

The Last god to Go

By George Davis and Michael Clark

John closed his first epistle with these words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (1 John.5:21).

The Amplified Bible reads, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols (false gods)-- [from anything and everything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life]. Amen (so let it be)."

The *New Century Dictionary* defines an idol as ". . .any person or thing that is the object of blindly adoring regard or inordinate devotion." In short, an idol is anything, other than God, we ascribe worship to.

Christendom today venerates one icon above all others. It is the most deceitful, illusive and beloved idol known to religious man. While other idols are more obvious and more readily cast off, this one object of worship is often the last god to go. It is talked about on every "Christian" television and radio broadcast and is the topic of an untold number of "Christian" books. Many people spend their lives in undying devotion, burning incense to it from the wee hours of the morning to the late hours of the night. What is this idol that bewitches so many well-meaning Christians today? Is it a statue of some Phoenician god set up in a secret sanctum? No. It is more subtle than that. It is the god of ministry.

Behind this idol is an even more beguiling and sinister object of worship. As in the movie "The Wizard of Oz," if you pull back the curtain behind the flash, fire, and smoke of a lot of "ministry" today, you often discover a different culprit altogether. Cowering behind the curtain called "My Ministry" is the self-exalting fraud of self-interest. Much of what is done in the name of ministry today comes from an inordinate romance with our own reputations, and resembles a PR campaign, complete with regular mental polling to determine your ratings. At the end of the day, success is determined by going down an unseen checklist of all the people that can hurt or help your cause and realizing that all of them have been placated. Yes, "nothing succeeds like the appearance of success" (Christopher Lasch).

Jesus contrasted this idolatry to His own devotion to the Father. He told the Pharisees, "I don't receive glory from men, but I know you, that you don't have God's love in yourselves. I have come in my Father's name, and you don't receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, who receive glory from one another, and you don't seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41-44) Let's ponder these words for a moment.

One predominate trait of this idolatry is expressed in Christ's words, "If another comes in his own name, you will receive him." How often have we seen this? Great crowds gather to hear and see men of renown who come in their own name, but he who is true, who seeks the honor of the One true God, and refuses to accept honor from men is not received. One of the unwritten qualifications for this good ol' boys club is "You pat my back and I'll pat yours."

How often do we see men in ministry coming in their own names? There is Bobby _____ Ministries, Kenneth _____ Ministries, _____ and Associates, _____ University, _____ Bible Institute and so on. Carnal man loves to have his name in lights. Carnal followers love to be identified with big name personalities. Can you see John the Baptist with a huge sign on the cliff above the Jordan that read, "John the Baptist Ministries" or "Baptisms are Us"? No, John did not come in his own name. When messengers from the religious leaders in Jerusalem asked who he was, he simply answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." John did not come to lift himself up, but to make the path straight for the only One who God wanted to glorify, the very Son of God.

Jesus told those Pharisees, "I don't receive glory from men. But I know you . . ." There is little doubt what Christ is saying here. Because these Pharisees did not have God's love IN them nor seek God's honor, they did not truly worship God. Instead, they honored themselves. They looked for honor from men and not the honor that comes from God alone. Their religious cloak was only a ploy to gain power over the righteous.

Paul puts it this way, "But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. For (because) it isn't he who commends himself who is approved, but whom the Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:17-18). Elsewhere he wrote, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? For if I were still pleasing men, I wouldn't be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). It doesn't get any plainer than this. If the favor of

men is our focus, we cannot be the servants of Christ. We are not true if we do not seek the glory that comes from God alone. To receive glory in this life for the work of God is to miss receiving it from Him in the next. He will say to us as we stand in judgment, "I say unto you, you have had your reward."

When our sense of accountability is horizontal toward man rather than vertical toward God, we cannot possibly be faithful to Christ. When we look for praise from man, jealousy and unbelief creep in. Jesus said, "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another?" Belief is more than adhering to a system of doctrine; it is faithfulness to God's leading and obedience to Him alone. You live what you really believe.

Man's Good Ol' Boy Networks

Unless a man is free from private ambition and free from the need for man's approval, he cannot be a true servant to the people of God. Paul wrote, "[For being free from all, I have made myself bondman to all, that I might gain the most possible.](#)" (1 Corinthians 9:19, Darby) You cannot truly serve another and do what is best for them if you are fearful of falling into their displeasure. This fear is what makes today's good ol' boy networks work. In associations like these, the members are constantly trying to make themselves look better and win the approval of the power clique in hopes of moving up the ladder.

One ministry that is making great inroads on today's apostolic/prophetic community has a single man at the top who instructs the other ministries under his venue to cut off anyone who will not yield to their authority. He and his ruling board also advocate removing pastors who will not come under their power from their ministries. Having been raised in the Catholic Church, I (Michael) see the same controlling, top-down structure here in this Protestant group that I saw in my youth. The proverb has once again been proven, "Like mother, like daughters" (see Ezekiel 16:44-45).

