

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 | LIVING IN A RESURRECTION MANNER

VERSE 1 - BLUE

In Colossians 2:20, Paul spoke to his audience as those who are "dead with Christ," meaning that they are no longer bound to follow the rudiments of this world (vv. 20-23). Now, in Colossians 3:1, he speaks to them as those who are "risen with Christ." The conditional "if" is assumed to have been met, which means that according to Paul, his audience is simultaneously "dead with Christ" and "risen with Christ." This language is, of course, metaphorical and alludes to a spiritual transformation in the way his audience lives and behaves in relation to their faith.

In contrast to earlier dispensations, which focused on the Jewish nation seeking earthly rewards of the coming Messianic reign of the Davidic king, believers in the age of Grace, having been "raised with Christ" who is now at "the right hand of God," are instructed to "seek those things which are above." This shift highlights a significant change as this dispensation offers no hope in earthly things. Instead, our Savior sits at the right hand of God, and we are now in a dispensation centered around spiritual matters—faith, hope, and charity.

Unlike the Jewish nation, our hope is not in the future restoration of the Kingdom (Acts 1:5), but in the "blessed hope" of the rapture, when we shall forever be with the Lord (1 Thes. 4:17). The Jewish nation, taught to store up their treasures in Heaven (Mt 6:20), would receive those treasures on earth (Mt. 6:33). They were to trust God to provide (Mt. 6:25) and lay up treasures in heaven for the provision during the Kingdom. With the Kingdom's nearness, they were even encouraged to sell their possessions and give to the poor, as a means of laying up treasure in heaven (Lk 12:33).

However, the dynamics for the body of Christ are different. The body of Christ, unlike the Jewish nation, is not a citizen of the commonwealth of Israel, a recipient of the covenants and promises. Our conversation is in heaven (Phil 3:20). The Jewish nation is looking forward to the "better country" and the city God has prepared for them (Heb 11:13-16). In contrast, the body of Christ is not seeking an earthly reward but longing for the Lord's presence through the rapture.

VERSE 2 - BLUE

In verse 2, Paul reiterates the directive from verse 1, encouraging believers to focus their minds "on things above, not on things on the earth." The term used here, φρονέω [phroneo], is inherently associated with cognition rather than emotion. This might lead one to question why the King James Bible opted for the word "affection" instead of a term like "mind," as used in Philippians 2:5. Interestingly, the primary definition of "affection" in the Oxford English Dictionary refers to a mental state brought about by any influence, or the action or result of affecting the mind in some way. This use of "affection" aligns well with Paul's call for believers to adjust their mindset and concentrate on the heavenly, rather than earthly, matters. [FN1]

FN1: 1 "affection, n.1." OED Online. Oxford University Press, March 2022. Web. 19 April 2022.

The apostles are often criticized by modern commentaries for being too earthly minded, overly focused on a physical kingdom. This perspective is often due to a misapplication of verses like Colossians 3:1-2, which are directed towards the body of Christ, but misapplied to the apostles, who belonged to the nation of Israel. The apostles lived in a different dispensation, one where the Scripture-based expectation was a coming physical Kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, their focus on earthly matters was not misplaced in their context. It is crucial to rightly divide the Word of Truth and understand the different audiences and contexts to avoid such misunderstandings.

VERSE 3 - BLUE

In verse 3, Paul confirms that the conditions implied by the "if" statements in 2:20 and 3:1 have indeed been met with his straightforward declarations: "you are dead" and "your life is hid." These statements describe our current state. Our life, as it is now, is not fully understood in its physical or earthly manifestation alone. Rather, our true life is "hid," concealed in such a way that it cannot be readily seen. This is similar to Christ's current state, as He too is "hid in God" and cannot be seen physically. Hence, our real existence, much like Christ's, is not visible to the naked eye. This hidden existence underlines the spiritual nature of our lives and the emphasis on unseen, heavenly matters.

This concept aligns with what Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh." This reflects the notion that as members of the body of Christ, we are not to be defined or understood solely in worldly or physical terms. Rather, our true identity is hidden in Christ.

VERSE 4 - BLUE

In verse 4, Paul transitions from the present state of believers being "hid in Christ" to a future scenario when both Christ and believers will "appear." The Greek word used for "appear" is φαίνω [phaino], which implies a physical sight, a visibility brought about by light reflecting off matter. This term cannot be used to denote a mere "spiritual appearance."

Since the term necessitates tangible, physical visibility, the "appearance" of Christ discussed here must refer to His second coming. Notably, during the rapture, Christ does not make a physical appearance on Earth. In the Second Coming, however, Christ arrives "in glory," a phrase pointing towards the Kingdom.

