

# God's Call To Ecclesiastical Separation

Revelation 18:4-8

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-04-29

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## Text

18:4 And I heard another Voice from heaven saying: "Come out of her, my people, so as not to participate in her sins and so as not to receive of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered about her her iniquities. 6 Render to her just as she rendered to you; yes, pay her back double, according to her deeds; in the cup that she mixed, mix double for her. 7 To the extent that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, by so much give her torment and sorrow; because in her heart she says, 'I sit a queen, and am not a widow; and I will certainly not see sorrow.' 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and sorrow and famine—and she will be burned up with fire; because the Lord God who has judged her is strong.

## Introduction

In the last twenty years or so there have been many Christians going back into the Roman Catholic Church or into the Eastern Orthodox Church and repenting of the Reformation and repenting of the so-called sin of separation. (Now, I think there is a sinful separation, but the Reformation surely wasn't it.) These people who have been (as they word it) "going home to Rome" have painted the Reformers as breaking the unity of the body of Christ. Of course, the Reformers said that it was Rome that broke the unity of the body of Christ by betraying the head of the church - the Lord Jesus Christ, abandoning true catholic doctrine, rejecting Biblical law, and disciplining people simply for believing what the church has always held to - the five solas. The Reformers claimed to be the true catholics who were were simply seeking to bring the church back to the true doctrines and practices of old.

But in any case, one of the big controversies at the time of the Reformation was this question: "Is separation Biblical, or is it treason against Christ?" Of course, the Reformers reversed that, asking, "Is staying in a apostate church Biblical, or is it treason against Christ?"

And the same two questions come up in every generation. People have conscience issues over separation. Is it sin? After all, Christ prayed for the unity of the church in John 17. That was one of His passions. So obviously we should desire unity, right? Failure to desire unity is failure to have the heart of Christ. I do believe that. The question is, "What kind of unity."

And some struggle in a totally opposite direction - they are so determined that everyone must agree with them that they have left the institutional

church altogether. It is a hyper-perfectionism. As one apocryphal separatist was reputed to have told his wife “All be heretics save me and thee and sometimes I have my doubts about thee.” I’ve known people who were actually that separatistic - they have alienated everyone - even their own families.

So what is the Biblical balance? This sermon will not address every question that people might have on this important topic, but let me recommend three books that do.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote this book called [The Basis for Christian Unity: An Exposition of John 17 and Ephesians 4](#) . In this book he shows exactly what Christ prayed for. John 17 is one of the most abused and misinterpreted passages in the ecumenical movement. Jesus didn’t pray for an organizational unity that ignores truth or ignores holiness. Instead, he prayed for unity in truth, unity in holiness, unity in submitting to God’s inerrant Word, unity empowered by the Holy Spirit, etc. I think this book is a helpful corrective.

Here is a second book that I have found helpful. In 1821 the presbyterian, Thomas M’Crie, published this book titled, [Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church: Her Divisions, and their Removal](#)<sup>7318b1c9-acbd-46b3-ba9e-142bdb784b35</sup>. He points out that the Bible guarantees a true unity of the church in the future without any compromise and that it will be a unity based on the Word, wrought by the Spirit, grounded in Christ-alone, etc. And it will be a unity that was not present in the apostolic age. Don’t look back there. In Ephesians 4 Paul says that they were tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and 1 John says that there were many false teachers who had split off from the true church and claimed to be the true church. But the same passage promises that the church will one day grow up and be mature and be 100% united. What man cannot produce, God’s Holy Spirit will indeed produce. Ephesians 4 guarantees it. But the book also goes through the horrible outcomes that happen when you follow the false unity promoted by Rome, Eastern Orthodoxy, latitudinarianism, and other heretical movements. Those unity movements are actually treason against Christ; they rebel against the clear commandments of Christ. It is a book that clearly lays out the nature of true unity that the church will gradually grow into. It is a great corrective against the compromised ecumenical movements of the last one hundred years. By the way, since Jesus prayed for unity, and since the Father always hears the prayers of a His Son, it’s a great argument for postmillennialism. There will one day be what Christ asked for.

