

The Spirit of Diotrephes

Introduction

One of the marks of the close of this age is the tremendous increase in deception. Whenever He was speaking of the end of the age, Jesus repeatedly told the disciples for them to not be deceived. Since we are over 2000 years closer to the climax of the purpose of God, it is very important that we take heed to His warning.

Deception is not a lie. If it was a lie, it would be called a lie. Deception is a mixture of true and false in such a manner that it appears to be all true. The thing that causes us to not examine deception too closely is the fact that the deception, itself, appeals to something in our flesh, our old nature. The bottom line is that deception is attractive to things that are hidden in our heart—we like it. That is why we must examine teaching closely and search the Scriptures to make sure that it is Truth and not a mixture.

John 8:31-32 NASB So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*"

The Modern Church

Our modern church has bought into much deception in many areas. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the hierarchical authority structure that everyone seems to think is necessary to function together. This is in spite of Jesus' words in Luke 22:

Luke 22:25-27 NKJV And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' (26) 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. (27) 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.*

From the world's viewpoint, those in authority consider themselves to be benefactors to those who are under them. From the world's viewpoint, the one who sits at the table is greater (in power and position) than the one who is serving the table. However, Jesus said this is not the way it is among His people and in His Kingdom. From the viewpoint of the Kingdom of God, the one who has spiritual authority is the one who is serving. From the viewpoint of the Kingdom of God, the one who is serving the table is greater than the one sitting at the table. This is most definitely NOT the hierarchical authority structure utilized by the world systems.

However, our modern church has become fully vested in the worldly type of authority structure. Every

denomination functions in the same manner as it relates to the fundamentals of structure. Even the house churches bring some form of this into their gatherings.

Each move of God that begins to refresh His people, quickly begins to become formalized by its leaders into some form of hierarchical structure. While these moves of God tend to take people out of the denominations, those in leadership seek to preserve their positions (probably not maliciously but by the nature of the flesh) by justifying the “correct, scriptural” form of a new hierarchical system through deceptive teaching designed to give scriptural validation to the new form. Let's examine some of the major components of this type of deceptive teaching.

Spiritual Covering

One of the major themes is the idea of “spiritual covering”. It seems that we live in a big, bad spiritual environment and need to be protected from evil spiritual things by being under a “spiritual covering” which protects us from evil. Of course, what is meant by “spiritual covering” is those who over you in the hierarchical structure.

This idea comes from I Corinthians where Paul is speaking about 'head covering'. He begins by establishing a flow of “headship”.

1 Corinthians 11:3 NKJV (3) But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.

The headship flow is straightforward: God is the head of Christ, who is the head of man, who is the head of woman.

Paul then begins to discuss 'covering' and its meaning. Because Eve was deceived and because the man is her head, she is to be 'covered'. This 'covering' is a symbol of her being in proper relationship with her husband, who is her head.

1 Corinthians 11:10 NKJV (10) For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on *her* head, because of the angels.

In this verse, “a symbol of” was added by the translators and is not in the original text. So, literally, “the woman ought to have authority on head, because of the angels”. So, the authority of her husband as her head protects the woman from the angels (the fallen ones, of course).

However, the “authority teachers” apply this same concept to the man and say that he needs to be under the “spiritual covering” of his pastor, his shepherd, his spiritual father, his apostle, his whatever—the set man. This is in direct contradiction to what Paul said in Corinthians.

For the man to be 'covered', that is, to have authority over him that is not Christ is to dishonor his head, who is Christ. There is no one who stands between the man and Christ. Christ is the head of the man and provides all that is needed just as the husband provides spiritual protection for the wife because he is her head.

For anyone to place himself 'over' the man as a 'spiritual covering' is to dishonor Jesus, to slap Him in His face. And anyone who accepts a man as a 'spiritual covering' over him is dishonoring his head and placing himself in a place independent of Jesus. The extent that you allow the one who says he is your “spiritual covering” to replace the work and function of the Holy Spirit in your life is the extent of the deception that is at work in you.

The Set Man

This idea is based on the fact that when God does something in the earth He moves through men. These are ones who have been called by God and put into position to accomplish His purpose. They have been 'set' in place. This is a truth that is most evident in the Old Testament and less evident in the New. Why would there be a change between the Old and New Testaments?

Hebrews 1:1-2 NKJV God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (2) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

God now speaks to us by Jesus and Jesus has received of the Father the promise of the Spirit and has poured forth the Holy Spirit into us in the earth. Jesus now speaks to us and directs us by the Spirit. That is how He functions as the head of the man—there is a direct connection or relationship through the Spirit. Yes, He still speaks and directs through men; but, it is not just one person but many that the Lord might use to speak to us by the Spirit. He uses many to minister to us so that we can come to recognize the fact that we need each member of the Body of Christ.

