

The Anti-Christ Spirit

By Michael Clark

Why does God hate it so when men exalt themselves over His sheep? Because it is modeled after the works of Satan! Multiple eldership is God's model for leadership in both the Old and New Testament. He seeks a multitude of godly councilors who speak His voice to lead his people in each gathering to Jesus.

As we approach the end of the age we are seeing Satan take ever bolder steps to be the "lord of all". He is trying to solidify his stranglehold on all of God's creation and the Church is not exempt.

Most Christians and their leaders are looking across the ocean to see a man called the Antichrist sit himself down on a throne in a new temple to be built in Jerusalem. I maintain that this has already happened in the true temple of God. The antichrist is right in our midst and many of us are totally blind to his presence. Paul the apostle warned the infant Church what to expect of Satan when he wrote,

...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4, NKJV)

I have one question. Who according to the New Testament is the temple of God? Doesn't the Word say that the Church is God's temple?

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16, NKJV)

Could it be that the antichrist has already found his throne in some of our hearts? According to the apostle John, the antichrist is already setting up house right in the Church.

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us,

they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19, NKJV)

Just as Tobiah set up house in the temple store rooms in Nehemiah's day (see Neh. 13: 7-9) and thereby displaced the Levitical priesthood of its source of supply, so is this antichrist spirit stealing from God's holy priesthood, the Church, and displacing it today. As John said, "They went out from us... that none of them were of us." When we think of ourselves as being just a little bit better than the rest of the saints, we go out from them in spirit and set ourselves apart.

We need not to be looking for it to happen in Jerusalem. We need to be looking in our own congregations and in our hearts. Let me enlarge on this theme and maybe you, too, will see the antichrist at work in your fellowship.

---The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans---

In the Revelation, chapter two, Jesus is hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans and commending the church for doing the same. If Jesus hates something it must really be bad! It is interesting to read today's church commentaries on this subject. Boy, do they sashay around this one!

Names in the Bible are meaningful. When a man or woman of God had a name that didn't describe them as God saw them, God would change that person's name so that it matched how He saw them. For instance, Abram was changed to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Simon was changed to Peter and Saul to Paul.

For me, the easiest way to find out what that doctrine is when the Bible doesn't outwardly define it, is to simply break down the meaning of the name:

3531 Nikolaites {nik-ol-ah-ee'-tace}
 from 3532;; n pr m
 Nicolaitan = "destruction of people"

Or more explicitly:

3532 Nikolaos {nik-ol'-ah-os}
 from 3534 and 2994;; n pr m

3534 nikos {nee'-kos}

from 3529; TDNT - 4:942,634; n n

- 1) victory
- 2) to utterly vanquish

and 2994 which is from:

2992 laos {lah-os'}

apparently a primary word; TDNT - 4:29,499; n m

- 1) a people, people group, tribe, nation, all those who are of the same stock and language
- 2) of a great part of the population gathered together anywhere

We get the word "laity" from the Latin form of this word. By the way, according to my dictionary, the meaning of LAITY: "THOSE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF A CHURCH BUT ARE NOT ORDAINED FOR RELIGIOUS WORK." So much for the members of Christ being a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9)!

I believe that the doctrine of clergy / laity separation is a doctrine of demons which has demobilized the Church and sapped its power. It is so good to see the saints exercising their priesthood through the internet with web sites and on talk lists, and in house gatherings, encouraging one another to do the work of the ministry. For so long we who are Christ's have been controlled and muzzled by he who has the pulpit.

In other words a Nicolaitan is one who "utterly vanquishes the people who gather together" or "UTTERLY CONQUERS THE CONGREGATION." Many congregations in America and the "free world" are made up of a beaten down group of people. The one who rules over them is usually the one who can out-argue and intimidate everyone else in the group. And for every one of these conquering church leaders there is a following who desires to have a king over them and in so doing rejects the lordship of Jesus himself. The prophet Samuel wrote of this same situation in His day.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Samuel 8:4-7, NKJV)

Jeremiah wrote of this usurping of God's leading of the congregation in his day by false prophets and false priests.

