

“COME FORTH....”

When John heard the angel announce the impending doom of “Babylon,” another heavenly voice warned, “Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). Opinions differ concerning what *Babylon* symbolizes, but the **warning** is not symbolic: God’s people must flee or perish. Lot received the same warning regarding Sodom (Gen. 19:13), and Paul echoed it to Christians (2 Cor. 6:17).

We must continue to sound forth these warnings to those in the kingdom today: leave that which is corrupt and apostate. Those who were adults half a century or more ago could weep at what we have seen happen in the precious bride of Christ. It is no exaggeration to say that in this time span elders and preachers in hundreds of congregations of the Lord’s people have repudiated (consciously or unconsciously) the authority of God’s Word, producing various stages of digression. Some churches are naively, gradually drifting from the Truth (Heb. 2:1–3), as the devil has his way with them incrementally, but nonetheless certainly. This number has mushroomed in the past decade, especially regarding fellowship compromises. Concerned members may find it hard to “put their finger” on why they are “uncomfortable,” but they sense that “something is not right.” Other congregations are past the “gradual” stage and are “quickly removing” from Christ (Gal. 1:6)—running pell-mell into the open arms of denominationalism.

Still others long ago lost their Scriptural identity. Preachers therein are attuned more to feel-goodism, social causes, attracting crowds, and/or entertainment than to God’s Word. They revel in their fellowship with the denominations, having adopted both the language and practices of Ashdod. They manifest utter contempt for God’s planned-from-eternity pattern for His church and for all who still respect His pattern (Eph. 3:10–11).

They observe “Easter” and “Christmas” as religious “holydays.” They parade speakers through their pulpits, notorious for their soft, compromising, and/or blatantly liberal pronouncements. They employ denominational films and books for “Bible class” material. Their preachers dwell on “unity” “love,” and “grace” as **they redefine** these terms, rather than as the **Bible defines** them. Instead of Scripture-filled Gospel sermons (2 Tim. 4:24), they treat hearers to entertaining stories and ego-stroking mush for 15 or 20 minutes each Sunday. They give no thought to declaring the plan of salvation (if they still believe in it) or offering an invitation. Some of them prove how “hip” they are by sporting open collar and untucked shirttail in the pulpit.

Some of these congregations, founded generations ago by sacrificial and faithful saints, now flout their antinomianism by using instruments of music and women preachers. They deny both the necessity and possibility of the restored church. I applaud such who have replaced

Church of Christ on their buildings with an appropriate sectarian name (at least they are honest in this respect).

There are good solid citizens of the kingdom all over the world who now find themselves in a congregation of which they have been members for perhaps 10, 20, or 30 years. They know that this is not the same church they were members of just a few years ago. Scripture mandates that we challenge faithful saints in such congregations: “Come forth... that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

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