

SPIRIT OF THE NICOLAITANS

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On May 19-21, Bob, Bobby Connor and myself were privileged to be involved in a prophetic conference in Shreveport, Louisiana. We had received an invitation approximately one year before but had not received permission from the Lord to go. In March of 2000, the Lord spoke to Bob through a vision directing us to Shreveport with His blessing and commissioning

Prior to the conference, the Holy Spirit counseled us to help the people in Shreveport to: (1) Comprehend where they have been; (2) thereby understanding where they presently are; (3) thus allowing them to more clearly recognize where they are headed. The Lord spoke it to Bobby in this fashion: Disclose to them their (1) Firm Foundation (2) Factual Faith (3) Fantastic Future. In a visitation prior to this conference, a huge angel appeared to Bob stating his name - "Winds of Change". This angelic being was accompanied with three other angels, we believe representing three churches and their leadership the Lord is desiring to join together in the bond of unity. This huge messenger stipulated he has now been released to bring the "winds of change" to the church aiding us in the transition imminently ahead. These winds will fill the sail of the church to transport her on this virtuous journey. Things are not going to continue as they have in the past within the church and the manner in which she is viewed.

Consequently, we perceived the Lord's intent to keep the conference focused on this subject, first helping the people to understand the spiritual heritage in their community and the blessings upon them because of the faithfulness of their spiritual fathers. We then established scripturally and historically this spiritual heritage. Accordingly, this helped them to understand the restoration of the desolate heritage that was to be released and the changes they face. The Lord wonderfully blessed these meetings, not only with the release of the Spirit of Truth but also the demonstration of power setting many of the captives free and stirring the gifts of God within them. The Holy Spirit helped us to identify the calling within many of the key leaders and the gifts imparted to accomplish those purposes.

At the time of the conference, we did not fully understand the strategic role Shreveport played during the late 40's and early 50's as many of their key leaders embraced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and did all they could to facilitate the revival throughout the nation. In fact, we later learned, the late Gordon Lindsey used Shreveport as a home base for the periodical *Voice Of Healing* to give testimony of the great miracles, signs and wonders accomplished by the Holy Spirit in their generation. The Lord clearly expressed He was desiring to restore that divine heritage and bring to life the seeds deposited through the spiritual fathers for this area. He also made it clear; this message was not strictly for Shreveport but also for the corporate body. We are to begin the process of "restoring the land and to make them inherit the desolate heritages". (Isaiah 49:8)

A few days following the end of this conference, the Lord gave Bob another vivid vision outlining the strategy of the enemy to counteract the spiritual deposit made in Shreveport. The Lord very specifically enumerated the manner in which this evil opposition intended to function and further made it clear this enemy will work not only in Shreveport but against all of God's "Cities of Refuge". This evil opposition has successfully undermined the working of the Holy Spirit over the centuries and must be overcome if we are to fulfill our Biblical mandate.

THE VISION

In the vision, Bob found himself and his wife Viola standing on an open plain in a barren, desert looking area. As he was inspecting the area in which he was standing, he observed a black snake approaching in the distance traveling towards a specific city. Bob knew intuitively that the snake was headed to Shreveport. However, upon initial observation he supposed the snake was a black snake and therefore harmless. In fact a black snake can actually be helpful in the extermination of rats, mice and other vermin. As the serpent came closer, Bob discovered a shepherd's staff in his hands, which he knew, represented spiritual authority to deal with the specific issues he was to confront. Suddenly, the serpent stopped in its approach to its target and displayed considerable surprise at being observed by Bob. This evil spirit has been able to keep itself hidden as it fulfilled its task of nullifying the grace of God released in certain areas]

Upon seeing Bob, the serpent raised its head and displayed that it was not in fact a black snake but a very deadly Cobra. As the cobra approached, Bob was able to keep it at bay with the shepherd's staff entrusted to him. When the serpent discovered it was unable to directly strike Bob, it then traveled toward Viola who was unarmed. This represented the enemy's intent to attack the church, as Viola was representative of the church body in this vision.