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power, and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end? (Jeremiah 5:31, NKJV)

"But what will YOU DO in the end?" If it was like this in Jeremiah's day, how much more true it is in this last hour of the "Church age."

--Loving the Preeminence--

There is another reference in the New Testament to this tendency which God hates among church leaders. John wrote in his third epistle:

I wrote to the church, but DIOTREPES, WHO LOVES TO HAVE THE PREEMINENCE among them, does not receive us. (3 John 1:9, NKJV)

The word "preeminence" is from the Greek word:

5383 philoproteuo {fil-op-rote-yoo'-o} from a compound of 5384 and 4413; to aspire to preeminence, TO DESIRE TO BE FIRST

This spirit of "ME FIRST" has a choke hold on most of the Church today and Jesus still hates it! Pastors are clamoring for control over the people and people are clamoring to gain power and preeminence through their ministries over one another. People are even clamoring for money and power under this false "prosperity doctrine."

When the disciples were vying for preeminence over each other at the last supper, Jesus addressed their sin by showing himself to be of an opposite spirit. He took the position of the lowest slave and washed their feet.

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles EXERCISE LORDSHIP over them, and those who EXERCISE AUTHORITY over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves." (Luke 22:24-27, NKJV)

The Greek word for the phrase "exercise lordship" in verse 25 is:

2961 kurieuo {ko-ree-yoo'-o} 1) to be lord of, to rule, have dominion over 2) of things and forces 2a) to exercise influence upon, TO HAVE POWER OVER

The word translated as "exercise authority" in this verse is:

1850 exousiazo {ex-oo-see-ad'-zo} 1) to have power or authority, use power 1a) TO BE MASTER OF ANY ONE, EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER ONE 1b) to be master of the body 1b1) TO HAVE FULL AND ENTIRE AUTHORITY OVER THE BODY 1b2) to hold the body subject to one's will 1c) to be brought under the power of anyone

When a person uses fleshly, soulish power "to have full and entire authority over the body," Jesus' Church, it is a sin against the Church and against Christ. Yet, this is a common attitude of many in the Church today! GOD HATES IT!!!

--The Antichrist Spirit Has Its Roots in Satan Himself--

Why does God hate it so when men exalt themselves over His sheep? Because it is modeled after the works of Satan! Multiple eldership is God's model for leadership in both the Old and New Testament. He seeks a multitude of godly councilors who speak His voice to lead his people in each gathering to Jesus. Even the Hebrew Kings, who were a leadership model not of God's doing, had multiple councilors that they listened to and confided in.

I would like you to consider this passage which shows Satan's mode of leadership. It is a real eye opener when used to see how the desire for preeminence operates in our Church gatherings.

HELL FROM BENEATH IS EXCITED ABOUT YOU, TO MEET YOU AT YOUR COMING; It stirs up the dead for you, ALL THE CHIEF ONES OF THE EARTH; IT HAS RAISED UP FROM THEIR THRONES ALL THE KINGS OF THE NATIONS. They all shall speak and say to you: "Have you also become as weak as we? HAVE YOU BECOME LIKE US? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you."

HOW YOU ARE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O LUCIFER, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, YOU WHO WEAKENED THE NATIONS! FOR YOU HAVE SAID IN YOUR HEART: "I WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN, I WILL EXALT MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD; I WILL ALSO SIT ON THE MOUNT OF THE CONGREGATION ON THE FARTHEST SIDES OF THE NORTH; I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS, I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH."

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, WHO DID NOT OPEN THE HOUSE OF HIS PRISONERS?"

(Isaiah 14:9-17)

In verse nine above, all of the kings of the earth are excited about Lucifer. He is the one who lords over the people as they do. And in verse ten these kings admit that Lucifer and they are alike! In verse twelve Lucifer is said to be the one who "weakened the nations." The Hebrew word for nations here is "gowy" and it is the counterpart to the Greek "lao" or THE PEOPLE. Lucifer uses preeminent leaders to weaken the people of God as well as the nations.

