

Straight Talk on the Nicolaitanes

#42

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*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
Rev. 2:6*

Many people are mystified by the above passage, and the handful of other verses (all in Revelations) that mention the Nicolaitans or Nicolaitanes (depending on how the word is rendered in the text). Yet this is one of the most critical of all teachings in the Bible. How one understands the meaning of the Nicolaitan heresy makes a major difference in one's view of oneself and the Body of Messiah.

A common, but not very credible explanation is that these were followers of a supposedly renegade deacon named Nicolas, as found in Acts 6:5:

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch [emphasis added] :

This subtle error serves to cut both ways, both of which help the devil. First of all, it draws attention away from what I, and many other Bible students, believe to be the true meaning of the term "Nicolaitans." Secondly, it is a slander on the city of Antioch.

Many of you may know that there is a concept in Bible interpretation called "the law of first mention." This states that very often the way a word is used first in the Scriptures will often determine its most important meaning throughout the text.

By saying that the first mention of the city of Antioch in the Bible was related to some evil heretic, Antioch itself is slandered. Of course, the "Antiochian" text of the Bible is (in part) the source of the Authorized Version, so you get a "two for one."

Getting to the Bottom of Things

In all fairness, the above is not a very popular position, and I believe this idea is waning. Most Bible studies and scholars of which I am aware favor the explanation that I am about to give:

The term "Nicolaitanes" is actually a compound of two Greek words, NIKOS and LAOS. The former means conqueror or conquest (as in Nike, the Greek goddess of victory). The second word, *laos*, means "the common people" (as in our word "laity" or "layman").

Thus, it does not take rocket science to discern that the Nicolaitan belief is the idea of someone conquering or "lording it over" the laity.

Please understand, the concept of a "layman" or "lay-woman" does not even *exist* in the New Testament. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9:

*But ye are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Peter was not writing here to some priestly class. He was *writing*, "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," (1 Pet. 1:1) In other words, he was writing to those who would today be called lay-people. Everyone who is a Born Again follower of Messiah Yah'shua is a member of "**the priestly caste.**" That is a Scriptural fact!

Profession of Faith

This is not to say that there are not congregation leaders, teachers, apostles, evangelists, etc. But there really is no idea of people in the New Testament church being just "pew-potatoes!" People were expected to function in ministries of their own within the larger ministry of the local congregation.

Of course, today when we use the word "layman" in common parlance, it also means someone who is not skilled or educated in a certain specialty or profession. For example, we use dichotomies like layman/physician or layman/attorney. That is fine, as far as it goes.

But the difference is that in the Body of Messiah, we should all be (to a greater or lesser degree) "experts" in the tools of our profession (i.e., prayer, the Bible, witnessing, etc.). Why do you think that we call it having a "profession of faith?"

The problem is that nearly 2,000 years of **Nicolaitan** nonsense has turned much of Christianity into a "spectator sport." The pastor becomes the "paid professional" and we just sit in the pews and get spoon-fed teaching every week (or even three times a week).

Now certainly, there are *many* exceptions to this rule. There are many vibrant Believers who have gone out and started "un-official" ministries of their own. Many of these sometimes blossom into full-blown ministries (ours did). Whether they are soul winning, feeding the poor, helping the elderly, or even praying for people to be set free from demonic oppression, such people are the ones who often make our Faith "work."

Obviously, pastors (or even associate pastors) cannot do everything. They would *burn out* trying to do so. That is why Yah'shua designed His Body so that all members would function in some capacity. Think of what would happen if only one percent of the cells of *your* body were doing their job!! You would be a mess! You probably would not even be alive! Yet that is

evidently how a lot of Believers think that their churches should function.

Everyone may not become evangelists, or deliverance ministers or mighty intercessors; but they can do something to help out. Right now, the standard maxim is that in any congregation, 90% of the people do 10% of the work and 10% of the people do 90% of the work, just like in non-Christian groups, secular clubs or societies. (See note 1)

Pulpit Percolation

Please, I am *not* writing this to make “lay people” feel guilty! YHWH knows there is enough of that already. Much of this is not so much the fault of the people in the pews as it is the way that they are being taught. There are psychological issues as well.