Bob found himself using the shepherd's staff to defend, not only himself but also Viola in this struggle to overcome this evil spirit. As he did so, the Lord spoke to him and told him the cobra represented the "spirit of the Nicolaitans". The spirit was coming in the form of "self appointed" leadership desiring to lord its authority over the church body injecting its venom causing destruction and death. Bob represented in this vision the "God appointed" leadership with the appropriate spiritual authority to fortify itself and the body of believers to whom they are assigned. In view of the fact that the setting for this vision was a hot dry place, it would seem to imply that this spirit will attempt to manifest itself in greater measure during the summer months of this year.

THE COBRA (SPIRIT OF THE NICOLAITANS)

As the battle continued, the Holy Spirit imparted to Bob the understanding that he was contesting an ancient religious spirit that had successfully undermined many purposes of God in the earth. It is the Nicolaitan spirit desiring to come between the church and the government of God established in the church with true spiritual authority. The “head” (leadership appointed by Christ) has the insight and understanding of God but can do nothing without the “hands and feet” provided by the body. Moreover, this evil spirit desires to masquerade as the true head of the body with counterfeit spiritual authority. Likewise, he cannot accomplish his purpose without the body functioning as the “hands and feet” putting into action his agenda. He will always attempt to divide true leadership from the body.

The term “Nicolaitans” is derived from two greek words...“Nikos” and “Laos”. Nikos is defined as: a conquest; victory; triumph; to conquer; and by implication, dominancy over the defeated. The word "nicao" literally means; to dominate-intimidate-manipulate. Additionally, the term "laos" means "the people" or the “laity.” Thus exacting the phrase “to conquer (dominate-intimidate-manipulate) the people (laity).

The Nicolaitan movement marked the beginning of an unrighteous priesthood in the church. The first item on this spirit’s agenda is to divide in order to conquer. The primary objective of the Nicolaitan spirit is the separation of the body from the Lord’s provision for leadership and the insight given through that spiritual authority. Normally, this is accomplished through accusation and persecution against the true anointed government established by the Holy Spirit. This form of opposition promotes the separation of people into the priest class and laity advocating the "us and them" philosophy. Further, there is no place in the Word where priests or ministers mediate between God and the people, nor is there a place where they are separated in their worship of the Lord. God desires all to love and serve Him together. Nicolaitanism destroys those precepts and instead separates the ministers from the people making the leaders overlords instead of servants. The Lord expressed His hatred for this type of administration and expected His people to do likewise. In other words, there are to be no intimidating, controlling, power-hungry officers in the Church Body exercising counterfeit authority over the “layman”. The scriptures plainly support a Priesthood of Believers, EACH being granted access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. “ **You are a CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, a PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**” (1 Pet 2:9)

The Early Church, beginning with the Ephesian Church Age, confronted this form of opposition following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. **Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists (anti-anointed) have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. (1 Jn 2:18)**

The admonition given to this church age in Rev 2:2-7, to return to her first love is also the predominant message in overcoming this adversary in our generation. The spirit of the Nicolaitans will always be accompanied by the spirit of apathy and lethargy. These will cool our affections toward the Lord and the passion with which we are to carry out His purposes. We must not allow ourselves to concentrate our focus on any form of human leadership. As we remain concentrated on Him we will then clearly discern and distinguish the unholy attributes of the “cobra” and the righteous attributes of Spirit appointed leadership.

The venom of the cobra infiltrates the body attacking the central nervous system causing deterioration in major body functions. The spirit of the Nicolaitans deteriorates the structure of the church body by attempting to create subordinates rather than brothers and sisters. A slave brought under this kind of authority is always distraught and nervous because of the great responsibility and expectations to please his “master.” This creates an irrational spirit or a neurotic mind-set rather than a spirit of peace. It promotes insecurity rather than abiding strength. Many Christians leave the church because of the wounds this creates and their feelings of insufficiency. The church has a large segment presently oppressed with a variety of nervous conditions because of the success of this evil spirit working in the body of Christ.

The Lord is issuing a clear announcement that a counterfeit, self-appointed leadership will always attempt to supersede the true leadership delegated to the church by the Holy Spirit. This “cobra” and its deadly venom represents the characteristics detected in this form of leadership. The Spirit-appointed leadership will be marked by attributes of servant-hood, humility and righteousness even as the Lord Himself perfectly exemplified these qualities in His unblemished example for all generations to follow.