The primary Scripture that is used to justify the 'set man' concept is from chapter twelve of Corinthians, “*And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, . . .*” (1 Corinthians 12:28 NKJV) The 'authority teachers' see in this a hierarchy of authority of those appointed or 'set' (KJV) in the church with the apostles as the top of the authority structure and the prophets next and the teachers after that.

However, this is a poor interpretation of this Scripture. According to the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance, the word translated “*appointed*” means “*to place, lay, set*” and is translated as “*laid*” more than anything else in the Scriptures. It is a building term as in “*lay a foundation*”. This Scripture is not talking about an order of authority but, instead, an order of function. To build anything that some things have to be done before other things. In building a 'church' the function of an apostle is first to lay the foundation, then the prophets finish the foundation [for we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)], and then the teacher to begin the construction and then the other things follow after that. There is not even a hint of the type of structure that the 'authority' teachers try to apply to this Scripture.

The Spirit of Jezebel

To disagree or question those in authority positions within the hierarchy usually results in admonitions concerning the spirit of Jezebel. While the Jezebel Spirit can be a problem in the church, many are falsely accused of operating in it. Jezebel operated in witchcraft and served false gods. She killed the

true prophets of God and put those in place who would say what she wanted to hear. She wanted a position of power and authority and manipulated and controlled others in order to maintain her place.

When someone questions the leader or leaders, making their doubts and reservations known to them, they are accused of having a Jezebel Spirit by those in authority. In many cases the leaders are actually acting more like Jezebel than those accused. Why do you think that there is so much preaching about the Jezebel Spirit? Could it be that the self-styled leaders want to keep a lid on any dissension in the ranks and are using this to justify their position?

The Diotrophes Style of Authority

The Scriptures give us a clear example of the type of leadership that is being presented to us in the modern church. You have probably never heard a sermon about the “spirit of Diotrophes” like the many you have probably heard about the “spirit of Jezebel” but John speaks plainly about it.

3 John 1:9-10 NASB I wrote something to the church; but Diotrophes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. (10) For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church.

In this verse it is obvious that Diotrophes is an absolute dictatorial leader operating from the worldly hierarchical system. What is in his heart is that he loves to be “first among them”. He likes to be the head, the “spiritual authority” over the others. He enforces his decisions by putting out of the church those who disobey him. When John wrote a letter to the church, which Diotrophes controlled, he would not receive what John said. The result was the Diotrophes unjustly accused John and those associated with him with wicked accusations. Then, he went on and refused to receive any of the brethren and even forbade others from receiving the brethren also.

I am sure that most everyone reading this has in their past (or, maybe even in the present) a “pastor”, or an “apostle”, or a “prophet” that is operating in the spirit of Diotrophes as described above. This is the inevitable result of the worldly hierarchical system. It appeals to and reinforces the flesh nature in us that wants power and position. John said it clearly, even though Diotrophes refused to hear it.

1 John 2:16 NASB For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Our modern church, especially in America, is consumed by the spirit of Diotrophes and not just among the denominations but also among the independent and house churches. There is a reason that when Jesus ascended He gave us a five-fold ministry to continue to establish and equip us for the work of the Lord. When anyone, whether pastor, apostle or prophet, tries to limit what you receive to themselves or those whom they approve they are limiting the equipping that the Lord had given for you and hindering you from coming into full maturity.

The spirit of Diotrophes appeals to the flesh and the ambitions of our heart. It is the operating force behind the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Here is what Jesus said to the Church at Pergamon, which tolerated the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

Revelation 2:14-16 NKJV (14) **But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. (15) Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (16) Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.**

Nicolaitans comes from two Greek words, which together mean “*to conquer the people*”. This implies that they put themselves into positions of authority over the people like a conquerer or king. This is something that Jesus hates. It is not a good thing to tolerate that which Jesus hates. He said “repent or else ...”. We should pay attention.

Jesus' words to the Church at Ephesus are also interesting. They had fallen to the point that unless they repented the Lord would remove their lampstand, that is, they would cease to be an ekklesia, a church. But, He did commend them for one thing.

Revelation 2:5-6 NKJV **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent. (6) But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

Even though they had fallen, they still hated the works of the Nicolaitans just as Jesus also hates them. Again, we need to pay attention.

From the days of Diotrophes forward the people of God have been “conquered” by those seeking to have positions and preeminence. The entire functioning structures of the Catholic and Protestant denominations are the result of the works and doctrine of the Nicolaitans empowered by the fleshly lust and pride of Diotrophes.

We simply do not appreciate how contrary this hierarchical system is to the purpose and plan of God. Mystery Babylon operates by a hierarchical system. The coming Lawless One, who operates in the spirit of Antichrist, functions as the head of a one world hierarchical system. It is the epitome, the fullness of the spirit of Diotrophes coming forth in these end days.

We need to pay attention to what the Spirit is saying to us.