

Taking the Place of Jesus

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Why anyone would want to take the place of Jesus is simultaneously difficult and simple to understand. First, Jesus was crucified and His life cut short in a brutal and painful death. Anyone who would desire and pursue such an end (apart from the Holy Spirit orchestrating a martyr's death) would certainly be a candidate for psychiatric evaluation! On the flip side, because Jesus was resurrected and exalted to the highest place of authority at the right hand of God, taking the place or assuming the right to use the power of Christ appeals to those whose egos are stroked, satisfied and made significant by exercising power over others. Yet we need to examine this much more closely and see exactly what this attitude reveals.

Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (Jn. 15:14) Either Jesus is what He called Himself to be – Lord and Master of all – or else He is an egomaniac with sickly warped ideas of friendship. Any normal human who demanded obedience as a condition of friendship is a sick individual indeed. No healthy friendship would last long under such one-sided conditions – only symbiotic, codependent psychoses could long remain. But a *king* who demands obedience in order to call his subjects friends of his throne (authority, realm, rule) is only to be expected.

There is a disturbing trend at work among those who claim to belong to Christ. Those who hold positions of power ("pastor," "apostle," etc.) or who dispense resources to the poor seem to think it is their right to be obeyed. Because a person has a title in a "church" or because resources have been given by a "noble philanthropist" to a "lesser" poor person, why the "lesser" person is considered as being virtually owned. Any refusal to submit to this tyranny or even a lack of "proper" gratitude in the poor person is viewed as rebellion and is grounds for their being dismissed and disfellowshipped from that "church" or disqualified from receiving more assistance. This only shows who the real "God" of that "church" or agency is. Such a group is "Christian" in name only.

John spoke of a powerfully effective deceiving demonic spirit called "antichrist." (1 Jn. 2:18, etc.) In the Greek, we find that this word "antichrist" [500] not only signifies "against" Christ but it also implies "in the place of." In practical terms, we can say that this powerfully effective demonic spirit enacts deceptions designed to lure people to place some counterfeit in any true place or aspect of Christ, God or the Holy Spirit. The "pastor" as a Nicolaitan ("conquer over the people" [3531]) stands in places which Christ alone is supposed to hold over the local assembly. Ignatius of Antioch (who died around 110 A.D.) is simply the first historically recorded Nicolaitan and his writings have always been a large part of the basis of the oppressive aspects of the Catholic sect's authoritative regime. The deceptive schemes of antichrist are much more powerful and prevalent and practiced as the right way to follow Christ and God than most believe.

Any time we allow any thing, idea or person to take any rightful place of Christ, God or His Spirit, we have succumbed to the deceptive work of the spirit of antichrist. It *is* that simple. It is an indictment against the body of Christ that so much that is currently and routinely done in the name of Christ and God is simply the deceptions of antichrist. This must necessarily be so since the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith under the guise of "Christianity," must occur before Christ returns (2 Ths. 2:3, Mt. 24:10) – but woe to the one who does such things!

Any time a person demands obedience from or takes a position of lordship over a brother or sister in Christ, that one has committed several evils:

- First, one must submit to deception, not the least of which is that authority has been delegated to them so that they have a right to exercise authority over other followers of Christ. There is not even one single instance in the New Testament where anyone has the right to order anyone else to do anything. Younger believers are commanded to *follow* or *imitate* (note well how many English versions wrongly insert “obey” into key passages – Heb. 13:17, 1 Ths. 5:12, etc. – but this is only a poor rendering of the original ideas expressed) and leaders are specifically forbidden from exercising authority over others. (compare Mk. 10:42-43, 1 Pet. 5:3, etc.) This is the paradox of true leadership in Christ.

- Once one has submitted to the deception of “delegated authority,” then one must choose self-will over the will of God. It is not God’s will that the poor brother be oppressed or dominated. Rather, it is the will of God that any poor brother be equipped so that he can do the work of the ministry and build up the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:12) But instead, we wrongly believe that it is the job and responsibility of the “pastor” and the paid professional staff to do these things.

- Because we have come to believe the deceptive scheme of antichrist that there is supposed to be a professional paid clergy class who does the work of the ministry, we believe it right for some to exalt themselves (often with the assistance of other men equally deceived and convinced of these errors) into a position that simply does not exist in the body of Christ. The word “clergy” derives from the Greek word “kleros” [2819] which refers to the “lot” or “portion” won in gaming or battle or by inheritance. In the New Testament, “kleros” referred to the people (God’s “heritage” 1 Pet. 5:3 KJV) but by the third century after being subjected to “theology” in the hands of the “church fathers” (especially Tertullian), it has since referred only to the clergy class. Yet the class, except to be condemned, is completely absent from the New Testament.

