

The Beneficiaries of the Redeemer's Return

by A.W. Pink

The Rapture is the consummation of our salvation, and it will be a time when Christ returns to conduct His blood-bought people to the Father's House.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Topics: "Grace and Salvation", "Rapture"

Description

A.W. Pink discusses the beneficiaries of the Redeemer's return, emphasizing that the Rapture will include all believers, not just a select few based on merit. He argues that grace characterizes God's dealings with humanity, eliminating distinctions of personal worthiness, and that the Rapture is the consummation of salvation for all who are in Christ. Pink highlights that the teachings of the Church Epistles support a total rapture, asserting that believers should not be anxious about their worthiness but should focus on Christ's love and grace. He warns against the confusion caused by the partial-rapture theory, which detracts from the assurance of salvation and the unity of the Church. Ultimately, Pink reassures that nothing can separate believers from Christ's love, and all who belong to Him will be gathered at His return.

Transcript

The Redeemer's Return

THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE REDEEMER'S RETURN

OR THE SCOPE OF THE RAPTURE

Chapter 7

"The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

1 Thess. 3:13

We Come now to a phase of our subject which has given rise to much controversy. Sad it is that the "Blessed Hope" should have been an occasion for contention. But, just as men have divided into different camps over every fundamental doctrine of Scripture, so have sides been taken in regard to various points which bear upon our Lord's Return. Alas! "What is man?" Surely "an enemy hath done this." One of the points upon which Bible teachers and students are divided is that of the scope of the Rapture.

Some have taught that at our Lord's descent into the air all of His saints will be caught up to meet Him; while others insist that only a small part of the Church will be removed from the earth at that time--that part which is obedient, faithful, spiritual. Thus, translation to heaven at the second coming of Christ is made a matter of merit and reward. What saith the Scriptures? Do they teach a partial or a total rapture of the Church which is Christ's body? Do they declare that all believers will be removed from earth at the time Lord descends from His Father's throne, or, that only a of them will?

Clearly, they cannot teach both, and surely matter of such moment is not left indeterminable. We believe that a question of such importance is left an open one. Yet, we are not unmindful of the fact that the advocates of each position referred to above, appeal to the Word in support of their views. But just here we would ask, Are the Scriptures pressed into service really relevant to the point at issue, and will they actually bear the interpretation which is given them? What saith the Scriptures? and particularly, What is the explicit teaching of the Church Epistles?

If we are seeking to find the inspired answer to the question, Will the whole Church or only a part of it, escape the judgments of the Great Tribulation? then, surely, it is to the Church Epistles we must turn for information. We are not here arguing that there are no Scriptures which treat of the first stage of Christ's second coming outside of the Church Epistles, for doubtless there are--for example John 14:1-3--yet, we repeat, If the question before us concerns the Church, then the testimony of the Church Epistles must decide the dispute.

If this much be granted--and personally we do not see why it should not--then the range of our inquiry is narrowed down and the issue is simplified. It is highly significant that almost all of the passages which are in dispute (as to interpretation) between the advocates of the conflicting schools are outside of the Church Epistles: in other words, the verses which are made the occasion for controversy are found, for the most part, in the Gospels, in Hebrews, or in the Apocalypse.

To one who is a beginner in the study of Dispensational truth and is unacquainted with human writings upon the second coming of Christ, the teaching of the Church Epistles on this subject appears to be simple and harmonious. Those passages which deal at greatest length with the return of our Lord and the taking of His people to be with Himself, seem to set forth no limitations in regard to the number of the saints which shall be translated. Such expressions as, "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." (1 Thess. 4:16, 17); "They that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:23); and "We shall all, be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51); certainly appear to teach the rapture of the entire Church, and, ought not we be very slow to accept any conflicting line of teaching which would compel us to abandon the obvious meaning of these verses, and instead, have to give them a strained interpretation so as to harmonize them with something which is foreign to their plain signification?

Yea, is it not evident that any system of teaching which would compel us to do this carries with it its own condemnation? What then saith the Scriptures and what is the testimony of the Church Epistles? The present writer believes there can be only one answer to this question, namely, that every member of Christ's body will be raptured at the time our great Head comes to conduct His blood-bought people to His Father's House. We believe this, not only because a number of Scriptures expressly affirm it, but also because some of the great basic principles which underlie both the Gospel, and what is known as "Church truth," demand this conclusion and repudiate the other alternative.

