

## Seven Church Harvest IV

### Pergamos—Nicolaitans & Gnosticism

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In part 3 of this series, as you'll remember, we covered things concerning the Nicolaitans out of the book, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight. He did an excellent job in researching and bringing out all of these things and showing that the problems with Christianity today as it's known in the world has its roots going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., at which time there was a great world-wide reformation of all religions, all the pagan religions; that is called an Axial Period.

This Axial Period developed beginning in the days of Hezekiah when they had the astronomical upheavals and the movement of the earth. When we deal you know how that's how the calendar shifted from 360 days to 365-1/4 days. Also the historical records going back beyond this Axial Period become very hazy.

The book of Daniel was written as the Axial Period for the prophecy from Daniel down to the second return of Christ. All the things that we are learning is that the whole book of Revelation ties in with the book of Daniel. You can't understand Revelation without having a good grasp of the entire Bible, but especially concerning the book of Daniel. And you can't understand Daniel unless you have Revelation because Daniel only brings the story up so far.

So likewise, it is with the Churches that God raised up. That's why we have in Rev. 2 & 3 seven churches. These seven churches depict:

1. the seven churches at that time
2. the historic prophecy of the seven churches down through history to the return of Christ
3. the particular attitudes that Christians would have scattered amongst any of the congregations of God at any particular time

As a matter of fact, when you read the Rev. 2 & 3 you might find from time to time you may be in one attitude or another. It's awfully hard to totally stay in the Philadelphia attitude all the time.

In part three we covered about the Nicolaitans and saw that they had two major things:

1. they had a hierarchy

The Gnostics from which the Nicolaitans came from had the hierarchy of people. Those who were the super-spiritual who were going to make it into whatever their definition of going to heaven was.

2. the weaker Christians who had to have the law to look at in order to keep it

They would make it under great duress into heaven, as they put it. The rest of the people were just animals, and they didn't count anyway. Not only did they have that with people but out of this grew the hierarchy that came to be the Roman Catholic Church.

The next greatest sin that they had, which Alan Knight points out very clearly in this book, was a form of righteousness which appeared so good, and appealed to human nature so well that without the Spirit of God it's awfully hard to detect where it's wrong. We have the same thing in Protestantism and in Catholicism today.

Let's see the warnings that Peter gave. Then we'll look at some of the warnings that Jude gave as to this very thing, which are the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans not only had their own form of standard of morality, but they also had a standard of morality where they would go back and borrow the commandments of God to add to their definition of what their 'religious' morality was.

We have the same thing in Protestantism. What is the first thing that they do? {note sermon series: *The Holy Sabbath* and *Refuting Sunday-Keeping*} What is the first thing that they do? *They reject the Sabbath! They reject the Holy Days!* They embrace Christmas and Easter, and all of the pagan holidays, Halloween and all of them. As a matter of fact, if you would look at the Roman calendar, nearly every day is a 'saints' day of some kind. And they have so many feast days in the Roman calendar it is unreal.

Then they come back and say, 'Ok, now that we've rejected this standard, we like the commandment concerning honor your father and mother; that gives us decency in the society. And you know we shouldn't have any murder, yea, we should also embrace that. And you know we should not steal. No, we don't like things stolen from us, we need to embrace that.' Likewise, all the way down.

Then when they get to the tenth commandment it sort of gets fuzzy again because *their* 'religion' is based upon how they feel. So if they have a desire for something, and since *they are the standard to themselves*, then coveting after something does not necessarily become wrong.

Hence it develops into a license to sin. Yet, at the same time, they were taught—and this is all part of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans—that once you were saved, you cannot sin to lose salvation. That’s what the Protestants call ‘eternal security’.

Let’s look at what Peter brought us and review 2-Peter for just a minute. Let’s understand something very important because he’s contrasting the two. First of all, he describes true Christianity.

2-Peter 1:1: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained *the* same precious faith as ours by *the* righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

When we go through this you might put this vs your own righteousness through your own false religion. Because that’s what he brings out in the second chapter.

Verse 2: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in *the* knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” versus what was claimed to be added knowledge written in the Gnostic gospels, such as Barnabas, Clement, the Gospel of Truth, and the Gospel of Thomas, which then were the Gnostic gospels, which said, ‘We have greater revelation now after the resurrection of Christ, and our revelation is continuing and ongoing through the inner-workings of the spirit within us.’ Now you see how closely this substitutes what Peter is bringing here.

Verse 3: “According as His Divine power...”—which then is translated *Godhead*. This is the Divine power. The noun form of it is translated *Godhead* in Col. 2. This is vs the power of the angelic pleroma. This is vs the power of the abyss, the deep things of Satan. Peter setting the stage for chapters 2 and 3.

“...His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue; through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises...” (vs 3-4). This is a superlative in the Greek, that nothing can be better than this, that’s what it’s saying.

“...that through these you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature...” (v 4). That was the whole premise of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and which goes all the way back to Adam and Eve, that you can partake of the Divine nature by going through these philosophies by following our way of doing things, and then you can come to the power of God.

I think that what we need to do when we’re studying, after you read this book, the Scriptures of God, especially when you come to the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, Hebrews and Galatians. Every one

of them have elements in combating this Hellenized Christianity, meaning that they were bringing in Greek philosophies and attaching that to the Christianity which Christ brought. Peter is separating this out here as we will see when we come to 1-Pet. 2, what he says concerning them.

