

Rapture, Partial View

Partial rapture theory contends that only the spiritually prepared and alert Christian will be taken in the rapture, while the carnal Christian will be left behind. According to this view, the purpose of the Tribulation period will be to practically sanctify the backslidden believer. As each is "straightened out" in this manner through the events of the Tribulation period, they will then be individually raptured to heaven at different times depending upon when they are brought into an appropriate state of progressive sanctification.

Those adhering to the partial rapture view typically rely on at least one of the following verses to support their position:

- Heb 9:28: "...so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*"
- Luke 21:34-36 similarly says, "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. *But keep on the alert at all times, praying* that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."
- 1 Thess 5:6 says, "So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."
- 1 John 2:28 also teaches, "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."
- 2 Tim 4:8 also says, "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also *to all who have loved His appearing.*"

10 Problems with the Partial Rapture View

1. Every blessing that the Christian receives from God is given on the basis of His grace as opposed to human effort. For example, the Christian receives salvation as a result of God's grace and not his own works (Eph 2:8-9). The Christian's spiritual giftedness is also entirely the result of God's grace (Rom 12:6). Likewise, the Christian's participation in the Rapture will be the result of God's grace and not human effort. The partial rapture view, which teaches that only those Christians who are expectant, sober, watchful, and prayerful will participate in the rapture, denies this basic truth by making it

sound as if it is the believer's spiritual progress, rather than God's unmerited favor to him, that merits his participation in the rapture.

Such a view seems to imply that trusting in the atonement of Christ alone (2 Cor 5:21) is not sufficient to bring one to heaven (see also Rom 5:1; Col 2:13). Scripture reveals that if one is a believer, one is "saved" (John 3:16-17; Acts 16:31). *That alone* qualifies one to participate in the rapture (1 Cor 15:51-52).

2. Symbolic parallels mandate that carnal as well as sanctified Christians will be taken up in the Rapture. As mentioned earlier in this series, before God rained down fire upon the wicked city of Sodom and Gomorrah, God allowed Lot, a positionally righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-8), and his family to leave the city (Gen 19). In fact, Gen 19:22 records the words of the angel dispatched by God to destroy the city. He told Lot, "Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Notice that the angel did not say that he *would not* bring judgment until Lot was removed. Rather, the angel said that he *could not* bring judgment until Lot was removed. In other words, divine judgment was a virtual divine impossibility as long as Lot remained in the city of Sodom.

3. The promise of the rapture is mentioned in Paul's letter to the carnal Corinthian church. The church in Corinth was the most carnal church of first-century world of which we have record. There were believers following men instead of Christ (1 Cor 1:10-17), worldly wisdom (1 Cor 1:18—2:16), carnality (1 Cor 3:1-3), divisions (1 Cor 3:4), incest (1 Cor 5), lawsuits among believers (1 Cor 6:1-11), prostitution (1 Cor 6:12-20), rampant divorce and remarriage (1 Cor 7:11-16), the blatant flaunting of freedoms to the detriment of the weaker brother (1 Cor 8-10), drunkenness and disorderly conduct while participating at the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:17-34), misuse and abuse of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14), and unrestrained false doctrine even denying the core doctrine of resurrection (1 Cor 15). Yet, Paul taught this very carnal church about the Rapture (1 Cor 15:50-58). In fact, Paul even went a step further and indicated that all believers (both carnal and sanctified) will be included in the rapture. In 1 Cor 15:51, he noted, "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will *all* be changed." If carnal Christians were going to be left behind by the rapture, as the partial rapture theorist assumes, then Paul would have surely warned the Corinthians that their carnality would prevent their participation in the rapture rather than virtually assuring them of their participation in the event.

4. A partial rapture would sever Christ's body. According to Eph 5:22-23, Christ is the head of His body the church. In Scripture, Christ's body is metaphorically analogized to the people of God (1 Cor 12). 1 Cor 12:12-14 explains, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so

also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

If part of God's people were removed from the earth while the rest of God's people were left behind, as the partial rapture theory teaches, then Christ's body, the church, would be severed and mutilated. It is doubtful that Christ would allow this to happen to His own body.

5. *The partial rapture view subjects believers to God's wrath.* All believers are promised exemption from God's wrath. The partial rapture view creates a kind of a Protestant purgatory on earth during the Tribulation period. The only difference between this idea and the Catholic view of purgatory is that it would be on earth before death.

6. *Partial rapturism makes the Bema Seat Judgment unnecessary.* The purpose of the judgment seat of rewards following the Rapture is to reward faithful believers as well as not reward those believers who were unfaithful upon the earth following their spiritual birth (1 Cor 3:10-15). Yet, partial rapturism makes participation in the Rapture the reward for faithfulness. If faithful believers have already been rewarded by being included in the Rapture, what then would be the purpose for the judgment seat of rewards or Bema Seat Judgment? Faithfulness and unfaithfulness will have already been rewarded based upon participation in the Rapture, or lack thereof, making the Bema Seat Judgment of rewards unnecessary.

7. *What is the exact degree of faithfulness or spiritual maturity that is necessary to participate in the Rapture.* For example, how long and intense does your prayer life have to be in order to be considered worthy of the Rapture? How much of your thought life must be under divine control? What if a person has two unspiritual thoughts per day? Would that amount disqualify him from participation in the Rapture?

8. *Individual bias.* Every person who believes in the partial Rapture view believes that they will be included in the first group that goes before the Tribulation. They always believe in the pre-Tribulation view for themselves. It's those other unfortunate believers who will have to go through varying degrees of tribulation before they can be caught up to heaven. But why believe that you are worthy for this special reward while other believers are not? It is inconsistent.

9. *Partial rapturists dispensationally misapply Bible passages.* Partial rapturists frequently quote from passages from the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25), such as the

Parable of the Wise Slave (Matt 24:45-51) or the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), where it appears that Christ is only coming back for those who are faithful. However, since the Olivet Discourse exclusively concerns God's future plans for Israel rather than the church (Matt 24:20), partial rapturists indiscriminately apply these passages to the church when in actuality their context concerns God's future plans for Israel.

Partial rapturists dispensationally misapply Luke 21:36, which says, "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." However, the primary reference in this chapter is to the nation of Israel, who was already in the Tribulation period, and therefore this is not applicable to the Church.

Partial rapturists similarly misapply Matt 24:41-42, which says, "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." Again, this passage is in the discourse in which the Lord outlined His program for Israel, who was already in the Tribulation period. The one taken is taken to judgment and the one left is left for the millennial blessing.

10. *Partial rapturists misapply passages promising a reward to faithful believers.*

While faithfulness is of consequence in order for Christians to experience a reward at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ (1 Cor 3:15; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11), faithfulness is of no consequence in order to participate in the Rapture. Partial rapturists confuse the two concepts.

2 Tim 4:8 is also used by partial rapturists to support their position: "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, *but also to all who have loved His appearing.*"

However, the subject of the translation is not in view in this passage, but rather the question of reward. The Second Coming was intended by God to be a purifying hope (1 John 3:3). Because of such purifying a new life is produced because of the expectancy of the Lord's return. Therefore those that truly "love his appearing" will experience a new kind of life which will bring a reward.