Many people that get into the “pastorate” are folks that like taking care of others. They are care givers and people-pleasers. That is *not* always the best reason to get into the ministry, but there you have it. A lot of them also tend to be perfectionists and/or compulsive. That means that they have trouble delegating tasks to others. Deep down inside, they doubt anyone else could do the job as well as they do. (I am preaching to myself here, also!)

Thus, a lot of professional ministers have a variable amount of “Messiah complex.” Even though they know, intellectually, that Yah’shua saves and sets people free; they still deep down inside think *they* have to do it. Therefore, they do not tend to encourage the folks in the pews to get up and start doing stuff.

Certainly, there are a **great** many exceptions to this generalization. (See note 2) I think things seem to have gotten better in the past 10-15 years or so. More and more pastors are encouraging their congregation to do more. But much of the problem can be found in the way the clergy themselves have been trained in seminary or Bible school. Just simply the fact that they have gone to seminary and the typical congregation member has not encourages a certain kind of thinking.

"Men of High Degree"

Of course, the clergy IS a professional class; just like doctors or lawyers (though most of them do not get paid as much). Most clergy, especially in the older denominations, are expected to have Bible college degrees or even advanced degrees. However, the problem is that having a lot of education does **not** guarantee that you will be a spiritual giant.

To the contrary, in some denominations, surveys have shown that the more degrees a clergy-member has, the less likely he or she is to be really doctrinally solid. The same thing happened to me in seminary. (See note 3) My professors did their level best to talk me out of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the Ascension. Oddly enough, in spite of the fact that I was a Satanist at the time, my faith in those three doctrines survived intact. (See note 4) Of course, I have always been strong-willed in my opinions.

If pastors are encouraged by their training to see themselves as professional experts, instead of humble servants, it might be hard for them to think that they can allow “lay-people” to do some of the same things that they do. In the back of their minds, it might seem like a doctor allowing a lay-person to set a broken bone.

There is an old saying that *“The pew can never rise higher than the pulpit.”* If the pastor does not encourage his flock gently to go out and pray for people to be healed, or to do other kinds of ministry, most will probably not do it on their own. This is especially the case if the pastor seems to be a high-octane whiz-kid with a doctoral degree.

A quality that I have seen which works best in most pastors that DO encourage the people to get highly involved is a more humble, if not “folksy” quality. Also, it is great if pastors teach (or arrange to have others teach) how to do various ministry tasks. That would be ideal.

Constantinian Culture

There is, of course, another side to this coin. I do not mean to sound as if I am coming down hard on pastors. They are partially victims of their own professional education and even more, they are victims of the culture. But there is also a lot of blame to be placed on the people of “the flock.”

Sad to say, just getting Born Again does not automatically change every aspect of human nature. Everyone wishes it did. It is human nature — to a degree — for a lot of people to just sit back and “let George do it.” Some church members just feel that “Hey, we pay this pastor a good salary, let HIM do it.”

This is because the person in the pew is just as much a victim of their cultural background as are the clergy. Today we are a society of “experts.” Most of us are accustomed to paying others who are professionals to do things for us. Additionally, deeply imbedded in Western society is (unfortunately) the oldest and largest model of supposed “church leadership,” the Roman Church.

From the time of the emperor Constantine, the Roman “Catholic” (See note 5) church has been an essentially monarchical institution. Constantine had the title, by virtue of being the Roman emperor, of *“Pontifex Maximus.”* This translates roughly as “supreme high priest.” What was he high priest of, you might ask? He led both the emperor cult in Rome and the Lucifer cult in Rome.

Emperors were believed to be divine. Julius Caesar halfway started that policy, probably borrowing the idea from the ancient Egyptians, who believed that their Pharaohs were gods incarnate. By the time Yah’shua walked the earth, it had become well established. Additionally, while Romans were polytheistic, (See note 6) one of their major religious systems was the worship of Lucifer.

