

1. “Satan’s Throne” – why?

2. Altar to an “Unknown God” –

- Acts 17:23

3. Theater and the god Dionysus –

- Theater possibly built under Lysimachus or Eumenes I
- Steepest theater in the world.
- Seats 12,000.
- A removable stage for the Dionysian festival procession
- Thespis (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) created the first play
- Dithyramb – the story of Dionysus

4. Temple to Dionysus –

- It was integrated into the theater.
- The theater is a worship center for Dionysus.

5. Dionysus:

- god of the grape harvest, wine and winemaking, fertility, ritual madness, religious ecstasy, and theater
- god of resurrection, renewal, and transformation

<b>Myth of Dionysus</b>
- born of a union between god (Zeus) and a mortal woman (Semele)
- Hera killed Semele, but Dionysus was brought back to life (resurrection)
- learned the skills of the vine and winemaking/god of fermentation (transformation)

- god of epiphany (advent), and the people celebrate his “coming” that brings the grape
- god of resurrection
- god of the vine, grapes, wine, and fermentation
- god of transformation (grapes to wine, youth to adult, death to live)
- god of the party, drunkenness, ritual madness, ecstasy
- festival-goers would “transform” to be like the god by ingesting wine

7. Process of Transformation:

- Ingest the “spirit” of the god through drinking wine and eating meat of the sacred animal, the bull. The bull represented the flesh of Dionysus.
- Wine would transform you and fill you with the “spirit” of the god.
- Ephesians 6:18

8. **Dionysian Festival:**

- Pergamum was “neokoros” to Dionysus. Neokoros = keeper of the religion or temple keeper. The central location for Dionysus worship.
- Women are allowed to throw off all restraint/sexual freedom. Female followers call “Maenads.”
- Rooms for eating raw meat (flesh) and drinking blood to become “one” with the god Dionysus
- Festival is marked by “eating meat sacrificed to idols” and “sexual immorality” (Rev. 2: 14)
- John 6: 53-58

9. **Balaam and Balak:** (Numbers 22-24):

- Balak – King of Moab – wants to curse the Israelites
- Balaam – a prophet – can only speak God’s words and blesses the Israelites.
- Numbers 25 begins with the Israelite men engaging in “sexual immorality” and eating the “sacrifices to their gods.”
  - How did they get here? What happened?
  - The Bible does not tell us...
- An explanation – to “fill in the gaps” – called *midrash* – came about and is related in several ancient documents.
  - The historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 4, chap. 6) records an extended story of how Balaam “taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14).

10. **Nicolaitans?**

Nicolaitans	Balaam
<i>Niko</i> = victory <i>laos</i> = people	<i>Bala</i> = swallow, devour <i>am</i> = people
Victory over the people	Devourer of the people

11. **How did Balaam die?**

- Numbers 31:8

**References:**

Sir William Ramsay - *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 1904.  
 Colin J. Hemer - *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 1986.