for divine purposes. God will do the same with the armies of the antichrist.

In Joel 2:1-11, I took the liberty of highlighting important segments. I believe that there is a connection to this army, the end-time army of the antichrist, Nimrod, the Nephilim of Genesis 6, and transhumanism today. There is a Hebrew word that is used to express both a subdivision of Nephilim and what Nimrod became: it is "gibbowr." This is the same word used in the Book of Joel for this approaching army.

We need to understand that both the United States (through DARPA) and other industrialized nations are beginning a new arms race; it is for the super soldier. They look to create the "Human 2.0" that Hitler was never able to create. This goal is shared by scientists worldwide in the transhumanist movement. (Transhumanists represent "Human 2.0" as "H+" in their publications.) They seek to use GRIN (**G**enetics, **R**obotics, artificial Intelligence, and **N**ano-technology) to create the perfect super human. It will be like X-Men, Dark Angel, and the Nightmare on Elm Street all rolled into one. Concepts displayed by this army (hive mentality, superhuman strength and agility, and accelerated healing) are all goals of both DARPA and the transhumanist movement.

Genesis 6 teaches us that when you begin tampering with the DNA of mankind that you can begin releasing untold demonic powers. This army in Joel 2 is empowered by the dark forces of the antichrist and is moving against God's people.

(For more information on transhumanism, I would recommend Dr. Tom and Nita Horn's well researched book "Forbidden Gates: the Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare." You can purchase this book online at www.survivormall.com.)

The second group in Joel 2 is God's people that sound an alarm **because of** the approaching army. These people gather together to pray and fast. It is the second group that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit falls upon. Then Messiah comes back to deliver them out of the hands of the approaching army. My question is: "Which group are you claiming to be a part of?"

Now let's examine what Finis Dake has to say regarding the Nicolaitans in his Annotated Study Bible:

Followers of Nicolaus, a heretic. They are thought to have been a sect of Gnostics who practiced and taught impure and immoral doctrines, such as the community of wives, that committing adultery and fornication was not sinful, and that eating meats offered to idols was lawful. This was similar to the doctrines of Balaam and Jezebel of Thyatira (Rev. 2:6,14-15,20).²

Dake describes this movement as one that attempts to take the Gentile portion of the Church away from the instruction given to them by the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 5:19-21.

Acts 15:19-21 (KJV)

¹⁹ Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: ²⁰ But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. ²¹ For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

I believe that the ruling of the council in Jerusalem established the observance of Leviticus 11 into the dietary habits of the Gentile Church. (I will be covering not only Acts 15, but just about every verse of Scripture dealing with God's wisdom regarding our diet in my upcoming book "Eating God's Way." This book will be an eye-opening hermeneutical experience for many!) At the very least, the basic instruction for the Gentile Church was not to eat anything knowingly that was sacrificed to an idol and to abstain from sexual impurity. It is easy to see in the Body today that both our appetites for food and sex are getting out of control! This is a manifestation of the Nicolaitan Spirit influencing the Church today.

I found the final commentary that I want to reference not only enlightening, but I was a bit taken aback by where I found it. The **Preacher's Sermon and Outline Bible** is a consolidation of some of the greatest spiritual minds in the Protestant movement over the last several centuries. I not only recommend this powerful series for any minister's library, I require many of their volumes in the studies at Biblical Life College and Seminary. Here are the comments from the PSOB:

They had stood ever so strongly against the Nicolaitans. Just who the Nicolaitans were is not known. It is thought that they stressed two things:

⇒ that Christ had done away with the law of the Old Testament and had instituted the law of Christian liberty.

⇒ that the soul and spirit of man was far more important than his body.

The results of this doctrine are clearly seen. If there is no law to govern us, then we can do what we like just so we profess to believe in Christ. And if the spirit is what really matters, then I can do what I like with my body just so I take care of my spirit.

⇒ Think how many people feel that they can live like they want just so they attend and support the church. If they attend church, they feel they can live like they want during the week.