We would now humbly submit to the prayerful and careful attention of our readers some of the grounds for our belief in a total rather than in a partial rapture of the Church which in faithfulness to our apprehension of God's Truth on this subject, we must denominate the partial-rapture theory. 1. Because GRACE is that which characterizes all God's dealings with His own during this dispensation and grace, necessarily, eliminates all distinction of personal merits. The advocates of the partial-rapture theory declare that only those who are intelligently and eagerly looking for the Lord will be caught up at His return.

They affirm that none save those who are walking worthily and who are faithful to the end will be taken to be with the Lord when He descends into the air, and that only such, will, subsequently, "reign" with Him during the millennial era. They teach that all unspiritual believers will be left behind on earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation. As a consequence, not a few of the Lord's people have been harassed and distressed, fearful lest they should be among the number who are rejected by the Lord at His coming.

We are told that none but those who attain some high standard of spirituality will be raptured, but when we ask for a precise definition of this standard none can enlighten us; where we inquire, How faithful and how worthy we must be in order to be among the select company who shall be taken to the Father's House, none can give us a satisfactory reply. Hence, instead of the Return of our Lord being a blessed hope it becomes a source of bewilderment and anxiety. It appears to the writer that there is one Scripture which simply and satisfactorily disposes of every objection which can be brought against the affirmation that the entire Body of Christ will be raptured at the appearing of our great Head.

We refer to 2 Thessalonians 2:16--"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace." Here we learn that the "Hope" which has been given to God's people in this Age, like every other blessing we enjoy, is "a good hope through grace," hence, all questions of worthiness, merit, desert, are forever ruled out. Let us settle it once for all that the Dispensation in which we are living is a unique one, that it is fundamentally different from all that have preceded it and from that which is to follow it--the Millennium.

This is the Dispensation of Grace, and grace obliterates all distinctions, grace eliminates all questions of merits; grace makes every blessing a Divine and free gift. But, the human heart is essentially legalistic. Man wishes to have a hand in his own salvation and desires to contribute something to the price of his redemption. When, by grace, the Holy Spirit has taught a soul that the Finished Work of Christ is the sole ground of our justification before God, when he has learnt from the Scripture of Truth that the Blood of the Cross cannot be plussed by anything from the creature, then it is that the Enemy comes to that heart and seeks to disturb its peace and rob it of the liberty wherewith it has been made free, by insisting that faith in Christ merely puts us in a salvable condition, that believing the Gospel simply places us on an extended probation, and that only if we obey God's commands and walk worthily before Him shall we be taken to Heaven at the close of our earthly pilgrimage.

This is Law mingled with Grace; thus is the precious Blood supplemented by human works. Instead of realizing that good works flow from a heart that is filled with gratitude to God and which are constrained by the love of Christ, the believer is led so believe that good works must be performed by him as a condition of his eternal salvation. But, even when the believer has been delivered from this error, the legalistic tendency of the human heart still seeks an outlet, and in our day it is manifested in reference to the Blessed Hope of the believer.

The saints are now taught that their Rapture and Glorification are not "through grace" but will be the result of personal effort and attainment. Thus does the leaven of legalism work to the robbing of God of His glory and the believer of his peace. Again we say, let us settle it once for all that we are living in the Dispensation of Grace (John 1:17; Eph. 3:2) and that every blessing we enjoy is a gift of Divine clemency. We are justified by grace (Rom. 3:24). We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8).

The Holy Scriptures are refined "The Word of His Grace" (Acts 20:32). The Third Person of the Holy Trinity is denominated "The Spirit of Grace" (Heb. 10:29). God is seated upon a Throne of Grace (Heb. 4:16). And, the Good Hope which is given us is "through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16). It is all of Grace from first to last. It is all of Grace from beginning to end. It was grace that predestined us before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9), and it will be grace that makes us like Christ at the consummation of our salvation.

Thank God for such a "Blessed Hope." 2. Because the Rapture is the CONSUMMATION OF OUR SALVATION and therefore, being an integral and essential part of our salvation it cannot, in anywise, be determined by our personal worthiness. Our salvation will not be complete until the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament "salvation" is threefold in its scope--past, present, and future; and it is threefold in its character--from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin.

