

# 25-0427p Transcript

## 25-0427p - *Make Sure You're Barking Up the Right Tree*, John Nousek

**Bible Reader:** John Nousek

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## Make Sure You're Barking Up the Right Tree

Transcript (0:04 - 30:01)

### Scripture Reading

**Bible Reader:** John Nousek

#### Revelation 1:1-3

(0:04) Well, good evening. So this evening I have the pleasure of reading God's Word, (0:10) and I have the pleasure of preparing to read God's Word. (0:15) So I want to begin my reading from the book of Revelation. (0:21) This sermon is titled, Make Sure You're Barking Up the Right Tree. (0:28) A phrase I haven't heard for a while, but that's the title of the sermon, (0:35) and you'll understand why shortly. (0:38) So, Revelation, beginning with chapter 1, verse 1. (0:46) The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, (0:51) things which must shortly take place. (0:57) And he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John, (1:03) who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, (1:09) to all things that he saw. (1:15) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy (1:21) and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near. (1:27)

### Transcript

**Preacher:** John Nousek

(1:32) So the book of Revelation, I selected this for a number of reasons.

(1:40) The book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, (1:46) begins with a clear claim and description that what is recorded in this book (1:52) is in fact the very Word of God. (1:55) And it's interesting, we might not use them very often today, (2:01) but the word I'm thinking of is bookends, (2:05) where you would have on a shelf different books, (2:09) and on one end is something to support the book from falling over, (2:14) and on the other end of the shelf is another one just like it, (2:18) facing the other direction and holding the whole bunch of them, (2:22) standing straight up and supported. (2:24) And in that way, I noticed that in Genesis chapter 1, verse 3, (2:34) right from the beginning, I'm going to turn over there, (2:41) God begins His Word to us in Genesis with something very similar.

(2:54) This is chapter 1, verse 3. (3:02) Then God said, oh, excuse me, I skipped ahead. (3:18) Then God said, Let there be light, and there was light. (3:22) And God saw the light, that it was good, (3:27) and God divided the light from the darkness.

(3:33) Then God said, that's how it reads, (3:38) Then God said, this is God's Word from the very beginning. (3:43) Chapter 1 of Genesis. (3:46) And at the very end, in Revelation, (3:51) it's a claim that this is the Word of Jesus Christ.

(3:53) This is God's Word, through and through. (3:57) And so, in the sense that we have these bookends (4:01) that mark the beginning and the end of the Bible, (4:05) the entire Bible is God's Word, through and through. (4:08) And we can rely on that.

(4:15) So the book of Revelation begins with seven letters to seven churches, (4:21) all located on the western edge of what is now called Turkey. (4:27) Much of the New Testament actually takes place, (4:29) or is written, to or from, or mentioned, (4:38) the people in Asia Minor, which is Turkey, (4:42) which is also called Anatolia. (4:46) I didn't know that before I began studying this.

(4:48) I knew Turkey. (4:51) I thought I knew that was Asia Minor. (4:55) But I looked it up in Britannica.

(4:57) According to Encyclopedia Britannica, (4:59) Anatolia, which is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, (5:04) may be defined in geographic terms as this area bounded to the north (5:10) by the Black Sea, to the east and south (5:14) by the southeastern Taurus Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, (5:23) and to the west by the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, (5:29) Culturally, the area also includes the islands of the eastern Aegean Sea. (5:35) And that's where the book of Revelation is written from. (5:40) It's written from this island called Patmos.

(5:44) God's Word says in chapter 1, verse 9, (5:48) I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom (5:55) and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island that is called Patmos. (6:04) You know, these are real places in real life. (6:08) These are not just made-up places or stories, (6:12) but yet you can actually go there today.

(6:16) I love that. (6:18) I love the fact that you can go and see these places. (6:21) I have a friend who actually went there not too long ago.

(6:24) To Turkey and saw the tomb of the Apostle John, (6:32) who wrote the book of Revelation, (6:35) who penned it with his hand, probably his right hand, not like my left hand. (6:41) That's how I do it, but that's okay. (6:45) So these are real places in real history.