The third booklet is actually just a long article. It is Herbert Carson's booklet, [United We Fall: A Study of Current Ecumenical Pressures](#)<sup>7318b1c9-acbd-46b3-ba9e-142bdb784b35</sup>. I want to start my sermon this morning by reading a paragraph from this book. Carson says, For many in the churches today, and especially for the leaders, the prime sin is that of disunity. They point to the divided state of Christendom with its multiplicity of denominations. This, they maintain, is the supreme scandal of our time. Their prime aim therefore is the reunion of the sundered fragments to produce one Church. Such, they claim, is the object of Christ's prayer, and the movement to realize this aim must be from the Holy Spirit. In spite of the implied charge in such a claim, that those who oppose are resisting the Spirit, there are many who are prepared to do just that. They see ecumenism not as the great hope for the future, but as one of the most serious contemporary challenges to a truly biblical Christianity. It is therefore not simply one more movement to be tolerated, or even ignored. It is rather an enemy of the Gospel which must be resisted.<sup>1</sup>

## **I. This forms a small philosophy of ecclesiastic separation**

So today I will use this passage in Revelation to give you an introduction to a Biblical philosophy of separation. He calls the Jewish believers who were still in the compromised Jewish church, "Come out of her, my people." He wasn't denying that there were true believers who were still members of that church; he was denying that they should stay there.

***A. Since Jerusalem is already destroyed (vv. 1-3), this call is not a call to leave a geographical place (Jerusalem). For one thing, Christians had left that city three and a half years earlier***

Of course, the first objection that some might bring up is that this is simply a call for believers to leave Jerusalem before it falls in AD 70. But if you follow the time clues of this book, that interpretation is impossible. We saw last week that Jerusalem had just fallen. There were no believers in Jerusalem. They had left Jerusalem three and a half years earlier. So Jerusalem fell in AD 70 (that's verses 1-3) and once it fell there was no city or temple to leave. None of the temple priests survived. There were no more Sadducees. And the rest of this chapter happens shortly after that destruction in AD 70. This is an admonition for people who had survived the AD 70 War.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Carson, [United We Fall: A Study of Current Ecumenical Pressures](#)<sup>7318b1c9-acbd-46b3-ba9e-142bdb784b35</sup>, (Faiford Close, Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1975), p. 1

***B. All that remained in Israel for believers to leave was the rabbinic synagogue system of Tanaaitic Judaism led by chief rabbi, Akiva ben Joseph***

So what was left for believers to come out of? If you follow the time sequence of this book carefully, there is only one answer. The answer is that God was calling believing Jews to leave the rabbinic synagogue system of Tanaaitic Judaism that was led by chief rabbi, Akiva ben Joseph. And a remnant of Jews did indeed leave; they left the synagogues by the droves.

In chapter 14 I looked at that rabbinic system that survived the fall of Jerusalem and that was successful in making another alliance with Rome. Rabbi Akiva was the false prophet who called down fire from heaven, made statues speak, and did other miracles to deceive his fellow Jews. In fact, he was so impressive that he deceived Titus into giving him full reign to establish a rabbinic center in Israel under the emperor's protection. So the call to come out of her was a call to separate from the remnants of Talmudic Judaism that survived in the synagogues. There was no other organizational "something" for believers to leave. This was clearly a call for Jewish believers to leave the apostate Jewish church - a church that pretended to be faithful to God, but was actually very compromised.

***C. These were words that would elicit strong reactions from the compromised Jewish church just as similar calls had in the past***

And just as such words are fighting words for compromised churches today, those were fighting words in the first century. They elicited strong reaction and persecution from the Jews once again, and the Jews once again had the power of the Roman state behind them. The Jewish church of John's day was extremely offended that people were pulling out of the synagogues and were joining the apostolic churches. So history records that fierce Jewish persecution of the church persisted until AD 136 - the end of the Bar Kochba rebellion.

Of course, this offense at the Bible's calls to separation goes way back - long before AD 70. For example, when the leaders of the synagogue system accused Paul of being a schismatic who taught new things, Paul totally disagreed. He proved that they were the schismatics who were teaching new things rather than teaching the Bible, and he said of himself, "... to this day I stand, ...saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come." He said that there was nothing he taught that could not be backed up from the Old Testament. He claimed that they were the ones who

had abandoned the Bible, not him. He was a Biblicist.

But long before Paul, Jesus also called people to leave the Jewish church, as did John the Baptist. This is not a new doctrine. Nor was John the Baptist the first to call for separation from a compromised church. Ezekiel 37 and Zechariah 11 both used God's separation of two sticks as an image of the fact that God Himself had divided the true church from the false church. Even the true church had its sins and problems, but there was something more serious about one of those two churches that required complete separation in order to be faithful to God. Of course, the same prophecies anticipated a day when God would bring about such Reformation that the two sticks that were separated would once again be united in truth and grace.