Every believer has been saved from the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin is "death" (separation from God), and we are delivered from it because, our Substitute died for us on the Cross--"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). But while ever, believer has been completely and eternally saved from the penalty of sin--from the wrath to come--while it is true that there is no sin ON us (all our iniquities were "laid" on Christ--Isa. 53:6), yet, sin is still IN us.

The evil nature remains even in the one who has been born again. Yet, notwithstanding this, Christ also indwells each of His own people and from Him may be drawn grace and strength and thus, day by day, we are being saved from the power of sin. But we shall yet be saved from the very presence of sin--"For our citizenship is in heaven; item whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

At our Lord's return we shall be completely emancipated from the dominion and pollution of sin. It was this the apostle Paul had before him when he wrote--"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly--completely, i.e. in each part of our threefold being--and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto (at) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). We have thus shown that our salvation will not be consummated until the Return of our blessed Savior, that not until then shall we be completely "conformed" to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29).

It is not until Christ's second advent that the purpose of our predestination will be fully realized, for it is not until then we shall be "glorified" (Rom. 8:30). If then salvation is by grace and it Christ is our Savior--our Savior from the presence of sin as well as from its penalty and power--then our own works (our obedience, faithfulness, service etc.) are not the determining factor, nor even a contributing factor. Salvation is not partly of grace and partly of works; if it were we should have ground for "boasting" and Christ would be robbed of at least a part of His glory.

Once we see that the time of our Lord's Return is the time when our salvation is consummated and once we see that salvation is by grace, through faith, and not of works, then it will be clear that it cannot, in anywise, be determined by our personal worthiness. 3. Because to make our Rapture dependent upon

anything in us is to attack the Finished Work of Christ. We do not charge the advocates of the partial-rapture theory with intentionally doing this, nay we are fully satisfied that most if not all of them would shrink back in horror from wittingly committing such a sin.

Yet, we do say that this is the logical and actual outcome of their teaching. A long drawn-out argument is not needed to prove this after what we have said above under the first two heads. If the Rapture is the consummation of the application of our salvation then anything which makes that salvation, or any part thereof, dependent upon anything in or from us, necessarily attacks the Finished Work of Christ upon which alone our salvation rests. As we have already said, the Rapture is the time when Christ returns to conduct His blood-bought people to the Father's House (John 14:1-3).

What then is it that gives title and fitness for the Father's House? Surely there can be only one answer to this question. Surely none but those who are ignorant of the character and contents of the Gospel of God would declare that our wretched works are needed to supplement the Cross-Work of Christ. But, blessed be God, the point we are now considering is not left to be determined by logical deductions, but is the express subject of Divine revelation. In Colossians 1:12 we are exhorted to give thanks unto the Father "which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

The "inheritance of the saints in light" is not a matter of attainment as certain teachers are today affirming, but is an occasion of thanksgiving to God, because it is due solely to His grace. Observe carefully the tense of the verb here: it is not we are "being made meet," still less that we are making ourselves meet, but "which HATH made us meet." Again we ask, What is it that gives us title to the inheritance of the saints in light? And we reply, Nought but the precious blood and infinite merits of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

What was it that qualified the "Prodigal" for a place at the Father's table? Did he have to submit to a lengthy probation after he returned home and before he was permitted to feast with the Father? No; the "best robe"--which speaks of "the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10) which is the portion of every believer--was all that was needed. Was not the "Repentant Thief" made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light the same hour in which he believed? Unquestionably, for our Lord assured him, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

If then the "best robe" was all that the Prodigal needed to fit him for a place at the Father's table, and if repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was sufficient to translate the Dying Thief to Paradise, is it not clear that nothing further will, be demanded of those whom the Lord shall conduct to the Father's House at the time of His Return? 4. Because the Rapture of a part of the Church truly, would leave the remainder of it still upon the earth and that prevent the manifestation of the Man of sin.

The picture that is presented in 2 Thessalonians 2 is an exceedingly solemn one. There we learn that the mystery of iniquity which was at work even in the days of the apostle Paul and which has been hindered from coming to complete fruition will yet head up in the appearing of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. The coming of this Devil-Man will be "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish."

