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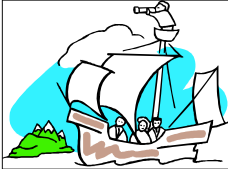
SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

Part 18

SEPARATION

By Rayola Kelley

We have been on a journey to discover what it will mean to survive the end days. This is the last article in this



series. We can look at the great challenges before us and conclude that we are facing some exciting times, but are we ready for the possible challenges that could shake our worlds? As believers, we need to keep in mind that to spiritually survive involves preparing the inner man to stand in trials and testing, with the intent of walking out the Christian life in an appropriate way. Therefore, the real culprit that we must face will not always come from the outside, but from within our own personal camps.

When we consider what it means to survive, we think in terms of managing to survive the odds of something that would normally be considered impossible to endure. If we come out on the other side of such a situation, we figure we have survived it, and now belong to that unique club of survivors that serve as shining beacons of hope. However, in the kingdom of God, the concept of survival is a bit different. It is not a matter of coming out on top of an impossible matter; rather, the real issue is *who* will come out on top in our lives.

I have often shared with others that the world is a big classroom, and life the main teacher. In America, before the invasion of Communistic indoctrination in our schools, academia was designed to prepare students for a different life outside of their controlled or confined worlds of family, friends, and education.

Likewise, when it comes to spiritual survival, the world serves as a classroom that is meant to prepare and challenge us in light of a new existence. Eventually, we will even graduate from this classroom to embrace a completely different way of living. As we consider the idea of the world, we will discover that much of what it stands for is vanity, and its goal is to tantalize the fleshly appetites to pursue its deadly fruit and temporary glory. However, it brings a viable contrast to us when it comes to what constitutes life.

When it comes to the harsh reality of life being our teacher, it clearly stipulates that all is a cruel joke unless there is something beyond the activities of the present world. This was brought home by the tragic shootings that have recently taken place in Oregon and Connecticut. The tragedy will be blamed on guns, but the real culprit rests with society that has taken God and morality out of the equation. What you end up with is a society that will run amuck in a world of fanaticism which will prove lawless, indifferent, militant, and insane.

It is for this reason that so much of the world's activities seem senseless. It becomes clearer each new day that life proves to be an astute teacher. Its shrewdness can cause people to become utter skeptics if they do not understand its ultimate goal. However, it will teach open, receptive students that their very existence does not make sense unless there is a God who has a purpose, plan, and design for their lives. In order for each of us to secure real purpose for our being, we must come to terms with God. In order to benefit from His plan, we must come to a place of agreement with Him. And, to discover our place in His kingdom, we must come to a place of total separation from what was in order to discover what can be.

According to the Bible, transformation of the inner man is a necessity

while reformation of the outer man is a means to whitewash tombs that contain the dead bones of the old ways and of man's religious best. The reason is the old must die so that the new can live. The "old" will defile the new, and the "new" will render the old ineffective. The Bible clearly brings this principle out in the parable in *Matthew 9:16-17* and the example found in *Haggai 2:11-14*.

Clearly, when it comes to the matters of holiness, saints cannot make what is considered to be "common", "profane", and what is "unclean" acceptable to God. That which is considered profane by God will be judged and consumed by His holy fire. The reason for this is because holiness is a state. If you expose and touch the unclean, it will make you unclean in your state. Since God is holy, His Church must be holy as well. The members of His Body must come out and separate from that which is unholy, in order to separate themselves to that which is holy. This is the only way to ensure the integrity of their inward state.

It is for this reason that the Lord has exhorted that we come out and touch not the unclean thing (*2 Corinthians 6:17*). Peter commanded that since our God is holy, we must be holy in all manner of conversation (*1 Peter 1:15-16*). Finally, we have Hebrews, which reminds us that God chastises those whom He loves so that they might be partakers of his holiness. It goes on to say, "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*" (*Hebrews 12:14*).

