

# ROMANCING THE SAINTS AT COLOSSAE

## Studies in the Book of Colossians

*"If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the 'church of Christ,'  
then Colossians must surely be labeled 'the Christ of the church'"*  
unknown

Text

Colossians 3:1-4

Topic

After telling the Colossians to come out of the shadows Paul encourages them to set their minds on Jesus seated in Heaven

Title

*"The Eternal Seating of the Saved Mind"*

### Introduction

A 2006 cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine featured award winning rap artist Kanye West posing as Jesus complete with a crown of thorns and blood running down his head.

In an interview with his father, Ray West is quoted as saying to his son, "You know that's not where you came from. You know that's not how you were raised."

We're not on magazine covers but out in the everyday world we are, in a sense, 'posing' as Jesus. When we say we are Christians it means we are Christ-like. It means we are little Christ's.

If a Christian were to misrepresent the Lord it would be proper to say, "You know that's not where you came from. You know that's not how you were raised."

How were we “raised?” According to verse one of chapter three **we have been “raised with Christ.”** What is physically true of Jesus is spiritually applied to us.

How should we live since we’ve been raised with Jesus? I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Live Like You Are Already Seated In Heaven, and #2 You Should Live Like You Are Awaiting A Surprise On Earth.

#1 You Should Live Like  
You Are Already Seated In Heaven  
(v1)

If we were scholars we’d have a decision to make. We’d have to decide if the first four verses of chapter three are the end of Paul’s doctrinal section or the beginning of the practical application of the doctrine.

Was Paul describing our position in Christ or our practice as Christians?

Luckily for us we’re students, not scholars, so we can receive the verses both ways:

- Of course they reflect our position when they remind us we have been buried and raised with Jesus.
- And it’s precisely because of our spiritual position that we can make the practical application.

Paul transported us into the heavenlies.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

“If” means *since*. Paul was stating a reality, not a possibility. He didn’t mean that in the future you will be raised from the dead. That’s true, of course, but the verb tense here indicates an action in your past. You have already been raised with Christ. You “were raised with Christ” the moment you were saved.

Jesus took your place on the Cross. He took your punishment for sin. He died; He rose from the dead. When you trust Him as your Substitute God says that you, too, died on the Cross to sin, and that you, too, were raised in newness of life.

**Jesus' physical resurrection from the dead insures you of your future physical resurrection *and* it also assures you that the power of His resurrection is available to you today in order to walk with Him in newness of life.**

Thus you live here and now as if you were already seated there and then.

Let's attempt a rather poor illustration. At my age I hear a lot of talk about retirement. Some people have a definite goal and a solid plan for getting there. A good plan usually involves sacrificing now to benefit later. If you know where you want to retire you likely buy some property there - maybe even start building on it in your spare time. The closer you get to retirement the more you pour into your goal and the more you think about and anticipate what it will be like. In other words, you begin to live now as if you are seated there already.

When I realize this great truth I find myself "seek[ing] those things which are above." In the Greek language it reads, *keep on seeking*. It is a continuous, daily activity.

Pam and I used to frequent the local antique and second-hand shops. I'd always overhear folks saying that something they'd found would be perfect for their cabin in the mountains or their place at the coast. They were always seeking things to furnish the house they'd rather be living in and that they planned to retire in.

Heaven should permeate our thoughts. "What does this have to do with Heaven?" is a question that should be a kind of litmus test of attitudes and activities.

Paul said there were "things above," in Heaven. What are some of them that make earth seem pale and dim?

1. First of all, you've been promised a sweet retirement home. It's a mansion being custom built for you by the Lord (John 14). No matter where you would like to retire on earth it cannot begin to compare to what is awaiting you in Heaven.
2. Your home is part of a great heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. It's described for you in the closing chapters of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It's made mostly of precious jewels, gems, and minerals. No water shortage there as a great spring flows through it. It's a "pure river of water of life" that nourishes "the tree of life" that yields incredible fruit.
3. In Heaven and for eternity you will have a glorified and perfect body that is free from any possibility of sin or sorrow or death.
4. Next you've been promised an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you" (First Peter 1:4). Anything that God has deposited for me in Heaven is safe and secure. Anything I might add to my heavenly inheritance by serving the Lord is just as safe and secure.
5. Then there are the people who have preceded you to Heaven - loved ones who loved the Lord and are awaiting a reunion with you. You'll know them fully, as they were intended to be by God, and they will know you.
6. The last thing I'll mention is the most precious of all. It's Jesus Himself. You'll get to see Him, know Him, be with Him forever.

