

## WHO ARE THE NICOLAITANS?

The Nicolaitans are mentioned twice in the Bible and only in the book of Revelation.

The first is in Revelation 2:6: “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

The second is in the same chapter, this time in verse 15: “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”

Who are the Nicolaitans? What did they do? What did they believe in and practice that was so hated by God?

In the book of Acts, we find that a certain Nicholas was one of 7 deacons ordained in the early New Testament church.

Did this deacon Nicholas abandon the true church to become the leader of this heretical sect that bore his name?

Church scholars such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Tertullian claimed that this Nicholas did indeed leave the church and that he started the Nicolaitans.

The *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* states, however, that “there is no positive evidence” that the Nicolaitans were founded by this Nicholas.

But there was a certain bishop of Samaria who was also named Nicholas. And this Nicholas was associated with the sorcerer-heretic Simon Magus of Acts chapter 8.

“It is possible that the two names refer to the same man and Nicholas of Samaria was Simon himself. Or, Nicholas was Simon's successor after Simon left for Rome” (*Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, Lesson 50, p. 10).

The name Nicolas is derived from the Greek words *nikos*—which means “conqueror” or “destroyer”—and *laos* meaning “people.” Nicholas then was the Greek word for Nimrod, the conqueror or destroyer of the people.

Genesis 10:8-9 identifies who this Nimrod was: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.”

A skillful and mighty warrior, Nimrod stood before the Lord or stood in opposition against the Lord. This made him a notorious arch-rebel and a tyrannical conqueror of the people.

Nimrod was also the first empire builder. And he was a cruel despot who established his kingdom in the land of Shinar with Babel or Babylon as his most principal city.

Babylon was an oppressive government as well as a corrupt and immoral religious system which is described as “the habitation of devils” or demons in the book of Revelation.

The people readily followed Nimrod, acknowledging him as their divine warrior-king. They called him “Baal,” a word found throughout the Old Testament meaning “master” or “lord.”

Thus, Nimrod put himself in the place of the true God.

But Nimrod had other names, too. In Babylon, he was known as Tammuz. In Syria and Greece, he was called Adonis. In Egypt, he was known as the god Osiris.

Another name for Nimrod that was commonly used throughout Asia Minor was “Santa” (Lesson 40, p. 6, *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, 1965).

**Santa Claus** is but a shortened form for “Santa Nicholas” or “Saint Nicholas.” The Nicolaitans were followers of this “Saint

Nicholas;” therefore, they continued to honor Nimrod in the days of the apostle John.

What was the doctrine or the fundamental beliefs these Nicolaitans preached and practiced that God said He hated?

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was rooted in the same attitude of defiance and rebellion Nimrod had towards God. He had taught his followers that it was foolishness and an act of cowardice to follow God and keep His laws.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, “Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. . . He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means that they were happy; but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter IV, Part 2).

Instead of listening to God, obeying Him and living His way, Nimrod taught his followers that they knew best, that they could do whatever they wanted to do.

Nimrod built a false and wicked religious system that was a clever counterfeit of God’s true Christianity. It became known as the mystery religion of “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5).

He replaced God’s annual holy days with his pagan, heathen ritual customs and observances, such as Christmas, which was originally saturnalia, or the birthday of Nimrod.

By blindly following “the deeds of the Nicolaitans,” mankind unknowingly continues to honor Santa Nicolas or Nimrod on December 25th—his birthday.