

Nicolaitans

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was mentioned in the Apocalypse of John to the churches of Pergamos and Ephesus of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2. It was a symbolic name of a party that represents the heirarchy of a ruling class over the rest of the people, developing a "pecking order" of fleshly leadership. Jesus hated this and warns the people to repent or else "I will come upon you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." The same warning illustration is applied to those that abused grace, which led to licentiousness from the example of Balaam, seducing Christians to fornication and tampering with idolatry. The individual overcomer is allowed to eat of the hidden manna and given a white stone with a new name written in it.

The Early church father Iranaeus, identified the Nicolaitans in his treatise "Against Heresies" in the second century as they who are an "offshoot of the knowledge which is falsely so-called," mentioning that they "lead lives of unrestrained indulgence." There is no absolute proof that the heretic Nicolas was the Deacon of the same name from Antioch of the seven deacons in the book of Acts, but Iranaeus supposed him to be so. Ignatius mentions the Nicolaitans also, so there was in fact a heretical group existing at that time. Nicolas the deacon was perhaps confused with another Nicolas, the bishop Nicolas of Samaria who was a heretic in the company of Simon Magus.

The root of the word Nicolaitans comes from Greek *nikao*, to conquer or overcome, and *laos*, which means people and which the word laity comes from. The two words together especially means the destruction of the people and refers to the earliest form of what we call a priestly order or clergy which later on in church history divided people and allowed for leadership other than those led by the spirit of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. A good translation of Nicolaitan would be "those who prevail over the people." This clerical system later developed into the papal hierarchy of priests and clergy over the laity. The Council of Trent stated, "If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters and ministers, let him be anathema." This very idea was taken over by the Protestants with their own corruption of church leadership. The Church of Ephesus was commended for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The wrong separation of the clergy from the laity is a great evil in God's sight and He hates the lust for religious power. There is an ungodly spiritual authority in the Church today, which is nothing more than the prideful spirit of control, manipulation, domination and intimidation and a rebellion of the rightful authority of God.

Faithful believers who have put on Christ Jesus, are all God's laity. Peter exhorted us to

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

Shepherds serve the sheep but the wolves that clothe themselves with so-called leadership and spiritual authority serve themselves, thinking that they serve God. In essence, this makes them false christs.

Immediately after John the revelator received the message to the seven churches, a door was opened in Heaven. The very first voice that John heard was as a trumpet talking with him which said, "Come hither and I will show you things, which must be hereafter." The trumpets will be sounding in these last days and this is the first one. John was given a vision of the very throne room of God, and the true pecking order, and the way in which that authority conducts itself. John is carried in the spirit to this place with the 7 Spirits of God. Round about this throne were 24 seats for 24 elders clothed in white with golden crowns upon their heads. Now we do not know who these elders are or how much power and authority they have, but if anyone has bragging rights for a high ministry they have attained, it would have to be these 24 elders. Every time they hear the 4 living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God, they fall down prostrate, worship Him and cast their crowns before the throne of God. Now if Jesus said that we should pray "let it be on earth as it is in heaven," no one has any business at all claiming a position over any other person as it always leads to abuse. God is now demanding that we throw down our crowns and gather around Him. Either we are obedient and the crowns are cast down or the Lord Himself will take them away.

If you want a spiritual crown throughout eternity you must first give up your authority and leadership at the foot of Jesus. In these things we must come out and separate from the Babylonian wolves of the apostasy in sheep's clothing that will not give up their faded crowns, and become holy if we would not partake of her plagues. This is the Bride of Christ, not the interlopers and usurpers called godly who would lead you astray into the mystery of iniquity through fleshly leadership. Jesus wants servants who will defer the authority and care for His sheep. Different people in the church have different gifts and ministries from God, but all are of equal importance to the well being of the body.

The Lord said to His disciples,

You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

This is the opposite of the wisdom of the world in regards to leadership and authority, the key here is dominion and sovereignty is the issue. The greatest among us are those that would be the servant or slave to the most of us with the authority to love, minister and serve, not to rule or govern those in the church. We are only beginning to see this and God is calling us out of Babylon. What we do see are those attempting to gain a false authority that puts them in a position to be served and recognized by the most. As true apostles and prophets are raised up, you will see men and women who are absolutely sold out to the concept of servanthood and being poured out in love upon their brothers and sisters.

There has been such a strong tendency for authority in any measure to be misused that I wonder if there is any way that it can be used righteously. Is this among the new thing that Jesus would have us learn? Are we singing a new song or the same old tired one that brought the church into the lack of knowledge? In the parable of Mark 13:34, "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." Jesus has gone and left us His authority? We are warned not to be found sleeping when the master comes back but we are also not to abuse the authority and mistreat the servants. Also in John 5, Jesus said that: "For as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself; and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." We are His brothers and we are to be the representatives of Christ, do we in truth have that authority?

