

How can you say, "We are wise, for we have the Law of the Lord," when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?
(Jeremiah 8:8)

I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps. Correct me, Lord, but only with justice – not in Your anger, lest You reduce me to nothing.
(Jeremiah 10:23, 24)

Jeremiah 23 (entire chapter)

Idolatry

Mention *idolatry*, and most people will answer, "Where? I don't see anyone bowing down to statues." But modern idols often are more than physical; they can be anything that has the place in a person's life that rightly belongs to God. An idol can be a person, a belief or an idea. It can be something as simple as excessive devotion to a sports team to as complicated and entrenching as a philosophy. Anything that replaces God as the center of a person's life is an idol.

All too often, idols are found in churches. While there are many churches that stay close to the Lord and do not fall into this category, there are many others that have forgotten that the Church in general is the Body of Christ, and belongs to God. Doctrinal creeds not based on the authority of Scripture that generate the idea that "this is *our* church" instead of the church belonging to God are one such example of idolatry in a congregation. Scriptural interpretations that twist the original, intended meaning of the Word into something completely different are another; for example, Noah's curse on his grandson Canaan (Genesis 9:25) was used for hundreds of years to justify the enslavement of Africans... even though Canaan (most likely) didn't look anything like someone from Africa. There is much debate now about theologies that stress political solutions to the problems we face and the idea of *collective salvation* – no one is saved unless everyone is saved, so we have to put into effect what Jesus set up so we can all experience salvation. This is simply a dressed-up version of salvation by works, which the Bible clearly contradicts in Romans 3: 23-24 and Ephesians 2:8-9 (among numerous other verses). Collective salvation also lets the person "off the hook" (as it were) for their own sins, and it is those individual, personal sins that Jesus died to save you, personally, from. No passage expresses that more clearly than Ezekiel chapter 18, which is summed up in verse four: *The soul who sins is the one who will die*. And I don't have time to go into churches that have simply become mere revenue generators or holy "pyramid schemes," whose pastors or church boards are in it only to make a pile of money; I've written about these before.

God is calling the Church, the Body of Christ, out from the churches. I believe the reason for this is that God has one final, great move He wishes to put into place to bring as many people into the Kingdom of God as possible before the End Times fully commence. In order to accomplish this, believers must be especially careful to stay as connected to God as possible so they can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit directing their paths. This does not necessarily mean that a believer has to leave their congregation;

indeed, I believe the Spirit wants to use sold-out believers to get others within the congregation to the same status. At the same time, however, if a pastor or priest preaches another Salvation other than the one Jesus offers, and is resistant to letting the Spirit bring about change (which is disobedience to and rebellion against the Lord), then leaving that congregation altogether and finding one that is sold out to the Lord might be worth seeking God's direction about. The time is growing short.

The role the pastor plays in the life of a congregation cannot be overstated. To begin with, pastors are a function specifically created by God for the life of the Body of Christ, the same as apostles and prophets (Ephesians 4:11). Such a person is entrusted by God with a group of believers in order to teach and guide them in the things of the Lord, even as the pastor learns of them. Pastors and ministers *must* be sold out to God for their job and not distracted by the things of this world, because they will be held accountable by God for what He has entrusted them with.

With the time growing short to Jesus' return, God is making distinctions between those pastors who are in it for Him and those who are in it for themselves. In the latter category are those who are in ministry either to specifically push a world view contrary to the Word of God, or simply to live lavish lifestyles off of the donations of those who sincerely donate to what they believe is the work of the Lord. Such pastors and ministers must *repent* – **now** – and either leave the ministry (if they were never truly called to it in the first place) or do the things God required of them at first. If they do not, God will inflict perhaps the most severe punishment He can assign in such cases... He will let them alone.

After all, God disciplines those he loves in order to bring them into His perfect way (Revelation 3:19), and leaving them alone often means such pastors (and congregations) are out of His protection. Despite the warnings of both Scripture and the signs of the times, they will not be ready for when God calls the Body of Christ back for its Head, the Bride of Christ called to prepare for her wedding to the Lamb, the "catching away" of the Church. Left here on the Earth, they will be forced into a choice with neither option being pleasant; repent later and live underground as a tribulation period saint and church (and possibly face martyrdom), or be manipulated by the antichrist and the false prophet into worshipping him, preaching their kingdom, taking their mark... and sharing their punishment forever.

Whatever else you may think of TV and radio personality Glenn Beck, he is quite correct in one of his statements; the battle is already won – it's only a matter of choosing which side you want to be on.