



# From Death to Life

[3:1-4]

Chris Bullard

*“If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (3:1-4).*

In 1970 Dr. Raymond Moody began interviewing people who had been declared clinically “dead” and then minutes or even hours later had revived. After five years of research into over one hundred such cases, Dr. Moody presented the results of his findings in the best selling book *Life After Life*. More fascinating than the reported experiences surrounding the moment of death was the effect these experiences had on the people.<sup>1</sup> One person stated,

Since then, it has been on my mind constantly what I have done with my life. . . . Since I died, all of a sudden, right after my experience, I started wondering whether I had been doing the things I had done because they were good, or because they were good for *me*. . . . I try to do things that have more meaning, and that makes my mind and soul feel better.

Another person related, “It was a blessing in a way, because before that heart attack I was too busy planning for my children’s future, and

<sup>1</sup>Raymond A. Moody, *Life After Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 90-91.

worrying about yesterday, that I was losing the joys of the present. I have a much different attitude now.”

As Dr. Moody conducted his interviews, he found that these people who had “died” and revived had new goals, new moral principles, and a renewed determination to try living on a higher plane.

Bruce Greyson, a psychiatry professor at the University of Connecticut Medical Center, has seen thousands of “clinical death” cases over the past fifteen years. Recently he made this observation: “If a person was very materialistic before, his whole life may be disrupted. Relationships often break up, especially if they were based on materialism and power. For a successful businessman, that could mean not being able to return to the job.”<sup>2</sup>

Evidently one cannot have a brush with death without coming out of that experience with a changed life. That is Paul’s point to the church at Colossae as he moves into the practical part of his letter. As people who have died to sin and been made alive unto God, Christians are to develop new goals, new moral principles, and a renewed determination to live on a higher plane.

## THE REMINDER (3:1)

Paul opened this practical section with four

<sup>2</sup>Reported in the *Kansas City Star*, Tuesday, August 29, 1989, p. 1C.

observations as he introduces the concept of a “resurrection lifestyle.” He began with the reminder: “If then you have been raised up with Christ” (3:1a).

Here is an accomplished fact: “You have already died, and you have already been raised with Jesus.” When did this happen?

In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (2:11, 12).

When you were baptized, you were buried in a liquid grave. When you were brought up out of the water, you were resurrected in the eyes of God. In that historical moment you were given new life, a new beginning. Romans 6:3, 4 says,

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

This new life is *eternal* life. Eternal life is not a quantity of life, that is, the emphasis is not living forever. Rather it is a quality of life. Eternal life is a way of living that understands God and honors His desires!

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:11-13).

Jesus led a different life after His resurrection than He did before His death. Before His crucifixion, Jesus went from synagogue to synagogue. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and health to the sickly. He ministered to the multitudes day after day in countless villages. After His resurrection, His lifestyle changed. No longer did He go out in public. No longer did He teach in the synagogues or perform miracles. He appeared only to His own disciples. Life was different for Jesus after His resurrection.

Even so, you were dead in sin. At the moment of your baptism you died to sin. In the mind of God, when you came up out of the water you were raised with Christ out of the tomb. Like His life, your life cannot be the same. We are to live a Christ-centered life because we have been co-raised with Him. Our old lifestyle is gone; we are to live a new, eternal life.

### THE RESPONSIBILITY (3:1, 2)

Out of that reminder Paul wrote about the responsibility that is now ours: “Keep seeking the things above” (3:1b). This is no option, for Paul uses an imperative. As a risen person, the Christian has a responsibility to be preoccupied with heaven. This is no form of escapism. The Christian is to be so concerned about heaven that it controls his earthly responses. It is so easy to remain caught up in the world system with its concerns. We Christians are often occupied with how much money we make (or do not make!), what our houses look like, how fashionable is the style of our clothes, and what models of cars we drive. Status symbols dominate our lives! How hard it is to break their grip on us! The result is that many Christians cannot tell the world anything about a heavenly dimension of life, since they have not yet discovered it themselves.

What is our responsibility? We are to set our hearts on things above. We are to seek after those spiritual values that are important to Jesus: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We should want for our own lives what Jesus wants for them.

Paul continued: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (3:2). To live the resurrection lifestyle, we must put our minds to it. The daydreams we entertain, the topics we think about when our minds wander, the decisions we make are all to be controlled by a divine perspective. The thoughts harbored in our minds and the desires lodged in our hearts will have a direct influence on the pattern of our behavior.

### THE RESOURCE (3:1)

Verse 1 also speaks of the resource we have to bring this new direction to our lives: “Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (3:1c). Here is our motivation to develop a resurrection lifestyle

in an ungodly world when we think it cannot be done: It is Christ seated in the heavenlies, waiting in majesty and honor for us to enter His presence and claim His power. He is our spiritual resource for victory. Because of His victory over sin and death, and because God the Father has exalted Him to His right hand, the fountain of blessing has been opened for His disciples. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

### **THE REASON (3:3)**

Why should we develop this resurrection lifestyle of setting our hearts and minds on things above? The reason is given in 3:3: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

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**"When Jesus  
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First, he said we are dead. Dead to what? Dead to sin, to the world system, to the values, goals, and ambitions that once captivated our minds and hearts when we were in rebellion to God.

Second, he said that our lives are now hidden in Christ. We are now in union with Jesus. Our hearts are one with His heart; our minds are one with His mind; our souls are one with His soul. We cannot be joined to Jesus Christ and still be the same old people.

Do you remember the last garden you planted? You broke up the dirt. Then you hid the seeds in the earth so that they could produce a harvest of vegetables. Just like that, our lives have been hidden in Christ so that we can produce a spiritual harvest of righteousness.

### **THE REVELATION (3:4)**

If you live a resurrection lifestyle, your friends and neighbors will not understand you. Your business associates will think you a little strange

for no longer involving yourself in their little shenanigans. But one day you will be vindicated for taking the time and effort to set your heart and mind on things above. When will this happen? Your vindication will come at the revelation of Jesus: "When Christ who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (3:4). When Jesus returns, the verdict of eternity will reverse the verdicts of time. Those whose lives are presently caught up in the world system will find out whose life counted all along.

Peter graphically describes our current situation:

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. . . . (1 Peter 4:1-5).

One day the shoe will be on the other foot. No longer will you have to explain why you live the "strange" way you do. On that day the world will have to explain to God why it rejected His values and His goals. This will not happen until the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory at His second coming. In the meantime, remain faithful to the resurrection lifestyle.

Many say, "My job is my life"; "My family is my life." But Paul says, "Christ is our life." He is what our lives are all about. He has become the magnificent obsession of our souls.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ptolemy, the Greek astronomer who flourished from A.D. 127-151, taught that the universe was spherical and daily revolved around a motionless earth. That view ruled the skies till Copernicus upset the world thirteen hundred years later, proving that to be an illusion. Copernicus demonstrated that the sun is the center and everything else goes around that.

Some Christians are still living spiritually under a Ptolemaic illusion. They think the world is the center of their universe, but it is not. The Son is! For the Christian, a transformed life begins with a heavenly preoccupation that keeps Jesus at the center of his heart and mind.