

Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV)

¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

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

⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

51-03-03-Baptized into Heavenly Thinking
baptism, Gnosticism, world, flesh, Satan, kingdom, heaven
Col 3:1-4

Heavenly thinking makes Kingdom living a present reality.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading)

—Our **text (Col 3:1-4)** is paralleled in **Rom 6:4**. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. In **Col 2**, Paul showed how baptism answered both *Jewish legalism* and *Greek Gnosticism*.

1) It replaced *circumcision's partial sign* with a *full-body ritual*: not just cutting off the foreskin, but stripping off the old life like a garment. The early church ritual was a *nude baptism*, receiving the believer as if a newborn into the spiritual family of the New Covenant.

2) This *new bodily ritual* depicted our union with a bodily resurrected Christ, something unthinkable to Gnostics, who despised the body.

—*Baptism* stands as **a new way of thinking**, departing from *Jewish laws* and *Greek ideas*. Union with Christ, Who was *physically raised from death* and *physically raised to heaven*, is based on *faith*, not on our own *works*. It brings the future spiritual realm—which Gnostics were so focused on—down-to-earth, where God wants *heavenly life* to be lived. Baptism represents *a whole new view of life* where **HOM.idea**. *First...*

I. The Importance of Being Baptized

A. The early church treated the baptism ritual as a visible statement of faith: “*I’ve adopted new thinking and new living. I’m dedicated now —“spirit, soul and body”—to be an answer to the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*”

B. The later church forgot much of baptism’s original symbolism, but also how it demonstrated a heavenly faith during this present life.

1. Baptism doesn’t bring salvation but declares verbally with our lips and visibly with our bodies, that *we now belong to Christ*.

2. Early church *nude baptism* symbolized *transition from death to a new life*. **[White robes]** were used to show what believers would wear in Heaven. They weren’t worn in the water. By stripping, they symbolically left worldly garments behind on the riverbank and went to be buried naked in a watery grave. But as *newborns*, exiting the womb of death’s tomb, they were wrapped in those *white heavenly robes*, to show their new life was in Christ, “*dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*”]

TRANS: [Nude baptism is still practiced in some African churches.], but it's unlikely that this richly symbolic form of early church baptism will make a big comeback. [Today, nude bodies are seen as *pornographic* rather than "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" displays of God's image.] Yet baptism is still just as important as back then. *If you haven't been baptized, talk to me about it... It's a God-given sign of our adopting new heavenly thinking that makes Kingdom living a present reality.* It symbolizes...

II. Uniting Our Minds with the Resurrected Christ—v.1. *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

A. God doesn't promote pie-in-the-sky thinking: "*raised with Christ*" refers to an earthly baptismal identification with His resurrection.

1. Aligning our earthly thinking with Christ in Heaven is far from the Gnostic idea that "*spirit is everything; flesh means nothing.*"
2. Jesus is the God-Man, forever in a human body. (Our union with Him brings His kingdom down to earth in down-to-earth ways.)

B. (v.2, *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*) We're not just temporary physical creatures, focused only on this present life.

1. Our destiny as body-spirit beings is astronomically larger than this earth as it now stands, but is totally connected to its future.
2. In union with Christ, we're destined to rule over the universe, uniting together both the physical and the spiritual realms.

C. (v.3, *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*) **Baptism** is a faith reminder that we have passed from death to life:

1. In baptism we reject the voice of Satan, who wants to cut us off from God— Gen3:4-5, "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." [In ancient baptism, while as naked as Adam and Eve originally were, believers verbally renounced the devil and all his works; that baptism always included a ritual exorcism.]
2. In baptism we reject the sin nature's independence from God:
 - a. Eve was so attracted to the fruit of independence that she gave up her relationship with God for it— Gen 3:6a. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.
 - b. We were created as a body-spirit beings, not to live in spiritual independence from God, but to live dependent on His will and guided by His Word— 1 John 2:15-17. Do not love the world or

anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the **cravings of sinful man** [*"good for food"*], the **lust of his eyes** [*"pleasing to the eye"*] and the **boasting of what he has and does** [*"desirable for gaining wisdom"*]—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

3. In baptism, we reject conformity to a fallen world, declaring our allegiance to the King of all creation— Rom 12:1-2. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer **your bodies** as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your **spiritual act of worship.** Do not conform any longer to **the pattern of this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
4. In baptism we reject sin's trinity [the world, the flesh, the devil], and embrace the Triune God [Father, Son and Holy Spirit].
 - a. But this "spiritual act of worship" is in our "**bodies as living sacrifices.**" (Our future after-life already began when, by bodily baptism, we sealed our vow of loyalty to be united to Christ forever.)
 - b. Our union with Jesus brings the Trinity's heavenly life into our present earthly life, so we can focus our "hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." (This is the **heavenly thinking that makes Kingdom living a present reality.**)

CONCLUSION:

—Humans were made for glory! God fashioned Adam and Eve from earthly dust to display His glory in their bodies. When Satan deceived them into seeking worldly glory by independence from God, they fell short of the glory of God. **But God**, through Christ's human body restored His glory to humanity. **Jesus, by bodily death destroyed Satan's work.** By His resurrection, He made divine glory available to us again, as it says in Col 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

—Baptism is our bodily vow of union with Christ's death and our bodily claim to be "*raised with Christ*" for resurrected living in this present life. It foreshadows our glorious destiny with Him— v.4, *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

—Let's remember what our baptism signifies... how it shows our union with the resurrected King of glory. And by setting our "hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God," let's let **heavenly thinking make Kingdom living a present reality.**