

NOT A PARTIAL RAPTURE

"KNOW YE NOT THAT THEY WHICH RUN IN A RACE RUN ALL, BUT ONE RECEIVETH THE PRIZE? SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN" - I CORINTHIANS 9:24

A dear brother wrote us a friendly letter, criticizing our teaching on the order of the translation of the Church. We are answering this letter through the "Grace and Glory", because others may be harassed by the same objections.

Dear Brother in Jesus: Your letter, citing Scripture and filing objection to our views of the translation, is before me. You have furnished us with some splendid material for another article on a theme that is dear to our hearts. Therefore, we are putting it in print, that others may be blessed as well as yourself. I trust that you will follow me with unbiased mind and heart.

QUESTION. Can you find partial rapture in the Church epistle doctrine? Is rapture something we can attain to? Is there anyone of us perfect enough to go? ANSWER. As to the first query, I do not know to which particular epistle you refer. Church doctrine is set forth in Paul's letters especially. In all of them are seen gleams of light on this subject; but in Corinthians, phillippians, Colossians and Thessalonians the Truth is revealed about the translation and the resurrection of the Church. We do not find "partial rapture" taught anywhere. The catching away of the saints to heaven in one grand sovereign act of God; but that catching away will certainly be in distinct detachments, ranks or divisions I Corinthians 15:23. Christ, as the Head of the Church, is an essential part of His Body. In I Corinthians 12:12, He and the Church together are termed "The Christ" (in Greek); that the Head, as the first detachment, was raised and He ascended on high nineteen hundred years ago. The remainder, "each in his own order, or rank," will be raised and ascend at His coming - I corinthians 15:23. The answers to the other two questionss will come forth in our further study

You say that every believer has an absolute standing, and quote: Colossians 2:10 "Ye are complete in Him." Eephesians 1:6 "He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Galatians 1:4 ... "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." I Thess. 5:10 ... "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." My brother, we agree that our standing in Christ is perfect and cannot be improved. This we teach in all our writings, which it seems you have not read. You make the same mistake that many others do. You admit no difference between our standing and our state, or our birth and our growth

The first two citations above speak of our standing only. The deliverance named in the third, is conditioned upon our faith and surrender; for some saints are not freed from this world, or age, in experience. The fourth quotation simply states the necessary provision for the final consumation. But other Scriptures teach that the walking and living with Christ will be in different orders, because saints differ in their spirituality now. As to the fifth, note the exhortations, "Seek, set, mortify." Why these earnest entreaties and scores of others in Colossians and the other epistles? What if they are not heeded? Some saints certainly will have a lesser place in heaven and enjoy a lessor glory if they fail to meet

prescribed conditions. Our standing determines our future destiny; but it does not determine our reward. Why did Paul say, "One receiveth the Prize," and add, "So run, that ye may obtain"? He knew that the theory, that all the Church is the Bride, would hinder some people from qualifying for the Bridehood of Christ. That theory makes our future reward of honor and glory dependent upon our standing, and admits no remuneration for a "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" I Thess. 1:3. It is unfair and illogical, as well as unscriptural

Your next quotation is I Cor. 15:15 - "We shall all be changed." We agree with that too; but that statement does not prove that all will experience the change at the same moment. It simply declares the fact of an alteration. Paul is not writing of the resurrection of the Church only, but of all the redeemed. The period of such a change will cover one thousand years. The phrase, "last trump," implies a first trump; and this harmonizes with the phrase, "every man in his own order (or rank)" - I Cor. 15:23. Believers of Israel will live through the Millennium and not die. They will be changed at the end, putting off their mortal bodies for immortal ones; but they will not be translated to heaven. This is the first resurrection

Jesus appearing to different companies at distinct times (I Cor. 15:5-8), and the distinct visions given to John at successive periods of distinct companies in heaven (Rev. 4 to 12), demand the resurrection and translation of the Church to occur in successive stages. The warnings of First Thessalonians Five convey the same views. Some believers will be wide awake and watching; and, hence, they will be ready to respond to the first trumpet blast. Others will be asleep spiritually, and drunken with the cares and pleasures of the world; and, hence, they will not be ready for translation. The departure of the first rank will alarm them; and they will prepare to go later