That by these promises of God “...you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in *the* world through lust” (v 4).

Now then, he tells you that you must have works, and this is part of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans: you don’t need the works according to law.

Verse 5: “And for this very reason also, having applied all diligence besides, add to your faith, virtue ...” Faith means that

- you come to God
- you believe He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him
- you believe that His Word is His sovereign Word
- you believe what God inspired to be written is so

Stop and think about it for just a minute. God, when He created, what did He do? *He commanded and it came into existence!* That’s what we are to believe concerning the Word of God; *it is sovereign!* It is the only way to eternal life. So, when he says here, “...having applied all diligence besides, add to your faith, virtue...”—virtue is the right kind of Godly conduct according to the standard of the commandments that God has given, which then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are to be written in our hearts and our minds!

“...and to virtue, knowledge... [the true knowledge of Christ] ...and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, endurance; and to endurance, Godliness...[having the character of God] ...and to Godliness, brotherly love; and to brotherly love, the [agape] love of *God*” (vs 5-7). {Note: 1-Cor. 13} ***If you don’t have the love of God***, being able to speak in tongues, having all knowledge, understanding all mysteries, giving all of your goods to causes, and all of this sort of thing—***you are nothing!*** The love of God is defined by: *‘This is the love of God that we keep His commandments!*

Verse 8: “For *if* these things exist and abound in you, they *will* cause *you to be* neither lacking effort nor lacking fruit in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the one in whom these things are not present is *spiritually* blind—so short-sighted *that* he has forgotten that he was purified

from his old sins. For this reason, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure; because *if* you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time. For in this way, you will be richly granted an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I will not neglect to make you always mindful of these things, although you *already* know them and have been established in the present truth” (vs 8-12). Then he says he’s going to die shortly.

Verse 16: “For we did not follow cleverly concocted myths... [that is going directly against the doctrine of Nicolaitanism] ...*as our authority*, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His magnificent glory; because He received glory and honor from God *the* Father when *the* voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, **“This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased.”**” (vs 16-17).

Notice what he’s leading up to. I really want you to grasp what Peter is saying here, then in chapter two you will see the difference.

Verse 18: “And this *is the* voice from heaven that we heard when we were with Him on the Holy mountain. We also possess the confirmed prophetic Word...” (vs 18-19). That prophecy can be two things:

- 1) the prophets of old
- 2) the prophecy of the inspired speaking of Christ when He was here

The Gospels that were written by that time, many of the letters of Paul that were written at that time, which you will see at the end of 2-Peter; he talks about *the writings of Paul* as if they’re Scripture already, which they were.

“...to which you do well to pay attention, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and *the* morning star arises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture...” (vs 19-20). Prophecy in this case doesn’t mean just the Prophets in Scripture. This means *any inspired writings* of Scripture: whether it be the Law, the Prophets or the Psalms.

You can take the test of that and going through and looking at the warnings God gave in the Law, what would happen if you would add to or take away from. That’s precisely what is happened with Nicolaitanism. I mean when you go through and read this book it’s going to open up vast doors of understanding to you. You will no longer have a mystery as concerning the false Christianity of this world. I think it’s very important of us to realize this: that in order for us to reach the world we must have an answer for it. It’s one thing to come up and say: ‘You’re wrong.’ *Well, tell me why I’m wrong.*

‘Well, you’re just wrong.’ *How do you know I’m wrong?* ‘I’m telling you, you’re wrong.’

But if you go up and say: ‘What you’re doing is not right according to the real true Scriptures, and by the way you have a corrupt Bible with this *NIV* and *New American Standard*. And do you know why you are wrong? Here’s why you are wrong: You’re assuming to set yourself up above God.’ *Oh, no that can’t be!* Then we can say, ‘You are, because if you don’t believe the sovereign Word of God, you’re establishing your own righteousness.’ *Well, we keep the commandments.* ‘Do you really?’

Then we have an entrance into really preaching the Sabbath and Holy Days—don’t we? And that follows right along with the series *Refuting Sunday-Keeping*.

Also is in this book, *Sunday Facts and Sabbath Fiction* by Dr. Russell Tardo, all of the doctrines of Nicolaitanism against Sabbath and Holy Days is here, even down to the point that is almost identical as to what the Gnostics have said, that if you keep the Law you are a weak Christian, and that Christ ended the Law, Christ abolished the Sabbath. It comes right out of the cauldron of Nicolaitanism. That’s why when you come to 2-Pet. 1 and you are reading these words, there’s a reason that he wrote them. That’s what we need to understand.

Verse 20: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone’s own *private* interpretation.” That’s the first step to Nicolaitanism. A private interpretation then allows you, which is license, to reject the commandments of God you don’t like. *That is a private interpretation! Sunday-keeping is a private interpretation!* Eternal security, to where you can’t lose salvation regardless of willful sin, *is a private interpretation!* Peter is laying the groundwork here in no uncertain terms.

Verse 21: “Because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit.” Go back and read about any of the prophets of God, any of the apostles of God, and you can add into that. Do you think that they would go about writing their own words and doing their own thing? *Absolutely not!*

2-Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” The reason he’s saying this is because one of the doctrines is regardless of what you do you’re not going to lose salvation, and God is not going to punish you.