Mind you, this is not the Lucifer we know. The Roman Lucifer was a version of the sun-god. Remember, Lucifer means “light-bearer.”

Fake Donation

What is important to this discussion is that Constantine's title somehow got transferred to the Roman pope. If you are an astute student of Catholicism, you will recall that the pope is *also* called Pontifex Maximus. Of course, devout Catholics assume that the pope is the “high priest” of Catholicism, functioning rather like the high priest Aaron did in the Torah.

The problem is, the Bible makes it clear that there is only ONE high priest in the faith of Yah'shua (Hebr. 3:1, 9:11, etc.) and it is Yah'shua our Messiah, not the pope. So how on earth did this happen? How did a sizable majority of what was once the Body of Messiah come to turn over all their allegiance to a man and give him king-like, if not god-like qualities?

The answer lies in the infamous and controversial “Donation of Constantine.” Without wanting to get into too many details, this was a supposed document that the emperor Constantine signed and gave to the pope back in the fourth century. This piece of paper essentially invested the “Holy Father” with all the power, wealth and panoply of the office of Emperor (or Pontifex Maximus, if you prefer). Constantine supposedly even gave the pope his imperial robes and diadem. Strangely, these last items have never turned up in the papal closet or the Vatican museum. Inquiring minds want to know *why!*

Naturally, this would have been a HUGE windfall for the infant Roman church. It turned Holy Mother Church almost overnight from a somewhat large but still marginal branch of the Body of Believers into a world-class ecclesiastical empire in a very short time.

This “Donation” gave the pope lands and wealth; and even the power to crown and depose lesser potentates (kings and princes). This is how the practice began (and is still carried out to this day) of having an archbishop or cardinal or (rarely) even the pope himself crown kings or queens. The most famous example of this historically is that the pope crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (which was neither holy, nor Roman, nor much of an empire either!). Even though the Church of England (Anglican) has not been under the pope since the days of Henry VIII, they still have the archbishop of Canterbury (See note 7) crown the sovereign.

There is just one small problem with this Donation of Constantine. It never showed up until *hundreds* of years after Constantine was dead, and **no one** contemporaneous to Constantine (or the pope for that matter) ever wrote anything about this remarkable event. Sounds a little suspicious, does it not?

Now most serious historians (outside the Vatican) acknowledge that the Donation was a forgery. There are many reasons for this, but one should suffice. There are Scripture quotations in the Donation text. They are from Jerome's **Latin Vulgate** translation of the Bible. The only problem is that the Latin Vulgate was translated more than 200 years after Constantine died. Now we know Constantine was a fantastic guy, but even he could not see hundreds of years into the future to use a Bible version that did not even exist then. Of course, back then no one would have believed that the pope would have *lied*, would they?

But the upshot of this is that the Donation was probably the greatest religious fraud in

history! It enabled the Papacy to acquire a status and temporal power unique in the history of religions on earth. Even today with Islam, which is numerically larger than Catholicism, there is no comparable figure of influence. The Donation also instituted the monarchical model of “church government.”

What is the Appeal?

The power of this model even over people today in the US is evident. Even though we fought a war to get out from under the thumb of the British sovereign, Americans are fascinated with royalty. Some say that we are just as fascinated as are the British. *Millions* of Americans (not just Catholics) watched the pope's funeral. We often tend to elect presidents who are distant descendants from royalty (both candidates in our last election are related to the royal family – and to Dracula (See note 8)). Odd, isn't it?

However, **I** think that there is more to it than just us "nutty Americans." I believe that there is a deep human need to be ruled over by someone with nearly absolute authority. I think that a lot of people find it comforting to have someone hold sway over their lives. This is true in both a religious venue and in a political regime.

