

# The Life That Was Hidden With Christ In God

[Notice: Unless you are an adherent to the fulfilled prophecy (aka preterist) paradigm of biblical eschatology, then this study will not make much sense to you; I would like for you to come back to this of course, but only after you have seriously considered several other passages and topics directly related to the timing of the return of Christ on my website: ASiteForTheLord.com.]

Sometime back I did a comprehensive study of baptism as it pertains to people living after the fulfillment of all things, then later I did an exhaustive study of baptism as it relates specifically to First Peter 3:21; recently, while conversing with a fella about this topic (in part as it relates to Colossians 2), I referred to Colossians 3:1-4 and its significance in relation to both the subjects of baptism and the transition period between the Pentecost of AD 30 and the Holocaust of AD 70 (a concept only fulfilled prophecy believers will recognize).

Of all Paul's writings except Philemon, it seems no epistle has less of a direct mention of the *parousia* of Christ than his Colossian letter; however, it could be said that the idea of the return of Christ infuses its pages such as when—just in chapter one alone—he wrote of the hope glory (v. 27) that was laid up for them in heaven (v. 5), their inheritance (v. 12), Jesus as the firstborn, implying their resurrection as well (vv. 15 & 18), their reconciliation that was about to be accomplished in Christ (v. 20 [cf. 2:17]), and their presentation to God as holy (v. 22), not to mention his statements in verses 6 & 23 indicating the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:15 concerning the end of all things once the gospel of the kingdom went into all of their world. So...

Let's now direct our focus to Colossians 3:1-4 which read like this: "*Therefore, since you were raised with Christ, aim for the things above where Christ is sitting at God's right hand. Concentrate on things above not on earthly things, for you died and your life is hidden along with Christ in God. Then, whenever Christ, who is our life, is revealed, you'll also be revealed with Him in glory.*" I want to break down this passage in our investigation, so follow along with me here:

## **Verse 1a: Therefore...**

As the old adage goes, "When you see the word 'therefore' ask what it's there for," we need to do this very thing so that we won't take the passage under consideration out of its context. So...

To set the proverbial stage of what preceded the first few verses of Colossians chapter 3, we need to first be sure we're on the same page concerning two phrases Paul employed: According to the NKJV, in 2:8 & 20 he referred to "the basic principles of the world," while in 2:11 he referred to "the body of the sins of the flesh," though in the original he actually merely wrote "the body of the flesh." As can even be determined by the very context here (vv. 14-17), both of these phrases were depictions of the Old Covenant Law system, especially as it, at that time in history, had become infused with a mess of rules that Yahweh never authorized.

"The basic principles or elements of their world" was also spoken of by Paul in Galatians chapter 4 as a phrase depicting the Law—just read chapters 3 & 4 if not the entire letter, following that up with Hebrews 5:12 and its direct context, going on into chapter 6 (if not also that entire letter); I won't take the time to read all of that for you now of course, but you can see on your own later that both of those sections of Scripture plainly concern the Old Covenant system of law and works and so on. Likewise...

"The body of the flesh" phrase points to the Law in such passages as Romans 6 (esp. v. 6), Romans 7 (esp. vv. 5 & 24-25), Romans 8 (esp. vv. 3-13), and several others related to body/flesh/sin/death in the contexts of the Law (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57). Besides this...

We also need to be sure we're on the same page concerning the purpose of this letter (which was essentially the same purpose for all of Paul's letters except Philemon), viz. to encourage the Christian recipients to stay faithful to Christ and not allow themselves to be pressured to place themselves under or back under the Law (especially, again, to what all it had become by the time of Paul); all a reader of this epistle has to do is read the last 16 (or even fewer) verses of the previous chapter to see that such is what Paul was attempting to prevent his audience from doing.

To clearly get this picture, we could go all the way back to the beginning of chapter 1, but to save time we can see in 2:8 that he warned them to be aware of those who would take them away from the Christ; he then, in verses 11-15, followed that up by either reminding them or teaching them that—in their act of being baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—they were thereby identifying with Him in what He did in relation to the Law. What did He do? Well, with the whole law/flesh/sin concept in mind, He died to it: In Romans chapters 6—8, Paul equated the Law with sin and sin with the Law because (as he wrote in 1 Cor. 15:56) the Law was the strength of sin; so in Romans 6:9-10 Paul wrote of Jesus (who perfectly fulfilled the Law, Rom. 8:4) as having died to it and all it represented (which, btw, is why in 1 Cor. 6:16 Paul could say they knew Christ no longer after the flesh); then in Romans 6:11 he said that, because they had identified with Christ in His death, they also had died to all of that, something he repeated in 7:4 when he wrote that "*you, my brethren, have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ,*" implying of course that the Law was still in effect. So what's my point so far?

In Colossians 2:11-17, he was telling them this same thing, viz. that they—through Christ—had died to living by/under law, the epitome of which they were being pressured to put themselves under; he even topped it off by making sure they understood that all such law-related things were of "*no value*" to them (vv. 22-23). And, based upon all this,...

Not only did he begin chapter 3 with "*therefore,*" but before that he used that word two other times (2:16 & 20), telling them that—due to their relationship to law because of Christ, they were not to allow themselves to be judged by law-keepers or ceremonialists, especially since God's Law was full of types and shadows, prefiguring the Christ who had come! So (just as Rom. 6:11 & 7:4 earlier), Colossians 2:20 says that they, in/thru Christ, had died to the world of attempting to live by (the) law. ... So now to our 3:1 "*therefore*":

**Verse 1b: Since you were raised with Christ, aim for the things above where Christ is sitting at God's right hand.**

So because they (like Christ with whom they identified in baptism) died to the Law (which, again, being perfect, was the epitome of law in general), then they also raised to the life in Christ outside of that which was the strength of sin and its death (1 Cor. 15:56-57). Now here's a question to ponder:

Since they were raised to life with/in Christ, then why were they to aim for things above where Christ was? Weren't they raised with Him and were thus already IN the "above" with Christ "at God's right hand" (reminiscent of their "citizenship" [Php. 3:20] being in the "heavenlies" [Eph. 2:6])? Well, obviously not in its ultimate, biblical sense, for not only would the inspired apostle Paul not have written something so contradictory in nature, but he also wouldn't have continued in the next few verses to refer to *how* they had only actually come into possession of the promissory note of that life, something he wrote of in other passages (e.g. Eph. 1:13-14) when speaking of their having the Spirit as the pledge of the finished product; but we'll get more into this in a few moments in verses 3-4. Now...

In relation to where Christ was—away from them—at this time, Paul here stated that He was at God's right hand; now, even though Paul wrote of this in at least six other passages, he only answered our questions relative to *this* context in Romans 8:34 wherein he indicated that Jesus was there because He was fulfilling His high priestly work of making intercession for His New Covenant people. So what's "intercession"?

The original word for "intercession" in Romans 8:34 is from a root word (*tygxano*) which is considered to be an antonym of the original word for "sin" (*harmartia*); i.e., while sin means "to miss the mark," intercession means "to hit the bull's-eye." See, Jesus, as High Priest, upon His ascension, went into the true most holy place to offer the sacrifice of Himself, essentially smearing His unblemished blood upon the mercy-seat and so on, for the Father to either reject or accept; obviously, Jesus' sacrifice was accepted, because, being sinless, His life "hit the bull's-eye" in reference to living perfectly ... for them. So...

As the book of Hebrews painstakingly depicts throughout, High Priest Jesus was pictured as being involved in His high priestly work in the true most holy place, while at the same time the Spirit He had sent on the Pentecost of Acts 2 was keeping His people from being or feeling like orphans (John 14:18); thus, as the remnant of those who accepted Jesus as being the prophesied Messiah were gathering to Him, their promised immortality was being safely kept by/in Him until He returned to bestow it upon them. Relative to all this...

In the epistle of Acts we not only find Peter referring to Jesus as having been exalted to God's right (2:33), but later on that same day he referred to that place as "*heaven*" (aka the true most holy place); and Peter said that that was where He would remain until the time of the restoration of all things (3:21), for while He was there, His Father was subjugating all enemies of the cross under His beloved Son's feet before sending Him to make the final judgment which would fully establish His kingship. Moving on...

## **Verse 2: Concentrate on things above not on earthly things...**

So what did Paul mean by this? I mean, what were those "*things above*" upon which he wanted them to concentrate? Well, the answer seems obvious in the context, for the things the Judaizers were pressuring the people everywhere to observe were tangible, physical, earthly, temporal things about which Paul wrote in 2:16 & 20-23, things mainly of the Old Covenant system which were pictures of things fulfilled by/in Christ in an unearthly, spiritual manner (2:17); so instead of their being involved in things that *prefigured* Christ & His work, they should've been basking in how that—at that very moment, finally in their very generation—He was "*about to*" (2:17) fulfill it all! By doing that, they, as Paul said in Romans 2:7, would be concentrating on receiving, what Paul later mentioned here in fact: life and glory.