Verse 2: “And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed.” Isn’t that what they do? Isn’t that what they do with the Old Testament and the laws of God? *Yes!* This came in and infected the Church. The Churches of God there in Rev. 2 & 3 is a warning of what we need to be careful of. We need to be alert to the doctrines that we are not seduced from within, which is what happened to Worldwide Church of God, is happening to the Seventh Day Adventists, and will happen to the Church of God 7<sup>th</sup> Day, and any other church that doesn’t understand the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and *the mystery of lawlessness*.

There will be men who will come in and subvert it, and that is their goal. You need to understand the oath that the Jesuits take for the destruction of Protestantism and Sabbath-keeping groups. And since they cannot bring about an inquisition today, they infiltrate and just take down by attrition, and gain importance in position. Maybe for years and years and years never reveal their hand until they get their hands on the hierarchical control and then they can do whatever they *want*. ***It always begins by bringing in false doctrine!*** One of the first things: attack the Passover, attack the nature of God, confuse you concerning that, denigrate Jesus Christ and now you’re all set up for Protestantism. Since Protestantism is going back to Rome, that’s where all roads lead, that’s where it’s going to end up. It started right here.

Verse 3: “Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain...” If you don’t believe this, watch Pat Robertson some night. ***Vain words!*** Do you want a better life? Do you want more money? Do you want happiness? Do you want all these good things in life? *Well, of course, everybody does!* They’re appealing to covetousness.

God’s way is you *repent* of sin. Being converted sometimes is difficult. You don’t believe it read Apostle Paul. Sometimes you’re going to be persecuted for it, and yea, sometimes you may be even killed for it. Pat Robertson is appealing to everybody’s covetousness and give them good things. ‘And by the way, we’re going to have a campaign for \$100,000 tonight.’ Roll the drums, blow the horn!

“...for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching” (v 3). Peter’s making the point here, if you don’t believe that God is going to punish for this, listen up!

Verse 4: “For if God did not spare *the* angels who sinned, but, having cast *them* into Tartarus, delivered *them* into chains of darkness to be kept for

*the* judgment.” Then you can say, ‘God’s going to take care of the angels. But you know, that doesn’t apply to human beings.’

Verse 5: “And *if* God did not spare *the* ancient world...” He wants us to learn a lesson concerning the Flood. And everywhere you go in the world and look at any archeological strata, you have the evidence of a flood perpetually before your eyes.

I remember when we were living in Salt Lake City and I would go visit brethren up in Montana. Well I would have to go east and north. When you’re going over the Continental Divide you really don’t feel like you’re going over the Continental Divide because it gradually goes up and up! When you’re up there pretty close to the 8000-9000-foot level, where the roads go through on the Continental Divide, they’re just little hills. Some of these little hills are kind of like sandy hills, kind of like limestone, and it’s the light tan colored stones.

One day as I was driving up I thought to myself, I’m going to take off on this little road, because it goes up to this mountain. It wasn’t a mountain, it was just like a little hill. I went up there and I thought I’m going to get on top of here. I looked around and I kicked a few rocks, and lo and behold what did I find? Fossils! There’s the evidence of the Flood everywhere!

Peter’s saying you need to understand because of sin. Read Gen. 6. All flesh had corrupted His way. The wickedness of man was constant from his youth up.

“...but saved Noah, *the* eighth, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought *the* Flood upon the world of *the* ungodly” (vs 5). Then someone will say, ‘Well, that was back then. That already happened, but not for us today.’

Verse 6. “And having reduced *the* cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, condemned *them* with a catastrophic *destruction*, making *them* an example *for those* who would be ungodly in the future.” Of course, if you preach that in San Francisco you’re run out of town with a spear in your back.

Verse 7: “And *if* He personally rescued righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the lawless ones *living* in licentious conduct.” Sometimes you’re stuck where you live. I think Lot should have moved, but he didn’t, so he was going around moaning and groaning. Finally the angels came and took them so that he would be able to get out of there.

Verse 8: (For that righteous man, dwelling among them, through seeing and hearing *their*

lawless activities, *was* tormented day-by-day in *his* righteous soul),” It went on every day.

Verse 9: “*The* Lord knows *how* to rescue *the* Godly out of temptation, and to reserve *the* unrighteous to *the* Day of Judgment to be punished; but particularly those who walk after *the* flesh in corrupting lust, and hold in utter contempt *the* lordship of *God*. *They are* audacious and self-willed. They are not afraid to blaspheme *the* Divine powers” (vs 9-10)—*despise lordship*, despising the rule, the true Lordship of Christ in your life.

Verse 11: “Whereas, angels, who are greater in strength and power, do not bring a railing condemnation against them before *the* Lord. But these—as irrational brute beasts, born to be caught and destroyed—blaspheme those things of which they are ignorant, *and* shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption...” (vs 11-12)—which is license to sin, *and they do*.

Look at the society around us built upon Protestantism and Catholicism today. There was a time when they adhered to the rules more closely. There was a time when they actually kept the nine commandments that they say that they kept. They did a pretty good job with it. But what happens when you have a grace like they have and begin to water it down? *You have license to sin!* Then:

- they remove God out of the schools
- they removed God out of the government
- they remove God out of the courts

because it’s all a religion of license. Then they began to then put up barriers against the Truth of God, even against the nine commandments, which they held, because it’s the mystery of lawlessness and license to sin, and now look at our society, because that’s what it ends up in.

