

## The Kingdom of God - What will it be Like? - 16

By the time the apostle John wrote his letters to the believers, those holding to the original Gospel taught by Jesus had become a minority and the apostasy in the majority - "As you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour" - 1 John 2:18 There were now many false teachers - and they made themselves into a separate class in the Church - Jesus refers to them in his message to the believers in Pergamos -

"You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" - Revelation 2:15. Their doctrine or teaching was false. The designation of the false teachers was a divinely coined word, formed by two Greek words: nico = victory, and laitos = people. The name therefore means "victors over the people." Of these Paul warned -

"O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - 21 by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith" - 1 Timothy 6:20. Their so-called "knowledge" came from Plato, and brought with it the pagan belief in the natural immortality of the soul. The doctrine of the resurrection contradicts such teaching -

But these false teaches tried to get around it by saying that the resurrection had already occurred, and Paul refers to this claim - "Their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" - 2 Timothy 2:17. So even while the apostles were at work, so were what Jesus called the Nicolaitans which John identified as antichrists. In the Greek, anti carries both the idea of "against" and "false" - the Antichrist falsely claims to speak with the authority of Christ.

Paul by the Spirit foretold how the false teachers would become organized under one man. Speaking of the return of Jesus, he said, "That Day will not come unless the falling away - apostasy - comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" - 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This prediction was fulfilled early in the history of the Church.

But in relatively recent times there has been a successful effort to identify the Antichrist as a person who, it is claimed, ●will set up political power in Jerusalem, ●and then claim to be the Messiah and king. ●He will build a temple there, and ● command that all nations submit to his rule - see, e.g., There's A New World Coming by Hal Lindsey.

This idea concerning the future ruler in Jerusalem includes the view that he will be the spokesman for an imagined evil spirit, called Satan, and as such he must be opposed. But the Bible clearly teaches that when Jesus returns, he will set up his power in Jerusalem - Matthew 5:35, will call on all nations to submit to his rule - Zechariah 14:17, he will build the temple - Zechariah 6:12.

So with the expectation of a latter day Antichrist, performing what they expect of him, the nations will mount the final assault on Jesus and his kingdom, and "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them..." - Revelation 17:14.