(6:48) Anatolia, Turkey, Asia Minor. (6:51) Those are different names. (6:56) And starting in verse 4, Revelation 1, 4. (7:03) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, (7:06) grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come (7:11) and from the seven spirits who are before his throne (7:17) and from, here it is, (7:22) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, (7:25) the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth, (7:31) to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

(7:39) And he has made us kings and priests to his God and Father. (7:45) To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(7:53) So John is writing from Patmos, (7:56) and he's writing to the seven churches in, you select a name, Anatolia. (8:03) And all of these seven churches lie in the western edge of the continent, (8:10) the western edge of Turkey. (8:13) You look on the map, they're almost all in a row.

(8:15) There's a little mountain range between a couple of them, (8:18) but they're almost all right in

a row on that western edge. (8:24) Burganum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Smyrna, and Ephesus. (8:33) Those are the seven.

(8:35) And I'd like to read to you, they're very short letters, (8:39) I'd like to read to you the first two. (8:46) And notice the claim of what's going on in these two churches (8:51) and what is not going on, (8:54) and what God has to say about what happens inside the church. (9:02) Chapter two begins, (9:03) To the angel of the church of Ephesus, (9:07) these things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, (9:12) who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, (9:16) I know your works, your labor, your patience, (9:21) and that you cannot bear those who are evil.

(9:25) So far, so good. (9:28) Johnny was in class in third grade, (9:30) and the teacher said, you're doing good. (9:34) Check, check, check.

Fine. (9:40) And you have tested those who say that they are apostles and are not, (9:46) and have found them liars. (9:47) And you have persevered and have patience and have labored for my name's sake (9:53) and have not become weary.

(9:57) Still, doing fine. (10:02) Now the hard part. (10:04) Verse four reads, (10:06) Nevertheless, I have this against you, (10:09) that you have left your first love.

(10:14) Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, (10:17) repent and do the first works. (10:20) For else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, (10:25) unless you repent. (10:28) But this you have.

(10:31) So there's a little saving grace, so to speak. (10:35) There's some, God says, okay, you have, (10:43) you're not doing what you did at the beginning. (10:46) When you first became believers, (10:49) and you decided to follow God instead of your own ways.

(10:56) But you're not doing those things. (10:58) But you do have this. (11:00) But this you have, he says in verse six, (11:03) that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, (11:08) which I also hate.

(11:12) That's a strong word. (11:16) God hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (11:21) So who are these Nicolaitans? (11:26) Because it's a big enough point for God to tell the church in Ephesus.

(11:34) Now you've got a lot of good things going for you. (11:37) You have some faults. (11:40) But you have a really big positive one.

(11:43) You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (11:46) So the name Nicolaitan comes from the Greek word Nikolaos. (11:54) It's a compound word, meaning two words put together to have a new meaning.

(12:00) It's a compound word from the Greek word niko, (12:03) which means to conquer, to subdue, to subjugate. (12:09) And the Greek word laos, which is where we get the word laity. (12:16) And we put them together.

(12:19) So this is a group that is conquering, subjugating, (12:24) and subduing the people, God's people. (12:31) They were a heretical group who taught that there was nothing wrong (12:34) with serving Christ while simultaneously participating in pagan practices. (12:41) They were a group of endless compromise.

(12:44) And Christ hated their deeds. (12:47) The doctrine or teaching of the Nicolaitans was very

active at that time. (12:56) And I have to tell you, there's nothing new under the sun.

(13:00) What's going on today? (13:02) No surprise, I suppose. (13:06) So consider some of the hallmarks of the Nicolaitans. (13:11) And maybe you'll see that in today's culture.

(13:14) So there's no emphasis on holy living or separation from the world. (13:19) For instance, modern Nicolaitanism dresses itself in the guise of inclusiveness. (13:28) It claims we need to accept and embrace everyone regardless of their lifestyle choices.

(13:36) Ultimately, it does away with the notion of sin and the need for repentance. (13:42) For example, they may say the time has come to help people (13:48) of different sexual lifestyle choices that are different from the biblical view (13:53) and let them blend into the church community. (14:00) But that's not God's Word.

(14:05) There's no emphasis. (14:06) This is the second point of four. (14:08) There's no emphasis from the Nicolaitans on the doctrinal teachings of the Bible.