The truth is, as Christians, we are preparing ourselves for the world to come by walking towards our demise in this present age. The more we die to the influences of the flesh and the world, and the more we expose ourselves to the things of God, the more we will reside in a holy state that will express itself with an upright attitude and godly conduct.

The fact that we are to become crucified to the old way proves that Christians are not meant to hold onto

the old; rather, they are instructed to lay it aside so that it will not beset them in the race set before them (*Hebrews 12:1*). However, to some Christians, they cannot fathom why the Lord would call them to separate from that which appears to be pleasant to their way of thinking, beneficial to their being, and glorious to their emotional welfare. In a way, they give the impression that God is a bit unfair, asking too much from them. After all, their actions are not hurting anyone and they only indulge or give way occasionally to the unholy.

However, a good rule of thumb to test something as to whether it would be considered "unclean" to the Lord is simple enough. First, are we willing to expose the real truth about the type of emphasis we put on any questionable attitude or conduct by being ready to give it up and leave it behind to follow Jesus into a greater life? After all, if it is not that important to us and it puts a questionable light on our Christian testimony, we should be willing to let it go for the sake of Christ. If we are not willing to let it go, most likely it is an idolatrous thing that harbors a rebellious attitude. Granted, we can hide such a condition behind religious garb, but such a state will cause our activities to be deemed unclean by the Lord, for it is coming from an unclean, unregenerate vessel that needs to be cleansed through and through.

An unclean state is also a perverted state. If you allow yourself to compromise at one point, this thread of concession will run through the whole of your Christian life. After all, there should be conviction and shame towards the matter because it is not of God. If there is no repentance, the conscience must be eventually subdued through personal justification and delusion. This state will also force the person to adjust the Word because it clearly states, if you love the Lord, you will obey Him and that He is clearly calling each of us to a state of holiness.

This brings us to the attitude these individuals have towards Jesus. The ones I have encountered who possess this state of compromise often display a sentimental attitude towards the Lord. When they talk about Him, they can become

quite emotional, yet, they harbor those things that are not pleasing to Him and which causes a separation in their relationship with Him. Their sentiment gives them the impression that as long as the emotion is there, the devotion is as well. However, this is a point of grave deception. Sentiment is not the fruit of true love, for love expresses itself in obedience. It is not a form of faith, for such emotion is fickle and becomes complacent, apathetic, or lazy, thereby falling short of doing what is honorable in the end. To fall short of doing what is right is the sin of omission (*James 4:17*).

Individuals who are trying to bring the old together with the new at best tack Jesus on to their activities. They often stand out because they live defeated lives. Most of their spiritual life represents that which is nominal at best. Nothing really happens, but in Christianity one is either going forward or backward, but no one can remain in neutral. Eventually these individuals' lives will begin to spiral out of control as they are flung downward into the abyss of utter despair.

Sadly, these people could avoid the abyss, but they first must come clean and agree with God about their state. He wants to reason with them about those things that are robbing them of inner peace, killing their resolve to stand in righteousness, and destroying their testimony (*Isaiah 1:18*). They have to allow themselves to be separated from the past baggage of their lives that they have held onto. This baggage can be old ways, habits, events, or attitudes. Some of these matters may have seemed harmless in the beginning, but eventually they became a hindrance. Perhaps, the Lord tried to put His finger on it, but the person would have none of it, causing him or her to come to a dead stop in his or her spiritual life and shift into reverse.

As Christians, we must keep in mind that when it comes to the test of our faith, its fiery trials are meant to burn up those aspects of our lives that keep us mired down in the mud of the pigpens of the world and chained to our former lives. It is true that Christianity can bring some outer reformation to our lives, therefore causing us to be presented in a changed way. However, Christianity is not meant to reform our old lives, but instead transform us into

a new creation that would be unrecognizable to those who knew us in our former lives. In fact, such a life would bring a separation and contrast between the old and the new.

In these days, we need to separate from the old so that we can stand in assurance in the new. The truth is, we need to make sure the baggage of the past is not weighing us down. We cannot afford to simply get by and hope for the best, while settling for wishful thinking that our offerings to God will withstand the fire (*1 Corinthians 3:11-16*). And, if for some reason our works are rendered into ashes, we hope we can still get into heaven, even if we shamefully face the fact that we will have nothing to present to our precious Lord but the ashes of futility.

We must have the inner character to stand in these days. Our lives must clearly be established in the ways of righteousness so that we can stand in authority when tested to compromise. We must be prepared to stand for truth, withstand with unfeigned faith, and continue to stand in the assurance of a future hope when everything around us declares we are foolish to do so.

The next question is, how can we be established in such a life? It begins with *true repentance* (*Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Peter 3:9*). We must call, "sin, sin." We must acknowledge what is unclean in our lives is, "unclean." We must confess that it is unacceptable to our Lord; therefore, it must become unacceptable to us, and we must resolve to refuse to tolerate it any longer. From this point we can draw near to God and He will draw near to us. If we lay all such baggage at His feet in brokenness, He will take it from us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

The next step is to begin to *walk after the Spirit* (*Romans 8:1*). A state that is a mixture of half-hearted religion and carnality produces complacency and condemnation. It is for this reason we must stir ourselves out of spiritual indifference and begin to follow after that which is righteous, godly, faithful, loving, long-suffering, and meek (*2 Timothy 2:22*). This is how we depart from iniquity and expose ourselves to a holy environment. The more we allow the disciplines of the Spirit-filled life to have its way, the more we will know

THE GREATEST PROPHET
Part 3
A TYPE OF THE END-TIME
CHURCH

By Jeannette Haley

Here we go again, facing another New Year with all of its up's and down's of personal, local, and national challenges. Every challenge, every crisis, and every situation that impacts our lives will, in some way, require a decision on our part. Will we make the right decision in any given circumstance that lines up with the Word of God, the character of God, and the will and ways of God, or will we be content to settle for our own conclusions and take on a matter, thus trusting in our own understanding? At this crucial junction in world history where we see biblical prophecy fulfilled on a daily basis, our very lives, either physical and spiritual, or both, may very well depend on our faith in God, along with His wisdom and guidance through the Holy Spirit. In other words, do we really know Him? Concerning the antichrist spirit at work in the world, and the soon-to-be revealed "son of perdition," and how God's people need to be strong, Daniel gives us this insight, *"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days."* (Daniel 11:32, 33.)

We must not forget that God has not left us alone to struggle through whatever trials, temptations or tribulations come our way. There is no doubt that all of us, in this life, including believers, will experience the "dark night of the soul" where all seems hopeless and lost, where loneliness saps the will to live, where pain and suffering seem endless, the heart is broken through bereavement, loss and waves of sorrow, and where even God appears to have withdrawn His presence. In spite of the brutal crushing and depression a mortal soul can experience, yet it remains true that *"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"* Deuteronomy 33:27a. With King David,

we can be assured, *"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock"* Psalm 27:5. We know that that rock is Christ, the great I AM.

Therefore, we who are blest to own the written Word of God (a "real" Bible, not a modern polluted paraphrase and perverted so-called "version") that we can hold in our hands and read, possess a priceless treasure. Within this eternal treasure we discover prophecies that are true and unchangeable concerning the times in which we live: the parables of Jesus that, while seemingly simple on the surface, are inexhaustible in their ability to give us a continual spiritual feast of eternal truths and personal applications; examples given for us in the Old Testament, and the testimonies, witness and examples of that "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) who have gone on before us, (even those martyrs of the past two thousand years) and wonderful "types" in which we can study and glean invaluable insights and revelations that impart life to our souls, sustenance for our spirits, and encouragement to our weary minds. I believe that a study of John the Baptist's life is one such "type" that God has given to us of the end-times Church.