Then you cite Romans 8:29-30 ... "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." This is altogether God's wonderful sovereign provision. It does not intimate in the smallest measure the nature or manner of the resurrection and translation of the saints. Why try to make it teach what it is not intended to teach? Then you say, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" - I Thess. 4:14. Thank God for that blessed hope. They will all be with Him when He is revealed; but that does not signify that all will be raised and translated at the same time. That sentence refers to the revelation of Christ, and not to the rapture of the saints. In fact, I Thess 5:6 exhorts us saying, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." This implies that some saints will be found napping when the trumpet blows. They will not "be sober"; but the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of salvation will be lacking. They will imagine that, no matter how careless and worldly they live, all will be translated at one and the same time. Be it remembered that Paul's description of the rapture of the saints in I Thess. 4:13-17 is addressed primarily to full-fledged believers, and not to the worldly and half-hearted. He commends in warmest terms their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." Then he adds, "So that ye were ensamples to all that believer in Macedonia and Achaia" - I Thes. 1:3-7. He does not file one complaint against them. He expresses deep concern that they should walk as "the children of light,

and the children of the day," ready to hear the trumpet blast. Some people do not heed God' s Voice now when they hear it. How can they be ready to go with the full-overcomers? Doubtless, the manner of the catching away of the succeeding groups will be like the first.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" - II Cor. 5:10. That, we do not deny. It will certainly come to pass. But what has that to do with the manner of our catching away? Must we all appear on one and the same day? Nay, those who will reach heaven last will be judged last. John saw ... "The Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" walking "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" - Rev. 1:13; 2:1. He is now separating them into different companies, according to their respective degrees of spirituality. As a brother wrote about ten years ago, "Surely, the saints are finding their ranks." Indeed, how can they be taken up in different detachments, if they are not first examined

"We shall live with Him by the power of God toward you" is your next citation - II Cor. 13:4. Brother, I am surprised that you try to use this Scripture to prove your point. It has nothing to do with the subject what- ever. Paul is not here writing about living in heaven, but on earth as a power of God, so Paul was living and laboring on earth by the same power. This has been a precious portion to me. For as Paul once lived on earth for the good of others by the same power which sustains Christ in heaven, so I now live toward God' s people by that power. Let us never force a portion of the Word out of its setting to prove our theory. Every point of doctrine finds sufficient Scripture to hold it up.

Your next quotation is ... "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" - I John 3:2-3. Yes, this is a fine portion. We believe it, love, and enjoy it. But, brother, do you not know that all the saints are not sons in actual experience? Have you not noted John' s distinction between "children," "young men," and "fathers" in 2:12-14 of this same epistle? The very Scripture which you cite to disprove ranks in the translation, actually emphasizes the doctrine. John' s words imply that some saints do not have this blessed hope, and do not purify themselves in preparation for the rapture. Many believers, by their daily conduct, show their unpreparedness for the catching away.

You say, "Partial rapture denies the oneness of Christ." No doubt, you are correct. But rapture in a series of deportations confirms that oneness, and indicates the varying rewards to be granted according to the varying grades of spirituality on earth. You say further, "We are saints by calling, by blood alone, not by character ... all baptized into one Body." Yes, as to our standing, exactly so. But does not God expect and require character? Does not Paul emphasize our state as well as our standing in all his epistles? What, but our character, determines our place in the glory? As to the "one Body," do all recognize it and endeavor to maintain that oneness? No! What about those who deliberately and designedly make strife and divisions in the Body? Would the Lord be just in renumerating them equally with the faithful ones? Nay. Never!

"Could Christ accept a crippled Bride?" you ask. We answer .. By no means! Neither will

He have a crippled Bride. A perfect, complete, beautiful, full-grown, unblemished company of saints will constitute the Bride of the Lamb. That is what Paul teaches emphatically. That is taught clearly and amply in the Song of Solomon. That is exactly why we declare that the whole Church, or Body of Christ cannot be the Bride. Many of her members are babes in Christ. Others are somewhat developed, but lack Bridal qualifications. In heathen lands, men marry babies; but not so in civilized lands. No Scripture endorses such matrimony. How unthinkable then, that Christ should be joined to a host of children as His Bride.