Otherwise, how would you explain the fact that still a majority of nations on earth are ruled over by despots of one sort or another? How do you explain the continued success (if you want to call it that) of the Roman church in keeping its hundreds of millions more or less in line? (See note 9) How do you explain the continued rise of **authoritarian** cults that incessantly spring up like crab grass in the lawn of religion? Remember Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Jim Jones or "Bo and Peep?"

What is the difference between **authoritarian** and **authoritative**? It is important. Authoritarian is usually defined as a person or group that demands absolute and unflinching obedience. It is basically run as a dictatorship, whether it is a government, a church or a family. Such organizations are often maintained by force or violence, such as the 19th century LDS church in Utah was under Brigham Young. Authoritative means someone who governs from a source of authority (the Bible, the US Constitution, etc.), but they are not despotic in their approach. They tend to rule more by moral persuasion. This is much closer to the Biblical model.

Even in our US political system, it seems that in times of crisis (such as post 9/11), a lot of citizens are fine with giving up many of their civil rights to a government that may or may not have its best interests at heart. The possibility of our government becoming more dictatorial is increasing. Why? Just because the surrendering of their rights makes a lot of people feel *more secure*. Deep down inside, a lot of people just want the state to take care of them and treat them like children.

The Coming of the King-Makers

This is certainly not a new phenomenon. It seems as though from time immemorial, people have wanted kings. The oldest recorded civilizations such as Sumer and Egypt had some sort of royalty. At first, they might just have been just tribal chieftains, but they usually

ruled by force for as long as they could. Soon these kings (or rarely queens) began to rule over larger and larger groups — again by force — until we have the rudimentary beginnings of the city-state. It is part of our fallen world.

Various kings of small fiefdoms are mentioned as early as Genesis 14, right after the Flood. Of course, we understand that YHWH did introduce the concept of human government in the covenant with Noah right after the Flood. In fact, one could say Noah was the first “King of the World.” But Noah was a righteous man and doubtless ruled with justice and humility. Sadly, most of the kings following him did not.

When YHWH called out Abraham and later the Hebrew people as a whole, it was His intention to not really follow the world's model (**BIG** surprise!). What He wanted for Israel was a theocracy — **a nation run by YHWH Himself**. There would be a Levitical priesthood, to be sure; but their function was more to intercede on behalf of the nation for its sins and officiate over the sacrifices. A lot of Bible scholars believe that the High Priest himself (after the passing of Moses and Joshua) communicated with YHWH by means of the Urim and Thummim (See note 10) (Ex. 28:30).

These strange artifacts are quite mysterious. They were part of the high priest's regalia and seemed to be carried in his breastplate. Some scholars believe that they were two stones of different colors. When a question needed to be posed to the Almighty, the high priest would pray and reach into the breastplate (which was like a pouch worn over the heart). If one stone came out, YHWH said YES to the question. If the other stone came out, it was NO. Thus, it may have been somewhat like a *divinely sanctioned* drawing of lots. (See note 11)

However, that is just an educated guess. We can see, though, that in some fashion, the Urim and Thummim were used by the Holy Spirit to give guidance or commands to Israel (see for example, Num. 27:21, Ezra 2:63, and Neh. 7:65). There is also one instance given where YHWH refused to give advice through the Urim because King Saul was in such rebellion (1 Sam. 28:6). The point is, YHWH was the source of all these important decisions.

But this was not good enough for Israel. They thought being run by an invisible deity was too strange. They wanted to be like the other nations around them (1 Sam. 8:20) and have a king over them! It seems that YHWH gave them what they wanted, but with a warning through Samuel His prophet:

And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. —1 Sam. 10:18-19

To seek out a monarchical ruler was to reject the living, omnipotent authority of the Almighty Himself! It was to replace the leadership of a Perfect, all-knowing Deity with the

fallible, human knowledge of a man. As most Bible students know, the result of this "king-making" did not go well. The first king, Saul, was a miserable failure. He died a suicidal demoniac.