This verse strongly supports the belief that after the rapture, believers will stay with Christ until His Second Coming. At that point, we will return with Him, sharing in His glory.

It's important to note that the passage does not provide any explicit details about our specific roles or duties when we are "in glory" with Christ. What we will do in this state remains undisclosed. Furthermore, this passage is not concrete evidence that the "ten thousands of his saints" who come with the Lord (Jude 1:14) equates to the body of Christ. This prophecy by Enoch predates the revelation of the mystery and therefore must be referencing either angels or Jews, as the term is used in the Hebrew scriptures.

COLOSSIANS 3:5-10 | A NEW LIFESTYLE

VERSE 5 - BLUE

In Colossians 3:5, Paul expands on the instructions given in Colossians 2:16 and 3:2, guiding believers on how to respond to the reality of being complete in Christ (Col. 2:10) and how to shift their affections to heavenly matters (Col. 3:2). He commands believers to "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." The term "mortify" is interpreted metaphorically here, instructing believers to put to death certain aspects of their lives.

The term "members" in this context refers to parts of a group or "club of sin."

Paul's "Club of Sin" -

- "Fornication": A broad term referring to various sexual sins.
- "Uncleanness": Likely refers to general filth, used metaphorically.
- "Inordinate affection" (πάθος [pathos] in Greek): Associated with negative feelings or emotions that evoke pity or sorrow. We get the word PATHETIC from this same word. The word "affection" is part of PATHOS, and not the same as verse 2, though the English meaning is the same, thus "pathetic, pitiful, negative thinking."
- "Evil concupiscence": Derived from the Greek words ἐπιθυμία [epithumia] (desire) and κακός [kakos] (evil). It warns against giving into evil desires.

- "Covetousness" (πλεονεξία [pleonexia] in Greek): Identified as a form of idolatry (εἰδωλολατρία [eidolatria] in Greek). This implies that covetousness is like a religious service to an idol, with the idol being the object of covetousness. Covetousness is not the simple desire but the intense longing to possess.

VERSE 6 - BLUE

In this verse and also in Ephesians 5:6, we are told that the wrath of God descends upon the children of disobedience due to their actions. The term "disobedience" is derived from the Greek word ἀπειθεία [apeitheia], the root of the English word "apathy." However, using "apathy" in this context would not be accurate. Instead, the original term more accurately translates to "a failure to believe," but it was often used to express the resulting failure to obey, hence the translation "disobedience."

Interestingly, one may question why Paul warns of the impending wrath of God when, under our current dispensation of grace, "God is not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19)? This verse appears to refer to a future event and serves as an illustration of the seriousness with which we should personally "mortify" the Club of Sin.

VERSE 7 - BLUE

Paul's phrase "in the which ye also walked" refers to a time in the past when the Colossians were living among the "children of disobedience" (v. 6). The phrase "when ye lived in them" refers to the time when they were actively engaging in the sinful behaviors listed in verse 5. It is a reminder that for most of us, where they are, we once were, and where we are, they can be.

VERSES 8-9 - BLUE

Notice the contrast between the things in which "ye also walked sometime" (v. 7) and "but now" (v.8). The things Paul is about to mention are daily challenges for many believers, while the things of v. 5 are more likely not practiced by those who are walking faithfully within a body of believers. They are the "sometime" (v. 7) kind of activity, whereas verses 8-9 describe the "everyday" kind of sin.

These additional members of the "sin club" include "anger" and "wrath." Wrath is an outburst of anger. Also included is "malice," a tangible expression of evil thinking. "Blasphemy" and "filthy communication" would both be examples of malice. Paul continues by giving the basic instruction to "lie not."

Paul's command to "put off the old man" refers to rejecting the sinful behaviors and habits that characterized our lives before we became believers. It is a metaphorical way of saying that we should abandon our old, sinful ways. This does not refer to a change in our human nature, but rather to changing our behavior. By "mortifying" or "putting to death" the members of the "sin club", we consciously reject and abandon our previous sinful lifestyle, and instead strive to live in a manner that is pleasing to God.

VERSE 10 - BLUE

In verse 10, Paul instructs believers to "put on the new man," a metaphorical expression to adopt a new, Christ-like way of living that aligns with our new identity as members of the body of Christ. This "new man" is characterized by being "renewed in knowledge." This renewal signifies a transformative process, a journey towards a correct understanding that aligns with the teachings and image of Christ, our creator.

The process of renewal is not a mere accumulation of knowledge. Instead, it involves a transformative shift in our understanding. This shift often requires us to let go of old, flawed assumptions and beliefs that we once held. In place of these, we are to adopt new perspectives that align with the knowledge of Christ. It's about aligning our thinking and understanding more closely with God's perspective, as revealed in Scripture.