

EPISCOPAL SYSTEM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Nature of the System

The Episcopal system of church government is fundamentally hierarchical and rooted in external bureaucratic control. Authority in the local church is subordinated to a chain of command that originates outside the house. At the apex of this hierarchy sits the pope, followed by cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and finally filtering down to the parish priest. This structure distances the voice of God from the local house. In practice, if God were to speak to a congregation, His word would have to ascend the chain of bureaucracy, being filtered through layers of hierarchy, before reaching the people. Thus, the immediate voice of God to the house is effectively shut out.

The Local Priest Is Muted

In this system, the local priest is not free to govern by the Word of God and the immediate voice of Christ. Instead, he is bound to policies, approvals, and decisions made by distant authorities (bishop, archbishop, synod, or pope). As a result:

- He cannot implement God's direction without external approval.
- Final authority rests outside the house.
- His spiritual fathering role is reduced to administrative compliance.

Example

Consider a local Anglican priest who senses God directing him to initiate an intensive discipleship program focusing on father-son alignment and apostolic teaching. In an episcopal system:

- He must first submit the proposal to his bishop.
- The bishop, who may not discern the same urgency, could delay or reject it, insisting on denominational curricula instead.
- Consequently, the congregation misses the timely word of the Lord for their maturity.

The result is that the local priest's voice is drowned under bureaucracy, and the congregation is deprived of fresh bread (Word) meant specifically for them.

Apostolic Contrast

In an apostolic model of autonomous local government:

- The set man (local father) hears God directly for his house.
- He is free to govern according to the Word and Spirit without bureaucratic hindrance.
- The house matures by receiving fresh, unfiltered bread from heaven.

Thus, while episcopal systems delay, dilute, or deny God's voice, apostolic households transmit it directly, producing maturity and accuracy in the people.

Nicolaitanism in the Episcopal Model

The Episcopal system thrives on a sharp distinction between clergy and laity. This is the essence of Nicolaitanism:

- **Nico** – means to conquer, subdue, or rule.
- **Laity** – means the people.

Nicolaitanism literally means **“to conquer the people.”** Here, clergy dominate and rule over members rather than serving them as Christ commanded (Matthew 20:25–28). The Lord Jesus condemns this system:

- “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Rev 2:6 NKJV)
- “Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” (Rev 2:15 NKJV)

Christ hates Nicolaitanism because it usurps His headship, replaces the fathering grace of the set man with hierarchical control, and subjects God's people to domination rather than sonship.

Apostolic Perspective

From an apostolic lens, the Episcopal system is Jezebelian because:

- It replaces God's voice with human bureaucracy.
- It fosters dependence on external authorities rather than direct submission to Christ through the set man.
- It enslaves the people under clerical rule instead of maturing them as sons.

By contrast, the apostolic set man principle establishes autonomous local churches governed by Christ's headship through fathers in the house. Here, the Word flows unhindered, unmuted by bureaucracy or Nicolaitan control.

Summary Thought:

The Episcopal system of government is a man-made, hierarchical order that distances God's voice from His people and institutionalizes Nicolaitan control. It stands in opposition to the apostolic model of the early church, where Christ ruled His house through fathers and set men, not through bureaucratic ladders.

I pray that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened, so that you may know the hope of His calling, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

EPHESIANS 1:18

Grace, Peace, and Joy!