Verse 13: “They are bringing upon themselves *the* reward of unrighteousness, while finding pleasure in satisfying *their lustful* desires day-by-day.... [to live excessively] ...*They are* stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions, while feasting together with you”—right there in the Church of God. This is why he’s writing this, because this was taking place within the Churches of God. He was writing a tremendous warning to them. God preserved that for us today.

Verse 14: “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, *they are engaged in* seducing unstable souls, having a heart trained in *lustful* cravings—cursed children Who have abandoned the straight way [which tells us if there’s a right way there’s a wrong way] ...They have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, *the son* of Beor, who loved *the* reward of wickedness” (vs 14-15).

His advice was to ecumenize the pagan religions with Israel so God would have to curse them. That’s one of the sins that happened with the church of Pergamos along with the Nicolaitans. It became so bad that God said, ‘I’m going to fight against you.’ Now, as I mentioned before, you think about it. How bad must it have been in the Church of God for Christ to say, ‘If you don’t repent I’m going to fight against you.’

They’re trying to bring them into the congregation, and what they’re doing is actually infiltrating a ‘newer spiritual interpretation’ while they’re feasting with you. Yes, they would keep the Feasts of God for a while, but their true goal was to get rid of the Feasts of God and to bring in the pagan feasts. That’s the ultimate goal! A righteousness that looks so good it’s hard to believe that it’s wrong.

Verse 16: “But he received a rebuke for his own transgression; *the* dumb donkey, speaking in a man’s voice, restrained the madness of the prophet. These *false prophets* are fountains without water, clouds driven by a storm, for whom is reserved the blackest of darkness forever. For they speak bombastic *words* of vanity...” (vs 16-18).

What are great swelling words of vanity? They can even be brought out humbly, but they’re vain! As long as it goes against God’s way, regardless of how softly, how nicely, how logical it is put, *they are great swelling words of vanity*. For example you could say, ‘You’re just struggling so hard to try and keep the commandments of God. You know that’s not the way you need to do. You just need to walk away from that and you just need to have the inner peace within your heart. And that you connect with Christ.’ *Those are great swelling words of vanity spoken in a humble way!* So then on the other hand you can have great bombastic preaching too. Either way *it’s swelling words of vanity against God!* Anything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Verse 18: “For they speak bombastic *words* of vanity, enticing *others* through *the* lusts of *the* flesh by granting indulgences to sin, *and ensnaring* those who had indeed escaped from those who live in deception.”

***Satan wants to bring the true believers back into the world and back into his religion!*** That’s why he infiltrates the Churches of God. I never heard of a true minister of God infiltrating a Protestant group to try and bring them down. Satan’s already got them. No one needs to infiltrate them; they’re already gone. So, who is Satan after? Who does he accuse day and night before the throne of God? *The saints of God!* That’s why they infiltrate

into the Churches of God. That's the place that Satan wants to get.

Verse 19: "While promising them freedom..." And that is their word. We have freedom, *freedom, freedom*; liberty, *liberty, liberty!*

"...they themselves are actually slaves of corruption because by whatever anyone is overcome, he is also held in bondage. For if, after escaping the moral defilements of the world..." (vs 19-20).

The pollution's of the world to them in their way of thinking, you can overcome the pollution's of the world not by keeping the commandments of God, but by rising above it. But the problem is when you rise above it, you rise into it, and they don't realize that.

Verse 20: "For if, after escaping the moral defilements of the world through *the* knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them, and are overcome..." There are two steps in it:

- 1) first of all, you get entangled in it

And we've seen how people in the different Sabbath-keeping churches get entangled in this lawless philosophy, which ends up in Sunday-keeping and so forth.

- 2) they continue in it

They are overcome by it. When that happens: maybe even some of the very people you knew in a congregation that you attended now have gone back so far into the world that when you begin to talk to them about the Truth and the *way* of God, and the Sabbath and Holy Days, it's just like there's a blank curtain over their eyes and they look at you and say, 'Now, now. We still love you, but we have graduated. We now have a greater spirituality.' That's how they will do it. If someone who's been in the *true* Church of God comes back to you with that attitude they have been overcome, and unless they repent they have the Lake of Fire to look forward to. *No question about it!*

"...the final end is worse than the beginning" (v 20). Why? *Because they sear their conscience against the pricking of the Holy Spirit, because their sins have been deliberate!*

Verse 21: "For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing *it*, to turn back from the Holy commandment *that was* delivered to them. But the *pronouncement found* in the true proverb has happened to them: *The dog has returned to eat his own vomit; and the sow that was washed has returned to her wallowing place in the filthy mire*" (vs 21-22)—and is just so thrilled and happy to do so

and squeals with delight.

Take *The Seven General Epistles* book and go read the section where I've combined 2-Peter and Jude and you will see how that all comes together in a far more powerful way than just each one separately. While some commentators may think that Jude copied Peter or Peter copied Jude, that perhaps may be true, but I think that the magnitude of the sin was so great that in order to explain to the brethren how serious it was they used many of the same examples.

Jude 3: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled... [it was obligatory] ... to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints"—because now they were getting another faith.

Verse 4: "For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness [license to sin] and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." When you deny God, what did Jesus say?

Matthew 10:32: "Now then, whoever shall confess Me before men, that one will I also confess before My Father Who *is* in heaven..."