You say further, "Every believer has Christ' s righteousness, and our righteousness is in heaven. Before the throne, my Surety stands. My name is written on His hands. Man can never be improved." My brother, if your theory were correct, then all the cautions, corrections, instructions, exhortations and warnings of the apostles were written for nothing. What Bible teacher have you been following anyway? You seem to see no need of growth in grace and Divine knowledge. You would compel Jesus to be joined to a great host of believers without any preparation and qualification on their part. This is emphatically unreasonable and unscriptural. Read Rev. 19:7,8 in the Revised Version ... "Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" - and not their imputed righteousness, as you contend.

"Translated into His dear Son," you exclaim. I suppose you mean to quote Colossians 1:13 ... "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." This is another example of your careless reading of the Word. It has absolutely no reference to the rapture, but to the new birth. Furthermore, if you read the verses which precede this one, you will see how correct we are in emphasizing development in the Christian life. Epaphras eulogized the Colossian saints for their faith, love and hope. They were more than ordinary believers. Hence, Paul says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" - Col. 1:9,10. In verses twenty-one to twenty-three he says, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciles in the Body of His flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight; if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." If these statements do not show that our walk and conduct have much to do with our future bliss and reward, what do they mean? Why are they written?

You say, "The Church comes in by birth -- no other way." Yes, but that birth produces babies only; and babies should become adults. Your language would leave them in babyhood all their days. Have you not read Peter' s words, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"? II Peter 3:18. And Paul' s words, "Grow up into Him in all things"? - Eph. 4:15. You exclaim, "We are in a favored dispensation; we have no merits nor awarded prizes for works. We are to be occupied with Him." You astonish me. No wonder that you add, "If it depended on me, I am sure I never would be raptured." We are not questioning the fact of the rapture, but the manner

of it and the respective places the saints will have in glory. If no Prize is offered, why does Paul say, "One receiveth the Prize. So run, that ye may obtain"? I Cor. 9:24-26. Why does he exclaim, "I press toward the mark (goal) for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? Why does he exhort us, saying, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded"? - Phil. 3:14,15.

If there is no reward for working, if our reward is not dependent upon how we fight and run and labor why did Paul finally shout, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" - II Tim. 4:6-8. Over twenty-five years before, he had obtained a robe of righteousness and an unchangeable standing in Christ.

Now he exclaims that, because of his steadfastness in fighting and running and keeping the faith, he sees a crown awaiting him. John saw an innumerable company in heaven without crowns (Rev. 7:9). But those in Paul' s rank, "love His (Christ' s) appearing," and act like it, talk like it, work like it, give like it, live like it, sing like it, fight and run to win the Prize. They, too, will be crowned. Remember Hebrews 11:5 ... "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." Mark the rest of the verse, "For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Then Paul declares for our instruction and warning, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." How can anyone today expect a reward if he is not full of faith, if he does not please God and seek Him diligently? Echo answers, "How?"

Finally, your two unanswered queries. FIRST: Is rapture something we can attain to? No, it is not; but we have certainly shown that, by their faith and devotion, some saints will attain to a higher place and greater honor and glory than others. They will have confidence before Christ at His coming; but others will be ashamed (I John 2:28). SECOND: Is there anyone of us perfect enough to go? Emphatically, Yes! Were not Enoch and Paul perfect enough to go? Was not Elijah perfect enough to go? Paul said, "I am ready." God said that Enoch was ready. Enoch' s faith in God' s proffer of grace caused him to seek Him diligently that he might please Him perfectly. Did he not do it? Shall we let them be the only ones who meet the conditions for an out-translation? Paul said to the Philippian saints, "Ye all are partakers of my grace, as to the furtherance of the Gospel" Phil. 1:7. May we not be partakers of his grace as to fitness for the crown? He sought by preaching, warning and teaching to "present every man (every Christian) perfect in Christ Jesus" - Col. 1:28. If we heed his words and follow his earnest example, we shall certainly succeed. We shall reach the goal of out-translation and win Christ, the Bridegroom, as the Prize. Hallelujah, for the hope!

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THE END

