

Results Of Resurrection

Colossians 3:1-4

Results of resurrection with Jesus

(1) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (4) When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

This section marks a transition in the epistle from theological statement to practical principles. It is the climax and conclusion of the preceding section, and it also provides a summary of the practical teachings to follow.

As in Colossians 1:15-23, we see in Colossians 2:8-3:4 a close linking of the doctrines of Oneness, the Atonement, and holiness. The truth of the one God as fully revealed in Jesus Christ is the basis for the Atonement and therefore our salvation. The Atonement, in turn, is the basis for the Christian life of holiness. Our salvation does not make holiness irrelevant; rather, it makes true holiness, inward and outward, both possible and necessary.

Just as Colossians 2:20-23 explains the practical implications of our death with Christ, so Colossians 3:1-4 explains the practical implications of our resurrection with Him.

Verse 1 assumes that we have been raised up together with Jesus Christ as stated in Colossians 2:12. The Greek verb for “risen” is in the aorist tense, denoting a specific past event. Literally, we were co-raised with Him. His resurrection has given us new life.

By way of identifying the meaning of “above,” the verse explains that it is where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. There is no word for “hand”

in the Greek; it is understood. This omission helps us to understand that the phrase is metaphoric rather than physical. As a Spirit, God does not have a physical hand apart from the human body of Christ.

Throughout Scripture “the right hand of God” is a figurative expression that denotes God’s strength, preeminence, and glory (Exodus 15:6; Psalm 44:3; 98:1). As applied to Christ, this idiomatic phrase signifies that Christ possesses all the power, authority, preeminence, and glory of God (Matthew 26:64-65; Acts 2:34-36). The visible Christ is invested with all the fullness of the invisible Spirit (Colossians 2:9).

The right hand position also denotes Christ’s mediatorial role (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1). His one, supreme sacrifice provides intercession for our sins and free access to the throne of God (Hebrews 10:12; I John 2:1-2). In that sense, the Epistles speak figuratively of Christ as being on right hand of God rather than on the throne as in Revelation. In His humanity, He is still our mediator, and not until after the resurrection and judgment will this role cease.

Some people say that Christ’s sitting at the right hand of God is proof of two distinct divine persons with two physical bodies. Such a view is tantamount to a belief in two gods and implies that Christ is not the true God. God is indivisibly one (Deuteronomy 6:4), and Christ is God (John 20:28). God is an invisible Spirit (John 1:18; 4:24), and therefore He does not have a physical body outside of Jesus Christ. There is only one divine throne in heaven, and Jesus Christ is the One on the throne. (See Revelation 1:7-8, 11, 17-18; 4:2, 8; 7:17; 22:3-4.)

When Stephen saw a vision of heaven, he did not see or call upon two divine beings; he saw and called upon one—Jesus Christ. Yet he did not see Jesus merely as He had appeared on earth but saw Him invested with all the glory of God and in the position of preeminence. Thus the Bible records that he “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” and that he said, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55-56). He called upon God by saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

Most commentators, including Trinitarians, agree that Colossians 3:1 describes Christ's lordship and not a physical positioning of two divine bodies. The verse means, "Reach out for the highest gifts of Heaven, where your master reigns in power" (Phillips). According to Carson, "The right hand of God is the place of holiness, of intercession and of power. Hence to seek those things which are above is to aim at emulating the characteristics of the Christ of glory."

In sum, since we have been resurrected with Christ we should seek those things associated with His glorious reign and emulate His holy characteristics.

Verse 2 underscores the message of verse 1, telling us to mind the things above, not the things on the earth. Not only should we seek heavenly things, but we should think heavenly thoughts. We are to set our minds on heavenly things, view everything from the perspective of eternity, and adopt a new set of values, live by the standards of the new creation rather than the old order. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). (See I John 2:15-17.)

Verse 3 again reminds us that we died with Christ to explain why we should not set our mind on the old, carnal things of this world. It literally says, You died. The verb is in the aorist tense, denoting a specific, past event. Although this death to sin occurred at our conversion, we must continue to make it a practical reality in our everyday lives. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Romans 6:11).

Our life is hidden with Christ in God. The verb is in the perfect tense, signifying a past action that has continuing effects. We died to the old life, and our new life comes from God through Christ. Our new, spiritual life is a hidden one, for carnal people do not perceive or understand it. Nevertheless, it is our real life. "For, as far as this world is concerned, you are already dead, and your true life is a hidden one in Christ" (Phillips). Not only do we have the assurance of eternal life in the future, but the Spirit of the indwelling Christ imparts new life to us in this present world (Romans 8:2, 9-11).

Verse 4. Christ is the source of our true life. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Paul explained, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

Although our present spiritual life is hidden as far as the world is concerned, when Jesus Christ returns to earth physically, we will be revealed to the whole world. Whenever Christ is manifested (revealed), we also will be manifested (revealed) with Him in glory. Jesus will descend to the Mount of Olives with His saints, and they will rule and reign with Him. (See Zechariah 14:3-5; Revelation 19:11-15; 20:4-6).

Colossians 3:4 marks the conclusion of the more theological portion of the letter. Having proclaimed the lordship of Jesus and refuted the heresy at Colosse, the epistle continues with practical exhortations and applications.

The lordship of Jesus in practical life Colossians 3:5–11

As is typical in Paul’s epistles, a section of practical applications follows the doctrinal heart of the Colossian letter. This passage applies the truths taught in the pre-ceding portion of the book to daily Christian living. In particular, Colossians 3:5-17 elaborates on the principles of Colossians 3:1-4.

By contrast, the false teaching at Colosse failed to provide practical guidance for godly living. It did not restrain the flesh or enable people to walk in holiness (Colossians 2:23). Instead of imposing a legalistic code as false teachers did, the inspired apostle Paul presented comprehensive principles for the Christian life. This type of teaching shows the way of true holiness.

(5) Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (6) for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: (7) in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. (8) But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice,

blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. (9) Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; (10) and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (11) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Verse 5. As in Romans 12:1, “therefore” marks a transition from doctrinal discussion to practical exhortation. It shows the logical and necessary connection between theology and practical life. A spiritual understanding of the one God revealed in Jesus Christ, the atoning work of Jesus and the new birth will lead people to walk in holiness.

The primary exhortation is for us to act as new people. We are to live in accordance with what happened to us. We must be in lifestyle what we are in identity. We died to sin, and sin has no claim upon us, but we must act out this truth in everyday life. (See Romans 6:1-14.)

Specifically, we are to “mortify”—put to death, kill—all carnality. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

Verse 5 lists five specific evils that we must kill. They progress from the more specific to the more general, and they overlap. In effect, the list covers all evil desires and attitudes. • “Fornication”: sexually immoral acts.

• “Uncleanness”: impurity. As Romans 1:24-27 shows, the term includes homosexuality.

• “Inordinate affection”: lustful or dishonorable passion.

• “Evil concupiscence”: evil desires.

• “Covetousness”: greed; acquisitive desire; self-seeking; desire for more than one ought to have especially something that belongs to others. In this context, it may have particular reference to wrongful desires for someone else’s spouse. (See Exodus 20:17.)

Greed is a form of idolatry, for it makes a god of the object of greed, such as material possessions. This object becomes the greedy person's priority, and in effect he serves it. (See Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:15.)

Verse 6. The wrath of God comes upon people because of these sins. God's wrath is His judicial attitude in relation to sin; it does not mean vindictiveness, bitterness, or personal hatred. God's hatred of sin is a necessary part of His love for humanity, because sin damages, perverts, and destroys humanity.

Verse 7 reminds us that all of us once walked in these sins when we lived in them. "For all have sinned" (Romans 3:23).

Verse 8. We are not to continue in our sins. By the grace of God, we are to put off all sinful attitudes and actions. Sin is like unclean clothing. We are to divest our-selves of sin by continually putting it to death. In addition to the sins listed in verse 5, this verse names five attitudes to put off. (See also Ephesians 4:22, 31.)

- "Anger." Anger without a cause is wrong (Matthew 5:22). While anger as an instinctive reaction to wrong is not sin in itself, it can make a person dangerously susceptible to sin, and when harbored as an attitude it can become sinful. It can lead to the sins of revenge, bitterness, hatred, or abusive speech. Jesus apparently became angry when He cast the dishonest moneychangers out of the Temple, but He did not sin.

Ephesians 4:26-27 admonishes, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." Even when anger is justifiable, we must not let it lead us into sin, but we must use its motivation to act in a positive way about the distressing situation. We must put anger away quickly and not let it develop into a sinful attitude.

- "Wrath": rage; passionate outburst; violent anger; quick temper.
- "Malice": viciousness; a desire to harm others.
- "Blasphemy": reviling or slandering God. In this context it probably has a more general meaning, encompassing all forms of slander.
- "Filthy communication": obscene speech; filthy or abusive language. This description includes lustful innuendos and suggestive speech.

The phrase “out of your mouth” probably refers to all the preceding evils rather than just the last one. We must specifically avoid these attitudes as expressed in speech.

Verse 9 mentions another sin of the tongue: lying. A present rule for Christians is, do not lie. All lying is wrong, but it is particularly disgraceful to lie to a fellow believer, because Christians naturally trust each other even if others do not.

Verse 10. Not only have we put off the old man, but we have already put on the new man. Again, the verb is in the aorist tense, referring to a previous event, namely, our new birth. The “new man” is the person we now are; our regenerate lifestyle; our new personality shaped, empowered, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Not only were we born again, but we are continually being renewed spiritually. The verb is present tense and refers to a progressive change in personality. This process is often called sanctification and II Corinthians 4:16 also describes it: “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” This renewal takes place in or unto knowledge. The Greek word is *epignosis*, which literally means, “full knowledge.” Once again, this word refutes the claims of heretics to special, hidden knowledge. All Christians can and should be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Verse 11. In this new way of life, there should be no discrimination between people. Every Christian has equal standing and privileges in the sight of God. Christ has abolished all barriers of birth, nationality, ritual, culture, and class. Not only does Christ do away with sinful habits and attitudes—one of which is social prejudice (James 2:9)—but He abolishes social barriers as well. The church must recognize and implement this truth. We should over-come the human tendency to stigmatize those who are different from us, not by a forced uniformity but by Christian love and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The verse specifically lists several invalid bases for discrimination.

- “Neither Greek nor Jew”: race or nationality. A “Greek” was someone whose language and culture were Greek. For the Jews in Paul’s day this term was more or less equivalent to “Gentile,” since Greek was the language of commerce throughout the Gentile world known to them.

- “Circumcision nor uncircumcision”: religious heritage, privilege, or ritual. This classification distinguished religious Jews, including Gentile converts, from Gentiles who did not follow the law.
- “Barbarian, Scythian”: culture. To the Greeks, all non-Greeks were known as barbarians. A barbarian was simply a foreigner, but the word obtained a negative connotation because of prejudice against foreigners. A Scythian was an inhabitant of the area around the northern coast of the Black Sea in the European part of the modern Soviet Union. In the ancient Roman world, Scythians were considered the worst of barbarians, or savages.
- “Bond nor free”: social rank or class. In the ancient world there was a drastic distinction between slaves, who were considered mere property with little or no human rights, and free people. Instead of showing partiality by drawing attention to distinctions such as these, we should recognize that Christ is all things to us and that He is in all these classifications and in all these kinds of people.

The Epistle to Philemon shows that Paul adhered to this principle personally (verse 10) and that he applied it in a practical way to the problem of slavery (verse 16).

Galatians 3:28 states the same truth as Colossians 3:11 in a more general way, using the categories of race or nationality, social rank, and gender. Apparently, Colossians 3:11 was written more specifically to address certain problems in Colosse. It seems that the Colossian heretics considered themselves a spiritual elite and discriminated on the basis of ritualistic observances, so-called higher knowledge, and perhaps culture.