

TODAY!

What Would Jesus Be Doing If He Were You?

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Insight 4. Clement of Rome is Not Our “Father”

The Destructive Influence of Clement of Rome

Have you ever wondered where the ecclesiastical hierarchy which dominates so much of Christendom came from? That’s what we’ll be discussing here. The second Clement heavily influenced early Christianity lived in Rome. He had a deep-seated confidence in the *Roman autocratic system of government, a system which ruled by absolute power*. During the last decade of the first century Clement wrote a lengthy letter to fellow Christians in the city of Corinth which passed along that governing ideal to them.



In his letter Clement combines Newer Testament principles with the Roman elite’s ideology that *enforced order* and harmony must prevail in society. So Clement and his followers began a process of infusing Christianity with Roman ideology: *Those with power and wealth have far more to offer Christianity than do the powerless and poor*.

Through Clement’s powerful influence Christendom at large came to accept *hierarchy* as the natural order, ultimately producing a *caste system* within Christianity. This meant “lay people” were at the bottom, and levels of clergy progressed to the top: priest, monsignor, bishop, Cardinal, and the apex—the Roman Pontiff (the Pope) whose position and role mimicked Rome’s Pontifex Maximus (Caesar) as supreme leader.

Official writings of Roman Catholicism state that the Pope is the “doorkeep-

er of heaven.” As the “**vicar of Christ**” he stands in the place of Jesus possessing His authority on earth as His vicarious substitute to rule His Church in His place.

The dominance of Clement’s elite class over the common people was most notably seen in their control of the Eucharist. No longer could followers of Jesus enjoy the spiritual intimacy of sharing the bread and wine of communion together in their homes. Instead, the higher ruling class of clergy were now required to bless the elements to transform them into the actual body and blood of Jesus. Only those who accepted the rule of the Roman Catholic hierarchy could partake—a standard in place even today. And *control of communion* is still one of the primary control mechanisms that enable clergy to dominate the “lay” people in their congregations.

The First Followers Of Jesus Did Not Have Or Need Clergy

Most Christians today are so accustomed to the clergy/laity arrangement of separation within their faith communities that they’re unnerved when it’s questioned. But in the letters written to the seven faith communities in the Book of Revelation, two of these messages confront the issue of the *Nicolaitans*. The letter to followers of Jesus in Ephesus states, *“But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”* (Revelation 2:6).

These are incredibly strong words. Can you imagine participating in something that God hates? What if *you* are practicing things which arouse His ire but don’t know it?

This is serious enough for Lord Jesus to repeat it! To the faith community at Pergamum John is ordered to write, “Likewise you also have those who hold to the **teaching of the Nicolaitans**. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will **fight against them** with the sword of My mouth” (Revelation 2:15,16).

It’s crucial to your own faith walk that you know that *Nicolaitanism* is a religious system of *control and power*, an ecclesiastical system which suppresses and subjugates. The Nicolaitan system places a **sacerdotal** (a human intermediary) — a clergy person — between an individual and their God.

This represents an insidious *two-tiered system* which is recognized by the very definition of the name. The Greek word *nicolaitane* [NIK-oh-lay-it-TAH-nay] means “**conquering the people.**” The first part of the word refers to *nikos*, to conquer or have victory over. The middle of the word is derived from *laos*, which means “the people.” The commonly used term “laity” stems from it.

The Nicolaitan system *subjugates the people* by making “laity” out of them through raising up others who act as intermediaries between God and them. It combines the Older Testament Levitical priesthood with the pagan practices of the Greco-Roman priesthood.

The spiritual predominance of a priestly clergy system is the goal of demonic Nicolaitanism.

With the establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, the loving Father/child relationship with God through our Lord Jesus was replaced by elite men attired in clothing and robes which were adapted from the Roman Praetorian Guard. Instead of the humble and loving character of our Lord being represented in those

whom His Spirit endued with a gift of leadership (see Philippians 2:5-7), **piety** and **pompous ceremonies** were set in place to elevate individuals *elected by men* to stand before God on their behalf.

The combined outworking of *Hellenist disdain for the common* and *Rome’s organizational governing rule* produced this bitter outcome: The Father in heaven, like His Son Jesus, was displaced, becoming a distant deity who required **sacerdotals** to approach Him as go-betweens.

Can you now see how *both Clements* were influential in preparing the way for Roman Catholicism to be birthed, especially when Emperor Constantine gave his official approval in the early 4th century? Generations of common laity were taught that only the elite were worthy enough to become clergy and come before God as priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes. And despite the Reformation changes in theology, most Protestant denominations have followed the footsteps of Roman Catholicism by creating some form of *clergy sacerdotal centrality*: one individual is perceived as serving a “holier” position than anyone else and is therefore more likely to be heard by God.

After reading our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, a denominational leader told us,

“We can’t have our people trusting Jesus as you call for. That would cause mayhem! We need to *control* and *direct* the spiritual activities of the people in our congregation.”

A *platform of control* is at the center of religious systems which rely on specific individuals to stand between people and God as representatives of holiness. The persistent Nicolaitan control mechanism which has prevailed within organized church systems over the centuries has created a **catatonic** Christianity.