We also know that we will have the authority in the kingdom, but is that the kingdom of now or the kingdom to come? Another parable of Luke 19 has us given the authority over cities, if we have been faithful, we will have authority. Saul (Paul) had authority before He received the Lord but that was temporal authority from the high priests. Once He became a Christian, he talked of himself being a minister and servant and even a slave. When Paul writes of the second coming in I Corinthians 15, he says that Jesus will "put down ALL rule and ALL authority and power." Are the true apostles in that day among those that will be "put down?" Paul asks us to pray for kings and those in authority, is he speaking of ministers? He does however tell Titus "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." What kind of authority is Paul speaking of here? Elders are to rule well, what does that mean? Is Paul teaching differently than Jesus? Paul speaks of us following him as he follows the Lord as if in leadership but he also tells us that it is his example that we are to follow. Can we have order without rule?

We do have the authority of Jesus but the problem of authority in the church can lead people down the wrong path if it used in the wrong way or used with pride and out of step with the Lord. Knowing the pitfalls of false authority can help us to recognize how the leadership of Jesus should be in all that we do. The more we grow together in humility, the more authority God will be giving us. God is truth and we are seekers of the truth. We do not concern ourselves with the truth that the world gives us but as obedient servants we decrease and allow the Lord to increase in each one of us. Every one of us should desire to operate in the prophetic and bear witness to each other. This is the way it should be.

As to spiritual authority, it is ours through faith, God has given us the authority over spiritual wickedness in high places, we have the authority to cast out demons, to bring down the high places and bring down strongholds. It is the same authority that Jesus had, He spoke as a man having authority but He spoke what the father spoke, He did not speak on His own authority while He was here on earth but what authority that His Father had given Him. We know that Jesus has shared His glory with us and that we have the authority to bless and rebuke in the name of Jesus, to intercede for others, to establish, to break down, to build up and to rule over the earth as our dominion. We have the power to stretch out our hands and allow the blood of Jesus to course through our veins and out of our bodies in spiritual power to heal and to deliver and to fill others with His spirit. We have the authority to have signs and wonders following, God speaks and lives through us through the death of His Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit. This is true authority but it is derived authority, not assumed.

We are nothing without Jesus, it is not our authority, dominion or glory, it is His. We have no righteousness in ourselves, we cannot save others and for sure we are not to rule over them in the church. And we are never called to lead apart from total submission to the Holy Spirit. He is our One and Only Commander and we are not part of a worldly army but a spiritual one that must march as One in unison, marching in one rank shoulder to shoulder behind Jesus, not one another. We should only submit to others that have the humility, love and servant attitude that we have been taught from the beginning. We are to be restored to the original purity of the early church. How can we submit to each other as in the Lord if we differentiate between leaders and followers among us? To be one body, we must submit to One Head. Let the fragments fall where they may but they will be devoured by the dogs. Jesus want us to be perfect, without spot or wrinkle and ready to meet Him in the air.

The restoration of the temple includes the rebuilding of the walls of the New Jerusalem and we have all seen pretended watchmen of the walls that think they have a ministry of tearing people in the church down instead of building us up. Be strong in the spirit, accept the authority yourselves and submit one to another. You need to know that Jesus wants your eyes focused on His leadership and for us not to put our confidence in man. You need to know that Jesus is the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne and He is the One that shall feed us, and lead us unto living aters. What could be the motivation that any one of us would follow any other than Jesus unless you don't have the faith to know that He is

among us when we gather together. The sons of God are not the ones that are being led by men but rather the ones led by the Spirit of God.

Of course there is leadership in the church. But it is only true leadership if it is Jesus living through us. More than causing division, the problem with the question of authority has caused mass confusion. The problem is in the fleshly leadership that has manipulated, controlled and dominated the church to bring it into the mess that it is in and saturated it with the traditions of men and the doctrines of demons. Wanting to be a leader in the church is a hard bad habit to break. This is the Nicolaitan spirit. It injures and alienates the same ones that the church was supposed to have served and ministered to, not ruled over. The watchword is pride, the power of the flesh taking control instead of the power of the Holy Ghost.

To have leadership in the church that does not take into account the service and ministration necessary to keep it pure is to allow pride to creep in, corrupt it and leave us in confusion. If Jesus is truly operating His will through us, then He is the leader and still the only leader, we are only operating according to His purpose and He is living His leadership through us through our submissive service and ministration to others. This is why we are to submit to each other, because He is living His shared leadership through us - but be careful, not all are following Him in the spirit. To even call yourSELF a leader is to act in the flesh. If Jesus has called you to a leadership position, keep it to yourself and trust Him enough to act through you and He will put you where He wants you to be. Do not seek to promote yourself or your ministry but rather act upon the spirit and allow others to do the same in order for that position to be manifested. If God is truly speaking and acting through you then His sheep will hear His voice and the words and actions will speak for themselves.

Jesus is still the only leader. For Jesus to share that leadership with us is to give us the responsibility to continue in that spiritual service to the point that we do not seek titles, exalt ourselves, lord it over others, act in pride, operate in the flesh or any such thing. To be in a leadership position **REQUIRES** you to operate totally in the spirit. And it is shared leadership only among us that are living in the spirit, there are no chiefs here, no rulers outside of that spiritual authority, no pecking order; we are to submit to each other and not to seek others to submit to us. We must have the mind that Jesus had to be effective.