Just one more example - in 2 Chronicles 30 Hezekiah sent runners throughout the land of northern Israel to tell people to leave that apostate church and to join the true church in the south. It created great offense. Over and over again in the Old Testament God spoke of a minority remnant that He had called out of the corrupt church (2 Kings 19:30-31; 2 Chron. 34:9; Is. 1:9; 10:20-22; etc.).

The point is that there have been repeated Reformations down through history, and the portion of the church that refused to reform was abandoned. It became what the book of Revelation calls a synagogue of Satan. So this passage is only one out of many Scriptures that call for separation. It would not have seemed odd at all to those who knew their Bibles.

## **II. This voice represents God's will ("heaven... My people" - v. 4a)**

Verse 4 begins by pointing out that this voice represents God's will: "And I heard another Voice from heaven saying..." And the fact that this voice speaks of "my people" shows that it is God Himself who is giving these directives through His angel. This doctrine of separation we will be looking at represents God's will. Believers who were afraid that separation might be sin (as the synagogues claimed that it was; as Rome claims that it is; as Eastern Orthodoxy claims that it is) needed to know that this really was God's will. There was enormous pressure upon them from family and friends not to leave the church. Perhaps many generations of their family had been members of the church, and the relatives were feeling betrayed when Christians left the church. So this remnant of believers really needed to know that this was God's will. And believers need to understand that today as well.

### **III. John's call to separate from the apostate church of Judaism is not an option, but is a command (v. 4b - Εξελεθε is imperative) that is echoed in many other Scriptures**

But not only does verse 4 indicate that this call to separate was within the will of God, God leaves believers no other option. He does not say, "Some of you can feel called to stay in the church and reform it." No; separation was a mandate; a command. The Greek uses the imperative, meaning that this is not an option.

Failure to leave liberal churches that deny Christ's deity or that deny the Gospel is disobedience to Almighty God. It is sin. True believers who refuse to leave the Roman Catholic church are in rebellion against God. God clearly says, "Come out of her, my people, so as not to participate in her sins and so as not to receive of her plagues."

#### ***A. Scripture forbids us to have fellowship with unbelief (2 John 7-11)***

Now, because this negative message runs so contrary to modern calls to tolerance, I want to spend five minutes proving that this is not an isolated call for believers to leave apostate churches. Let's do a quick survey of some Scriptures that these Jews would have already had in their canon. They should have already known about this imperative, but like Lot and his wife who were called to leave Sodom, they were slow to move - way too slow.

First, look at 2 John. And I'm going to read 2 John 7-11 about fellowship (koinonia) and the verbal form, κοινωνέω. What is legitimate koinonia and what is illegitimate? Let's start reading at verse 7:

2John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

And people respond, "But didn't Jesus hang around sinners? Wasn't He a friend of sinners?" Yes, He preached to them, talked with them, and was nicer to them than the Pharisees were, but Luke 7:34 is actually a quotation of the Pharisees. It says, "'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" He wasn't the kind of friend of sinners that put up with sin. No, He called them to leave their sin, as all true friends should do.

It all depends upon how you define friend.

There was a sense in which He was friendly and open. But Jesus was never covenanted with sinners. He did not fellowship with unbelief. Hebrews 7:26 is quite clear when it says that Jesus was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” He was “separate from sinners.” And He calls us to be as well.

### ***B. Scripture commands us to reprove apostasy (Eph. 5:11)***

Flip over to Ephesians 5:11. This also speaks against fellowship with unbelief. The word fellowship or koinonia is a very strong word. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” Most translate that as “reprove them.” But either way, it shows a responsibility to not passively ignore dangerous evils that are present. John Ashbrook used this analogy:

Suppose that you are driving down your street and come to a place where someone has removed a manhole cover. You narrowly avert disaster. You realize that, had your front wheel dropped into that hole, you might have been killed. However, you have not discharged your responsibility as a citizen by avoiding the hole. You have a responsibility to stop and see to it that authorities are notified and a barricade erected to protect your neighbors.

