

## INTRODUCTION – Colossians 3:1-5

It sometimes seems as the things we long for are never going to come. But as surely as we have begun a new year, so surely Christ will come again. Our text speaks of him as the Christian's life – that needs explaining. It also states that the believer will appear with Christ in glory – that may be harder to believe. The truth of this should greatly influence the way we live.

### CHRIST IS THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

The Spirit is speaking to people who are conscious of death. It will come, and they will be totally dependent on Christ that day. They are also conscious that they cannot make amends to God for sin, and that they cannot bring themselves to life spiritually. In that sense they "have died" (verse 3), and life from Christ is their only hope.

Although they may know they have eternal life that life remains hidden (verse 3). They cannot always trace the Spirit's work in themselves, and cannot see how he will raise them from the grave.

Christ is the origin of their life. He is Creator and Redeemer. We obtain life through his death. It is he who gives the Holy Spirit so we may be born again. He protects his saints. And when he returns to earth he will give life to the dead. Job (chapter 14 verse 15) said he would answer when God called into his grave, for God would desire what his hands had made.

Yet we do not experience that. It is something we await, and we may groan until it takes place (2 Corinthians 5:4).

### CHRIST (OUR LIFE) WILL APPEAR

It is the Christ of Bethlehem and Calvary who will appear. It is the Christ who is gathering sinners into his arms and building up the church of God. It is the Christ who is subduing his enemies, and who will put the last enemy under his feet. Above all – it is the Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

When he appears there will be no more living by faith – so we better do it now. There will be no more trials to endure. We will no longer need to deny ourselves; that was part of his humiliation (which we presently share), but his glory will become ours also. There will be no more conflict with sin and Satan. We will have no further opportunity to bring his gospel to our fellow-men.

We will no longer be able to honour him by patient endurance, or by remembering his death "till he comes".

He will appear in glory. We cannot yet grasp what that means, but we do get hints of it in scripture. His completed work will be on display. We will see it in the number and quality of his redeemed people, and in the wisdom of his dealings with us (though they puzzle us now). We will rejoice at his victory over all his and our enemies.

#### BELIEVERS WILL APPEAR WITH CHRIST IN GLORY

Christ's love is purposeful. It is not fulfilled with our forgiveness, or even our adoption into God's family. We greatly err when we minimise the love of Christ, for it goes beyond all these things. "Then you also will appear with him in glory" (verse 4).

Believers are already with him in heavenly places, for he represents them there. They are already heirs of God, and "the meek shall inherit the earth". But Christ's love goes further. As they shared in his humiliation, so they will share in his exaltation. As is rewarded, so will they be. They will be holy, as he is holy; they will no longer know shame or insecurity.

Above all, they have a position that is described as "the Bride of Christ". Part of their glory is being associated with him. His love for them is so great that all he has he shares with them. He will give them "authority over the nations" (Revelation 2:26-27). He will confess them before the Father and his angels (Revelation 3:5).

#### THIS HAS PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW WE LIVE HERE

This has obvious implications for how we should live. They are summed up in three words: "Seek" (verse 1); "Set" (verse 2); "Separate" (verses 5-17).

Some wealthy people like to study their balance sheet. How much more should believers study the blessings they have in Christ. We should make ourselves familiar with heavenly things, and seek the coming of his kingdom here.

We will only do that if we set our minds to it. We should choose to enjoy the things of God. We should choose to long for heavenly things – God's character, his ways, and the growth of his kingdom.

That implies we should separate from all that is from the old sinful nature. It is not a matter of separating from people or places (though that may happen), it is separation from attitudes and practices that we were guilty of in the past.

In place of these things we should develop as children of God. Verses 12-17 show us the character and practice we should deliberately acquire.

The motive for all this is that Christ will appear, and believers will appear in glory with him.