

## Who are the Nicolaitans?

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

So, just who are the *Nicolaitans*? Follow along with me while we search for the answer. Standard Christian reference publications, which are reliable for most things, are of very little help in this quest. Let us take, for example, the Strong's Concordance. When I look up the word "*Nicolaitans*" (#3531) in its Greek Dictionary section, I find this meaning given.

(#3531) *Nikolaites*; from 3532; a *Nicolaite*, i.e. "adherent of Nicolaus":—Nicolaitans

Which tells us nothing. However, when we look at #3532, the word from which #3531 is derived, we find this in Strong's as part of its meaning:

(#3532) *Nikolaos* from 3534 and 2992; "victorious over the people"; Nicolaus, a heretic:—Nicolaus

So we see here that the base of the word "Nicolaitan" is made up of two Greek words:

(#3534) *nikos*; from 3529; "a conquest; triumph"

(#2992) *laos*; "a people"

I found other words besides "*nikos*" which I list below, that all follow (as defined in Strong's) this basic meaning of "to subdue," as is given for their common root word "*nike*" (#3529); which means "conquest."

(#3527) *Nikanor*; "victorious":—Nicanor

(#3528) *nikao*; "to subdue":—conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory

(#3530) *Nikodemos*; "victorious among his people":—Nicodemus.

(#3533) *Nikopolis*; "victorious city":—Nicopolis

Strong's definition for "*nike*" (#3529) is:

(#3529) *nike*; a primary word; "conquest":—victory

This word "*nike*" is also a part of the root meaning of the word "Nicolaitans." Why is it then that the Strong's dictionary lists for the word "*Nicolaitans*" (#3531) just the meaning "adherent of Nikolaus"? One gets the impression the scholar is trying to avoid the true definition, which is best exemplified in the word "*Nikolaos*" (#3532) which means, "victorious over the people." For we have seen that the Greek word for "*Nicolaitans*" is made of two Greek words: "*nikos*" (to conquer) and "*laos*" (the people).

Now my good bible dictionary<sup>1</sup> likewise accurately defines the other words that I listed above, but let me quote part of the lengthy definition that it gives for the word "*Nicolaitans*" (#3531):

"A party or sect in the churches of Ephesus and Pergamos whose practice and doctrine are severely censured...Presumably the Nicolaitans were the followers of some heresiarch called Nicolaus."

What does this definition do to the Word of God? This puts the living Word into some ancient (and little known about) context so that we would tend to believe that the whole matter of Nicolaitanism does not apply to us today.

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, Op. Cit.

When I open the **New** Scofield Reference Bible,<sup>2</sup> I find this footnote in reference to the word “*Nicolaitans*” in Revelation 2:6,15:

“The name ‘Nicolaitans,’ according to early church fathers...refers to those who, while professing themselves to be Christians, lived licentiously.”

Again, this tells me nothing! Is there a conspiracy among the church scholars? Why is the true definition so carefully hidden from the understanding of the people?

Not long ago, however, I found the following definition for the word “*Nicolaitans*.” I believe it is the correct definition, and I found it in what I will call the “**Original**” Scofield Reference Bible.” Here in this earlier version we have the original footnote, which was undoubtedly written by Mr. Scofield himself, but which in later editions has apparently been altered.

“Nicolaitans: From *nikao*, ‘to conquer,’ and *laos*, ‘the people,’ or ‘laity.’ There is no ancient authority for a sect of the Nicolaitans. If the word is symbolic it refers to the earliest form of the notion of a priestly order, or ‘clergy,’ which later divided an equal brotherhood (Mt 23:8) into priests and laity. What in Ephesus was ‘deeds’ (rev. 2:6) had become in Pergamos a ‘doctrine’ (rev. 2:15).”

While I cannot personally agree with all of Mr. Scofield’s doctrines, it seems that the man at least had a certain scholastic integrity in this matter. So the question then arises again, why was it necessary for this excellent footnote definition to be changed into something so meaningless and probably not even true? The answer (which I have heard also from other sources, and I am still looking for the full proof) is in a writing I read most recently from my good friend Brother Clayt Sonmore.<sup>3</sup> In his footnote referencing his discussion of the deeds of the Nicolaitans, he quotes the above original Scofield footnote and then adds the following also:

“The above quote was taken verbatim from the version of the Scofield’s study Bible that was the only one published until about 1960. From good authority I was told that the Southern Baptist Convention, at the time representing nearly 10 million members, demanded of the publisher that this footnote be deleted in the future editions or they would withdraw their endorsement of it. It takes no expertise to see the obvious reasons, financial and otherwise, which motivated a hierarchical clergy class of controllers to suppress this illuminating truth. The overwhelming desire to conceal this invention of the church fathers that replaced a “kingdom of priests’ with an Old Testament division of these same priests into two bodies, a clergy class and a laity class, is basic to Christendom’s declining walk in the revelation of Him. For whatever reason, demands, or threats to Scofield’s publisher or to others, it is needful to record that this very illuminating footnote, along with other comments, has been eliminated from the editions of the Scofield bible published since about 1960. And worse, who in their lifetime ever heard one mention from any pulpit explaining what Nicolaitanism means...or of God’s distinct “hatred” of its intrusion into, and its tragic effects upon, the so-called church?”

Can we not see why this information would be offensive to the churches of today? I suppose that over ninety percent of them practice the deeds of the Nicolaitans at this time.

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<sup>2</sup> 1967 edition, Oxford University Press

<sup>3</sup> Sonmore, Clayt E., Who Was William Branham, Chapter 1, page 5, of a soon to be published book sent in a mailing dated March 18, 2002. Thy Kingdom Come Ministries, 12100 Marion Lane – Suite 6104, Minnetonka, MN 55305