One version called the *Montgomery New Testament* on this verse reads like this: "*Set your heart on things above, not on earthly things*"; in Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus, obviously before His ascension, warned some Jews, "*Don't lay up ... treasures on earth ...; lay up ... treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be as well*" (reminiscent of Php. 3:19 which was about Judaizers whose mind was set on the earthly things of the Old Covenant). Moving on...

## **Verse 3: ...for you died, and your life is hidden along with Christ in God.**

Beginning here in verse 3, Paul expanded on his statement in verse 1 about what it meant for them to have been raised to life in Christ; by making this statement here, he explained that, although they died to the things of the Old Covenant law-system—with its strong hold on sin and its resultant spiritual death, they had in turn been raised to life. However, as mentioned earlier...

This life, that they knew was basically theirs, wasn't in their actual possession yet; but it was in a safe place with/in the possession of the Firstborn (1:15 & 18) who wasn't only in God's presence and no longer susceptible to death (Rom. 6:9-10), but who would also dispense their inheritance (1:12) when His Father said the time had come. So, in/thru Christ, they had died to the old life which existed before Christ (a life, ironically, in which they were dead to God), and (since Christ was their "Life-Guard") they were heading toward the point of their new life after Christ, that life which Paul said was hidden safely away in Him. So not only can we see all of this as transitional language (coinciding with the proleptic concept of Romans 4:17), but this hidden-life idea is interestingly reminiscent of "seed." Why? Because the life in a seed is hidden until the grain dies and that new life arises (cf. John 12:24 & 1 Cor. 15:36). Moving on...

**Verse 4: Then, whenever Christ, who is our life, is revealed, you'll also be revealed with Him in glory.**

Here Paul didn't merely refer to their life as being "in" Christ, but referred to Him as being their life itself, i.e. the cause/source of life for them; He was such a perfect provider and guard of that life, that He could be spoken of as being that very life. And whenever He returned to actually bestow that life on them, not only would He be vindicated, but they also would be vindicated before all the skeptics and stubborn rejectors of Christ/Christianity; i.e., they together would be revealed in glory, I think meaning "in triumph" (which is a synonym for "glory"), for, as Daniel 7:22 states, they would be the saints who would come into possession of the promised kingdom of heaven. Second Thessalonians 1:10 comes to mind where Paul wrote, "*When Christ comes on that Day, He'll be glorified in His saints and admired among all those who believe.*" You know...

Especially in relation to the topic of baptism in Colossians 2 as it led to the verses we've been looking into here in Colossians 3 and its life, Romans 6 keeps coming to mind, specifically how (in vv. 4, 5, & 8) Paul wrote of their act of baptism as being inclusive of a sign of ... What? ... life, resurrection life: "*We were buried with Christ through baptism into death that just as Christ was raised from the dead..., even so we also shall walk in newness of life. For since we've been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.... Since we died with Christ, we ... shall also live with Him.*" Did you hear the future tense in Paul's words? He employed what's called the subjunctive mood which refers to a future result of a current action: Because they identified themselves with Christ in what He did (and was doing for them), they'd be recipients of resurrection-life at His return, for Jesus Himself said, "*I'm the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*" (John 11:25-26), and soon after that He said, "*I'm ... the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6; cf. John 17:3).

At verse 2 I brought up how that 2:17 refers to the fulfillment of all things (cf. 1 Pet. 4:7 & Luke 21:22) that was "*about to*" (*mello*) transpire; well now here, relative to the glory of verse 4, I'm reminded of First Peter 5:1 in which he wrote of himself, saying, "*I'm ... a partaker of the glory which is about to be (mello) revealed*" which he followed up in verse 4 by writing that "*when the Chief Shepherd appears, you'll receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*" And going back to Paul in Romans 8:18-19, he, like Peter, wrote this: "*The sufferings of this present time aren't worthy to be compared to the glory which is about to be (mello) revealed in us, for the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the children of God.*" So not only did he refer to the idea of vindication of who were God's chosen and hence true children, but he also (as in Col. 2:17) employed that *mello* word. So the main point, that I hope is obvious, is that all this is imminent language concerning Christ's return and therefore explains why I kept referring in our study of Colossians 3:1-4 to "them" instead of "us," for what Paul wrote was TO them and ABOUT them, not us today, for we live on this side of the *actual* finished work of Christ after He provided the resultant life of His completed work. Oh, as we close,...

Let's don't fail to recall Paul's words just two verses later in Colossians 3: In verse 6 Paul wrote of how that those who refused to pursue or seek after the things above (especially without the compromise of binding earthly laws/ceremonies) were about to be the sad recipients of, as he wrote in Romans 2:8-9, "*indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish.*"