⇒ Think how many people believe they are eternally secure because they believe in Christ, have been baptized, and belong to a church. Yet, they live like they want during the week. They continue to seek the pleasures and possessions of the world, banking and hoarding and neglecting the spread of the gospel and a world of desperate needs. There is no evidence whatsoever of repentance and of a changed and holy life—no evidence of self-denial, of the sacrifice of *all one is and has*.

The point is this: the Ephesian church had preached and taught against the error of the Nicolaitans. They had refused to allow the error to enter the church. They were doctrinally sound; they stood staunchly for the truth of Christ and the Word of God. But they lacked the main thing: love for Christ. They had lost their love for Christ.³ (Emphasis mine.)

The POSB is considered by most to be a Baptist publication. Yet it stresses that the Nicolaitan Spirit wants to replace God's commandments and separate them from what is to be considered Godliness in the Body of Christ!

I can testify that this spirit is alive in Christian theology today. I have had ministers of the Gospel about spit on me for bringing up the Commandments of God. The Nicolaitan Spirit tells us that Jesus conquered and did away with God's Law. Nothing could be further from the truth. Listen to the Apostle John (the Apostle of Love):

1 John 2:3-6 (KJV)

³ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

1 John 3:4-10 (KJV)

⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ⁵ And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. ⁶ Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. ⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

The Apostle John considers sin the violation of the Law (or God's Commandments) and acts of righteousness as the keeping of the Commandments. I guess John did not get the memo that

Jesus conquered and nailed the Law to the Cross! It was not the Torah that was nailed to the Cross; it was our long list of violations against it.

It should also be noted that the “doing away with the Law” is not only what the publishers of the PSOB would call “Nicolaitanism,” but is known historically as “Marcionism.” During the second century Marcion rejected the Old Testament and the commandments of God. He was the first to group together very carefully edited versions of Paul’s writings that seemed to be expressing an anti-Torah view. He took the position that Jesus did away with the Law and conquered it by the Cross. Around 139 A.D., Marcion went to Rome to present his teachings to the Church fathers there (along with a rather large love gift). The elders in Rome rejected his teachings and his love gift. In fact, Polycarp (a direct disciple of the Apostle John) called Marcion the “first born son of Satan.” Later on, the Catholic theologian Augustine embraced Marcion’s ideas about grace and opposing God’s Law and made it a part of his theology. This position was later adopted by theologians in the Reformation.⁴ Few today question the origin of this teaching and embrace it as orthodox theology. They are also quick to rebuke any believer that would return to God’s commandments as an expression of walking in holiness.

The Word tells us:

Ephesians 5:27 (KJV)

²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Jesus is coming back for a people that have won the war within against the old sin nature and are walking in true biblical holiness. He is not coming back for some pseudo-Christian ubermen (“The Übermensch” or “Overman, Above-Human, Superman” is a concept in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche posited the Übermensch as a goal for humanity to set for itself in his 1883 book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)⁵ that are ruling the world with an iron fist and saying “Come on back now Jesus, we’ve got this all under control!”

The only true way to prepare for the soon coming of the Lord is to return to biblicity. We must be living the Word from within and manifesting the resurrected King through our thoughts, words, and actions!



About the Author

Dr. Michael K. Lake is the founder and chancellor of Biblical Life College & Seminary (www.biblical-life.com), the president of Biblical Life Publishing (www.biblical-life.net) and the Pastor of Biblical Life Assembly (www.biblicallifeassembly.org). He has been teaching and mentoring those

called to ministry for over 28 years. Dr. Lake is known for his “where the rubber meets the road” teaching style that makes complex theological concepts easy for all to understand and live out in their daily lives.

EndNotes:

¹ The New Pilgrim Bible: KJV Student Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, NY. © Copyright 2003.

² Finis J. Dake, *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*, (Lawrenceville: Dake Publishing, Inc., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 2".

³ *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Revelation*, (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "B. The Message to Ephesus: The Orthodox Church, But A Church Without Love, 2:1-7".

⁴ Moseley, Dr. Ron. *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. Messianic Jewish Publishers, Baltimore, MD. © Copyright 1996. Page 40.

⁵ Ubermensch. Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbermensch>