

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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In Glory with Christ

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1–4, KJV 1900)

While we find the range of meaning for a word in a dictionary, the context in which the word appears dictates which definition rightly applies to the word as used in that context. Example; if I use the word "Trunk" while visiting the San Diego Zoo with my grandchildren, it is quite likely that we are watching elephants, and my reference is to the appendage on the head of the elephant. If I use the same word as I slowly stop my car beside the road because I realize that I have a flat tire, I am likely referring to that storage compartment in the rear of the car where the spare tire is stored. We may use "If" to raise an uncertainty. If I had a million dollars, I would.... We may also use the word to refer to a form of logical reasoning, "If this, then that." In this use, "If" takes on a meaning equivalent to "Since." Since "A" is true, "B" should follow. In Colossians 2:20, Paul follows a similar method of reasoning, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" Following this question, Paul lists a number of attitudes and behaviors that characterized first century gnostics. If the Colossians truly were identified with Jesus in His death and resurrection, how could they justify their abandoning Him and showing more passion and loyalty to gnostic sophistry than to the reality of Jesus and His resurrection, something that the gnostics fiercely denied?

In terms of the grammatical point, A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, a respected work among conservative New Testament linguistic scholars, identifies Paul's "If" point in Colossians 3:1 grammatically as "...a condition of the first class, assumed as true," adding that the same grammatical structure appears in Colossians 2:20.

In the second chapter of Colossians, beginning with Verse 10, Paul deals with our completeness in our Lord Jesus Christ. He reasons from our identity with and in Christ to our ethical and spiritual obligation to live according to Him and His teaching and not according to the ever changing ideas of this world. Our study passage quite simply summarizes the details set forth from Colossians 2:10 to the end of the chapter, adding the clear reality of Jesus' resurrection and, because He arose, the certainty of our own resurrection. The closing verses of the

second chapter indicate that Paul was confronting and refuting some element of gnostic philosophy in the Colossian Church. Holding that all things material were corrupt and evil, the gnostics placed great emphasis on living life apart as much as possible from all things material. This errant view also led them to reject the whole idea of Jesus as God Incarnate, including His literal, bodily resurrection. Paul affirms this truth emphatically in Colossians 2:9. Not only did the fullness of God dwell in Jesus *bodily* during His time on earth from conception in the womb of a virgin to His final ascension, but the fullness of God presently dwells in Him "bodily" now in heaven. Notice Paul's use of a present tense verb "dwelleth." Neither God the Father nor the Holy Spirit possesses a physical body. All of God dwells in Jesus "bodily." His is the only material or physical body that belongs to God. That God is a Spirit, meaning that He does not possess a physical body (John 4:24), does not make God any less real than if He possessed a cosmic body.

When Paul begins the third chapter, he summarizes the points made in the second chapter, but this summary, as any good summary does, sharpens the focus and meaning of the longer thesis. His summary is positive, asserting the fact of Jesus' resurrection and of our obligation to seek things in our life that relate to Him, knowing that we shall, in the end, be raised from the dead, as He was raised, and shall then be with Him wholly, spirit, soul, and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23) If we try as much as we are able to relate personally to the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul teaches in this lesson, the brief time we spend in this life pales in comparison to the eternity that we shall spend with Him in glory. So which of the two should command our greater attention and action? When a child of grace forsakes the teachings of Scripture for self-serving ideas or actions, he does so with no logical basis, much less a moral or spiritual basis, for his conduct. If in fact we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, this fact imposes the values and lifestyle of that "Kingdom" onto us as our only right outlook and conduct. That is Paul's reasoning in this context. His reasoning is not an admonition; do all of these things so that you will become translated

into this kingdom, but rather do this because you have been so translated. You have been raised out of the domain of death and darkness into the living kingdom of God's dear Son. Live like it. (Colossians 1:13) In both the second and the third chapter, Paul uses this relationship with the resurrected Jesus as the only ethical and spiritual right way for a child of grace to live. You are a child of the King; live like it. This corollary appears throughout the New Testament.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. We cannot miss the contrast; you are dead, and you are also alive. In whatever area we are dead, we need to conduct the funeral, bury that world, and start living in the world where we are presently alive. What things are of paramount interest to people today? Where do they invest the most of their time, energy, and emotion? Today's culture is deeply intertwined with the internet, at times far more so than is beneficial. I do not belong to "Facebook," and I have no plans to join, but we have family members who are into Facebook. I am amazed at how much personal, and sometimes private, information people splash on their Facebook for all the world to see. For better or worse, you get an intimate view of what people consider most important in their lives, and it is often not at all spiritual. Paul's direct words are obviously necessary. Stop living your life in the realm where you are dead, and start living it in the world where you are alive.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Our appearance in glory with Christ is a real truth. It is future, but Paul sees no doubt or question about its reality. It is such a certain fact that we need to transform our present conduct in this life to reflect the reality of our future life with Him.

This teaching does not require a believer in Christ to retire from existence in this world. We live in it, and we must attend to certain necessary tasks of life. In fact, Scripture often teaches us how we should go about those matters in a decent and God-honoring manner.

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. (1 Corinthians 5:9-10)

If Scripture required that we avoid all business contact with anyone or any business that was not owned and managed by Christians, how long could you survive? How much do you know about the owners of the grocery store where you buy your groceries? The clothing store where you buy most of your clothing? The bank that holds the mortgage to your home? Paul's exhortation in this passage deals with church company, a point that he simply explains in the verses following. "...for then must

ye needs go out of the world" makes the point. If we followed the rule for all of our business in life, we simply could not do business for necessary things, and we would soon die.

...then shall ye also appear with him. Christ, who is our life, now lives in heaven. Scripture affirms this truth. Paul's present tense verb in Colossians 2:9 confirms that truth. Several years after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Paul wrote the Colossian letter, but at the time of his writing this letter, the fullness of God continued to dwell in Jesus "bodily," that is, in His resurrected, ascended, and glorified human body in which He lived in this world for over thirty years. Our faith stands or falls based on our strong conviction of this truth. Compromise it and your faith grows quickly anemic and ineffective. Paul's point is not merely that we shall exist or appear at some future time, but that we shall appear "with him." An old hymn's chorus contains the lines, "Where Jesus is will be heaven for me." If we take Jesus out of our hope of life after death and resurrection, the whole idea slips out of focus and may become so full of superstition and fantasy as to be far more frightening than comforting. I fail to get the idea, but the present television passion seems to be on zombies or other people who come back to a twisted and tortured life after they died. Scripture describes our life after death and our bodily resurrection in powerful contrast to such an idea. We shall appear "...with him." He will be there. Our presence there relies on Him and on His work. We do not return from death to torture people who are yet alive here. We live joyfully in glory with the Lord till the Second Coming at which time He shall raise our bodies to join Him in His body, both then raised and glorified, and ours, like His, free at last from sin in all of its damning consequences. Don't fret. You will not awake to an eternal church service (Talk about long winded preaching!) in which you sing every verse of every good hymn over and over again. You shall be "...with him" and enjoy Him in all of His glory as you cannot even imagine today.

... in glory. We sing the delightful hymn, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." The title to this hymn is "Doxology." "Doxology" is derived from the Greek word "Doxa," the same as the word translated "glory" in this passage. The word refers to honor, due and rendered to a worthy object. Take note. The glory of heaven shall not appear in dazzling lights, haloes around your head, or golden streets. We shall then be joyfully consumed in giving our God and Savior the "honor, due and then rendered" suitably and worthily to Him that He deserves. "What a day that will be!"

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor