

# The Resurrection of our Lord – Epistle

Where Christ Is

Colossians 3:1-4

The Resurrection of our Lord

Analysis by Ron Starenko

1So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things that are above, not on things on the earth, 3for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

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## DIAGNOSIS: The Bad News of Being Earthbound

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *If We Are Not Where Christ Is...*

The lesson begins with the proverbial “if.” Such a conditional statement is enough to rock all of us on Easter Sunday. “If you have been raised with Christ...” (v. 1). Is it the author’s intention to suggest that there might be some doubt about that, about us? There are times when we all have wondered whether we are truly Christians. We know that we live much of the time as if there were no God. With the rest of the world we scramble through life, driven by earthbound goals and needs. When we take a close look at ourselves – how we live with others, how we use our time and money, and how we get motivated from day to day, – we might be troubled with just how little indication there

is that we have been raised with Christ. The word “if” is disconcerting, to say the least.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *We Have Earth-Centered Minds...*

Perhaps we are nothing more than earthbound creatures after all. Perhaps, for all of our religious beliefs and practices, all of our decent living notwithstanding, we haven’t changed very much. Perhaps we are so far from being like Christ, that we don’t even know where he’s at. If so, the author of Colossians must be on to us. Why would he even write that we are “not to set our minds on the things on earth” (v. 2), unless the reality is that we do not seek Christ where he may be found? And what is that other than unbelief, a preoccupation with the creaturely, the stuff we do, the stuff we rely on, the stuff we live and die for? The earth-centered mind is nothing other than vanity, a holding on to what is neither secure, nor permanent, nor liberating.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** – *And, We Have No Hope of Being Revealed With Him in Glory*

There is a dimension to our earth-boundness that has eternal consequences. If we are not raised to where Christ is, we have no future, doomed to the earth from which we came. If we are not where Christ is, God is against us—a terrifying thing to contemplate, especially on an Easter Sunday. If we have no Christ to hide in, then we are subject to God’s wrath. That’s something we are quick to dismiss, but at our own peril. Be mindful, writes the author of this letter, how our lives are under “the power of darkness” (1:13), how we are “estranged and hostile in mind” (1:21), and how “on account of these the wrath of God is coming” (2:6). Earth-bound, we are on our own, without a way of escape, condemned to being only where God is against us. Indeed this is a problem with frightening consequences, the very opposite of Easter joy.

# PROGNOSIS: The Good News of Being Raised with Christ

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *Since Christ is at the Right Hand of God...*

There is hope for us, nevertheless, in what is above, as there are no “ifs” about what God can do and already has done for us. The good news for all sinners is that even before we ever did or ever could seek him, God was preparing to find us where Christ is. As the letter spells out, “In [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (1:20). The good news is that Christ erased “the record that stood against us with all its legal demands, ... set this aside, nailing it to the cross, ... disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it” (2:14-15). When all enmity had been wiped out (ours toward God, God’s toward us) Christ “was raised from the dead” (2:12) and now sits “at the right hand of God” (v. 1). Martin Luther is instructive; he reminds us that the right hand of God refers to the power and presence of God everywhere, most especially where Christ, the eternal God, is present for us—the Christ who is high above all things and yet, paradoxically, is here on earth in his Word and Sacrament, presenting us “holy and blameless and irreproachable before him” (1:22). Those are the things that are above, where Christ is.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *We Have a New Mindset...*

When we set our minds on the exalted Christ, we are no longer operating on our own power. We have a new mindset, having already been “raised with Christ” (v. 1). Christ is here with us and for us before we ever knew to seek him. Whether it was the gift of our baptism or in the preaching of the good news, the

truth is that we were “buried with him...also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (2:12). This new mindset is what the New Testament calls repentance, where we both die to the earth and are raised to what is above. And now, since we have been raised with Christ, we get to “seek the things that are above where Christ is...” (v. 1). The reality is that Christ raises us to be where he is, to be as alive as he is.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *And We Have a New Way to Live*

What is more, Christ is where we are, where we live everyday, where we work, where we play, where we make love, where we develop relationships, renewing our lives. Thus, the letter continues: “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)...get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language...As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another...forgive each other” (3:5, 8, 12). That’s where Christ is, raising us to be who he is, where he is, presenting us-bodies, minds, spirit, our very lives-before God and our neighbor as new beings, living his love with one another and with our neighbor. The good word now is “since”: Since Christ has trumped death and wrath, since the same Spirit who raised him has raised us to what is above, and since we have been transformed, we live in this world by faith and love as we await the day when we will be “revealed with him in glory” (v. 4).