

HANDLING THE DOCTRINAL CORRUPTION OF GOD'S PREDESTINATION

II. Christ's Prophetic Clarification Of The Corruption's Origins (Revelation 2:6, 14-15)

I. Introduction

- A. A huge debate afflicts evangelicals on the doctrines of election and predestination, with Augustinian-Calvinists saying God author's man's faith opposite Pelagian-Arminians who claim man helps save himself.
- B. Remarkably, as we will learn in this lesson series, both schools are impacted by errant beliefs, and Christ predicted this doctrinal corruption's origins in Revelation 2:6, 14-15. We view His prophetic overview of that corruption's historical origins in Church History for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Prophetic Clarification Of The Corruption's Origins, Revelation 2:6, 14-15.

- A. We before learned that Christ's messages to the 7 churches in Revelation chs. 2-3 address Christians in the 7 eras of Church History – Ephesus the Apostolic Church (Rev. 2:1-7; Acts 2 [Pentecost] to A. D. 100), Smyrna the Persecuted Church (Rev. 2:8-11; A. D. 64-311), Pergamum the Compromising Church (Rev. 2:12-17; A. D. 300-800), Thyatira the Apostatizing Church (Rev. 2:18-29; A. D. 800-1517), Sardis the Post-Reformation Church (Rev. 3:1-6; A. D. 17th & 18th centuries), Philadelphia the Fundamentalist Church (Rev. 3:7-13; A. D. 19th & 20th centuries) and Laodicea Today's Evangelical Church (Rev. 3:14-22; A. D. 1950 to the Rapture).
- B. Christ's message to the Pergamum Compromising Church at Rev. 2:14 **figuratively** critiqued the teaching of Balaam on food sacrificed to idols, and **one of its eventual products** was Pelagian-Arminianism: (1) Trying to unite his empire, Constantine in A. D. 319 exempted only the "Catholic" group of churches from taxes, so all other groups and pagan cults were pressured to enter this "Catholic" group. As they entered, they mingled errant views with "Catholic" beliefs. (Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides the Beast, 1994, p. 203-204, citing Will Durant, The Story of Civ., 1959, v. IV, p. 75; v. III, p. 657) (2) Paganism extols idolatrous human meritorious works (man as divine), so the "Catholic" monk Pelagius around A. D. 400 used pagan Stoicism to hold, "If I ought, I can" save myself, that "(a)fter baptism, man has full power and duty to keep the divine law" so that he provides a meritorious faith to God to be saved. (Williston Walker, A Hist. of the Christ. Ch., 1959, p. 168)
- C. Then, Christ's message to the Pergamum Compromising Church at Rev. 2:15 **figuratively** critiqued the **teaching** of the Nicolaitanes, what led to Augustinian-Calvinism (as follows): (1) The Nicolaitanes in Rev. 2:15 are identified by Christ's mention of their **deeds** back in the Ephesus Apostolic Church in Rev. 2:6. However, (a) it is hard to prove that such a cult existed in the Apostolic era (B. K. C., N. T., p. 934), and the etymological meaning of the term (*nikao + laos* = "conquering of the people"; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Rev. 2:6), if applied to the Apostolic era, fails to explain why Christ opposed its **teaching** in Rev. 2:15 two Church eras later in Augustine's time (circa A. D. 400). (b) We thus view "Nicolaitanes" as a code word meant to conceal the group's identify from John's Roman captors (Rev. 1:9) who would admire this group, so we identify the "conquering of the people" group as Roman **Platonists** (as follows): (i) The Platonists tried to get the state to replace individualism by the Roman aristocracy (G. Carruth, The Volume Library, 1996, vol. 22, p. 1406, 2025). (ii) They believed that the highest reality was the "Good" that transcended the lower reality of earthly objects and ideas. (Ibid., p. 2025; M. J. Vlach, Ph. D., "Platonism's Influence On Christian Eschatology," theologicalstudies.org) (c) The wicked **deeds** of Rev. 2:6 were then persecution deeds by pagan Platonists against Christians in the Apostolic era as Platonists tried to suppress individuals who did not yield to the aristocracy. (Z. P. E. B., v. Four, p. 411; Jean-Pierre Isbouts, The Biblical World: An Illus. Atlas, p. 326-327; Compton's Ency., 1973, v. 16, p. 265; Ibid., Fact-Index, s. v. "Porphyry") (2) Later, around A. D. 391, Bishop Augustine tried to make Christianity appeal to pagans by uniting Platonism with Christianity (Ibid., Carruth, p. 2026), identifying Plato's "Good" as **God**, what produced **idolatrous pantheism** where **all creation is God** (Ibid., p. 2025; B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Augustine, 1956 reprint [1974], p. 375), showing why Christ at Rev. 2:15 was opposed to the Nicolaitanes' **teaching** (as Augustine's **Neo-platonism**)! (3) Neo-platonism left man as an extension of God, making God author man's salvation faith! (Ibid., Walker, p. 165)

Lesson: Christ predicted that (a) the Pelagian-Arminian error would arise from the Church's compromise with Stoicism due to its compromise with paganism's idolatrous belief in human meritorious works, (b) and that the Augustinian-Calvinist error would arise from the Church's compromise with pagan Platonism via Augustine.

Application: May we avoid both Augustinian-Calvinist and Pelagian-Arminian beliefs and hold that man authors his own faith opposite Augustinian-Calvinism, but that God alone saves man opposite Pelagian-Arminianism.