This movement goes by different names, such as Third Day, Third Wave, or New Apostolic Reformation, and is the religious equivalent of the New World Order of the governments of the Beast system. These Third Day ministries professes to think outside the box, but a closer analysis of their structure reveals the same old box with a new look. The thing that they will not touch is the hierarchical structure that has been in place for the last 1700 years. If anything, what is coming is a greater concentration

of power to the few at the top. These elite few are taking to themselves the titles of apostles and prophets. The thinking goes, "If we just tack scriptural names and titles on what we have built in the past, then God will bless it." Nothing has really changed. The controlling spirit behind it is still the same.

This is the same method that David and Uzzah used to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Since the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel on an oxcart, they thought a new oxcart would be ideal to bring it on up to Mount Zion. God was not impressed then and he is not impressed now. Every oxcart needs people to steady it. Invariably the ox--those burdened with making the new system work--stumbles. People and movements always die and eventually all that is left is another cold denomination.

In order for the presence of God to return in power in HIS temple, the body of Christ, God must be true and all men be liars. God will not share His glory or power over the church with men, even if they are priests. God struck Uzzah dead because he and his priestly sons failed to follow the due order. We are not speaking of a cast of priests doing the work of the ministry. In the New Testament every man and woman is a priest and minister unto the Lord, set completely apart to follow Him alone.

Men Who Would Be Kings

One of the unwritten laws of good old boy networks is that the ruling members are to make the other ruling members look good at all times. You are never to dress down another leader in front of the "laity." An appearance of solidarity must always be maintained before the faithful or they might loose faith in your right to rule over them.

I, Michael, was in one such ministry in my youth. The head minister who supervised everyone with an iron hand instructed us to lift him up in the eyes of the public, mentioning his name in glorious terms at all times. If we did, he would build us up in the eyes of others, too, and we would all look good. What ever happened to Jesus' words, "If I be lifted up, I WILL draw all men nigh"? Carnal man wants his own name lifted up above Christ. This is the very essence of antichrist, which not only means against Christ, but also to displace Christ.

If we are slaves to the fear of man we cannot do what is best for them or ourselves. We will be too fearful to correct people when the Spirit shows us that they are out of order

and teaching false doctrines. The fear of man is two-sided. One side is the love of being seen and praised; the other side is the fear of rejection and scorn.

If Christ had looked for honor from man, no one would be saved today. The last place He would have gone was to the shameful and humbling death of the cross. Thank God that He shouldered his cross, bore it outside the camp, and suffered and died for our sins.

The Last God to Go

In the kingdom that Jesus came to establish, there is no priestly cast that rules over the saints. Paul planted believers in Christ. He did not plant churches or make himself head over them! Wherever two or more of these believers were found, that was the church in that area. God was autonomous over them as HIS priests. God's mind has not changed. Jesus is still building HIS church in one heart at a time. His church is built after the pattern in the heavens and cannot be aided by worldly, romanistic methods.

Paul cried out to the Corinthians,

"Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:1-4, NKJV).

Can anyone read this and not feel Paul's heart? Where are our hearts? Are we espoused to one Husband or have our ministers espoused us to themselves? Who and what are WE in love with? God's words, spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, ring as true today as they did back then. "But my people have forgotten me, they burn offerings to a delusion; they have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient roads, and have gone into bypaths, not the highway" (Jeremiah 18:15 RV). Do we burn offerings to a delusion or worship the one true God? Do we erect secret shrines and burn incense to our own image--our own ministries?

Paul wrote that the events of the Old Testament "happened. . .by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11 ASV). Its types and shadows are examples that often apply, in amazing detail, to God's current work in the Church.

Today many people are fulfilling that same idolatrous vision that Ezekiel saw in chapters eight and nine.

And He said to me, Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each man in the rooms of his image? For they are saying, Jehovah does not see us, Jehovah has forsaken the earth. . .And he brought me into the inner court of the house of Jehovah. And, behold, at the opening of the temple of Jehovah, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty five men with their backs to the temple of Jehovah. (Ezekiel 8:12 and 16a GLT).

The chapter starts out with these elders of Jerusalem sitting with Ezekiel in his house, looking good to the outward glance. But the prophet is taken out of this inner circle by an angel and shown what they are doing in the hidden chambers of their hearts. He is taken in a vision to the inner court of the temple and there he sees each man bowed down before his own image (imagination or conceit; see Hebrew meaning of image) in the inner court of the temple of God. They are driven by the god of Jealousy (Hebrew - envy). Under the guise of ministering to the people, they turned their backs on the temple of God built with living stones.

God then orders His angel in white linen (the garment of the true priests of His inner court [see Ezekiel 44:17-18] to go forth and mark the foreheads of all those who are mourning: "And the LORD said to him, 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.'" (Ezekiel 9:4, NKJV). Then the judgment falls on all that are not so marked.

Be warned. God has once again sent out his angels to mark the foreheads of all who are weeping over the fallen state of today's self-seeking church leadership. The unmarked who are profiting from this current apostasy and going along with it will be dealt with. Judgment begins first in the house of the Lord.

Are We Betrothed to One Husband?

