

Are The Nicolaitans Back?

When Jesus finished telling the story of the persistent widow, He ended it with a question from the depths of His heart. "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) Like the father of the prodigal son, God longs for His children to trust Him. Why does He yearn for such faith? Here is the answer. Every human bond is built on trust. No exceptions! It is the fabric that gives society its sweetest and most satisfying experience. It is the foundation of all our happiness. To trust God, who gave us life, is at the center of our happiness.

When faith is absent, then we get war, divorce, estrangement, chaos, and death. Life cannot exist without faith! The universe would disappear. That is why God's anger is directed against those who "suppress the truth." (Romans 1:18) Why is truth so important? What does it have to do with faith? Just this! Only truth builds and preserves faith! Faith is the glue of relationships. When the truth is suppressed, it is automatically replaced with falsehood. And deceit breaks people's faith in God.

One of the most beautiful predictions of Christ is found in Isaiah 61. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor... to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives... to comfort all who mourn, to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This is done by declaring "the year" of God's mercy and the "day" of His justice.

Isaiah continues to tell us that Christ will produce a people called the "trees of righteousness." These "trees" sacrifice themselves to "rebuild the old ruins..., raise up the former desolations... of many generations." Later in the same chapter, God promises to "direct their work in truth." On this sin-torn, deceived planet earth, He raises up a people who, with the truth, restores the "hearts of the children" to their Heavenly Father.

The Western culture we live in today is often called "postmodernism or postchristianity." It was the Protestant Reformation that gave birth to human freedom after the religious tyranny of the Dark Ages. For them God and His revealed will in the Bible was absolute truth. Today, the greater part of the Western world believes that there is no such thing as absolute truth. So the door has been thrown open to the paganization of Protestant Christianity. It is no wonder that the Pope is considered a superstar today. For it was papal teaching that oversaw the merging of Christianity with paganism.

Today much of the Evangelical world is rushing to abandon the teachings of Scripture by claiming to express their beliefs in just one word – Jesus. Certainly that is the sweetest name on earth! But it is also a name that has been hijacked to excuse the most flagrant violation of the law of God. We must never forget that Jesus died to save us from the penalty of the law because it was absolute truth.

Jesus warned about the Nicolaitans in His messages to the Seven Churches. This early apostasy is thought to have come from Nicolas, a convert from Antioch, who was chosen as one of the seven deacons. They used the concept of the "love of Jesus" as the basis of their rebellion against the teaching of the church not to eat food offered to idols. This prohibition, by the early church, made it hard to shop for groceries in the Gentile culture of the day. But once the followers of Nicolas abandoned this

teaching, the next step was inevitable. They believed the “love of Jesus” made the commandments of God less restrictive. It appears that he taught, because of his pagan roots, that there is no absolute truth. The result was gross sexual immorality. Like Balaam and Jezebel who led Israel into immorality, so did Nicolas’s teachings. No wonder Jesus called their deeds “something that I hate.” (Revelation 2:15)

So which Jesus did the Nicolas apostasy follow? It certainly was not the Jesus of the New Testament. It was an imposter who hijacked the name in order to infect the movement of the real Jesus.

Today we are facing again the combining of Christianity with pagan concepts, also known as the “New Age.” These New Age “Christians” and sympathizers have become prominent speakers and leaders in many Evangelical circles. Their influence is huge. Some examples of this are Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren, Tony Campolo, and Rob Bell. Rick Warren, author of the *Purpose Driven Church* and Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek fame don’t seem to be far behind. They are acclaimed by many as the most important leaders in Evangelical Christianity. Do all of them teach some truth? Of course! But it is mingled with some things that Jesus hates. Several – not all - have proclaimed their support, in some form or fashion, of gay marriage. Some teach that people who believe in the coming of Jesus are the world’s greatest problem. Some are into medieval mysticism. One has recently become a Roman Catholic. And with much sorrow I need to share with you that *some* Adventist groups and institutions have invited *some* of these to be speakers at their meetings and on their campuses. It was these kind of things that Elder Ted Wilson warned the church about in his address at the General Conference Session in 2010.

The hijacking of the name of Jesus is nothing new. Neither is the naivety of Christians who constantly fall for it. In our day, the New Age spiritualism has put on shiny new clothes which they claim they got from Jesus. But God is not mocked. Flash and flares will not fool the earnest student of Scripture. For the Bible is “lamp for our feet and the light to our path” (Psalms 119:105) and it never goes out!