David and Solomon fared better, but even they had their serious faults and got the nation in trouble. David, though a great man of YHWH in most senses, still committed adultery and murder and had many troubles within the family dynasty. Solomon, his son, reigned over Israel at its amazing height of glory and power. Yet, in spite of Solomon's great wisdom, even he got drawn into worshipping idols by his foreign wives and had his vast realm rent from his son and torn in two.

After that, except for a few bright lights, most of the kings of Judah and Israel after the kingdoms were divided were pretty bad. In fact, many say that one of the best proofs of the truth of the Bible is the frankness and candor with which it presents its characters. The Scriptures are no PR puff-piece, but a truthful portrayal of humanity — even Israel — in its sinful state.

Finally, as we know, the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell into total apostasy and was carried off. Soon after that, the Kingdom of Judah backslid to the point that it had to be wiped out and carried off to Babylon. The glorious temple of Solomon was destroyed. Though YHWH allowed a great miracle to happen so that they could return to the Promised Land 70 years later, Israel never regained its former glory. By the time of the arrival of Messiah, Israel was a puppet government of Rome with its king being an Idumean fiend named Herod who had no royal blood in his veins.

Application for Today

In the New Testament, we see little trace of this monarchical style of rule. The model is different and we find Yah'shua setting the tone.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. — Matt. 20:25-28

Elsewhere, He teaches similar things:

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. — Mark 9:35

And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. — Mark 10:44

And there is the amazing scene in John 13 where He washes the disciples' feet:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have

given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. — John 13:13-15

The power of this scene is only truly understood when one realizes that foot washing in Yah'shua's time was a job only for the lowest of the low. He was demonstrating the utmost humility in what He was doing. Humility and service were the two keynotes which Yah'shua taught about leadership among His flock.

Now, this does not mean that there was no leadership in the Book of Acts. Contrary to Roman propaganda, the head of the original Jerusalem church was **James** (Hebrew Ya'akov), the brother of Yah'shua. This is clear from Acts 15. Yes, Peter had a voice, and an important one. But he was not some monarchical "Vicar of Christ." It is apparent from Acts 15 that the true head of the congregation of Believers was actually the Holy Spirit. James, Peter, Paul and the others prayerfully listened to Him and heard His guidance. They evidently did not need an Urim and Thummim to do so.

Historians of the early church tell us that James (known as "James the Just") was a man of exceptional holiness and character. Reportedly, he prayed so much that his knees were like the knees of a camel! He lived a lifestyle of humility and simplicity. This was the way for all the early church leaders.

The Nicolaitan impulse (which is the **only thing** in the entire New Testament that Yah'shua says He hates) is the human need to set up kings over ourselves. We want to put people up on pedestals, whether they are pastors, rock stars or film actors. It has been said that the closest thing America has to royalty is the Hollywood film star. If that is so, we are in deep trouble. The vast majority of those people are greedy, immoral, egotistical louts.

The problem is that even within the churches, many people treat their pastors or TV preachers like celebrities. The cult (and that is what it is) of Christian celebrity is a stink in the nostrils of YHWH. Of course, the biggest "Christian celebrity" of the past quarter century was Pope John Paul II, who probably did not know the real Yah'shua from a doorknob.

But can you honestly imagine James (or even Peter, for that matter) having people bow down to the ground and kiss their rings? Can you imagine James being arrayed in rich vestments and being carried around for the adulation of thousands, ringed by bodyguards? Can you imagine Peter, the humble fisherman, eating off gold dinnerware in a palace filled with billions in valuable objects of art (and having *another* palace for the summer?).

The history of the popes is even more dismal than the history of the kings of Israel. (See note 12) There does not appear to be a single sin that they have not committed. But before the rest of "Christianity" gets too comfortable, realize that we also have our own little "popes." None of them might be as wealthy or powerful as the Roman model, but they are still doing the same thing in miniature.

A few years after I was saved in 1984, we had the fall of two major Pentecostal ministers, Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. Since that time, the "cult of Christian celebrity" has grown (and festered!). Many of the top-flight pastors and TV preachers are treated like demigods by their followers. Though most pay lip service to humility and "serving Jesus," they live in

a lifestyle that would be the envy of many large corporate chieftains. Yet almost every year, one of them gets "nailed" with either charges of financial malfeasance or moral impropriety. Either that or they go off and teach doctrinally bizarre concepts.