Is it any wonder that the early Church was admired, feared, and accused of "turning the world upside down" and that today's church is mocked and counted as irrelevant in our society? The early church had multiple godly men and women in each location ministering in the Spirit and multiple elders, but today's modern churches almost always have a tight fisted all controlling "pastor" who controls all ministry and rules over all. And by the way, there is no such thing as a "senior elder" in the Bible.

In verse 13 the phrase "the farthest sides of the north" refers to the utmost reaches of Zion, the true spiritual people of God, the city of God, the New Jerusalem (Ps 48:1,2). The heart of Lucifer is to rule over all of God's people, to "sit on the mount

of the congregation," to rule over all of God's holy angels, and to be elevated to the position of God Himself. This is the spirit of antichrist.

ANTICHRIST MEANS not only against Christ, but IN THE PLACE OF CHRIST. Those who exalt themselves above God's people are operating in the antichrist spirit. Let's look at the meaning of antichrist:

500 antichristos {an-tee'-khris-tos} from 473 and 5547; TDNT - 9:493,1322; n m 1) the adversary of the Messiah

473 anti {an-tee'} 1) over against, opposite to, BEFORE 2) for, INSTEAD OF, IN PLACE OF (something)

5547 Christos {khris-tos'} Christ = "anointed" 1) Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God 2) anointed

Literally antichrist means "against Christ" or "INSTEAD OF CHRIST" and "BEFORE CHRIST"... The Antichrist is the king of the "thieves and robbers!"

--The Good Shepherd--

Jesus warned that "thieves and robbers" would come in among His flock to kill and destroy them. In John 10 He describes himself the "Good Shepherd," who must contend with thieves and robbers in His flock.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, HE WHO DOES NOT ENTER THE SHEEPFOLD BY THE DOOR, BUT CLIMBS UP SOME OTHER WAY, THE SAME IS A THIEF AND A ROBBER. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and THE SHEEP HEAR HIS VOICE; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, HE GOES BEFORE THEM; and THE SHEEP FOLLOW HIM, FOR THEY KNOW HIS VOICE. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ALL WHO EVER CAME BEFORE ME ARE THIEVES AND ROBBERS, but the sheep did not hear them.

For centuries the church had no seminaries. Men and women who were called into the "five fold" ministries answered the call of Jesus and obeyed, leading others by His Spirit. Today if you "put the money down," you can "climb up some other way" (vs.1), and ply your trade as a thief and a robber and a false shepherd in the flock of God without entering through the Door of the sheep fold, Jesus. I am not saying that everyone who goes to seminary is a "thief and a robber." All I am saying is that you can call yourself, or be called by a man and never have a shepherd's call from Jesus on your life. Men who become ministers in the Church without God raising them up, do great damage to the flock of Christ by placing themselves before (in preeminence) Him.

The Greek word translated "before" in verse eight of John ten is "pro". It can mean "before" chronologically or "before" positionally (See Acts 5:23). I was told once in a Sunday school class that Jesus is saying, here in John ten, that every Old Testament person whether good king or bad, every false prophet or true, all the patriarchs of Israel, Moses, Noah , Enoch and all of the righteous ones were thieves and robber because they were ministering before Jesus came. What RUBBISH!!!

In this verse the word "ever" was added by the translators and the word "came" is "come" in the original. It more correctly should read, "ALL WHO COME BEFORE ME ARE THIEVES AND ROBBERS." When a minister uses his gift to place himself in preeminence over the people, instead of connecting the people directly to Jesus, he is stealing attention to himself and away from Jesus and puts himself before Christ. Just like the satanic model, he has become a thief and a robber. As Paul told Timothy, "[For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.](#)" (1 Timothy 2:5, NKJV)

This displacing of Jesus can happen to a church leader unwittingly. As one brother who was a pastor recently wrote:

"I have seen so many well meaning pastors, elders and counselors who are so eager to tell, or give, people the answers to their questions and problems. Even when they are doing a very good job, giving Godly counsel, the result can be making the person dependent on them for help, instead of Jesus. It is harder, but necessary, to train the person to "look to Jesus". Of course, a pastor humble enough to do that, probably wouldn't gather much of a following."