When John the Baptist was born, *"the hand of the Lord was with him"* Luke 1:66b. The hand of the Lord was with him because God had prepared John even within his mother's womb (as Zacharias prophesied) to be *"called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace"* Luke 1:76-80. As we examine this prophecy closely, we can see the parallels between John's calling and the commission of the Church.

First to consider is that the hand of the Lord was with him, just as the Lord has been with, and in, His church from its inception. As Christians, we need to remind ourselves that we are His Church, members of the Body of

Christ. The true Church of Jesus Christ is not an institution, a building, a religious system, or a set of doctrines. The Church is made up of individual believers, worldwide, who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been washed from their sins by His blood shed on the cross.

Jesus told Peter, *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* Matthew 16:18b. The end-days Church is, will be, and has been, for the past two-thousand years greatly assaulted and persecuted by hell itself. Just as Herod's continual iniquities wearied the soul of the imprisoned John the Baptist, so too shall the saints of the Most High be wearied in the end days by the world leader of whom Daniel wrote, *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time"* Daniel 7:25. (Note: This is a period of 42 months.)

As we consider the early life of John the Baptist, we see him stand out in stark contrast to the mainstream of both secular and religious life. John was of the priestly Levitical line, and as such could have followed in his father's footsteps as a priest, serving in the temple. Instead, John (who had been filled with the Holy Ghost, *"even from his mother's womb"*) lived in the wilderness. The wilderness represents many things for the individual believer, as well as for the Church as a whole. The wilderness for a believer is a time of separation from the world and all it has to offer. The Spirit will, in a sense, lead God's people into a time of being in the "wilderness" to bring about separation from what others consider to be a "normal" life. Usually this wilderness experience is more emotional, mental, and spiritual than an actual physical separation; however, it is a time of drawing apart unto God to gain His perspective, learn to hear His voice, and be prepared for service (ministry).

Believers who comprise the end-time Church will likewise be separated unto the Lord through the fires of intense persecution. Like John, there will be no wavering, no looking back, no compromise with the god of this

world (Satan) or the mark of the beast (antichrist), and no compromise with the flesh or the devil. This remnant Church, in spite of growing weary with the prevailing godless insanity, will nevertheless remain steady, established, strong and bold in the Holy Spirit. As John the Baptist went before the Lord *"in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,"* Luke 1:17, so too shall the end-time Church prepare those, who have ears to hear, for the glorious return of the Lord. Just as John went *before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, by giving knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God,* so we who are called to be the "salt and the light," and to occupy until He comes, and to be about our Father's business in this sin sick world. At this point, I need to make it clear that we are not going to "prepare" this world by setting up the Kingdom of God on earth so that Christ can return (as many falsely teach) but, rather, we are to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel as co-laborers with Christ in the harvest field of the world. The fact is, Jesus is returning at a time when most of the world's inhabitants do not expect Him to come, and whether people are ready for Him or not.

It is well known that John was in every way one of a kind. His personal appearance and strange diet of locusts and wild honey were far from the norm. His ministry was also unique. John was truly "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" Luke 3:4. As we read about John's preaching to the multitudes, we are struck by the fact that he was direct, blunt, bold, and fearless. To an entire multitude that came to be baptized of him, he thundered, *"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance..."* Luke 3:7b-8a. What about the generation of vipers that surround us today? Do those of us who make up the end-time Church have the courage to stand up and confront them of their gross immorality, wicked ways, evil imaginations, and godlessness because the

day of His wrath draws near? Do we have what it takes to unflinchingly declare, *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" Luke 3:9?* God is calling men and women everywhere to repent before it is too late, before *"the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand" Revelation 6:17?*

John was indeed a prophet, and more. To me he was a great evangelist, one who could not be intimidated, bribed, shamed, persuaded, or silenced. John would never fall into the trap of "peace at any price" by remaining silent when there was sin in the camp, for by doing so, he would be partaking of other men's sins by refusing to confront them. John, like Jesus, knew that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. He was God's man for the hour, preparing the way of the Lord. John knew that any compromise, however slight, would lead to disaster.

As for the Church, how can we prepare people for the Lord when we are so busy "loving them into hell" because we can't bear to confront them about their sin? How can people be prepared to face the Great Judge with sin in their lives, in word, thought, and deed? As Christians in these evil and perilous times, we can be quick to lament and point out the wickedness of the world around us that is comparable to the days of Noah. However, when it comes to sin in the lives of those we know and love who profess to know Christ, we tend to ignore it and hope it goes away. The question is, is this really the type of love that God requires in our lives? The love that God requires is committed to others to ensure that they are reconciled to God through repentance, gaining Christ, and assured of heaven. Jesus said that He is returning for a Church without sin, *"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" Ephesians 5:27.* Just as John prepared the people for the Lord through repentance of sin and baptism unto righteousness, so too must we, who bear Christ's name, prepare people for His appearing the second time through conversion to righteous-

ness and holy living.

Our witness of Jesus and who He is must be clear, as was John's. John declared to the people, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1:29b.* Only God can forgive sin, and the people knew it. Therefore, John was declaring the divinity of Jesus. John also said, *"This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me" John 1:30.* In our post modern churches the message of who Jesus is, why He came, and the necessity of the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation is blurred at best, and diminished in its importance at worst. Whenever we have visited churches, the first thing we look for is Jesus. Who or what is being exalted? If the church and it's plethora of programs, ear-tickling messages and teachings, along with fleshly music, entertainment, and so forth takes center stage, we judge it as a man-centered church with Jesus merely tacked on. Jesus said to feed His lambs and sheep, not entertain them, amuse them, pamper them, flatter them, exalt them in their sin, or make them feel good about themselves. No! A thousand times NO! He said to FEED THEM. Feed them what? Feed them HIS WORD, rightly divided, in Spirit and in Truth! How can the end-times Church be prepared for what is to come prior to Christ's return if all they have been fed is sugar-coated half-truths, watered down milk (no meat whatsoever), unholy forms of "worship," and syrupy self love? Jesus came to save us from our sin, not save us in our sin. Jesus made it clear that His followers must be overcomers in this life in order to gain the next. *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" Revelation 3:5.* [Emphasis added.]

John the Baptist is a powerful example of a true disciple of Jesus Christ and of the true bride of Christ. When the time came for his followers to become followers of Jesus (which is what he prepared them for) he humbly declared, *"He must increase, but I must decrease" John 3:30.* John

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what it means to possess our souls in patience.

Once we start walking after the Spirit, He will be able to *lead* us to our place in the Lord, away from the condemnation of the Law (*Romans 8:11-17*). Positionally, we are seated in high places with Jesus, but we must be led to greater spiritual heights by the Spirit in order to become identified with the life of Christ. As we come into places of spiritual growth, we will understand our status as children of God and understand what it means to have sweet communion with the Lord. It is as we grow in our relationship with the Lord that we will be prepared to stand on His promises, while standing in the cleft of His immovable truths.

It is upon being led by the Spirit that we can begin to *walk or live in the Spirit* (*Galatians 5:16-18*). We will no longer fulfill the lust of the flesh, for the old has been and continues to be put off in the power of the Spirit and the new embraced with joyous abandonment. We will be increasingly conformed to the likeness of Christ as we daily put on His attitude and ways. It is in this life that there will be assurance, there will be expectation, and there will be victory!

Today, as believers we need to know how to walk through the darkness of this present age. It must be in the power of the Spirit. However, the Spirit will not land where the unholy resides. We must cease to think about, touch, or value the unclean things of the world and the flesh. We must cease to touch it with any kind of agreement and turn away from the attraction of it in repentance, as we look to God to show us a way to flee the temptation of it. We must come into step with the leading of the Holy Spirit in order to walk in righteousness, liberty, and victory.

As believers, we must recognize that such a walk is a preparation to simply step into glory without skipping a step, while avoiding stumbling into defeat, tripping over despair, or falling into the abyss of hopelessness before we reach the finish line. It is for this reason I want to challenge believers that, instead of making a New Year resolution about doing better, losing weight, or accomplishing something

new, we should humble ourselves and give God permission to make us ready to survive the challenge the New Year may bring us. We need to let Him cleanse our present temple of any profane thing, establish us firmly on the eternal foundation, and line us up to the immovable cornerstone of heaven.

It is my prayer that each of us may be accounted worthy to escape all the things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man in light of the complete assurance of the good work He was allowed to do in us. †

RAYOLA’S Q & A CORNER

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “HAVE THE GOODS” OR “PAY THE PRICE”?

Q: *Can you please explain what you mean when you say certain Christians who either are in leadership or who want to be leaders in the Church don’t “have the goods” or “haven’t paid the price?” If Jesus paid the price for our souls, what price do Christians have to pay to be leaders?*

A: It is true that Jesus paid the price for our salvation, but we still must possess the life of Jesus. The idea of paying the price, comes from Jesus’ statement, who counted the cost of redemption, exhorts each of us to count the cost in relationship to discipleship before venturing into the journey (*Luke 14:26-33*). The real cost of discipleship requires us to put a value on our life in Him in order to possess it. We see this in the example of possessing the Pearl of Great Price (Jesus) in Matthew 13:45-46.

We also see this same example in the life of the Apostle Paul. He was always pressing towards his high calling in Christ Jesus in order to apprehend Him and be apprehended by Him. Therefore, when we speak of not having the “goods” it simply means that the person has not yet discovered the deeper life with Jesus. Perhaps he or she has just begun serving the Lord or the person could have some baggage from the past that will beset him or her in spiritual growth. As you watch how the individual handles challenging situations, it can become clear that he or she lacks the experience that would have seasoned him or her with a

greater likeness to Jesus in his or her attitude and conduct.

To possess a greater measure of Christ will cost us those things associated with our worldly identity and inheritance. The Apostle Paul counted the things of the world as being dung (*Philippians 3:1-14*). In his mind he was willing to pay it all to gain a greater knowledge of Jesus. He never accepted a comfortable level of familiarity with Jesus; rather, he wanted to always advance in his knowledge and relationship with the eternal Christ. He never wanted to accept the status quo of the religious world, he wanted to breathe and walk out the life that was made available to him.

Paul’s walk took him into some rough spiritual terrain. He knew the depth of the canyons of despair, the long length of the challenging valleys of suffering and uncertainty, the temporary ecstasy of mountain peaks, and the destructive currents of rushing rivers. Through his journey, the apostle became an experienced hiker in the canyons, an endurance runner in the valleys, a mountain climber in the mountainous terrain, and knew the source that would always help him in the unstable currents of life.

What will each of us gain by paying the price? I already made mention of it. We will come out knowing God in a more personal, intimate way. Many believers do not realize that it costs to know God. Like every relationship, it takes personal investment to grow in a relationship with Him. We must remember that discovering God is not a picnic. Even Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tested before His ministry officially started (*Luke 4:1*).

The truth is, we must experience the shaking of our spiritual lives before we will let go of our romantic notions about God. We must know loss in regard to the present world, before we can value and discover what has been made available to us in Christ. We must have experienced the extremes of heat (purging), cold (death), wind (separation), and rain (cleansing)) in each season of

knew that his mission was being fulfilled as people left him to follow Jesus. John was, unlike those who “wannabe a somebody” of today, a great prophet because he had only one purpose, and that was to exalt Christ. He was not here to exercise his “religious muscle” and gain a big following, or build a huge mega-church where he could become rich and famous. Unlike the myriad of false prophets and so-called “spiritual leaders” today who are ravaging wolves in sheep’s clothing, John rejoiced in being God’s instrument because he rejoiced in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Likewise, the end-time Church is here for the purpose of pointing men to Christ, not to this or that church, movement, leader, or the latest so-called “Christian fad.” The end-time Church will also decrease through persecution. Paul wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. The root meaning of the word “remain” is “survive.”

Sadly, many in the Christian realm criticize and judge John the Baptist for his questioning of whether Jesus was the one that should come. John was the type of person that seeks for proof. Such were Thomas, King David, Nehemiah, and Peter. Jesus understood that. Also, John needed to know that he had run his course, finished his race, completed his mission, and that it was indeed God’s timing to take him Home so that he could depart in peace. In Luke chapter 7 Jesus outlined what a great prophet John was.

Before we jump on the bandwagon to criticize John the Baptist, let us consider what the end-days Church has faced, and is facing. Persecuted Christians who have been imprisoned, beaten, and tortured for their faith can experience times of depression and fear. After all, we are only human, and we all have our

down times. It’s easy to be brave and confident in how we would handle different situations when sitting in the warm comfort of our homes, reading statistics in Voice of the Martyrs reports, and other true-life testimonies. Therefore, let us remember John’s question, and Jesus’ answer so that we, too, will be able to stand steadfast in faith and confidence until we “go” or He comes. We all know that this great man of God was beheaded for his uncompromising stand for truth and godliness. Likewise, many saints in the last days will be beheaded for their faith. “*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*” Revelation 20:4, 5.

Thus, John the Baptist’s martyrdom is also a “type” of what many Christians in these end times will experience as they stand strong against the rising tide of filth and perversion. John steadfastly stood against the iniquities (moral deviation) of King Herod and Herodias, his brother’s wife. It is interesting to note that “*Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly*” Mark 6:20. The problem was, Herod was overcome with his own lust and foolishness which cost John his head. By comparison, can it be said by those who stand on the outside and observe the end-times Church that she is as faithful to prepare people for the Lord’s coming through the preaching of repentance, righteousness, and holiness in one’s personal life as was John? Concerning holiness, the writer to the Hebrews warns, “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*” Hebrews 12:14. [Emphasis added.]

In conclusion, John’s mission was to prepare the way for the Lord, his ministry was to preach repentance, and his message was to introduce Jesus as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the

world. May God help those who are truly born again of His Spirit to embrace the challenge of being faithful to do likewise until that great and glorious day of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when He returns for His Church. Amen. †

“Paying the price” - Con’t. from pg. 5

growth, as well as have the inner stuffing (pride) knocked out of us by the challenges of the spiritual wildernesses. This is all necessary to ensure character can be forged in us by the chisel of the Holy Spirit.

People who know God have a certain attitude, walk, and manner about them. They may appear unassuming at first, but once you begin to observe or converse with them, you will know that they have been places you have not been. Most likely they will not say a word, but you will know they have knowledge concerning the deep things of God that is not experientially known by most of the Church. Such a person may stir you up to risk taking a similar journey, or he or she might intimidate or even offend you and cause envy and jealousy to raise its ugly head in your soul. However, you will not be able to simply pass their way. These people will cause some type of reaction in you, and you will know there is something that clearly sets them apart, and you might naturally want to follow them. You will know they know, and nothing can touch, shake, rob, or reach the depths of those secret places or experiences they have had with the Lord. †

QUOTABLE

Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf,
Like the binding of a sheaf,
Be in time.

Fleeting days are telling fast,
That the die will soon be cast,
And the fatal line be passed,
Be in time.

Fairest flowers soon decay,
Youth and beauty pass away,
Oh, you have not long to stay,
Be in time.

While God’s Spirit bids you come,
Sinner, do not longer roam,
Lest you seal your hopeless doom,
Be in time.