FALSE APOSTLES

But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (2 Cor 11:12-13)

The sure word of God will destroy the endeavors of the cobra. There is a false Apostolic leadership that is coming to the Church preceding the release of the true. Those who are self-appointed apostles may embellish tremendous gifts of administration, organization, and expression, however, that in itself does not make one an apostle. **I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. (Col 2:4)**

The false leadership will always attempt to set itself above the body of Christ usurping a position in the church rightfully belonging to the Holy Spirit. The church is not a democracy-- (government by the people; rule of the majority) but a Theocracy--- (government of a state by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as

divinely guided). The “cobra” is attempting to separate true leadership from the body of Christ. If successful, the church is then faced with a form of self-appointed domination lording itself over the laity. The body is represented as the “hands and feet” working in harmony with leadership putting into action spiritual objectives. When directed by true Godly administration, the hands and feet can destroy the cobra and its evil agenda. Unfortunately, if the body is under the direction of the “spirit of Nicolaitans,” the same “hands and feet” can be used to undermine divine purposes and our prophetic destiny. The first defense against this spirit is returning to our first love and the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

The spirit of the Nicolaitans will target Christians who have lost their “first love”. In this place of vulnerability, the cobra will strike, injecting its poison subjecting the believer to its self-righteous agenda. Of course, it will always appear on the surface as harmless as did the black snake. Nonetheless, its true identity is that of a venomous, destructive, evil spirit. Very often, this form of leadership will utilize false accusation and innuendo to undermine the true leadership appointed within that body of believers. This will make the true government appear volatile and weak drawing the people to the false leadership anointed with the “spirit of the Nicolaitans”.

TRUE APOSTLESHIP

Paul confronted this as he was forced to give the signs of his apostleship... **The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Cor 12:12);**

“giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; {regarded} as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things. (2 Cor 6:3-10)

It is the impartation of supernatural spiritual authority from heaven that makes one an apostle according to Biblical standards. The new Testament contains numerous warnings against false leaders drawing the flock astray with counterfeit authority. The spirit of the Nicolaitans will not approach in the manner of an enemy, rather, veiled as righteous leadership promoting seemingly appropriate agendas. Moreover, the scriptures make it plain, God has never placed His church in the hands of an elected leadership which moves with political mindedness. He has placed His church in the care of God-ordained, Spirit-filled, Word-living men and women who lead the people with meekness and faithfulness...shepherds who willingly lay down their lives for the sheep and will only feed them the Spirit-breathed revelation of the Word.

The government of God appropriately placed in the body will be (1) Chosen by Him, (2) Ordained by Him, (3) Equipped by Him, (4) Sent by Him. **While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit...(Acts 13:2-4)**

True leadership will always do all in their power to point the church to the Lord and encourage them to cultivate deep and passionate roots with the Lord Himself. It will be their greatest desire to see others equal and even surpass the spiritual standards they enjoy themselves.

THE LORD IS BREAKING OUR BOW

“He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. Cease {striving} and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah. (Ps 46:9-11)

The bow is a symbol of might and strength... elements upon which we put our trust and confidence. A broken bow is an image of impotence or dependence. The Lord is “breaking our bow” and rendering useless the patterns and formulas we have relied upon in times past to advocate our own agendas and causes with which we have been striving in our own strength. **Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. (Jeremiah 49:35)** The bow was the national weapon of Elam, and therefore the "chief of their might"... that upon which their resilience in war depended.

The Lord breaks our bow because we have become dependent upon our own abilities to survive and even prosper. This form of self reliance can be extremely destructive leading into a form of ungodly self-righteousness. The sure word of God is coming forth, thereby negating the need for this form of the bow. Our “bows” are being broken so we can be reinforced with “The Lord’s Bow” and His strength for war. The Lord is determined to break our independent spirit making us totally dependent upon Him and the working of His Spirit in us. The Lord is “breaking our bows” and the things we have relegated confidence in so our trust would be wholly in Him. It is in our weakness that His strength is made manifest. **It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel... Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen." (Hosea 1:5,7)**

Furthermore, the enemy will often attempt to promote a spirit of self-preservation within the church causing division and confrontation between one segment of the body and another. The Lord is “breaking our bow” removing the

warlike mentality we have had towards one another promoted by this “Cobra spirit”. In this place of divine dependence we can “be still” and know that He is God.

