

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (ORGANIZED BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Part VIII: Eschatology (Doctrine Of The End Times)

C. The Rapture

1. Examining The Partial Rapture Position

I. Introduction

- A. Some believe Christ will take only **mature** believers to heaven at the rapture of the Church, the immature ones coming later only as they are **refined** through the Great Tribulation's trials.
- B. Such a view breeds stifling fear as believers wonder if they will face part of the Tribulation Period.
- C. However, such a fear violates Paul's call for believers to face the prophetic future in God's **comfort**, 2 Thes. 2:1-2, 16-17. We examine Scripture to answer the Partial Rapture position as follows:

II. Examining The Partial Rapture Position (I am indebted to J. Dwight Pentecost's Things To Come.)

- A. Scripture as interpreted by the normal method of interpretation counters this Partial Rapture view:
 1. Paul taught **ALL** believers would be changed at the rapture, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, and that regardless of carnality (1 Cor. 3:3) even in those who had **died in practical SIN** (1 Cor. 11:28-30)! **How we live** thus has **no** effect on how or when or why we are **raptured!**
 2. The Partial Rapture view is countered by salvation's **positional** truths affecting the believer:
 - a. Christians are related to God by propitiation, meaning God's wrath against them is totally removed through Christ's substitutionary death for them, 1 John 2:2. Hence, the believer **in Christ** is **already positionally SEATED** at the Father's right hand in **heaven**, qualifying him for the rapture!
 - b. As the believer's **experience** must someday match his **position**, he **must** be raptured even if he **never** matures (as 1 Cor. 3:15 and 5:5 reveal **can and WILL** [respectively] be the lot of **some!**)
 3. The Partial Rapture view misapplies verses to the **Church** that really deal only with **Israel** as follows:
 - a. The Luke 21:36 verse about "watching" to be "worthy to escape" is **not** for **Christians**, but for Jews in the Tribulation who are to live for Christ to enter the Millennium and **not** to heed antichrist.
 - b. The Matt. 24:41-42 reference to a woman being taken while two are working at a mill is not about the **rapture!** The woman taken is judged for unbelief at Christ's Second Coming, Mtt. 13:47-50!
 4. The Partial Rapture view hence misinterprets the following verses to support its position as follows:
 - a. Hebrews 9:28 - The phrase "unto them that look for Him shall He appear" is claimed to say Christ raptures **only the mature!** Yet, the author generalizes, saying believers as a whole look for Christ!
 - b. Philippians 3:11 - The wording ". . . if . . . I may attain unto the resurrection" does not mean Paul doubted being raptured. He referred here to a spiritual goal of maturity that equaled the maturity in the humanity of Christ at His resurrection, a personal ambition of Paul's, cf. Philippians 3:12.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 15:23 - Partial Rapturists take the phrase "every man in his order" to mean several different **times** of being raptured for different **Christians**. However, the **context** shows Paul spoke of different **kinds** of resurrections: The **first** resurrection is the resurrection of the **just, including** Christ [as the 1st (23a)], the Church [as 2nd (23b)], O. T. and Tribulation saints [3rd (Dan. 12:13; Rev. 20:4-5)] and Millennial believers [4th (Jn. 5:29a via application)]. The **second** resurrection is the resurrection of the **unjust** [at the Great White Throne, Rev. 20:6b, 11-15 with Jn. 5:29b].
 - d. 2 Timothy 4:8 - "unto all...who love His appearing" does not mean Christ overlooks raising those believers who, in sin or immaturity do not love that appearing. Paul is again merely generalizing!
 - e. 1 Thess. 1:10 with 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51-58 - Partial Rapture advocates suggest these passages speak of carnal believers being raptured **after** the Tribulation **starts** to meet Christ in the **air** as He is in the **process** of descending to begin His Millennial Kingdom. Yet, Jesus taught the raptured believers end up in **heaven, not the earth** as their **initial** destiny, John 14:1-3! One cannot use these passages to prove such raptured believers do not initially get to heaven in their being raptured!

Lesson: The Church will be raptured as a UNIT BEFORE the seven-year Great Tribulation BEGINS!

Application: Instead of living in FEAR of facing the antichrist in the Great Tribulation, we are to live in God's COMFORT that we will be UNITEDLY raptured BEFORE the Tribulation. In this hope, we can afford to live settled lives, being productive in every "good word and work," 2 Thess. 2:15-17!