Seek the Things Above (Col.3:1-4), Part 1

The Shepherds have chosen “Seek the Things Above” as our theme this year. So, at least one Sunday a month I’m going to try to include a lesson or two on this theme. This one is the first installment. As such, I thought it best to first consider what these words really mean. Not just what brother Perry and brother Dickey mean by those words- with all due respect to them, but what the Holy Spirit and Paul meant when they collaborated to write them to Colossians.

At some point, we’re going to do some introductory work on the letter as a whole, the city of Colossae and the church there, and perhaps even some background on Gnosticism (which this epistle seems to be combatting), but for the time being, let’s just concentrate on what these words mean within the context of the first four verses of chapter three…

I. Generally, please note from Col.3:1-4

1. There are two *imperatives* (requirements) set forth in our text, vv.1-2
   1. The first, *“keep seeking the things above,”* v.1, is a *predicated imperative;* meaning that it is *predicated* upon having previously met a previous or preliminary requirement. Therefore, itis only for those who have been *“raised up with Christ.”*  It would do little good, if it were even possible, for those not previously *“raised up with Christ”* to *“keep seeking the things above”* in the ways that this passage indicates (just avoiding *immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire,* and *greed* from v.5, or the additional vices listed in v.8, would not accomplish the eternal purpose of salvation without *“having been made complete”* by *“having been buried with Him in baptism,”* cf. 2.10-12), cf. John 3:3,5.

Also note that this first imperative is specifically stated as *“keep seeking…”;* it is in the “present active” tense indicating the requirement of continuous or on-going action.  It was not, and is not intended to be a singular decision, event or action- such as a *mental acceptance* of the deity of Jesus, or a *singular action* such as baptism, but a continuous, on-going, dedicated, effort.

1. The second imperative of our text, *“Set your mind on things above,”* comes with the additional prohibition, *“not on the things that are on earth,”* v.2. Such reminds us of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount, cf. Matt.6:19-21,24. By viewing these passages together, it becomes readily apparent that one cannot do both- it is an *either/or* proposition. One cannot have their *mind set on things* both *above* and *below,* for the interests of these two realms are diametrically opposed, cf. Rom.8:5-8.
2. The *reasons* and *reward* for these imperatives, vv.3-4
   1. The *reasons* provided for these imperatives (*keep seeking things above* and *set your mind on things above*) are two-fold:
      1. *“For you have died…”­* To be *“raised up with Christ”* (v.1), one must have first been *“buried with Christ”* (2:12); and to have been *“buried with Christ,”* one must first be(come) *dead.* The *dead* are buried, not the *living!*  We are *“dead in … transgressions and uncircumcision of … flesh”* (2:13a), but after being *“buried with Him in baptism”* (2:12a), we are *“raised up with Him”* (2:12b) becoming *“alive together with Him”* having been *“forgiven… all our transgressions”* (2:13b).
      2. *“…and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”*  The word translated as *“hidden”* (NASB) is the Greek term *krupto.* It comes from *kyrpto,* and both mean *to hide* or *conceal;* to *escape notice.*  The connection to *burial,* or *to conceal in a crypt* is obvious. Thus, our previous life of *sin-* by which we became (spiritually) *dead,* is *hidden, buried,* or *concealed* with Christ when we are *buried with Him in baptism* (2:12,13). Since, then, we have been *“raised up with Christ”* (v.1), having become *dead* to that previous life of sin/transgression (v.3a), and having it *“hidden with Christ”* (*concealed/covered/buried*, v.3b), we properly ought to *“seek the things above* ***where Christ is****”* (v.1a) and *“set our minds on the things above”* (again, *where He is*) and *reigns “at the right hand of God”* (v.1b) rather than below *“on the things that are on earth”* (v.2a) where *sin* and *death* continue to reign.
   2. The *reward* for obeying these imperatives is to be *“revealed with Him in glory,”* v.4. Note carefully that this *revealing* is tied inseparably to the time of Christ’s *revealing* at the *end,* 1Cor.15:24-26rather than in the *here* and *now* as so many seem to desire and expect, cf. Phil.3:19-21 and 1Thess.4:15-18.

II. Applications: What does it mean for us to *keep seeking the things above* and *set your mind on things above?*

1. Seek Christ’s *rule* and *reign,* v.1; by,
2. Setting your mind on *His* interests and desires (vv.12-17) rather than *your own* *earthly* ones (vv.5-11), v.2.