The Lord is aching to initiate unity and fraternal affection between the various members of the body of Christ. In this sense the Lord is breaking our bow that has caused division and dissension within the church. If we allow ourselves to overly focus on the exploits of the enemy, it will serve as an object of distraction and division within the body. Likewise, if we unduly focus on the leadership sent to the church by the Holy Spirit, perversion will also be the end result. These bows are being destroyed as we are given the mandate to return to our first love and rivet our gaze solely upon the Lord. In so doing, righteous leadership will be recognized in its proper balance and harmony.

CONCLUSION

In Bob’s vision, at the end of the shepherd’s staff was a “snake hook” specifically designed for the handling of venomous serpents of this nature. The “snake hook” is divine love. An infectious, passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ surpassing all other wants and desires. In this position of intimacy and affection, our vision becomes clear and our heart sensitive to the unfruitful deeds of the cobra. We will then become leaders according to the directive of scripture: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. (1PE 5:2-4)**

The Ephesian Church was commended by the Lord for opposing the Nicolaitans. However, over the following generations this spirit grew in its power and influence. By the time of the Pergamum Church age, the Lord departed from commending the Body for separating from this evil influence to condemning the Body for its appeasement. The latter membership wasn’t fully convinced of the poisonous problem posed by this spirit and tolerated its existence within the church.

The Lord clearly spoke to us in Shreveport announcing, the “winds of change” are blowing. The initial wind for this began in Shreveport as a token. Likewise, the Lord is using this as a teaching tool to prepare and warn the body of this evil opposition and its historically successful strategy. We must overcome this enemy in our quest to become one with Him. There is a spiritual heritage resident in Shreveport that is representative of many such areas in which a tremendous deposit was made by our spiritual fathers. The Lord is desiring to first restore that heritage and overcome the enemy that brought those movements of the Spirit down.

One of the encouraging aspects of the vision was the response of Viola (representing the church), once she recognized the serpent to be a cobra. Her immediate response was to flee to (Bob) the leadership the Lord had established in the Church and the true spiritual authority given, rather than allowing the serpent to separate her from it.

The church must understand the vast distinction between the impartation of spiritual gifts and the delegation of spiritual authority. Many in the body of Christ have the mistaken notion that their powerful gifts of the spirit qualifies them to be recognized as Apostolic leadership. Simply possessing powerful spiritual gifts does not meet the Biblical qualification of Apostleship. It is in the Lord’s commissioning and the delegation of spiritual authority along with the impartation of mighty gifts of the spirit. Miracles, signs and wonders will always accompany true Apostolic leadership assisting in the pulling down of principalities and powers within churches or geographic regions establishing a spiritual foothold for the kingdom of heaven. The proper Scriptural view is that the church is like a body with diverse people each having different gifts from God, yet all are of significant importance to the well-being of the entire spiritual body. There is no hierarchy in the Body of Christ--all are called to work together in the ministry as one Body headed by Christ.

This adversary we have described is anti-anointed and diametrically opposed to the “winds of change” the Lord is desiring to bring to the Body of Christ. The miracle working “winds of change” are prepared to be released upon the Body of Christ to “fill her sails” to carry her on this spiritual journey and the restoration of her great heritage. The Lord hates the deeds and the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. The church of the Apostolic period recognized this fact and likewise hated them. If we are to be in conformity with Him, and return to our Apostolic heritage, we must comprehend this spiritual reality. Satan was very attentive to the things taking place in Shreveport and has already plotted his counter attack. This same strategy will be utilized corporately within the church as the Lord releases His Apostolic authority to her.

We must always remember, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. Moreover, our continual prayer should be for the grace to remain free ourselves from the subtle and cunning influence of this spirit and its deceptions. Each of us stands solely by the favor of God and we desperately need the abundant release of His greater grace...He gives His grace to the humble.

If we encounter some who have fallen prey to the spirit of the Nicolaitans, we should discern the spirit behind the individual and fervently pray for the human being from a heart of compassion and meekness. Perhaps the Lord will extend grace and grant repentance. If so, we will have won part of the battle and rescue some from the grasp of Satan.

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:24-26)