Likewise, as a Christian, you have a responsibility assigned by God to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness as displayed in apostate Christianity and other Satanic religions. The spirit of today is, “Don’t be negative.” That is not a Biblical admonition. Scripture commands us to reprove apostasy.<sup>2</sup>

### ***C. Scripture commands us to purge apostasy out of the church if possible (1 Cor. 5:1,2)***

Third, look at 1 Corinthians 5. This is a passage that commands the church to purge apostasy out of the church if at all possible. 1 Corinthians 5, beginning to read at verse 1:

1Cor. 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

There are many churches that approve of worse - homosexuality, and even goddess worship. Far from failing to discipline, they protect and even celebrate these vile behaviors. You may not have heard of it, but the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church USA have had joint worship services where they worshiped an ancient sex goddess. They have both approved of homosexual pastors. There are numerous other deviancies that

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2014/04/02/axioms-of-separation-chapter-1-part-1/> I also got the general idea of these four subpoints from John Ashbrook.



they have both approved at the highest levels. When it becomes institutionally impossible to discipline evil that God commands us to discipline, then the church itself should be disciplined by separation. That's why the Reformers quit treating Rome as a true church after the Council of Trent. When Trent pronounced anathemas against true doctrine, they became hardened in apostasy and reformation or discipline became impossible.

God told the seven churches that if they tolerated evil, He Himself would fight against them and even remove them from the right of claiming to be true churches. He told one church that He would pluck of their candlestick. In other words, they were no longer going to be considered a true church. Just because they call themselves a church doesn't make them one. God is the one who gets to decide.

***D. Scripture commands us to not be yoked together (work together) with unrighteousness in spiritual endeavors (2 Cor. 6:14-18)***

Next, look at 2 Corinthians 6. This passages quotes from Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 52, both of which call for separation from compromise and the establishment of a new pure church. I'll begin reading at verse 14.

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." Come out from among them and be separate. Do not be unequally yoked.

The yoke was an instrument that bound two animals together in a joint endeavor of plowing. And applied to the church, being yoked together would mean that you are jointly trying to engage in ministry (in spiritual plowing) with people who are not even believers. So this passage means that believers and unbelievers should never be covenanted together; never to be joined together at the neck; never to be part of the same tabernacle of church; and never to call apostates brothers and sisters. You can buy things from them and sell things to them; you can operate in common functions in the same city, but you cannot covenant with them in any venture.

And by the way, the prohibition of covenanting with unbelievers applies way beyond church unity. It applies to marriage. Believers should never marry unbelievers because that is covenanting together; that is being unequally

yoked together. It applies to believing nations entering into covenant with unbelieving nations. This is why America, back when it was still a Christian nation, should not have entered into covenant with the United Nations. And let me illustrate that from 2 Chronicles 19.

When Jehoshaphat (king of Judah, the king of the faithful southern nation) joined Ahab (king of apostate Israel) in a covenant to war against Syria because he thought it was a good cause (after all, the Syrians were a common threat to both nations), God rebuked him for doing so. Why can't two nations covenant together against a common evil cause? There are good reasons, but it should be enough that God tells us not to. God was very upset with Jehoshaphat, and one part of his rebuke simply said,

“Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you.

***E. You cannot preserve a Biblical position without crusading for it (2 Chron. 30:6-12)***

The last passage I want to use as background is 2 Chronicles 30. There was a tremendous revival under Hezekiah, but not all joined in that Reformation and in that repentance. Many defended the mainline church and would not come out. 2 Chronicles 30 is Hezekiah's call to separate from an apostate church. I'll start reading at verse 6.

2Chr. 30:6 Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: “Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see. 8 Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. 9 For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.” 10 So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. 11 Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. 12 Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.

This kind of separation is not an attribute of the post-modern evangelical church. They are too busy being nice, preserving their income and programs, preserving the status quo, and ‘loving’ one another that they fail to realize that the Bible defines true love in a quite different way. Separation is

probably considered by some of them to be the chief evil of today, when in reality it is one of the virtues that God calls us to.

#### **IV. The reasons given by John for why Jewish Christians must separate from Judaism and its connected synagogue system**

So let's look at some of the reasons given by the angel for why Jewish Christians were absolutely mandated to separate from Judaism and its connected synagogue system. I believe these remain legitimate reasons today.

##### ***A. The presence of true believers ("my people") in this apostate church was not a good reason to stay (v. 4b)***

The first reason is given in the phrase "my people" in verse 4. "Come out of her my people." God was not denying that there were true believers in the compromised Jewish church - even after AD 70. He affirmed that there were true believers in that apostate Jewish church. But it didn't matter. That is not a good excuse for staying.