Catatonic means that you're living in a stupor of immobility, unresponsive to what's happening around you. Think of this lack of response in terms of your own spiritual walk. Are you bogged down in spiritual stupor? Have you become less responsive to the Holy Spirit because your "relationship" with Him consists mostly of familiar rituals and traditional practices? Does the thought of "going anywhere and doing anything for Lord Jesus" terrify you because it would require active change in your life?

There's an element of *lifelessness* when you're spiritually catatonic. God is tightly constrained in the mental box you keep Him in, and you feel safe not allowing Him to burst out and alter anything in your belief system, relationships, activities, or values. But is a God you can confine really the *Lord of your life*? Even while He was on earth Jesus rebuked the catatonic religious people of His day: "*You diligently study the Scriptures [the "Older Testament"] because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about ME, yet you refuse to come to ME to have life*" (John 5:39,40).

- **So please answer this. Have you become *spiritually emaciated* in a *catatonic* "Christian" faith community that refuses to dynamically and purposefully extend the Kingdom of God to the lost?**

[In Section 2 of our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, "The Transition From Our Hebraic Origins," we discuss in depth the destructive influence of converted Greek philosophers and Roman domination: <<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/rtec/RTECEntireBook.pdf>>]

**The Hebraic Restoration:
Bringing To An End
The Romanized, Levitical Priesthood**

When most Christians think of the

Levitical priesthood they normally think in terms of "Jewish," "Old Testament," "Old Covenant." These are valid considerations—except that Roman Catholicism, through **syncretism** and **revisionism**, *restored* the old Levitical priesthood using their sacerdotal model for clergy and religious services. (And many Protestant denominations have followed suit too.)

This version of *professional intermediaries* calls for lay people to attend services in a designated "church" building where a paid clergy person conducts a prescribed religious service on their behalf. Backed up by a lively worship team or trained choir, the clergy person orchestrates an organized ritual of musical presentation, a prepared teaching, an offering, recitation of memorized prayers, and transformation of the communion elements into the actual body and blood of Jesus—the *sacrifice* of the Mass. All of these "spiritual practices" fulfill the lay people's religious expression so they can leave the service satisfied that they've pleased God.

**Forsaking the Clements:
New Covenant, New Temples,
New Way of Worship**

We conclude this section with something for you to consider which we'll discuss in more detail in later Insights. The Levitical priesthood was part of the Old Covenant, and "*Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant*" (Hebrews 9:15). This new covenant of which our Lord is our **Mediator** means He is the only One Who can reconcile His Father and sinful humanity. So, what does this mean for *your* life when you know and love Jesus as your *sole Mediator*? Consider this essential point which highlights a key difference between the old and new covenants:

Old Covenant:

*“Now the first covenant had both **regulations for worship and a Holy Place here on earth... priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry...**” (Hebrews 9:1,6).*

New Covenant:

*“Don’t you know that **you yourselves are God’s temple** and that God’s Spirit lives in you? ... Do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God?**” (1Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).*

*“God is Spirit, and His worshippers **must worship in Spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24).*

*“When you come together, **EVERYONE** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done **for the strengthening of the called-out ones**” (1Corinthians 14:26).*

Under the Old Covenant three facets emerge in the passage we cited: regulations for worship, a specific earthly Holy Place, and a priestly class who carried out their duties within that Holy Place.

But what are we told by the writers who are describing the New Covenant? There is *no holy place of worship* which is set apart for spiritual activities! God made sure of this when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 by the Roman army. We who have been called by our Father to follow Jesus as Lord of our lives are now His “temple”, both individually and collectively through the Holy Spirit Who abides in the born again.

In 1Peter 2:4,5 we who have come to Jesus as our “living Stone” are depicted as “living stones” being built into a *spiritual house* for the purpose of being a holy priesthood. *Each of us* is a priest who in loving service is called to offer *spiritual sacrifices* of praise and works befitting our

Lord (Hebrews 13:15,16). And as living stones comprising that spiritual temple, we are told through His servant Paul that when we get together *each one of us* needs to be prepared to strengthen one another in our spirit! That kind of worship *in truth through His Spirit* pleases our Lord.

If you’re in a religious system in which you rely on a “church building” for worship and intermediary clergy to represent you before God, then you are still part of the Old Covenant, Levitical system. As we’ll discuss in our next Insight, our Lord did away with this system when He became the Mediator and High Priest of the New Covenant.

Please heed this admonition:

IF YOU’RE PARTICIPATING IN A CLERGY-BASED RELIGIOUS SYSTEM, YOU ARE ENSNARED UNDER THE OLD LEVITICAL SYSTEM.

The reasons for continuing to be held in this snare are many. You may be blind to how catatonic your own spiritual life is as you disregard our Lord’s righteous and holy ways for His sheep. And you may not fully understand *your need* for an ongoing, viable, personal relationship with Jesus as *your Lord*.

If your Christian experience has centered on gathering in “church” buildings with prescribed worship ritual, you most certainly need our Lord to help you live free of the Old Covenant. Paul’s words about the Israelites may apply to you too:

*“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the **same veil remains** when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because **only in Christ is it taken away**” (2Corinthians. 3:14).*

Ask our Father if He intended for the Levitical system to remain. And ask Him whether Hebraic foundations are His means for you to freely serve Him under the New Covenant.