Those are just six of the things that are guaranteed for you. They are real - more real than anything on the earth.

How can you be certain of these "things above"? You can be certain because "Christ is [there], sitting at the right hand of God." **The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is your guarantee.**

The "right hand of God" is the seat of authority and power. Read through the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ and you'll see just how much authority and just how much power your Lord has and wields.

That, then, is how we were "raised." Ours is a spiritual resurrection in Jesus Christ that has us seated in heavenly places. It only makes sense to live now in the anticipation of what awaits me then.

Why do we not always live that way? Why do we not always live the way we were “raised”? The world, the flesh, and the devil tend to divert my attention off of Heaven and on to material things. I forget I am seated in Heaven and instead of investing my time, treasure, and talent where it is safe and secure I waste it on earthly pursuits. So Paul next gave some practical advice for us as we live between two worlds.

## #2 You Should Live Like You Are Awaiting A Surprise On Earth (v2-4)

The ultimate surprise of our lives is that Jesus may return for us at any moment. He’s promised to come and resurrect the dead and, when He does, to rapture those believers who are alive at the time. The Bible always presents this coming of the Lord for His church as imminent. It could occur any moment. Thus we can live in a constant state of surprise as we focus on staying rapture-ready.

These next three verses tell us how to stay in a state of surprise.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Next week we set our clocks forward, springing ahead. [But not on Saturday! We wait til after church on Sunday so as not to lose an hour’s sleep!]. We “set” them according to Greenwich Mean Time. It is sometimes called Greenwich Meridian Time because it is measured from the Greenwich Meridian Line at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England. Greenwich is the place from where all time zones are measured.

We are to “set [our] minds” by a place as well - by Heaven. The “things above” that we just discussed in verse one are the real standards by which to “set” our lives. The “things on the earth” must not be allowed to take priority.

Anyone have a watch that needs to be wound everyday? You can’t just ‘set it and forget it’ for any extended length of time. I think that too often Christians have a ‘set it and forget it’ mindset when we ought to be constantly setting our affections on Heaven. It prompted apologist and author Dave Hunt to write a book several years ago with the title,

*“Whatever Happened to Heaven?”* In it he chronicled the decline in interest in heavenly things as the church became more-and-more materially minded.

How is it we can overcome the “things on the earth,” like the world, the flesh, and the devil? It is by faith believing and applying what we read next in verse three.

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

This stuff is the heart of Paul’s theology. He kept reminding the Colossians they “died” and “were raised.” Again it looks back to what happened to you spiritually the moment you were saved. These are things that have already happened to you. You “died” to certain things, notably to sin and to the Law. Listen to how Paul described it in the Book of Romans.

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Romans 6:7 For he who has **died** has been freed from sin.

Romans 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become **dead** to the law through the body of Christ...

At the Cross you “died” with Jesus and became “freed from sin.” That is, you were set free from both the penalty and the power of sin. As long as you are on the earth in your unredeemed physical body you must deal with the presence of sin. But if you believe by faith that you died with Jesus and are therefore dead to sin, then you can always overcome sin in your life by yielding yourself to the spirit rather than to the flesh. Think of it like this: a temptation to sin presents itself. But you are dead to sin. Can a dead person sin? Neither can you if you yield to the spirit rather than your unredeemed flesh.

Also at the Cross you “died” with Jesus and became “dead to the law.” It means that instead of trying to live according to the principles of God’s outward Law you are enabled to live by the power of His inward love.

