



The Doctrines and Practices of the Nicolaitans

I recently made a video on YouTube page about biblical submission and authority, and it generated lots of private messages, mostly from church leaders who chided me for being out of the will of God for not having a “church home” “covering” or “pastor” that I should submit myself to. After

blocking some of the more obnoxious ones, I saw the sincerity of many who responded to me, thus prompting this blog. More on this subject later.

I would like to lay a foundation with a description of what I believe is the Nicolaitan doctrine.

Revelation 2:6

Yet this you (The Church at Ephesus) have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Revelation 2:15

So also you (The Church at Pergamum) have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

There are many interpretations as to what the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans actually is, for it is a doctrine that Jesus told us clearly that he **hates**... those are strong words, and because God hates it so, I believe it is important for Christians to really study and see exactly what Jesus is speaking about. It is used in the book of Revelation chapter 2 twice by Jesus. The Nicolaitan Doctrine can be seen from the definition of the word itself.

Now it is important to note that Jesus didn't expound on what the doctrine was exactly, so it is impossible for me to be dogmatic about the subject, however we do know where the word derived from, and I think it is the closest thing to help us get some clues as to what the doctrines and practices of those who hold to this doctrine entails.

Historically these doctrine and practices have been attributed to a man in history named Nicholas, who historians says grew apostate and encouraged his followers to participate in idolatry and fornication, though there are conflicting reports and historical records of Nicholas being a God-fearing man who remain faithful till death.

While I see the point of pointing to a man in history, The word and it's root meanings do not support this story. I'd rather stick to a biblical definition of a word than shaky testimonies of historical record... and REMEMBER Jesus never explicitly explained the doctrine or did he give this story in inspired scripture.

According to the Strong's lexicon, the word **Nikolaitēs** literally means "**destruction of people**" or "**conquering (having victory) over the (people)**"

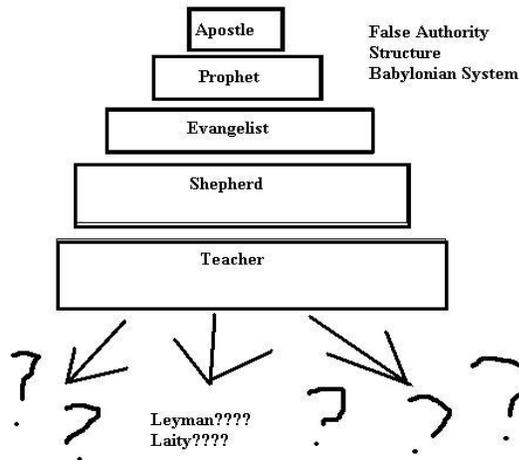
It comes from the Greek words **nikos** which means **1) victory or to 2) to utterly vanquish, (destroy)** and **Laodikeus** which simply refers to a resident of **Laodicea a city in Asia Minor**. The church of Laodicea is mentioned in the book of Revelation so the spiritual implications of Laodicea being referenced here (A Place where the believers were **LUKEWARM**) are not lost on this blog writer.

So to put this together, the Nicolaitans had DOCTRINES (Teachings, philosophies, beliefs, precepts, and or instructions.) and Practices (Works, deeds, actions) which Jesus hated which infiltrated the church. In this case it is safe to assume these ideas have a religious grounding in them being that they are being promoted in the Body of Christ.

Some synonyms for the word Victory:

1. conquer implies gaining mastery of
 2. defeat,
 3. subdue,
 4. reduce,
 5. overcome,
- **Overthrow** means to get the better of by force or strategy...
 - **Vanquish** implies a complete overpowering.
 - **Defeat** does not imply the finality or completeness of vanquish which it otherwise equals.
 - **Subdue** implies a defeating and suppression.
 - **Reduce** implies a forcing to capitulate or surrender.
 - **Overcome** suggests getting the better of with difficulty or after hard struggle .
 - **Overthrow** stresses the bringing down or destruction of existing power

Again it is reasonable to say that this victory or destruction of the people will use some sort of force, either by compulsion or physical manipulation. This will be done through DOCTRINES and FALSE TEACHINGS which put the saints under subjection, completely overpowering them, to eventually destroy and defeat them.



Here are some examples of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans:

- Tithing for New Testament Believers as taught today in institutional churches which make people give under compulsion and not cheerfully.
- Spiritual Covering – The thought that one must have the covering of a pastor or the leaders of the church in order to be approved by God
- Viewing pastors, church leaders etc. as mediators between the church and God.
- A “ruling” council of elders who exercise false authority, and lord it over the church where the body of Christ must be in subjection to them.
- The “CEO” Pastor in a false pyramid hierarchy of who exercises false authority, and lords it over the church. They preach that the body of Christ must be in subjection to them.

Note how each of these doctrines and practices are a means of control over the people of God.

Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:42-45

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Luke 22:25-27

Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

All three synoptic gospels confirm this truth. Jesus has made it clear that no leader in the body of Christ will lead as the gentiles do. Jesus even tells us the kind of authority he's talking about:

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."

Examining these two Greek words used here are of value...

The first Greek word **katakyrieuō** translated "lord it over them" is a combination of two Greek words **kata** which means "down from," "throughout," or "toward" and **kyrieuō** which means to be lord of, or to rule, or have dominion over by exercising influence upon, or having power over one. One may note that the Greek word **kyrios**, is used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words brought together suggest that those who lord it over the flock seek to bring and subject the body of Christ under **their own power**. The goal is to subdue them, master them, and hold them in subjection, exercising lordship over them.

We know in the scriptures that there is only One who exclusively has this type of power over the body of Christ, and it is Christ himself. No man can usurp the authority of which Christ has over His body.

The second Greek word **katexousiazō** is like the first, it is a combination of **kata**, and **exousiazō** which means to exercise authority over, and or to wield power by “mastering the body.” Now Jesus speaks of the body of Christ as HIS body, but yet **there are people out there who are trying to exercise authority, dominion, power, and influence over Christ’s body subjecting it to be under their full and complete control.** One is trying to have a dictatorial authority over Christ’s body. Again only **Jesus Christ himself has this kind of authority over HIS body.**

This is confirmed again later on in Peter’s epistle.

1 Peter 5:1-3

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

The Greek word **katakryrieuō** is used in this verse as well. This type of authority is forbidden by Jesus in the scriptures and the concept is reiterated and confirmed by the apostles. Why is it however that so many churches encourage this sort of authoritative structure? Why have we gotten it so wrong? My thinking here is that many have looked at the world and how the world rules and governs and have taken note, bringing those practices into the household of faith.

It is obvious that the bible describes elders, pastors (bishops) etc as “leaders,” so the question remains, what does the bible say a biblical leader in Christ’s church looks like?

All one needs to do is take a look at the one of the passages from above:

Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This is so painstakingly simple. **A leader in God's church will be YOUR SERVANT, and whoever wants to be first must be your SLAVE.** Do we see this? It is hard for many to get this concept because in the flesh, we want to rule as the gentiles do, and exercise authority and lordship over people. But Jesus said it clearly in the gospels that it will NOT be that way with you. As an elder of God's flock you are called to give your very life away for the body of Christ, being like Jesus who never did anything on his own behalf, but did the will of his Father till the end.

Elders lead by their example and their lives ought to be marked by servanthood to their brothers and sisters in Christ, being SLAVES or servants to ALL in the body of Christ.

All too often you will find that many elders expect God's people to serve them just like the Pharisees did in Matthew 23:

Matthew 23:4-12

"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger." But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

"But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

Again, Jesus makes some key distinctions to the disciples; **do not call yourself by honorific titles for no one is your teacher or leader other than Christ.** The greatest among you shall

be your SERVANT and we should ALL follow Christ's example. How many times must Jesus say it for it to be true?

The reason I mention elders and leaders in this context (and we certainly can use more **biblical** elders) is because leadership in many IC's are unknowingly guilty of these very offenses. While I cannot be dogmatic about the doctrines and practices of the Nicolaitans, I can CERTAINLY be dogmatic about how some leaders in many modern-day IC's exercise false authority in their attempt to control and manipulate the sheep.

In conclusion, Let us remember that God HATES those doctrines and practices which (by some logical deduction) tries to subdue or conquer the saints by either forceful manipulation, compulsion, and false doctrines. What I have asserted here is just a guesstimate based on the Greek root words, and according to the scriptures I have come to this conclusion. **In the future if I refer to a doctrine or practice as *Nicolaitan*, you now will understand why.**

<http://setfreefromtheic.wordpress.com/2010/04/20/the-doctrines-and-practices-of-the-nicolaitans/#comments>