These "humble servants" of the Almighty have mansions, private jets and multi-thousand dollar suits. They travel with bodyguards and a retinue that prevents most of their "flock" from getting near them, unless they happen to be big donors. They also insist on a near-papal regard for their teaching authority. Many of them are highly insulted if you question their teaching. They thunder "touch not the Lord's anointed" to their accusers. They claim that their "prophetic" or "apostolic" office places them above criticism!

These are the preachers who have spread the "prosperity gospel" (See note 13) that is totally without Scriptural foundation. Of course, if they can claim that Yah'shua and all His apostles were the equivalent of modern millionaires, then it gives them excuses to live like kings on the backs of their poor and elderly followers.

Such claims are *utterly* unscriptural! It is clear that those who are functioning in the prophetic office are subject to the judgment of other prophets in the congregation (1 Cor. 14:29-32). Everyone's teachings (even *mine*) are subject to the final authority of the Bible (Is. 8:20). If they speak not according to THIS WORD it is because there is no light in them.

The dangers of the Nicolaitan/Monarchical approach is that usually such pastors or clergy are not accountable. If they have boards, usually such boards are stacked with family members and sycophants. They implicitly (if not explicitly) demand unquestioning loyalty and obedience from their members. Many will seek to intrude into private family matters. We have had couples come to us for counseling who said their pastors were telling them how often they could go grocery shopping or what sort of house to live. ***Some even were told how often they could have conjugal relations!*** Another church leader whose people we worked with would have his flock (adult men and women) come forward and publicly confess their sins and then be beaten with a cane on their buttocks in front of the whole congregation! These things are not of YHWH! Such control is the mark of a cult! Even the Roman church never dreamt of doing some of these things!

A cult CAN be doctrinally okay in the "fundamentals of the faith," but still have leadership issues which are way out of line. If you have questions about your church in these areas, please feel free to contact us for some suggested resources. (See note 14)

Some Final Suggestions

So, we have talked about the bad" and how to do it wrong. What is a good model for local leadership? We need to look to the early apostolic communities for that. James the Just and others like him in the very early movement modeled three key qualities: 1) Humility, 2) Holiness and devotion, and 3) A servant heart. Those should be the qualities of true Biblical leadership.

A genuine shepherd of Messiah is not over his flock, but under them. People forget that the root of the word "minister" is the idea of servant. According to Yah'shua (see Bible quotes

above) the leader of a flock should be a *servant* of the servants of YHWH. If he is a good shepherd, he should lay down his life for his flock, both spiritually and literally.

This does not mean that the pastor cannot have a decent wage. But it means he should not be making a king's ransom, nor should he be puffed up and prideful. That is perhaps the biggest danger of higher education is that it makes professionals think that they are something special. Remember, compared to what the Holy Spirit can teach us all, the knowledge one gets in a seminary is inconsequential. It is a good thing if the recipient of that knowledge can receive it and use it wisely and with humility. But it is not good if it makes them full of vanity.

A leader should definitely be a man of prayer. Prayer **MUST** be a vital part of a pastor's life. If it is not, he is too "busy" with other things (Acts 6:2). While no man or woman (pastor or otherwise) is without sin, the pastor's life should be above reproach. That goes without saying, but in this day and age it needs to be said.

Of course, different church bodies have different ways of choosing their pastors. Some are Episcopal," which means more or less that the monarchical model mentioned above is adhered to. Some are Presbyterian (not in the denominational sense) that means they have a board of Presbyters select the leadership. Others are Congregational, which means individual congregations vote on a pastor.