How quickly we trade the living Son of God for other idols! Paul betrothed new believers to Jesus Christ Himself, not Paul, not a hierarchy! As the friend of the Bridegroom, he presented them as chaste virgins to Jesus, the only Bridegroom. They were not of Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas. Because they belonged to Jesus alone, all things were theirs in Christ (see 1 Corinthians 3).

Men in ministry are still betrothing the bride to themselves, constantly referring to my ministry, my congregation, or my church. They act as if THEY are the rightful bridegroom. If one of these men had been sent by Abraham to purchase a bride for Isaac, Isaac would still be waiting for his bride in Canaan (see Genesis 24). This self-seeking is perverse and sick and yet the people of God are taken in by this craftiness. Instead of following Jesus, they follow a man who tells them that HE has the NEW way to get to Jesus or the keys to all truth.

Paul warned the Ephesian Church:

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:29-31, NKJV).

Savage wolves that devour the flock of God will never produce a new wineskin that God's new wine can be poured into. They are IN the box, will never think outside the box, and will not allow others under their domain to do so either. Jesus spoke of the antichrist (in place of Christ) spirit when he said to the Jewish leaders, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for neither do you go in [yourselves], nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13). They can repaint the whitened sepulcher as often as they like, but inside it still holds a rotting corpse that kills everything that comes in close contact with it.

Today Christians still put up with those who are of another spirit, preaching another gospel, and portraying another christ. The more things change, the more they remain the same. But there is hope. We get letters from dear saints who are finding the truth in the One who said, "I am the Truth." The latest movements always point to themselves and their apostolic names, positions and titles. They want to rule over the believers, so

they rarely point them to Christ. If these men and women were honest, they would adopt the country song by Toby Keith as their theme song. "I wanna talk about me, talk about I."

The Heart Motivation

The motive of the heart determines whether you are true or not in the eyes of God. The current preoccupation with accountability in the church is to insure that the ones at the top remain there. The ambitious who are climbing toward the top use submission to get their piece of bread. Solomon wrote: "[To show partiality is not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress](#)" (Proverbs 28:21, NKJV). These people can be bought and in fact have been. They sell themselves for promotion in the eyes of honored men. As Jesus put it, "[No one can serve two masters; either he will hate the one and will love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other](#)" (Matthew 6:24). No wonder the church is filled with apostasy these days.

Man cannot maintain true accountability to men and remain faithful to God. If fear of being called to task by man motivates us, we are not truly serving God, but are bowing before lesser gods. One of the first lessons about God that I (George) learned as a child was, "God sees everything!" You can run but you cannot hide. He is around when there's no one else present. It is a sub par "Christianity" that requires man's scrutiny to force God's children into obedience. These accountability systems destroy any sense of the believer's responsibility of doing "all things as unto the Lord." The victims of this system find themselves doing all things unto church dictators. Paul spoke of this in the context of slaves and masters. "[Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men](#)" (Ephesians 6:6-7).

I, Michael, remember the paralysis that I felt when I was sent out to do a task for my master in the ministry group I mentioned earlier. Invariably, something would come up that was not covered by the leader's instructions, and I would be forced to make a decision on my own. No matter how hard I tried, I would always make the wrong choice and the inevitable dressing down followed. The fear (of man) has torment. I have since learned that this is typical cult behavior.

Our Lord "made Himself of no reputation." He didn't come to win friends and influence enemies or use soul power to build a large following. Jesus did not render eyeservice

and He was not a man-pleaser. His eyes were trained on the Father and He did only the things He saw the Father doing. Who was Jesus accountable to? Who did He honor? Who did He receive honor from?

In today's Church, we promote ministries like the world promotes rock stars. "Come and see Dr, Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher, Brother Wonderful! He moves in all nine gifts of the spirit and possesses all five ministry gifts in his humble little soul. He will be preaching a barn burner of a message and miracles in Holy Spirit power will follow (on demand)." It has taken lots of time, effort, and publicity, but some have finally reached superstar status, not caring who they used or stepped-on along the way.

Raise Yourself Up!

Today there is a mentality that says, "If I am raised up before all men, then I can draw all men to Christ." This is a flat out lie from Satan himself. Jesus was constantly pressured to promote Himself. An example is found in John 7. The feast of tabernacles was at hand, and His brothers scoffed at him, "[Go where your followers can see your miracles! . . . You can't become a public figure if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, prove it to the world!](#)" (John. 7:3-4 NLT). Christ was not concerned with becoming a public figure. He had come to bear witness to His Father, not Himself. "[He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory](#)" (John 7:18). Those who speak their own words from their own authority seek their own glory, but those who are sent by God seek only His. These are the genuine article.

The way of Christ is to decrease, not increase. It is the way of lowly service, not ruling over. It is the way of the cross, not the way of gilded thrones and posturing over the priests of God.

Choose the cross, dear saint, not the way that seems right to men but ends in death. Jesus is the Pattern Son. Follow Him alone. Then when you stand before Him you will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," not "I say unto you, you have already had your reward."