Then it will be that the Devil is allowed "free rein." Then it is that, through the Antichrist, Satan will deceive the whole world. There will be many on earth at that time who in former days had listened unmoved to the preaching of the Gospel had treated with scorn or indifference its gracious offers. Hence "because they loved not the truth, that they might be saved God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe

a lie that they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We have said above that 2 Thessalonians 2 pictures a time when the Devil will be allowed "free rein." This will be the season when all his diabolical scheming will attain its full development in the manifestation of the Son of Perdition. Today it is otherwise. In this Dispensation, Satan is held in check, and his plans are not permitted to fully materialize. Today it is impossible for the Man of Sin to appear on the stage of this world as the above passage clearly intimates.

Says the apostle, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now until He be taken out of the way." (2 Thess. 2:5-7, R.V.). The "mystery of lawlessness" (in contrast to "the mystery of godliness," i.e. "God manifest in the flesh"--1 Timothy 3:16) will terminate in the Satanic parody of the Divine incarnation--the bringing forth by Satan of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition.

This Man of Sin will be revealed "in his own season." That "season" has not yet arrived. The reference is to the Great Tribulation period. There are two entities which are now preventing the appearing of the Antichrist. They are referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2 as "that which restraineth" and there is "One that restraineth now until He be taken out of the way." The former is the Church which is the body of Christ; the latter is the Holy Spirit Himself. The Church which is indwelt and energized by the Holy Spirit is now hindering and preventing the full development of the Mystery of Lawlessness and the consequent appearing of the Lawless One.

Not until the whole of the Church and the Holy Spirit leave this earth ("until He be taken out of the way") can the Man of Sin appear. Here then is a simple but conclusive argument which all should be able to grasp. Passing by the question of--How would it be possible for the Holy Spirit to be "taken out of the way" while many of those whom He indwells are left behind on the earth--we would point out the obvious fact that no part of the Church can be left behind on earth at the Return of Christ into the air, or, otherwise, there would still be a hindrance to the consummating of the Mystery of Lawlessness.

Christ declared that His disciples were "the salt of the earth." They are God's preservative. They are His instrument of preventing everything on earth going to utter decay and rottenness. But in the Tribulation period everything on earth will have gone to utter corruption as is clear from the words of our Lord--"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28)--a prophetic utterance which will receive its fulfillment at the very season of which we are now treating.

We are told that in the days which immediately preceded the Flood "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12) and our Lord declared, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37) i.e.--His coming back to the earth: the conditions which He will find prevailing here at that time. We repeat, at the Rapture and during the Tribulation period everything on earth will be morally and spiritually rotten. Even God's judgments at that time will have no other effect than to cause earth's-dwellers to "blaspheme God" (Rev. 16:11 etc.)

Hence, is it not evident that the whole of the salt (except that which has "lost its savor," i.e., formal professors) must have first been removed: that the church and the Holy Spirit which now make impossible this total corruption must first be "taken out of the way"! 5. Because for the believer there is "no judgment" and all upon earth during the Tribulation period are unquestionably the subjects of God's judgments. One of the most blessed, most remarkable and most far-reaching utterances which fell from our Lord's lips

while He tabernacled among men is that recorded in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

Nothing could be simpler than this. The one who has received Christ as his or her Savior is for ever beyond the reach of Divine "judgment." We quote this verse from the Gospels because the same assurance is given to us in the Church Epistles. There, also, we read, "There is therefore now no judgment to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). In the above verses an unequivocal assertion is made which requires no great learning to understand. Every believer has been justified by God Himself, justified eternally, justified "from all things" (Acts 13:39).

The result of this decision in the High Court of Heaven for those who have been pronounced righteous is that there is for them "no judgment." Hence it ought to be clear that no believing sinner who has been "accepted in the Beloved" can possibly be left on earth during the Great Tribulation, for at that time God's sore "judgments will be on earth." That then will be the time when God's Judgments are let loose needs no arguing--the last book in the Bible makes that abundantly clear.

The "seven golden vials" in which are stored up the concentrated and long suppressed "wrath of God" (Rev. 15) will then be poured forth upon the world which crucified the Lord of Glory. To teach then, that any of the members of Christ's body will be left behind on earth to suffer these judgments is to repudiate the express testimony of our Lord to the contrary, is to undermine the glorious doctrine of Justification, and is to make God's children the subjects of His "wrath" instead of the objects of His love and grace. 6.

