

2 False Doctrines Devastating the New Covenant Church

In the Lord's message to the Ephesian church, we see a pattern followed in His message to each church, or church age. He begins with a commendation followed by a rebuke. Then He gives them a promise and a hope of the reward they will receive for repenting and overcoming their mistakes. This is called "a critique sandwich." If this is how the Lord speaks to each of the churches here, isn't it likely that this is the way He will speak to His people today?

The Lord commended the Ephesian church for testing those who called themselves "apostles" but were not. The word "apostle" means "sent one," implying one sent by God. All true ministries are sent by God, but an apostle has a special authority that we will not get into here. However, from this message, we can evaluate some basic characteristics we should expect to see from one truly sent by God as His messenger.

If Jesus used a critique sandwich for each church that He addressed, should we not expect the same from those that He sends? Some who consider themselves His messengers have nothing to say but good things. This may be fitting if the church behaved perfectly, but what church does not need some correction? Much of what is called prophecy today would probably be better defined as "flattery." The Scriptures do not have a single good thing to say about flattery or those who use it.

Likewise, there are those whose message to the church seems to only be corrective, with little hope or vision included. That is not the way the Lord spoke to His church either. We need leaders who can put to the test those who say they are sent by God, determining the ones that are false and protecting God's people from them.

The Lord also commends the Ephesian church for despising the teachings of the Nicolaitans, which He also hates. Scholars believe this doctrine may have had its origin with Nicholas, one of the seven deacons. However, the evidence that this was his teaching is sketchy at best.

This doctrine continues to this day in different forms. Its teaching allows for—and even promotes—promiscuity among believers, basically claiming that since we are perfected in spirit, it does not matter what the flesh does. This is obviously a “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). As Scripture warns repeatedly, those who live according to the flesh (or carnal nature) will die, and those who practice such things **“shall not inherit the kingdom of God”** (Gal. 5:21).

The word “Nicolaitan” could be interpreted to mean “dominance of the laity” or “suppression of the laity.” Because of this, some scholars and historians believe this was the doctrine that robbed the church of the biblical truth of the priesthood of all believers. In its place, the doctrine established a special class of priest as mediator. This conflicts with New Testament teachings like 1 Timothy 2:5, **“For *there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”**

Both false teachings of this doctrine are devastating to New Covenant church life and should be rejected. In the New Covenant, every believer has direct access to Christ—we do not need to go through any other mediator. We can know for sure that any who claim to be such mediators have not been sent by Him.

This does not mean that we do not need to be under leadership. The priesthood was different from the civil authority of the king in Scripture. To approach God, we do not have to go through another person. We do, however, submit to His delegated authority in the church, civil government and other places it may apply, such as our jobs.

As for increasing moral corruption in the world, knowing the truth of God's Word and discipline can help keep us pure, as temples of the Holy Spirit must be. Even so, the ultimate protection from the world is growing in love for God and living with vision and purpose. Once we see ourselves as children of the King of kings, we will conduct ourselves with the dignity and respect such a position requires. {eoa}

Rick Joyner is the founder and executive director of MorningStar Ministries and Heritage International Ministries and is the senior pastor of MorningStar Fellowship Church. He is the author of more than 40 books, including *The Final Quest*, *A Prophetic History* and *Church History*. He is also the president of *The OAK Initiative*, an interdenominational movement that is mobilizing thousands of Christians to be engaged in the great issues of our times, being the salt and light that they are called to be.

This article originally appeared on Morningstar Ministries.