(go to the next track)

Verse 33: "But whoever shall deny Me before men, that one will I also deny before My Father, Who *is* in heaven." There's one thing for sure, you don't want Christ to deny you, but that's what they've done with their practices.

Let's read Rev. 2 with the Church of Pergamos again, and let's see why Christ was so vociferous in His correction of this church. Revelation 2:12: "And to the angel of the Church..." That means messenger, because you can't conceive of a righteous angel being as wicked as this was.

"...in Pergamos, write: 'these things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.... [His very word] ...I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*...' (vs 12-13).

When you're dealing with where the throne of Satan is and you're living in the very city that is permeated with all of the wickedness of Satan, and you're just bombarded with it day and night, what happens? *Your guard let's down!*

Now, they resisted it: "...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful

witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (v 13).

After he was slain what happened? Verse 14: “But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who 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” There are two kinds of fornication:

- *physical fornication* by having temple prostitutes going clear back into rank paganism
- *spiritual fornication* (Rev. 17) with Mystery Babylon the Great, and ‘things sacrificed to idols.’

I think that’s the beginning of the Eucharist.

Verse 15: “Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (vs 15-16).

Now let me read some things out of *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight.

Pg 106-107—Christ’s View of Gnosticism

...Gnostic antinomianism takes first place—disobedience, immorality, religious lawlessness, the ‘mystery’ of lawlessness. The Apostle John in 1-John 3 couldn’t say enough about it—God and disobedience is nonsense, a logical impossibility.

That’s why the great swelling words of vanity, being this: ‘We have a new revelation concerning Sabbath. The number eight means new beginning. We all want to advance beyond, and since we are to be new creatures in Christ, we now can set aside the seventh day Sabbath and we can worship on Sunday, which is the eighth day, a new beginning.’ That sounds so good, and so smooth, and so righteous that it is so hard to detect that that is absolute blasphemy and sin. But that’s what it results in.

...Many tend to fixate on pagan customs and symbols in criticizing Nicolaitan Christianity. This is a valid issue, and the bible demonstrates repeatedly that God is displeased by mixing his worship with pagan practices....

But as Alan points out, it’s not just Santa Claus or the Easter bunny; it is the philosophy behind it that gives you the permission to sin.

...The real, core issue is the underlying theological, *de facto* licensing of disobedience in general, the wave of sin

and human misery that comes from it in the form of war, divorce, the entire gamut and daily grind of strife and emotional dysfunction that afflict mankind, and, most important, the disrespect for God himself and his creation-centered institutions that cuts man off from the true God of the universe.

Profound statement! You can see it everywhere. They have succeeded in making God, and belief in Him an opinion. Meaning that every other religion in the world is as valid as what you may think, because what you think is your opinion, and what I think is my opinion—and my opinion is right, and I stand before God because I have greater revelation than any of the rest of you. There you have it. When you turn on the Trinity channel, you’ll be able to pick it up just like that! You’ll pick that stuff up immediately.

pg 107—After lawlessness comes docetism...

—which is the dual nature of Christ. The Christ descended from heaven and possessed the body of the man Jesus. So, Christ did not come in the flesh, and the only thing that was crucified was the man Jesus, because the Christ left Him and returned to heaven. That’s docetism, meaning *the dual nature of Christ*. After that, asceticism, which we’ll talk about concerning Col. 2.

...The presence of those statements implies some Christians have a problem with recognizing Nicolaitanism for what it is....

When you get done reading this book you won’t have any problem.

...Instead they believe in tolerating it. Pergamum... [the Church at Pergamos] ...is a prime example of this. There are several other Scriptures in which Jesus makes a special point that Primitive Christians should not participate religiously with Gnostic Christians.

We see that Gnostic Christians commonly infiltrate the true church....

That’s why periodically the Church has to be scattered. That’s why periodically there are upheavals within the Church, because there’s greater work that God is doing to purge it of the Nicolaitanism.

This includes antinomian preachers operating inside the primitive church....

Antinomian Christians are depicted as hounding and slandering God's people with their false claims to be more spiritually advanced and the only true Christians accepted by God....

And it's right in this book, *Sunday Facts and Sabbath Fiction*, that's what they say: 'We Sunday-keepers are only the true ones. If you keep the law, you keep the Sabbath, why you're a weak Christian. Brother and sister, we'll pray for you enlightenment.' That's how they look down. That's what happened! It's amazing! It's amazing what happens here.

pg 108—Hellenistic Christianity did not die with its radical cousin, Gnosticism. It is prophesied to be a continuing problem of the church....

Then Alan writes here how it comes down into—described there in 2-Thess. 2—the *mystery of lawlessness*, which only Christ can destroy.

Nearly all serious scholars—Protestant, Catholic and Jewish—freely admit the historical veracity of the Hellenistic conversion of Primitive Christianity....

That's why these Scriptures were written, and that's why the book of Hebrews was written. Very profound!

The earliest intellectuals of Roman Christianity did not dispute this, In fact, there were quite proud of their Hellenistic roots! Clement, Origen and others believed that Hellenistic philosophy, and specifically its religious component, was given to the pagan world by the will of God as an intermediate revelation of truth, to prepare pagans for the full revelation of God's (Hellenistic) truth in Romans Christianity.