The same is true today. I have met numerous people who stay in apostate denominations like the PCUSA, the ELCA, the UMC, the ABC, and other mainline denominations. And one of their reasons is that there are still true believers in the church. And my response is, "Why!!? Why are they still in the church when God has commanded them to leave? It is rebellion. It is sin." Some will say, "Well my local church is still evangelical and is in the PCUSA." But again the question comes, "Why!!? Why are they still in the church when God has commanded them to leave? Why are they propping up evil with portions of their tithes and offerings?" And when you examine these supposedly uncompromising local churches, you will find that they have indeed compromised on many many doctrines and practices. It's the frog in the kettle syndrome. The changes have happened so slowly that they have not noticed the compromises. Nothing short of calling it sin will wake up some of these compromised believers.

Are there true believers in the Roman Catholic Church? I believe so. I have met a number. But if they are to remain faithful to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then they should leave. At the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church pronounced curses - pronounced anathemas against the Gospel of justification by faith alone, anathemas against the sufficiency of Scripture, anathemas against the sufficiency of Christ and against the rest of the Five Solas and a bunch of other Protestant doctrines. Those anathemas

made them apostate. Their heresy was entrenched at the highest levels. Our confession calls Rome a synagogue of Satan and refuses to acknowledge that it is a true church. Doug Wilson calls it a true church though he also believes it is an errant church. But it is heresy to call Rome a true church. The Confession calls it a synagogue of Satan just like this Jewish church was. The presence of true believers in a church does not legitimize the church; it compromises those true believers.

***B. Staying made these Christians share in the church's sins (v. 4c). This involved three dangers:***

But the angel goes on to give a second reason. He says, “so as not to participate in her sins and so as not to receive of her plagues.” The word “participate” is verbal form of koinonia and is better translated by the New King James Version as “share.” The word group has the idea of covenantal involvement with.<sup>3</sup> There are three ways that you can share in sins. It is not just an actual participation in them. That is only one of the meanings.

**The danger of sin-sharing by means of covenantal guilt**

The first way is covenantal guilt. If you are a vowed member of a church, you share in that church's rewards in heaven, but you also share in her disciplines, if the church is worthy of discipline. Not all sin is worthy of discipline, but deliberate rebellion is. But this covenantal connection to the church of which you are a member is one of the reasons why our hearts need to be into the confession of sins that comes before communion even if we have not personally committed the sins. Because of our covenantal relationship, we can share in covenantal guilt. It's a real thing.

To see how this works, just read some of the prayers of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They confessed sins that they had never personally committed, but they mourned over those sins of the church because they were covenantally part of that church. So covenantal guilt is the first way of sharing or having koinonia in sins.

**The danger of sin-sharing by means of failing to rebuke the sin (sin of omission)**

The second way we can have sin-sharing is by failing to rebuke the sins of

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3 “The concept of koinōnia or fellowship moved a step beyond friendship and two steps beyond acquaintance. For example, in secular Greek, the term was used to describe relationship in marriage. Just as Koine is the common Greek spoken in the agora, so the koinōnia word group focuses on what is held in common by one with another.” Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 39, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 332.

the church we are connected to. Even if the church does not repent, you can at least get it off your chest that you have said something. But many people in apostate churches will not point out all the sins of their church. If they do they will get kicked out. J. Gresham Machen and many others were kicked out of the mainline presbyterian church simply because they would not participate in its evils. You either aggressively resist the heinous sins of abortion, homosexuality, goddess worship, and other evils and are thrown out of the church as a result or you act evangelical-nice and begin to accept the sin as being not that serious or at least get comfortable with the sin. Over the past thirty years I have watched friends become less and less concerned with sins that they were once very opposed to, and this frog in the kettle syndrome has made them less worried about the sins. But ignoring sin is a sin of omission.