Because nothing can separate believers from the Love of Christ. To those that believe perhaps the most precious and amazing truth in all God's Word is Christ's Love for His own. Unlike human love, His love is lavished upon the unlovely and unworthy. Unlike human love, His love knows no change. Unlike human love, nothing can separate us from His love--"Who (or "what") shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:35-37). The time when our Lord's Love will be fully exhibited and publicly displayed (before all Heaven's inhabitants) is that time when He shall rise up from the Father's Throne where He is now seated. Then it will be that He shall descend from heaven with a "shout." What will occasion this "shout"?

What is it that He is descending for? Is it that He may return to the earth and take its government upon His shoulder? Is it that He may be coronated the King of kings? Is it that He may vanquish His blatant enemies? Is it that He may bind that old Serpent. the Devil? No; important as these may be, there is something else which must take the precedence; there is something else which lies much nearer to His blessed heart. He descends to receive to Himself His blood-bought people.

Why? Because He loves them. He comes for that Church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself in order "that He might present it (not a part of it) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). Ah! this will be the time when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," and think you He would be "satisfied" by seeing an incomplete Church? To teach then that a part of the Church will be left behind when our Lord comes back again to receive His people: unto Himself is to declare that something (unfaithfulness or unworthiness) will separate some of the saints from their Redeemer's Love and thus Romans 8:35 is

repudiated.

Moreover, it is to deny the comforting declaration of John 13:1--"Having loved His own which were, in the world, He loved them to the end." --Therefore, we say, Because nothing shall or can separate any believer from the Love of Christ, not one shall be left behind when He returns to take unto Himself His blood-washed people. As it was declared of Israel of old in connection with their leaving Egypt (type of the world)--"There shall not an hoof be left behind" (Ex. 10:26). 7.

Because the inevitable tendency of the partial-rapture theory is to get believers occupied with themselves instead of with Christ. We shall not now attempt to argue at length what is a matter of common observation. One of the favorite devices of the Enemy is to get the believer occupied with something other than Christ who is "Our Hope." And, let us say it with emphasis, Satan cares not what that "something" may be, providing that it shuts out our blessed Lord. This is his favorite device for the sinner.

While ever the sinner is taken up with his own works of righteousness, the Finished Work of Christ is excluded from His vision. So it is with the believer. We are hidden to "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). But to hinder him from doing this, Satan is ever seeking to get the believer concerned with something else. With some it is "the mammon of unrighteousness;" with others it is "the care of this world." With some it is politics and civic affairs; with others it is Temperance reform work and Social-uplift activities.

With some it is an intellectual study of doctrine or prophecy divorced from heart-occupation with Christ; with others it is their own experiences and attainments. The life-task of the believer--blessed privilege--was defined by the Lord Himself in that word to Martha, "But one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42)--i.e., to sit at His feet and find our delight in Him. O that we might come to the place where we can say actually and experimentally, "Thou O Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find."

But, as we have said, this is exactly what Satan seeks to prevent, and one of his "wiles" for preventing it (so it appears to the writer) is the partial-rapture theory which today is unsettling so many of the Lord's dear people. Teach that participation in the Rapture is a reward for faithfulness, and at once, the eyes are turned from Christ to self. Necessarily so; for immediately, I shall be occupied with my faithfulness, my obedience, my diligence, my service, the effect of which will be the drawing of invidious distinctions and the cultivating of an I-am-holier-than-thou spirit.

But teach that the Rapture is "a good hope through grace" and I shall be occupied with my returning Lord. The Holy Spirit is here to glorify Christ and not to magnify personal attainments, and whether or not a line or system of teaching proceeds from Him may be judged by its logical and actual tendency to glorify Christ by getting His people occupied with their Lord. 8. Because the partial-rapture theory introduces a situation that is full of Confusion. The leading advocates of the partial-rapture theory teach that all believers who fail to come up to the standard necessary for participation in the Rapture will not only be left behind on earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation but that such will have no part or place in the Millennial Kingdom, and therefore that they will not be raised from the dead until after the thousand years.