There is a grain of truth to that. God did reveal to them *but not* to change their pagan religions into the kind that they changed it to. God revealed Himself to them that they would come to God. Notice what they did, and this, in fact, is talking about that religious reformation which took place.

Romans 1:17: "For therein *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith unto faith..." From God's faith *into* you, and your faith *back to* God.

"...according as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith.' Indeed, *the* wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the Truth in unrighteousness" (vs 17-18). That's precisely what they said, 'We don't need the Scriptures of the Old

Testament. God of the Old Testament was evil and wicked. And those angels that helped Him create the world are evil and wicked. We need to get away from this.' Rather when God revealed Himself, *He revealed that He was Creator, He revealed that He was God!*

Verse 19: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested *it* to them." They didn't have a revelation of their religion. What they had was a revelation of the true God. When they contrived their philosophical religion they now had not excuse. So, the *grain of truth* is entirely different than what they present.

Verse 20: "For the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead..." That's what Nicolaitanism is, and when we get to the depths of Satan, the depths of Satan is claimed to be coming right from the Godhead. ***But it's coming right from the fountain of Satan himself!***

"...—so that they are without excuse; because when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, neither were thankful; but they became vain in their own reasonings, and their foolish hearts were darkened. While professing themselves to be *the* wise ones, they became fools" (vs 20-22). That is the foundation of 'philosophia,' *philosophy*. Hellenistic philosophy is a 'religion,' so God turned them over to them.

Notice what happens to the society after that. Just exactly as is happening in the world today, and in America especially.

Verse 23: "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into *the* likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed creatures, and creeping things... [I want you to notice what God does every time that happens]: ...For this cause, God also abandoned them to uncleanness..." (vs 23-24). There comes a certain point where that God enforces a penalty. The ones who receive this penalty in their own delusions look upon it as new revelation.

"...through the lusts of their hearts, to disgrace their own bodies between themselves" (v 24). Do we not have the 'new religious revelation' today? That homosexual marriage is really the *in* thing? This is a great revelation. We have greater insight. Any confirmed homosexual, male or female, will tell you that God's condemnation of it in the Old Testament proves that He's an evil, wicked God who has no love.

Verse 25: "Who exchanged the Truth of God for the lie... [with all their stories and fables]

...and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the One Who is Creator, Who is blessed into the ages. Amen.”

The second stage becomes even more severe, v 26: “For this cause, God abandoned them to disgraceful passions; for even their women changed the natural use *of sex* into that which is contrary to nature; and in the same manner also the men, having left the natural use *of sex* with the woman, were inflamed in their lustful passions toward one another—men with men shamelessly committing lewd *acts*, and receiving back within themselves a fitting penalty for their error” (vs 26-27). Today that is spelled AIDS, and any of the other 60 venereal diseases.

Here’s the final step, v 28: “And in exact proportion as they did not consent to have God in *their* knowledge, God abandoned them to a reprobate mind...”—one incapable of coming to the Truth, because you can only come to the Truth when you repent. It’s amazing! It’s all in the Bible! It is something! That’s why you need to understand God’s Word is a *living* Word.

‘Given over to a reprobate mind’—I can’t help but thinking of seeing this fellow on television. But anyway, when I heard him make the statement, ‘Yes, Larry, it’s a wonderful thing. You just sit there and you meditate and you come to the point of complete silence in your mind. Then you listen to the silence.’ How you can hear silence? *Well, MCI has the answer. You drop a pin!*

Notice what happens, a fitting description of our society, v 29: “Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, guile, evil dispositions; whisperers, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things *and practices*; disobedient to parents, void of understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable *and* unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God... [because He revealed it to them] ...that those who commit such things are worthy of death, not only practice these things themselves, but also approve of those who commit *them*” (vs 29-32).

I just read to you the *TV Guide*, and the police blotter, and the FBI’s most wanted, and the history of wars.

pg 110—The only Gnostic sect named in that connection is the Nicolaitans. Even more important, the historical sources indicate the essence of Nicolaitans Gnosticism is the same spiritualized antinomianism...

I like the Greek pronunciation: ‘*anomia*’—*lawlessness*.

...the idea that salvation is completely unaffected by even willful disobedience, and the licentiousness that naturally results.

Isn’t it amazing that now they estimate that 40% of all Catholic priests are infected with HIV—the *mystery of lawlessness*.

This does not mean the Nicolaitans were the only Gnostics bothering the primitive church. However, since they are mentioned by name, and since they appear to have been a more biblical and spiritual form of Gnosticism much in keeping with the form of Hellenistic Christianity that survives as modern Christianity, it seems an appropriate choice for designating those who carry forward the Gnostic tradition of religious lawlessness today.

#### Chapter 6: Forms of Spirituality

The first time I heard of the word *spirit* was when I was in high school, and I was a freshman in high school. That was the first time we had a sports rally. We all went down to the gymnasium, and it was for the football team. The cheerleaders were there. And they started out this thing: Do you have spirit? Everybody’s yelling. I couldn’t figure out what that was. What do you mean spirit?

But I think Alan does a very good job here in showing that there is, with the spirit of man, a spirituality of human goodness that people like to cultivate, which then filters through all the religions of the world through their do-goodism. And he points out then how this connects up with the demons. Now, please understand, all demons are not necessarily coming to you as evil and wicked. There are some self-righteous demons. Christ found them in the synagogue—didn’t He? *Yes!* And their goal and purpose is to associate, to possess people, come and associate with those who are the true believers in hopes that they may return to God forgiven. So, it gets to be quite a complex thing.