Yes, he wouldn't "gather much of a following" to himself, but might be very instrumental in gathering a following to Jesus. I have always liked a story that Watchman Nee of China told about one of his new converts and the man's wife:

"Late one summer I stayed at a hill resort in the home of a mechanic and his wife, both of whom it was my joy to lead to a simple faith in the Savior. When the time came for me to return to Shanghai, I left with them a Bible.

"During the winter the man was in the habit of taking alcohol with his meals, sometimes to excess. Soon, with the return of the cold weather, the wine reappeared on the table, and, as had now become his custom, he bowed his head to give thanks for the meal. But today no words would come! After one or two vain attempts he turned to his wife. "What is wrong?" he asked. "Why can not we pray today?" The wife took the Bible, but turned the pages in vain, seeking light on the subject. They could find no explanation, and I was far away. "Just drink your wine," she said; but no, he knew he must give thanks, and could not. "Take it away," he exclaimed at length; and then together they asked a blessing on the meal.

"When eventually the man was able to visit Shanghai he told me the story. Using an expression familiar in Chinese: "Brother Nee," he said, "Resident Boss wouldn't let me have that drink!" "Very good," I replied. "You always listen to Resident Boss!" (Nee, Watchman. "A Table in the Wilderness." Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978. pp February 29 [a daily devotional]).

If we are truly born from above, we have the "Resident Boss" living inside us and we do not need the religious legal system to keep us in check. He draws us to do what is right with cords of love, not with a straight jacket of legalism. The apostle John wrote, "[But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth \(I John 2:20\).](#)"

["I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. \(Ezekiel 36:27, NKJV\).](#)

Back in John chapter 10, Jesus goes on to warn us of the difference between His leadership and that of the hireling.

[9"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and WILL GO IN AND OUT AND FIND PASTURE. THE THIEF DOES NOT COME EXCEPT TO STEAL,](#)

AND TO KILL, AND TO DESTROY. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. BUT A HIRELING, HE WHO IS NOT THE SHEPHERD, ONE WHO DOES NOT OWN THE SHEEP, SEES THE WOLF COMING AND LEAVES THE SHEEP AND FLEES; AND THE WOLF CATCHES THE SHEEP AND SCATTERS THEM. THE HIRELING FLEES BECAUSE HE IS A HIRELING AND DOES NOT CARE ABOUT THE SHEEP.

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:9-15, NKJV)

With today's money driven ministries in the church, "If you wanna play, you gotta pay!" "Buy my tapes!" "Buy my books." Many of these ministries will not tend to or feed the sheep unless you pay them a salary. More and more charges are being levied at the door for "special meetings" and conferences. Many of these ministries must have money up front or they won't perform. If their salary is decreased or, God forbid [I jest!], taken away, they are gone off to greener pastures. When the wolf is at the door, the hireling scatters!

When the wolf is at the door of a sheep in today's Americanized churches, too bad! You can hardly pry a nickel out of their hands to help out a poor sheep in his financial need! It is far different in this day when the money goes into the leaders pocket and pockets of the bankers who hold the paper on the church building, instead of being laid at their feet and made easily accessible for all who are in need (See Acts 4:34,35). But that is another subject.

One other thing, in verse nine above. Notice that Jesus not only lets them come into the sheep fold, but they are free to COME IN AND GO OUT to find pasture. I have heard church leaders warn that if you go to anywhere other than their church, you will not be safe! A sheep fold is not where sheep eat. It is a barren protected defensive type of place where they sleep at night. The good shepherd does not exercise control over them, but lets them "come in and go out" to find pasture, and only Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Well, I have much more I could write to you on where it's NOT AT. But I would rather encourage the Body of Christ to seek to edify one another through the

working in their lives of the Holy Spirit. And if you must lead, lead the flock to Jesus with an open hand and do not take any glory to yourself that would draw their attention away from the One who paid the price to be their Shepherd. As Jesus warned,

When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:8-11, NKJV)

Like the Greek seekers told the disciple, "SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS!" (John 12:21). May we all seek Him and accept no other substitutes.

(Note: All caps were added in Bible texts for emphasis)