Now apart from the fact that there is no Scripture which teaches a resurrection of saints at the close of the Millennium, we affirm that such a theory as the above involves confusion of the worst kind. We are told that certain saints (many of them) because of their unfaithfulness or failure to "look" for their returning Savior will not be raptured at the time our Lord descends to the air, in fact will not be "glorified" until the close of the thousand years. Unquestionably there have been many saints all through this Dispensation

who failed to measure up to the standard fixed by partial-raptureists and yet, dying hundreds of years ago, they have during all the intervening centuries been "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

What absurdity is it then which teaches that these saints who have been with the Lord all these centuries, will nevertheless, be separated from Him during the Millennium! Again. During the Tribulation period there will be on earth a Jewish remnant who will cry unto God in the language of the Imprecatory Psalms. These Jews, harassed by the Antichrist and persecuted by his followers, will cry--"Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 59:13).

They will exclaim: --"Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against Thee.

O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with Thy tempest, and make them afraid with Thy storm. Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea let them be put to shame and perish." (Ps. 83:1-5, 13-15,17). Now could such prayers as these, ascend from the lips of the members of the body of Christ who have been saved by grace! The above are inspired prayers which the Jews will appropriate to themselves in the time of "Jacob's Trouble," but who can imagine Christians praying such prayers?

We have been instructed to be "kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). The saints of this Dispensation are told "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Rom. 12:14). The requirement of the Church Epistles is, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thess. 5:15). If then a part of the Church were on earth during the Tribulation period we should have the following strange anomaly--The Jews praying to God to take vengeance upon their enemies and Christians praying to God to "forgive" these same foes!

Surely a theory which involves such confusion as this cannot be according to the Scriptures. The truth is that partial-raptureists confound entrance into the Kingdom with position of honor in it. All believers who belong to this Dispensation will partake of the blessedness of the Millennial era and will reign with Christ throughout it, but all will not be on the same level. Special positions of honor will be allotted to those who have qualified themselves for such (Luke 19:17, etc.).

Special "prizes" await those who shall win these marks of distinction. But this is quite another thing from entrance into the Millennial Kingdom itself. Entrance into that Kingdom is solely a matter of Divine grace, but an "abundant entrance" into it is conditional upon our present fidelity to the Lord. New birth admits us into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5), but diligent service, faithfulness unto death, and loving the appearing of Christ are the several conditions for the "crowns." 9.

Because the Church Epistles plainly teach that ALL believers will be raptured at the time of our Lord's Return. In Romans 8:30 we read, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Glorification is co-extensive with justification. This is admitted by all: the point at issue is--Will all be glorified at the same time? We answer, assuredly they will. Do we not read "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51,52)? "We shall all be changed" at the same moment, for the passage continues "At the

last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (all living believers) shall be changed."

In 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23 we read, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ first, then they that are Christ's at His coming." Note particularly the words. "They that are Christ's at His coming." How simple! how all-inclusive! how blessed! It is not "They that are faithful or worthy." It is not "they that have attained some high standard of moral excellence." It is not "they that have been unusually diligent and successful in service."

But "They that are Christ's." That is all. It is simply a question of belonging to Christ, being one of His people. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we are told "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." That unfaithful believers are not excluded from this appearing before the Bema of Christ is clear from 1 Corinthians 3--"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:13-15). There will be some in that day who will "suffer loss," nevertheless, they will be present at the Bema with their fellow-believers and furthermore, they will be "saved." How remarkable it is that these comprehensive assurances are found in the Corinthian Epistles--addressed to a church whose moral condition was the worst of all the churches addressed by the apostle Paul, as if to anticipate this modern heresy of limiting the Rapture to spiritual believers!

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 we read, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, 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." The dead "in Christ." Here again it is simply a question of being "in Christ." There is no third position: it is out of Christ, or in Christ.

In God's sight every person that is now on the earth is either in Adam or in Christ. All who were "in Christ" when they died shall be raised from the dead at the time of His return. This is sure, and it is equally sure that every believer who is alive on the earth at that blest day shall be caught up together with all the resurrected saints to meet our Lord in the air and be forever with Him. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10 we read, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Observe once more the universality of such a promise, and note, too, its simplicity and how it turns back to first principles. Our Lord is to be admired in all them that believe. All is traced back to simple faith. It is not at all a question of worthiness or attainments. The same simple heart trust in Christ which delivered us from the wrath to come, shall most certainly secure for every saint a participation in the Rapture and a place in the Millennial Kingdom, for this last quoted passage carries us forward to the Millennium itself. 10.