#### pg 126—Gnostic Immorality

...Of course, in the flexible antinomian environment of Gnosticism...

Gnosticism means, *to know*. The big G over the Masonic doors means Gnosis. You come to the Masons and you admit you know nothing. Only the Masons have the key to the understanding. All of the degrees is to finally work you to the depths of Satan to worship him. In this lawless environment

...you could craft your distinctions according to your taste. As we saw above, some Gnostics emphasized that specific rules of morality are only a matter of personal opinion, so one cannot lay down a rigid standard of right and wrong.

That's what we have today.

If your new-found spiritual excuses do not wash with your fellow Gnostic churchgoers, you might have to find a new congregation.

There are various degrees of Gnosticism and Nicolaitanism. You know, if you want to have the hollering, shouting, jumping up and down, and leaping screaming kind, go to a Pentecostal church. If you want to have a stayed, very religious cold one, go to a Catholic Mass. If you want to have something very religious where you deny the flesh, well then, you go to that church. If you want to have one where anything goes, well then go to one where the enjoy life: wine, women, song, and so forth.

pg 127—No problem. Within the Gnostic Christian world you could pick and choose, from the radical [lawless] antinomian liberation of the far left were seemingly anything goes, to the far right Gnostic sects that took their asceticism seriously....

I'll talk about that when I get to Col. 2.

...Early Christianity was highly diverse, not unlike today. Some Gnostic churches allowed marriage and accumulation of wealth, while the conservative groups that didn't, damned to hell their more liberal brethren.

So it's no wonder you even have fights amongst Protestantism today. Now, this is straight out of Mormonism here, and the Mormons do this today.

pg 128—Water usually was substituted for wine in celebrating the Lord's supper....

Wine, after all, is evil and the Mormons take water and bread with their communion. Others however:

pg 129—...Valentinian Gnostics believed their sacraments provided them with a spiritual body of light that made them invisible to the demons. They believed that participation in the eucharist clothed them with the spiritual body of Christ, and this was the guarantee that they were spiritual and would be saved.

That is regardless of their behavior.

pg 140—The term *lawlessness* invokes certain images. A group of people sitting peacefully in church singing hymns seems

anything but lawless. For some the term 'mystery of iniquity', as it sometimes is translated, conjures up ideas of a Satanic cult performing obscene rituals and maybe sacrificing babies as the ancient Canaanites did. Religious lawlessness, however, is not necessarily violent nor outwardly vulgar.

pg 141—Lawless Christians today say 'Let's worship God, but we're under the liberty of the New Covenant and we'll make up our own rules about how we worship and we'll decide for ourselves what moral standards if any we attach to it.'

They reject, with their freedom:

...the necessity of having a codified law in favor instead of having spontaneous demonstration of devotion to Jesus...

...from one's own heart (which, by necessity, ends from one's own heart (which, by necessity, ends up being an expression of natural human spirituality).

Let's understand this: **you cannot save yourself!** It does not come from within you from yourself, otherwise you could save yourself.

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not **of** your own selves..." The Greek here is very explicit. The English word *of* comes from the Greek word 'ek'—*from something within*, out. It does not come *out* of you; not from within you.

"...it is the gift of God, not of works..." (vs 8-9). Remember, Sunday is a work. Christmas is a work. Think on that! It's a *human work* to substitute the righteousness of God.

"...so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them" (vs 9-10)—which is the good works of

- the commandments of God
- the statutes of God
- the Sabbath
- the Holy Days

all of these things are the *good works of God*.

- to love God
- to love each other
- to love your neighbor as yourself

Those are the things that *God gave you to walk in*. Those do not come naturally. You cannot conjure it up from within yourself. *It must come from God!*

True love from God, and the ultimate is to

love your enemy. And you cannot do that without the Spirit of God. Love in its truest form is very difficult because the demands of it are so great that only the love of God can fill it. Not human spirituality and the fuzzy-wuzzy 'let's all be warm and good to each other.' That's not to put down natural affection that people have, and so forth. But that is to say do not replace the true love of God with human love.

Now Alan gives a very good summary of it here. What do the Nicolaitan systems have today?

pg 141-142:

- We are free to utilize any custom or practice we wish in worshipping God, as long as we Christianize it....

In a book *My Catholic Faith*, which is one of their catechism books, it says that the Catholic Church made a practice of taking the pagan worship things and changing the name, because they had the *right* to Christianize them. Profound!

...Worship God in any way you feel appropriate. Listen to your heart. Spirituality is from the inner man.

*No!* Spirituality comes from without, from God.

- All Old Testament practices and customs must be rejected in worshipping God. Spirituality must spring spontaneously from within, not imposed from the outside.
- True spirituality cannot be found in obedience to biblical law....

If you go by Biblical law and you keep the Sabbath you'll never find spirituality, they claim, 'But you come to our church on Sunday and you'll find it.' You walk in there and they're singing songs and they're happy, and they're oh so good. They have got so many people there. How can all these people be wrong, and that choir sings praises to God and sends shivers up and down your spine, and you know this is got to be from God. You have to watch what they teach, not what you feel. You have to look at the commands of God and not just trust the sight of your eyes. You have to understand that it can't be from within because from within, Paul said, 'In my flesh I find no good thing.