(14:16) Under the banner of progressivism, it diminishes the Bible as too restrictive (14:23) or exclusive of other people's beliefs. (14:27) Instead of the Bible as being the source of absolute truth, (14:33) they use the Bible as a reference for illustrations, motivational sermons, (14:40) inspirational ideas, how to make a better whatever. (14:47) They allege the Bible is never to be used to judge or imply anyone else (14:55) is ever doing anything wrong for any reason.

(15:02) I've seen this myself many times. (15:08) There's no emphasis on absolute truth or biblical authority. (15:12) This aspect disguises itself.

(15:19) I'm going to use that word disguise because that's what it is. (15:22) It disguises itself as open-mindedness or properly claimed or described as relativism (15:31) where truth is subjective. (15:33) There is no standard, just personal opinion.

(15:37) Truth is reduced to what you believe because you just believe it. (15:43) I believe mustard is better than ketchup. (15:46) But there's somebody who would argue the opposite.

(15:50) Which one of us is right? (15:54) Those are subjective matters. (15:55) God's word is objective, which is the standard. (16:00) And the fourth point is that there's no exclusionary belief (16:06) that Christ alone is the only way to heaven.

(16:12) This point dresses itself with the word tolerance, (16:20) which leads us to universalism. (16:24) Everyone gets in. (16:27) Everyone gets in.

(16:29) We have groups that go by the name of Unitarianism, Unitarianists. (16:36) Oh yeah, everybody gets in. (16:40) Well, if that's the case, even Satan himself gets in.

(16:45) We'll spend eternity in paradise. (16:47) That is absolutely contrary to God's word. (16:54) So where modern Nicolaitanism prevails, (16:58) God's truth is often replaced with things like social justice, (17:07) an attempt to appeal to a mass audience (17:12) in order to make people feel good about themselves.

(17:17) It's nice to feel good about ourselves, (17:21) but only if we're doing what God has designed us to do. (17:26) Not what we want to do. (17:30) The true teaching of the Bible is diminished by the Nicolaitan views, (17:37) and even replaced by different variants (17:41) of watered-down,

politically correct instruction.

(17:47) And I am convinced that is why God hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (17:54) But let's not go beyond what God's word says. (18:00) God says he hated the deeds.

(18:06) He didn't hate the Nicolaitans, (18:10) but he hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (18:14) Make sure we have that distinction in our mind. (18:19) As we interact with people, (18:21) we may or may not believe everything that God's word says.

(18:27) And they may live out their lives, and they will live out their lives, (18:31) based upon what they believe. (18:32) That's why God's word says, (18:34) as a man thinks, so he goes. (18:36) Right out of Proverbs.

(18:40) If you really believe something, you'll act on it. (18:44) God's word says so. (18:45) And I've seen it.

(18:49) Revelation 2, verse 7, (18:52) that letter finishes with the phrase, with the words, (18:56) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (19:00) To him who overcomes, (19:03) I will give to eat from the tree of life, (19:09) which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (19:16) So, for those who hear, and those who overcome, (19:23) there is awesome news.

(19:27) You know, just like the bookends I mentioned earlier, (19:31) Genesis 2, 9, also mentions the tree of life. (19:40) And it says, (19:44) Out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at (19:49) and good for food, (19:51) with the tree of life also in the middle of the garden, (19:58) and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (20:00) And we know what happened with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

(20:09) Note that the fruit of the tree of life, (20:13) there's no mention of a forbiddenness. (20:18) Adam and Eve were free to choose. (20:23) But after the fall, only then, (20:27) and for Adam and Eve's ultimate benefit, (20:30) did God forbid them to eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

(20:37) In their condition of disobedience, they would have been eternally cut off, (20:43) had they been separated from God. (20:56) So now, why is the tree of life no longer guarded and off limits? (21:06) But it's made available once again. (21:09) Let me reread this in Revelation 1, 5. (21:15) And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, (21:19) the firstborn from the dead, (21:20) and the ruler over the kings of the earth, (21:24) to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

(21:33) And Revelation 2, 7, once again. (21:36) To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, (21:40) which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (21:47) And that phrase, or I want to emphasize that word.