Because there is not a single Scripture in the Church Epistles which, rightly interpreted, teaches a partial rapture. How could there be? Scripture cannot contradict itself. If the Pauline Epistles explicitly teach and expressly affirm that "all shall be changed in a moment," that "they that are Christ's at His coming shall be raised from the dead," that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ" and that when our Lord returns to the earth to be glorified in His saints He shall be "admired in all them that believe" then these

same Church Epistles can not teach that a part of the Church only shall be taken to be with the Lord, that merely a favored selection from among His people shall be conducted by Him to the Father's House, and that the remainder shall be left behind on the earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation or be left in their grave until the close of the Millennium.

Even though there should be certain passages which seem to teach or imply a partial rapture we know that it cannot be so, and that it is we who fail to expound these passages in harmony with those which positively teach a total rapture of the Church. It is a fundamental principle of Scriptural interpretation that whenever God's Word speaks plainly and emphatically on any subject that obscure passages which treat of the same theme must be explained in accord with those passages, about which there is no dubiety.

For example, when we hear our Lord saying "My sheep shall never perish" etc. then we know that in such passages as those of Hebrews 6 and 10, which treat of the irrecoverable doom of apostates, the apostle must have had before him professors and not persons who had been born again. In a like manner when we find a passage which appears to bear upon the Rapture and which is in anywise ambiguous then we must not make it teach that which would conflict with other passages which deal with the Blessed Hope and which are plain and positive.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10,11). These words, "If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead" (Greek) are understood by partial-raptureists to refer to a select resurrection from among the dead at the time of our Lord's Return, and hence, they conclude that as the resurrection referred to is spoken of; as a matter of attainment, then, only select company of believers will participate therein.

But let us ask the question, Does the apostle here refer to a physical resurrection? In the New Testament the terms "death" and "resurrection" have a fourfold scope, viz.:--physical death and resurrection, spiritual death and resurrection, judicial death and resurrection, and experimental death and resurrection. We need not submit proof texts for the first, but we will do so with reference to the last three. In John 5:24-26 we read, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Now the words "death" and "life" in this passage can only refer to spiritual death, spiritual life, and spiritual resurrection--"passed from death unto life." By nature we are spiritually dead--"dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but by the new birth we pass from death unto life.

Regeneration is therefore a spiritual resurrection. Further. In Romans 6:2 we read, "How shall we that died to sin (Greek), live any longer therein?" and in Colossians 3:1--"If then ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above." These two verses refer to the believer's judicial death and resurrection. This side of the truth is little known or understood, but we cannot now dwell upon it at any length. One word sums it all up--identification. On the Cross there was a double identification--all believers understand the first side of it, but few are clear upon the second.

In the reckoning of God and in the eye of the Law Christ was identified with us as lost sinners. He took our place and bore our sins. He endured the full penalty of the broken law in our stead. But further, (and it is deeply important that we should apprehend this) in the reckoning of God and in the eye of the Law all

believers were identified with Christ. Hence, every believer can say "I was crucified (Greek) with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). In the sight of God I died on the Cross because Christ hung there as my substitute and what a substitute does or suffers is imputed to the account of the one on whose behalf he is acting.

Hence, we repeat, in God's sight, when Christ died I died, "died to sin," died to the law, died to the world, died to everything that had to do with my old standing in Adam. But further still. Death did not retain Christ. He rose again, and in the reckoning of God I rose too, for all believers were identified (reckoned one with) with Christ in His resurrection, so that it is written, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins (spiritually, and therefore, judicially), hath quickened (made alive) us. together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4,8).

It is not our individual spiritual quickening (the new birth) that is here in view, but our judicial identification with Christ--"together with Christ." The next verse goes raft, her still and informs us that, in the reckoning of God, all believers were identified with Christ in His ascension--"And hath raised us up together (Christ and His people), and made us sit together in the Heavenlies (Greek) in Christ Jesus." Observe that this is "in Christ Jesus" which refers to our position before God (compare "in Christ Jesus" Romans 8:1) and is not at all, a question of experience or attainment.