Candidly, I am not sure any of these have the right idea. But we are still — after nearly 500 years — struggling to get away from the jaws of Rome. I believe the optimal arrangement, which some small churches have, is to have the Holy Spirit call out people from the local body to be leaders, just as in the Book of Acts (Acts 13:1-2 and elsewhere). Of course, to do that, a congregation must really be devout and in prayer continually so that they can hear clearly the voice of their Chief Shepherd.

In short, we need to cultivate within ourselves a sensitivity to the Spirit through a rich life of prayer and study of the Scriptures. Ideally, any person should be able to stand up and lead a local assembly should they be called upon to do so. I know that we are a long ways from the ideal, but we need to aim toward that!

I think it is easy to see why YHWH hated the Nicolaitan heretics. They were trying to place themselves between His VOICE and His people. They were trying to say — even as Rome does today — that you cannot just reach out and speak to the Father whenever you want. You need a pope to be your intermediary. That is a lie from the pit of hell. Yah'shua wants us to be open and to be able to hear His voice. He does not want sinful men trying to eclipse the glory of His face from those who love Him.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: - John 10:27

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God — Hebr. 12:2

End Notes

- 1.) If it is any consolation, we used to hear the same figures when I was in the leadership of the LDS (Mormon) church.
- 2.) Some of the best pastors I ever had encouraged "audience participation." I think the trends are encouraging, at least in some fellowships.
- 3.) Of course, I went to a Roman Catholic seminary from 1977-80, but from what I have been told, most main-line, Protestant seminaries were even worse in those days. Today, everything is worse, at least in the old traditional churches of whatever stripe.
- 4.) If that sounds too unbelievable for the average reader, I do not have the space to go into all the strange reasons behind this bizarre fact. For all the details, see our autobiographical book, LUCIFER DETHRONED, available from this ministry.
- 5.) Catholic just means "universal" or "complete." Actually, the RCC is anything but universal OR complete. It is certainly not the "universal church," so we tend to avoid using this term.
- 6.) Polytheism means worshipping many gods.
- 7.) The Archbishop of Canterbury is the highest ranking bishop of the Anglican Church. The queen or king of England is actually the head of the "C of E," but they could not crown themselves.
- 8.) The fictitious 19th century character, Dracula, was loosely based on an actual Transylvanian warlord, Vlad Tsepes (Vlad the Impaler) who was indeed called "Dracula" because he was the son of "Dracul," a member of the Order of the Dragon.
- 9.) Actually, Catholicism is not nearly as monolithic as it appears from a distance. Most US Catholics disobey the pope on matters of birth control, and so do most Catholics in Europe. There are radical leftist Catholics who defy the Catholic stand on abortion and conservative right wing Catholics (such as Mel Gibson) who are way off on the other end of the spectrum. There are also "Evangelical Catholics" who claim to be Born Again just the same way as do regular evangelicals. And of course there are the legendary "cafeteria Catholics" that just go through the line and pick and choose whatever dogmas of the faith to which they wish to adhere.
- 10.) The Hebrew words mean "lights and perfections."
- 11.) We see the drawing of lots being mentioned a great deal in the Torah, (see Lev. 16:8-10, Num. 26:55, 33:54, Deut. 32:9, 1 Sam. 14:41, Prov. 16:33, etc.). There is even a place in the Book of Acts where lots are used prayerfully to select a new apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1:26).
- 12.) We deal with much of this in detail in our STRAIGHT TALK ON THE PAPACY.
- 13.) Briefly, this is the teaching that true Christians are destined to be rich and that if you are walking right with YHWH, you will become fabulously wealthy. Conversely, if

you are poor — you must be in sin. Such teachings popularized the "Positive Confession" dogma and the "Name it and Claim It" and "Fake it Till you Make" teachings which now plague American Churchianity and TV evangelist programs.

14.) There is an excellent book out there to help with these issues, called **CHURCHES THAT ABUSE** by Dr. Ronald Enroth. We do not carry it, but most Christian bookstores would be able to carry it or order it.

15.) This does not just mean the "Episcopal church" but any church which uses a "top-down" hierarchical model in which bishops (chosen by men) choose the local pastors.

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