Anyone that is not able to present himself in the church as "just a servant" has no business being a leader at all. Certainly, it typifies a false leader. Lordship over others that you have obtained yourself or through others irregardless of a true calling and ministration is a perfect example of the type of leadership that has prevailed in the church through the traditions of men and that we must overcome. Jesus has made it clear to us by His own example but not clear enough to those that lean upon their own understanding and seek their own glory and honor. Now it becomes not a problem of submitting to each other but rather the lack of submission to the authority of Jesus and His word, becoming the type of authority that we must reject. For those that will submit themselves to the authority of others without first submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ is in real danger. Many authoritarian false prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers have invaded the church, increasing in these last days and many souls have submitted to the false leadership that Jesus has not personally set up. This false authority is infiltrating the five-fold ministry and drawing weak-spirited and prideful people among them. Even though the apostles are considered first in the list of spiritual gifts, this does not make them any more than any other gifted persons in the body or others to be of any less importance or have less authority. Jesus' words have not changed, it is still He that does His work through us, we are still to deny ourselves and allow Jesus to live through us and it is still the least among us that will be the greatest.

The Nicolaitan teachers will try to convince you that grace comes from the church but you need to know brothers and sisters that it comes from God. They will also try to tell you that salvation comes through the church. Do not believe it, salvation comes from the Son of God who died for us on the cross to deliver us from the traditions of men. The rock that the church is built upon is the faith that we have in the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the Living God that was promised to the world. We are justified by faith, not by the church. The church cannot save you, only Jesus can save you. We are the church and the witness to salvation, the fellowship of the household of faith, the sower of the seed, it is God that gives the increase and the One that chooses us for salvation. We must not submit to the fleshly leadership of the church, we are the church, subject to each other in love as to the Lord and it is only the godly remnant that Jesus will reveal Himself in these last days, those totally committed to Him, holy and filled with the spirit and recognized by our love.

Those in the New Testament never confirmed or bestowed leadership, not once. In all cases, Jesus was the true leader and His true followers were given ministerial functions as servants in the church, never leadership positions outside of the spirit led submission to Jesus and each other. Leadership may have been inferred through the authority that we have in Jesus such as the rulership mentioned by Paul, but never once was it ever referred to or conferred. There were no clergy as distinguished from laity. All the *laoi* of Christ were God's lot, inheritance, or clergy. The elders and overseers among them were divinely inspired and endowed "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." Too many in leadership positions in the church today are acting in the flesh according to the pride of their calling. It is important that we not step out of Gods will into any kind of presumption through leadership. Many

abuse the power and use it according to their spiritual pride and God is now calling them to change their way of thinking or He will personally come against them.

If we are to meet Jesus as His Bride, we need to have a mind-set that we only want to follow the Bridegroom. The best that we can do to get others into the kingdom is to point them to our leader Jesus Christ. The carnal mind will never understand what we are trying to do here. Jeremiah prophesies of the last days,

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means and my people love to have it so: and what will you do in the end thereof?

This is our last chance to get it right, many are called but few are chosen.

We have those called to leadership conferences, youth leaders, apostolic leadership, church leaders and all kind of leaders. Much of it is good but if the servant's attitude is not stressed early on, it is not a given that Jesus is Lord. We must reject the pecking order every single time or suffer rebuke and be cut off. If we are to have true restoration, we need to restore the Headship of Christ with us as the Body with different members and reject fleshly leadership. True authority speaks for itself. As Paul would say, "those that think they are somewhat add nothing." Jesus is sending forth His apostles. Paul says that we should all desire to prophesy allowing the Lord to speak through us. The great Commission gives us the mandate to proclaim the good news and do the work of an evangelist and we should all guide and pastor the sheep, teaching them the right way to go. No lords among us but Jesus.

but be filled with the spirit... submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

There is in the world today a tremendous cry from the people of God, a travail coming forth touching the very heart of God. The shepherds are not leading the sheep into this outpouring so the people are entering in spite of the restraint that the shepherds are trying to put on them. The reason that the "leaders" do not want the Presence of the Lord in the midst of the congregation is that they will have to relinquish their crowns. The blind leading the blind have for too long demanded to have praises sung to them. Now is the time that if a man is a prophet he should be saying like Zechariah, "I am no prophet, rather a tiller of the ground."

The whirlwind of the Lord is going forth in fury. This is God's truth we speak and He is pronouncing judgment on the church age preachers as we enter the kingdom age. The Lord is about to bring an everlasting reproach and perpetual shame on those who will not come to one accord. If church leaders do not lay down their crowns before Jesus as Lord, they will not be singing the praises of a new song with us but weeping alone between the porch and the altar. We as ministers are given to humanity as a sacrifice offering. Just as Jesus laid His life down for the brethren, we are to lay our own lives down. Jesus did not come to lord it over humanity, but to lay His life down for it; we should do the same. [17, 294, 330, 339, 18, 101, Acts 6, Mark 10, Revelation 3, 4, Zechariah 13, Ephesian 4, John 15, Jeremiah 5, Galatians 2. The Nicolaitans and the issue of leadership and authority was an item of the latter rain discussion list.]