Then Paul said “your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Albert Barnes says that this word “hidden” is used of buried treasure. We’ve seen the things

that are safe and secure that are awaiting you in Heaven - your mansion, the New Jerusalem, your new body, your inheritance. What this phrase is telling us is that Jesus also has something to look forward to in Heaven. **He has you to look forward to! You are His treasure.**

The Lord can't wait, to use an earthly expression, to bring you to Heaven and show you off to His Father. In Ephesians 5:27 and in Jude 1:24 we're told that we will be presented in Heaven. We will be whole and blameless and perfect thanks to the Lord.

This is also a strong statement about your security as a believer. If your "life is hidden with Christ" then your salvation is secure.

The assurance of salvation is thought, by many, to be a license to sin. They reason that if I am saved no matter what then I have no incentive for holy, godly living. So they inject some doubt about whether or not you are truly saved as a method to motivate you.

Paul thought otherwise. He thought and taught that the more you understood your security in Jesus Christ, the more you'd live in a manner pleasing to Him. He understood that the most heavenly minded person would do the most earthly good.

The ultimate surprise is imminent:

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Paul could summarize his teaching by saying "Christ... is our life." It's a description that can be taken many ways:

- "Christ... is our life" reminds us that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ.
- "Christ... is our life" reminds us that we have Jesus living in us by the Holy Spirit and can now live life in His power.
- "Christ... is our life" reminds us that we are living forward to the time we find ourselves in Heaven and in eternity.
- "Christ... is our life" reminds us that nothing and no one else can satisfy us. Everything and everyone must be subordinate to Him in order for us to live to the fullest.

Jesus Christ was everything to Paul. He wanted the Lord to be everything to the Colossians, and the Ephesians, and the Galatians, and the Romans, and the Thessalonians, and the Philippians, and the Corinthians... and to everyone else, including you and I.

So he reminded us to live with a sense of imminent surprise when he said “when Christ who is our life appears.” “When” is an interesting word that really means *whenever*. It’s the particular word you would use to say that Jesus’ return was certain but that you were unsure of the exact moment. In other words, His return is always imminent.

Nothing is more motivating than to believe that your Lord and Savior could return at any moment. You will want to be ready.

And not in a grudging sense. The imminent return of Jesus for you is often put in romantic terms. He’s the Bridegroom returning to take His bride to their wedding.

Lovers like to surprise one another in different ways. You never know when your beloved might show up unexpectedly, or leave you a note or a gift to discover, or in some other way surprise you.

We look upon a couple in love and tend to think that they have their priorities all wrong. They spend so much time thinking about each other, and planning for the wedding, that they overlook other everyday activities. We joke about them settling down into the ‘real’ world once ‘the honeymoon is over.’

Too often Christians start to live as if their honeymoon with Jesus is over when, in fact, we haven’t even gotten to the end of our engagement!

Our entire time on earth from when we get saved is to be thought of as an engagement. There is to be no sense of settling down into the ‘real’ world.

Jesus is coming to resurrect the dead in Christ and to rapture those who are alive and remain. When He comes, “then you also will appear with Him in glory.” It means you will be immediately glorified:



- If you've died prior to His coming you will be raised into a glorified body.
- If you are alive at His coming you will be changed and transformed into your glorified body.

Is there a sense of surprise in your relationship with Jesus? The world, your flesh, and the devil are working against you. Life comes at you hard with its sorrows and sicknesses and your own failures. None of that changes Jesus. He's still coming for you any moment.

So you may as well live now as if you are already in Heaven. Your home is waiting for you there. Your city and citizenship are there. Your wealth is being stored up there. Those you love who love the Lord will forever be there.

Set your mind according to the things above. For some of us that means occasionally hitting the reset button! Especially if you have a Windows-based computer you know all about 'reset.' Things aren't working right; your system has slowed down or is frozen. So you hit 'reset' and (hopefully) the reboot puts things back in order and gets you computing again.

If your mind is not fully set by the things above, **reset it**.

How? Take an inventory of your time, talent, and treasure. Is it mostly dedicated to earthly pursuits or to heavenly priorities?

Get your answer from the Lord and act accordingly.