(21:51) It says, to him who overcomes. (21:58) So the Nicolaitans are clearly not overcoming. (22:05) There's a stern warning to those in Ephesus, (22:09) but it's followed by encouragement.

(22:11) The encouragement has to do with Christ's affirmation (22:13) that the believers in Ephesus do hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (22:21) In order to understand what those specific deeds may have been a little better, (22:27) I'd like to read the second letter in Revelation 2. (22:33) And this is to the church in Pergamos. (22:39) And at least in my new King James Version Bible, (22:43) there's a header above this letter that says the compromising church.

(22:55) Starting with verse 12. (22:58) And to the angel of the church of Pergamos write, (23:01) these things says he who has the sharp two-edged sword. (23:07) I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is, (23:12) and you hold fast to my name.

(23:16) That sounds like a tough order. (23:18) You're surrounded by junk, people talking, (23:23) just trash sometimes about anything. (23:28) To stay faithful, to stay focused, (23:32) to stay in a mind that is good can be very difficult.

(23:42) Verse 13 again. (23:43) I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is, (23:47) and you hold fast to my name, (23:49) and did not deny my faith even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful martyr (23:56) who was killed among you where Satan dwells. (24:01) But I have a few things against you (24:05) because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam (24:09) who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, (24:14) to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

(24:20) Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, (24:28) which I hate. (24:32) Repent, or else I will come to you quickly (24:34) and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (24:41) So in these verses we see the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans (24:44) and some of them are the same as Balaam (24:51) when he taught Balak to entice Israel to sin back in Numbers 22.

(24:59) In that case, the treachery concerned two things. (25:03) Eating food sacrificed to idols (25:06) and engaging in acts that are sexually immoral. (25:10) These things are therefore connected with the evil teachings of the Nicolaitans.

(25:18) Now, it's not hard to notice that out of the four behaviors (25:26) forbidden to Gentiles back in Acts 15, and I'll read that right now. (25:32) Acts 15, 28 and 29. (25:35) For it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us (25:39) to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials (25:44) that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols (25:48) and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.

(25:54) If you keep yourself free from such things, you will do well, very well. (26:02) So it's not hard to notice that the four behaviors mentioned there, (26:10) two of them had to do with what was going on with the Nicolaitans, (26:15) with Balaam and Balak. (26:18) Eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality.

(26:27) It is important to see that this combination of food and sex-related offenses (26:34) were particularly important for the Jewish apostles and elders (26:39) to address in their letters to Gentile converts, to the Jewish Christ. (26:53) Now, finishing in Revelation 2, verses 4 through 7. (26:59) Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (27:09) Remember, therefore, where you have fallen.

(27:13) Repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly (27:18) and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent. (27:31) Unlike the period after the fall, and because of what Christ has now done for us, (27:38) the tree of life is made available for those that repent. (27:43) Choosing Jesus Christ, those that choose Jesus Christ can be washed (27:52) and are washed by His blood according to Jesus' perfect Word.

(27:59) According to His Word, not how we want to be. (28:06) Those will eat in the midst of the paradise of God. (28:12) That sounds great.

(28:16) Likewise, in accordance with God's perfect Word, those that refuse will not. (28:25) That's a true statement. (28:28) And that's a scary thought.

(28:34) So I entitled this sermon, Make Sure You're Barking Up the Right Tree. (28:41) Believe what is true, God's Word, the Bible, (28:46) and not what the modern Nicolaitans have to say about how things are. (28:56) I'd like to firmly encourage each of us, ongoing, to choose wisely.

(29:03) For Christians, by not forgetting our first love for Christ, (29:07) and for non-Christians, for those non-Christians that we run into (29:13) that may hear words like this, I urge them to obey God's Word as well as ourselves (29:26) so that they could enter into the forgiveness of sins through baptism, (29:31) by being washed clean in Christ's blood. (29:34) Because our eternal destiny and condition of where each and every one of us (29:39) will spend eternity will depend on exactly that. (29:44) Our own response, our own free will response, (29:49) with the love that God gives us, even when we were unlovable.

(29:56) Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for the day we have. (30:00) Amen.