

Studies in Daniel #11 – A General Rapture, or a Firstfruit Rapture?

Theme #8: The “Saints of the Most High” (continued)

In the last lesson, I suggested that not all Christians will be ready for, or go up in, the rapture. This may cause some concern or questions. Some believe in a “general rapture”, that is, that all professing Christians will automatically go up in the rapture, but they should consider the following:

There are warnings of a great apostasy in the last days.

Mt. 24:12-13 – “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of [the] many shall wax cold. But **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**” Note – “the many” (in Greek) implies “most”. i.e., the love of most will grow cold.

2 Thess. 2:3 – “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;”

Even before the last days, the parable of the sower speaks of some who turn from Christ due to persecution, or the cares of this life.

So can we believe that those who once made a profession of faith but do not endure, are somehow going to be taken up to be with Christ?

There are frequent warnings to watch and be ready, because we don’t know when Jesus will return.

Mt. 24:36-44 – After describing the last days as being like the days of Noah, Jesus says “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. **Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.**” Then 24:45-51 gives the warning by contrasting the wise and faithful servant who is carrying on his lord’s instructions while he is absent, with the evil servant that says “My lord delayeth his coming” and so misuses his authority and eats and drinks with the drunkards.

Mk. 13:32-37 – “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. **Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.** For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commandeth the porter to watch. **Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh,** at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: **Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.**”

Lk. 12:34-38 – “For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. **Blessed are those servants, whom when the lord he cometh shall find watching:** verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.”

Lk. 19:12-27 – (the parable of the nobleman going into a far country) He went “to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return”. His own citizens hated him, but of his servants, to whom he had given money, some gained by trading, and some did nothing. The faithful servants were given authority over cities, but the unfaithful servant lost any reward he might have gotten.

1 Thess. 4:15-17 describes the rapture – “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”, so first is the resurrection of the dead saints, 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Then 5:1-9 says we cannot know when this will be, because the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 5:4-6 – “But ye,

brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. **Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.**” So in the very context of describing the rapture, there is a warning to watch!

The parable of the wise and the foolish virgins

Mt. 25:1-13 speaks of the 5 wise, and 5 foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom. The wise were prepared with oil in their lamps, but the foolish had let their lamps dim, with no oil. The groom came and the foolish were left out. Perhaps it is significant that he does not say “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:23), but “I know you not”. Does Christ know you now? Do you have a real relationship with God through Christ, or are you just giving nominal assent and lukewarm obedience? Some people make an initial profession of Christ, but do not stick with it. Their lamps are gone, or going, out. v. 13 – **“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”**

Promises and warning in the letters to the 7 Churches of Asia

Rev. 2-3 – In each of the letters to the churches, there are commendations, rebukes, warnings, threats, and promises. Each one ends with at a promise made only to those who overcome. The church of Philadelphia is given a promise that could well be the rapture. 3:10 – “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” If someone is not overcoming and enduring, can they be confident that they will be kept from that hour?

The concept of a firstfruit, as opposed to a full harvest

Rev. 14 shows the great harvest of the earth, first of the righteous and then a harvest of terrible judgment. There are also the parables of the wheat and the tares, and the separation of the good and bad fish. But all through the Bible there is a concept of the “firstfruits”. There is a feast of the firstfruits as well as a feast of the ingathering of the full harvest. Christ is the firstfruit from the dead. So likewise, we can consider the rapture of overcoming, watchful, sober, and prepared saints to be a “firstfruits rapture” which could occur at any time, as opposed to the general resurrection at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 20).

Conclusion

Lk. 21:33-36 – “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. **Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.**”

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