### **The danger of sin-sharing by means of falling into the same sin or being leavened by sin**

The third way of sin-sharing is to eventually partake of the sin ourselves - the sin of commission. The conservatives who stayed in liberal churches like the PCUSA had to compromise on numerous sins, while pretending to oppose a more serious sin. Initially conservatives in the PCUSA voted against those who denied the inerrancy of Scripture, but after being accused of being divisive over and over again, they softened and only applied inerrancy to passages of the Bible that dealt with salvation. Initially they opposed women pastors, but when feminism became entrenched (and anyone who opposed it was demonized) they accepted it grudgingly and opposed homosexuality. When homosexuality became part of the PCUSA culture they accepted active homosexuals as members, but opposed them as pastors. After all, they thought, what better way of preaching the Gospel to them if we accept them as members? At every stage they give the illusion of being reformers, when in reality they were gradually being deformed. It's the frog in the kettle syndrome. As one so-called evangelical pastor of a PCUSA church right here in Omaha told me, "I only oppose ordination of homosexuals. The Lord's Table should be open to all, including homosexuals because grace is open to all." He was using the language of the Gospel to deny the central purpose of the Gospel - to save us from our sins. Those who stay in mainline denominations almost always end up becoming somewhat corrupted, and their children completely apostatize.

#### ***C. As a result of sin-sharing believers were judged (v. 4d)***

The next phrase may not seem fair, but it says, "and so as not to receive of

her plagues.” Why would true believers (and God Himself acknowledges that they were true believers) be punished right along with the apostate church? The answer is, “Because they are in the church and covenantally connected to the church.” When the ship goes down, everyone sinks with it, whether believer or unbeliever. Sure the believers may end up in heaven, but they are going to be judged in time and in history for their compromises.

And I have seen the horrible disciplines of the Lord fall upon numerous people in these mainline denominations as they lose their moorings, lose their children, and waste years of their lives in fruitless ministry that God guarantees that He will not bless. They are like Lot who lost everything, including his family. Why? Because he would not separate from apostasy. What a horrible feeling to look back at the end of your life and realize that everything you did was wasted; everything you did propped up a tottering apostate denomination, and that God was offended that you had helped His enemies. You don’t want that to be the legacy of your life - that you spent a lifetime supporting an organization that God considers an enemy. If any of you move to other cities, do not join an apostate denomination, even if the local church is believing.

#### ***D. God does not overlook sinful compromises (v. 5)***

And for believers who have a hard time believing that God will actually judge their church, verse 5 gives another reason to come out - God will not overlook sinful compromises. “For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered about her her iniquities.” God does not overlook what is happening. It may look like it when these churches continue to exist and continue to have money. But has God blessed those churches? No. They have been given over to Satan, and the churches are filled with demons who neutralize the efforts of the evangelicals.

#### ***E. God does not overlook His rebukes being resisted or His rebukers being persecuted (v. 6a)***

Verse 6 goes on to say that God will not overlook how His people have been treated by the apostate church. “Render to her just as she rendered to you; yes, pay her back double, according to her deeds; in the cup that she mixed, mix double for her.” God follows his own law in judgment - there is automatically at least a 200% retribution to those who refuse to repent.

Now, in the first century, Judaism did continue to persecute the true church from AD 70 to AD 136, at which time it was almost wiped off the face of the map. God’s patience only lasts so long. God sends people to rebuke, but if

those rebukes are resisted or if His rebukers are persecuted, God will remember.

And all you have to do is read the biography of J. Gresham Machen to see the way uncompromising believers get persecuted in mainline denominations. Yet even though pastors and believers who speak up are viciously attacked and persecuted for their solid stands on the Scripture, other believers kept silent and hoped to be ignored and stayed in the denomination. Some stayed in to keep their pensions; others stayed in for other reasons.

But this verse indicates that believers who stayed in the mainline church were guilty of every persecution that the church brought against true believers. And if you don't think the PCUSA and other mainline denominations persecute believers, you need to read up on it a bit. There is enormous persecution not only of those within the church who still hold to conservative values, but retired ministers, and those like us who are outside of the church.

#### ***F. Her apostate deeds rendered her fit for judgment (v. 6)***

But that same verse shows yet another reason - her apostate deeds render her fit for judgment, yet here you are doing the opposite of God and rewarding her with tithes and offerings, and teaching Sunday School, and keeping the church afloat. Believers actually fight against God's disciplines when they stay in apostate denominations. It is a form of rebellion. They are working against God's hand of discipline.

#### ***G. She glorified herself, not God (v. 7a)***

Verse 7 gives another reason - she glorified herself, not God. "To the extent that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, by so much give her torment and sorrow." Many of these mainline denominations are about keeping the church and its programs going. They don't ask what God desires or what would best glorify God.

At the time of the Reformation the clergy were particularly obnoxious in their self-promotion, self-enrichment, self-glorifying, and living in luxury. Hus, Luther, and other reformers spared no words in exposing the shamelessness of these people who would buy and sell offices, sell forgiveness, and turn the true God-centered Gospel into a man-centered Gospel. The Roman Catholic church tortured and martyred many Protestants simply for owning a Bible or teaching their children to say the Lord's prayer.