- True spirituality cannot be found in obedience to biblical law. On the other hand, the institutions and rules we substitute for it, being 'spontaneous' and spiritual, can be enforced and held as binding on Christians, even to the point of executing offenders.

Isn't that something?

- Do you believe in the Passover? *Yes!*
- Do you believe in Sabbath? *Yes!*
- Do you believe in the Holy Days of God? *Yes!*

You recant, you renounce it, or you lose your head, and I do this in the name of God. The Inquisition! killed millions!

- Disobedience to moral standard is acceptable, within limits...
- A little gambling doesn't hurt.
- A little cheating doesn't hurt.
- A little lying doesn't hurt.

Like this one woman who went into Wal-Mart. We have a lady down south who works in Wal-Mart part-time. And she has to guard the back door, because people can go out the back door. So, here comes this woman with a cart filled with a lot of expensive things.

So she said, 'May I see your receipt?' Oh, I don't have it. I don't have time for it. I got a doctor's appointment for my little son here, and I have to get there right away. 'Well ma'am, I need a receipt.' *Well, huh...* So she gave her some old receipts. She said, 'Well this is not for today. I need a receipt for what you have in there.' *Well, huh, I got to run off to the appointment right away.* So, she zoomed out. And they found over \$700 worth of things. Can you imagine \$700 worth of things in a Wal-Mart cart? I mean, she wasn't shopping at the Ritz there. No morals about it! *Well that's ok to do it. If Wal-Mart is dumb enough to let me take it, thank you.*

...if one finds obedience very difficult. Just do what comes naturally to you. Listen to your heart. Spirituality is from the inner, not the outer man.

That is all of your lust being there. And you watch some of these movies that are driven by lust. Anyway, I saw an ad in this movie with Michael Douglas. It was all on this driving lust of this woman who was stalking him sexually. He finally gave into it because, after all the inner feeling said, well this has got to be so good, how could this be wrong.

- There is no hard and fast definition of morality. Every man should judge for himself. Listen to your heart. Spirituality is from the inner man.
- God is pure love.... [therefore, He will never condemn you] ...All you have to do is be kind and positive towards others....

Go watch Oprah Winfrey. If you want to know about being kind and positive and doing good things, and she will have stories on there that are so heartbreaking that the whole audience is just crying,

and they go away feeling so good. But it's all lawlessness. And this whole society is that way. {note sermon: *Stinking Thinking*.} This whole society is totally caught up in it.

...Other than that, specific conduct is not significant. Listen to your heart. Spirituality is from the inner man.

- We should lead a moral life as regards our fellow man. On the other hand, why would God, who lives in heaven and is so far above us, impose any specific standards on how we worship him?

That is Nicolaitanism. Here's some other part of it, pg 143:

- The total self-sufficiency and total exclusivity of grace [meaning you can't fall from grace]. Grace excludes the possibility of law and sin having any effect on salvation.
- Eternal security. Once-saved, always-saved, even if one turns back willfully into sin.
- Jesus not only forgives the penalty of sin, but abolished the law itself.

Meaning without law there is no sin. so therefore. why worry? Just be good.

- Church officials have the authority, not only to explain and apply biblical principles, but also to overturn and change the teachings of the Bible, including teachings of the New Testament.

Which come via this way: 'Well, Christ really didn't mean that.

- The work of the Holy Spirit includes not only inspiring and guiding Christians to understand and apply biblical principles correctly, but also how and when to overturn and change Biblical Scripture, including the teachings of the New Testament.

#### **IV. Church at Thyatira:**

Now let's come back to Rev. 2 and we'll begin the next section with Thyatira. I think with the background that I have brought to you from #3 and #4, when we get to the depths of Satan then you'll understand even more.

Revelation 2:18: "And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: 'These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass. I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works...' (vs 18-19). They have mentioned for their *works* twice.

{Note DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church)—explains more about this time in history than in any other time}

"...and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols" (vs 19-20). Notice that's a reverse order in Pergamos. Pergamos is to eat things sacrificed to idols and commit fornication. Here fornication is put first because the spiritual fornication really comes to the fore.

Verse 21: "And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts..." (vs 21-23). Christ is establishing His power of judgment over all the Churches.

"...and I will give to each of you..." [this comes down to an individual level] ...according to your works. But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden" (vs 23-24).

So next time we will cover What is the Depths of Satan? *and* Where did that come from? And I think you are going to be absolutely amazed!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) 2 Peter 1:1-12, 16-21
- 2) 1 Peter 2:1-21
- 3) Jude 3-4
- 4) Matthew 10:32-33
- 5) Revelation 2:12-16
- 6) Romans 1:17-32
- 7) Ephesians 2:8-10
- 8) Revelation 2:18-24

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 3
- Colossians 2
- 1 Corinthians 13
- Genesis 6
- Revelation 17

#### Also referenced:

##### Book:

- *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight
- *Sunday Facts and Sabbath Fiction* by Dr. Russell Tardo ([faithfulword.com/tracts/Sunday\\_Facts.pdf](http://faithfulword.com/tracts/Sunday_Facts.pdf))
- *The Seven General Epistles* by Fred R. Coulter

#### Sermon Series:

- *The Holy Sabbath*
- *Refuting Sunday-Keeping.*

Sermons: *Stinking Thinking*

DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church)

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