We are now prepared to consider the fourth aspect of "death" and "resurrection." Every believer in Christ has "died to sin," died judicially not experimentally, died in the sight of God because he was "crucified with Christ." Here then is where faith comes in. God says I am "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2), but "I don't feel dead to sin: my experience shows me otherwise," says one. Beloved, it is not a question of "feelings" or "experience" but of believing the testimony of God. Hear Him: "Reckon ye also yourselves to have died indeed unto sin (Greek) and to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

Here then is the experimental death and resurrection. By faith I am to translate into my practical life what is true of me judicially. Believing God's Word which tells me I have died unto sin and that I am alive unto God through (or rather "IN") Jesus Christ our Lord, I am now to live in the realization and power of that truth. This is what the apostle had reference to when he said, "Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5): the "therefore" looking back to the previous verses where he had been discussing the believer's judicial death and resurrection.

It was as though he said, See to it that yore practical state corresponds with the standing which you have before God "in Christ." Returning now to Philippians 3. Here Paul is speaking "resurrection" but, as we have seen, the New Testament treats of four different orders of resurrection, to which of them then is the apostle here referring? Is he here speaking of physical resurrection, spiritual resurrection, judicial resurrection, or perimental resurrection? The context must decide.

A close reading of the entire passage will make it evident that it is experimental resurrection which the apostle had before him. The whole passage refers to his practical experience and is a biographical amplification of Romans 6:11. Beginning at the seventh verse he says--"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things (how evident it is that the apostle is here recounting a practical experience!, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him (the Greek word here is "ginosko" and means know intimately), and the power of His resurrection" (vv. 3 to 10).

The apostle yearned to live as one who had been raised from the dead. He longed to walk in "newness of life." He desired that he should no longer "serve sin." "And the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" The apostle longed to tread the same path his Lord had trod, to be baptized with the baptism He had been baptized with, and to drink of the cup which He drank (Mark 10:38, 39). "If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead" (Phil. 3:11), that is, if, by any means I might experience the full and blessed effects of complying completely with the terms of Romans 6:11--reckon myself indeed to have died unto sin and be alive unto God.

The apostle longed to apprehend or lay hold of that for which he had been apprehended, namely, to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." What he desired above every thing else for himself, was that he might realize practically in his daily life, that which was true of him judicially in regard to his standing before God. But had the apostle fully achieved his ambition? Had he arrived at the place where he was now beyond the reach of the lusts of the "old man"? Did he never yield to temptation?

Was he delivered from the very presence of sin? Nay, verily. The language of the next verse is very emphatic--"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (v. 12). Here is proof positive that in the previous verse the apostle was not writing about a future resurrection of the body, for if participation in the first resurrection (or of an eclectic resurrection at the return of Christ) is the reward for a life of exceptional spirituality, the apostle here acknowledges that he himself did not measure up to the required standard--and if he did not, who has?

No, this passage proves too much for the partial-raptureist, for in making the resurrection of believers a matter of spiritual attainment he excludes the Apostle Paul himself! It should be evident that the apostle is here referring to an experimental resurrection, something which had to do with his practical everyday life. Someone once said to an Irish brother, "Pat, you are, dead to sin: Your old man was crucified with Christ." "Yes," was the reply "but, I'm frequently troubled with my ghost."

Says the apostle, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but lifts one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind (his successes and his failures; his attainments and his sins), and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (goal) for the prize of the high calling (or "vocation") of God in Christ" (vv. 13,14). A further word on this last verse. Note the apostle speaks of: "the prize of the high calling" which is quite distinct from the "high-calling" itself.

The "high-calling of God in Christ Jesus" is the judicial position which is occupied by every believer. It is to this the apostle referred when he said, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation (the "high-calling") wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1), and for those who do "walk worthy" there is a "prize." Did the apostle succeed in winning it? We certainly believe so. 2 Timothy 4 is the SEQUEL to Philippians 3! Listen to the beloved apostle as he has arrived at the close of his earthly pilgrimage--"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 (the "prize" he so earnestly revered), 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" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). May grace be given both reader and writer to fight the good fight of faith, to finish our course with joy, and to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

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