This is why it is such a stench in my nostrils when former Evangelicals in Omaha and Lincoln have repented of the Reformation and repented of separation. They ignore the murder of Protestants and elevate unity to the status of an idol. That is not a Biblical unity. That is an offense to God and a denial of the principles of separation that God mandates in these verses.

But this verse is also a warning to us. We must not go down the road of self-glorification. And believe me, it is so easy to go down that road. We must not become man-centered. We must not be a personality centered church. This church is not about Phil Kayser or any other elder. Any church that fails to be God-centered and that begins to rotate around a powerful human personality is in danger of sliding down this road. God hates it when the church glorifies herself. And sadly this verse describes many mega churches.

#### ***H. She lived independently of God (v. 7b)***

The next part of verse 7 says, “because in her heart she says, ‘I sit a queen...’” Chilton points out that this parallels the church of Laodicea, which had said, “I have become rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.” The church of Judaism didn’t need the King of the church, Jesus Christ. They ruled in terms of their desires. It was living independently of Jesus Christ and his authority. In Biblical times queens were not supposed to rule. It was a sign of apostasy. Well, this queen had thrown off the authority of her husband and ruled and continued to rule long after He had divorced her.

#### ***I. She refused to recognize that she had killed her husband (v. 7c)***

Next, she refused to recognize that she had killed her husband, Jesus Christ - “and am not a widow.” She did not even recognize the evil that she had done in crucifying Jesus. She did not accept Him as her Lord. To covenant with her was to covenant with Christ’s murderers. To covenant with Rome is to covenant with the murderers of Protestants. To covenant with Liberal Protestant churches is to covenant with homosexuals and abortionists.

#### ***J. She was certain that she deserved blessing (v. 7d)***

Next, she was in denial that she had done anything wrong, so she was absolutely certain that she would receive blessing. She says, “and I will certainly not see sorrow.” She was certain that Jesus would not judge her as He said that He would. We see the same boldness in cults and liberal churches today - they are quite certain that they will not be judged. They try



to convince people that the command to separate is not loving and that you will be judged if you separate. They turn everything on it's head. Of course, they are defining love differently than God does.

## **V. God declares that false churches will not continue forever because He is Lord and He will judge (v. 8)**

But verse 8 declares their sense of certainty to be an absolutely foolish presumption. “Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and sorrow and famine—and she will be burned up with fire; because the Lord God who has judged her is strong.”

Notice that this is yet another future judgment. It uses two future tense verbs and compares them to a present tense judgment that is still ongoing. So God is saying that just as He is right now finishing up His judgment of Israel in AD 70, God will judge Judaism again in the future. Israel had already been through death, sorrow, and famine in the previous three and a half years of war, but this prophecy is about a further “death and sorrow and famine” and burning with fire. The final blow came in the Bar Kochba rebellion sixty years later when every synagogue in Israel was destroyed, the rabbis left in the land were destroyed, the ones who managed to escape were unable to feed themselves, and every city in Israel was burned. Following the Bar Kochba rebellion, Jews were not able to even live there any longer. It was a major setback for that false church.

Of course, there is coming a day (and Revelation 20-22 speak about it) when all false religion will be eradicated from the world and the true church will shine. But I believe this is referring only to the temporary judgment that Judaism would face. Now, you could apply it to the second half of the war (AD 70-74, but I think it goes beyond that. I think it is referring to a far more permanent judgment that happened on one day, the battle of Bethar in AD 136).

So that is the meaning of the passage. God calls all true believers to separate from churches that have apostatized from the true faith. This does not mean separation on peripheral issues, but separation over fundamental issues of the faith. This is a pervasive doctrine in the Bible that is ignored by so many churches. Paul says, “avoid them” (Rom. 16:17), “from such withdraw yourself” (1 Tim. 6:3-5), “and from such people turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5), “come out from among them and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:4-18), and do “not to keep company with” them (1 Cor. 5:9,11).

Brothers and sisters - we live in an age where all lines are being erased,

when truth is being muddied, and where compromise is being called love. This passage is a clarion call to be different; to be separate; to be holy; to be faithful to our Lord. May we embrace this call to remain separate and may we encourage people in Rome and other false churches to leave. Amen.