

Who are the Nicolaitans?

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Rev. 2:6

What was the doctrine of the “Nicolaitans”? There was a connection between them and Balaam. *Balaam* is from the Hebrew word ‘*Baal*’ meaning *lord* or *master* and ‘*am*’ references the *people*. It is an expression of superior rank over the people contrary to the directive of Christ, the King.

Nike is the Greek word for *conqueror* with *nikos* meaning *victor*. *Laos* is a word for *people*. *Nicolaitan* and *Balaam* are two different forms of the same idea. Both include the idea of rank, lordship and submission to an exercising authority who can judge the people. They are systems that make gods, judging rulers, of men who other men must pay homage too, homage being fealty and allegiance.

Nicolaitans were people “who were charged with holding the error of Balaam, casting a stumbling block before the church of God by upholding the liberty of eating things sacrificed to idols as well as committing fornication.”

The things sacrificed to idols were the welfare programs ministered by the civic or licensed altars of those various governments. One could become eligible for those benefits by an application for membership. This application often included an agreement to serve and contribute regularly to those incorporated altars of the state. There usually was an oath required under the penalty of the courts attached to those systems.

Both God’s kingdom and the Kingdoms of the world had ministers (clerks, bureaucrats, clergy, ministers) who managed the institutions or altars of contributions. The problem arises in distinguishing the Nicolaitian or Balaam system of clergy and laity from what was established by Christ. Some systems of faith have a top down clergy that exercises authority, compel service and contributions but this is contrary to the Kingdom of God.

It is clear by the Biblical text that Jesus appointed men to serve the people. Those individuals also made appointments of men chosen by the people.¹ The clergy is simply the clerks of the kingdom, the bondservants of the King in service to the laity or people who live by the perfect law of liberty with its burden of individual responsibility.

In Gibbon’s *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he praised “the union and discipline of the Christian republic.” This personal discipline included the rights and responsibilities of freedom. It was a kingdom that depended on faith hope and charity. He also pointed out that “it gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman Empire.”

The reason early Christians gathered together was to take care of the business of the kingdom of God. There was religious freedom guaranteed by the Roman constitution. There was no persecution because men loved one another. The problem was the difference between these two systems of government. Christ was turning the world right side up. To those who did not want to change they accused his followers of turning the world upside down.

The bureaucrats of Nicolaitian or Balaam system of governance entice the people to give their allegiance with promises of benefits but then exercise authority, compel taxes, make laws and regulations. The Clerks of Christ’s Kingdom of God at hand offer their service in a system that only works if we love one another in faith, hope and charity. Christians would not apply to the Romans or the Jews who would not follow Christ. They would not touch benefits paid for by the compelled sacrifices of the people. If they did that they would be Nicolaitans.

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. Proverbs 23:1-3.

¹ Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men ... whom we may appoint over this business.