One who attempts to take the place of Christ (whether taken as a titled position or simply usurped in practice) disobeys Christ’s command that “It shall not be so among you!” (Mt. 20:26, etc.) and oppresses his brother or sister. Such a one needs to recall Christ’s admonition that “whatever you have done or not done to the least (poorest) of My brothers you have done or not done to Me.” (Mt. 25:40, 45) Serving the needs of the poor in accordance with the will of God *is* among Christ’s highest priorities for His genuine followers.

Jude wrote:

“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” (Jude 4)

And Peter wrote:

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” (2 Pet. 2:1)

Yet one readily finds “theological” restatements such as: “In view of apostates who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and *deny Christ*, it is crucial that believers ‘contend earnestly for the faith.’” This contraction, so easily made in English, fails to catch some of the deeper meaning held in the Greek. Both Jude and Peter chose an unusual word when they said, “Master.” In the Greek it is “despotes” [1203] – the word from which we derive the word “despot,” a usually cruel, absolute master over a realm or nation. The usual word for “lord” or “master” is “kurios.” [2962] But “despotes” stresses the absolute power and sovereignty of the lord or master in view. In the other instances of the use of “despotes” in the New Testament, it refers to the master’s right to command and literally own his servants. When it is given as the equivalent of the title of God, it is most often rendered “Sovereign Lord” in English. In Peter and Jude’s prophecies, it is Christ who is the “despotes,” the absolute Master.

But the restatements often simply say the renegade teachers will deny Christ, often inferring that the transcendency and greatness of Christ will be denigrated or dismissed. This deception has been aided on by the KJV rendering of Jude’s use of “despotes” as “Lord God” rather than “Master.” But no one – not even the worst of cultic fringes – really denies Christ in this way. That is, even in the strangest of cults, Christ is at least seen as some sort of superhero or guardian spirit to be emulated, imitated or mimicked – but none toss Him out entirely or deny His greatness. Nor is this what the prophecies said would happen.

The prophecies said they would deny their “despotes” who had bought them. The New Testament tells us that Christ bought His true followers with His blood. (1 Cor. 6:19-20, Rev. 5:9) In New Testament times, the slave who had been purchased had no rights, especially one who had been redeemed from indebtedness or prison. For Peter to use both the word “despotes” and the idea of redemption and ownership places more emphasis on denying the right of the Master to command His subjects than it says anything whatsoever about denying the transcendency or deity of Christ.

Thus we find Jesus’ dismissal of those “who practice lawlessness” (those who, rather than doing the will of the Lord, the Master, did only what was right in their own eyes – Mt. 7:23) is right in keeping with Peter’s and Jude’s prophecies. No one dismisses the absolute Lordship of Christ more so than does the one who decides for himself which “theology” to embrace, which “church” to attend, which “pastor,” “apostle,” “prophet” or other “man of God” to follow and support, etc. This is the very question Jesus asked elsewhere, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord’ but you don’t do what I say?” (Lk. 6:46) This *is* the lawlessness that is a primary characteristic of the end times. (Mt. 24:12) Men today most often call this “church” or “Christianity.”

The thrust of these prophecies is not that people would change or distort the nature of Christ – the thrust of these prophecies is that people would not come under His lordship even as they claimed His name. They will deny *Him* His right and privilege to command and direct their lives at the most basic of levels. The “pastor” and “Christian” philanthropist who demands obedience from those beneath them has simply denied the Lordship of Christ and followed after whatever is right in their own eyes. This is merely one more way of taking the place of Christ and this action carries with it a frightful penalty indeed – eternal dismissal from the presence of

Christ and God. Taking the place of Christ is not simply an innocent error – it is the rejection of Christ as King and Lord. That Christ has allowed so many sincere “Christians” to do this over the centuries proves nothing. *Many* will be dismissed on the last day who thought they lived their lives in obedience to Christ. (Mt. 7:21-23) Many of those will be “pastors” and “Christian” philanthropists who will be forced to stand aside as the poor whom they oppressed and dominated are accepted and warmly welcomed into the kingdom of God while they themselves are coldly escorted to eternal darkness.

Let he who has ears hear.

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