

11. Living with Christ (1Q 2026 Christ in Philippians and Colossians)

Biblical material: Col. 3:1–17, Rom. 1:18, Rom. 6:1–7, Eph. 4:22–24, Deut. 7:6–8, 1 Sam. 16:23.

Quotes

- The church is not simply a religious body looking for a safe place to do its own thing within a wider political or social world. The church is neither more nor less than people who bear witness, by their very existence and in particular their holiness and their unity (Colossians 3), that Jesus is the world's true lord, ridiculous or even scandalous though this may seem. *N.T. Wright*
- The best way to show your gratitude to God and people is to accept everything with joy... We may not be able to give much but we can always give the joy that springs from a heart that is in love with God. All over the world people are hungry and thirsty for God's love. We meet that hunger by spreading joy. Joy is one of the best safeguards against temptation. *Mother Teresa*
- The more we express our gratitude to God for our blessings, the more he will bring to our mind other blessings. The more we are aware of to be grateful for, the happier we become. *Ezra Taft Benson*
- The grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference. *Thomas Merton*
- A life of gratitude to God for being saved is far more pleasing than a life based on self-righteousness over being good. *Timothy Keller*
- God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say 'thank you?' *William Arthur Ward*

Questions

How do we “live with Christ” in this world? Do we often consider the blessings that God brings to us? How can we best express our thankfulness to God? What should our lives be demonstrating to those around us? How do we fix our minds on the things of God? In all of this, how do we see the issues on the great controversy playing out?

Bible summary

Colossians 3:1–17 speaks of the inclusiveness of Christ's followers, and that we no longer to follow our earthly desires. God is opposed to those who don't live right (see Romans 1:18). We don't continue to sin to experience more grace (see Romans 6:1–7). Ephesians 4:22–24 tells us to get rid of our former lifestyle. Deuteronomy 7:6–8 states that we are God's holy people. 1 Samuel 16:23 speaks of David playing the harp for king Saul..

Comment

“May the peace of Christ direct your thinking, because you were called to this by God who makes you one, and thank God for it! Let Christ's message fully live in you. In every wise way teach and instruct one another through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing praises to God in gratitude and sincerity. Whatever you do, whether in word or action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, praising God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:13-17.

This is a great affirmation about the way to live the Christian life! Notice the emphasis on Jesus, and gratitude for all he's done. Our thankfulness to God should infuse our thinking, not in the sense of obligation, but because of the joy it brings. As poet Christina Rossetti wrote, “Were there no God, we would be in this glorious world with grateful hearts and no one to thank.” When you look up at the heavens, or stand in awe at the brilliant colors of a sunset, or delight in the tiny little face of a baby, we pour out our thanks to God that we are here to enjoy it all. “When I look at the galaxies on a clear night - when I look at the incredible brilliance of creation, and think that this

is what God is like, then instead of feeling intimidated and diminished by it, I am enlarged . . . I rejoice that I am a part of it.” (Madeleine L. Engle).

In the text from Colossians, notice the references to song and music—especially as we praise God in our thankfulness. The wise use of music is an essential part, not only of church worship, but also of our personal lives. As we consider all that God has done for us, gratefulness wells up in our hearts, and need to find expression. If we don’t find much to be thankful for in our lives, then we need to think again. As the children’s song says, “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”

Colossians 3:16 closely links worship and gratitude. What are the implications? Here we begin to see the real basis for true worship. It is in the recognition of God as he truly is that we *want* to worship him, to thank him and to praise him for his presence in our lives. Worship is very personal, and cannot be defined by ritual. The sense of awe and grandeur at the beauty in nature brings us to reflect and worship the God of creation—and this can be very far from church. In all that we do, we need to keep a consciousness of God. This is worship.

“So if you’ve been brought back to life with Christ, look for what comes from above, where Christ is, sitting at God’s right hand. Fix your mind on what’s above, not what’s here on earth. You died, and your life is kept safe with Christ in God. When Christ—your life—is revealed, then you will also share in his visible glory.” Colossians 3:1-4. There’s much to consider in these words. Our minds are to be fixed on heavenly things, not on those of this world. Our life is in Jesus, and when he returns, we will have the promise fulfilled of always being with him.

As we fix our mind in Jesus, we will be open to new ways of thinking. All too often organized religion thinks it safest to stick with old formulas and well-worn clichés. So let us consider some possible new thoughts. Could it be that we do not have a monopoly on the truth? Does our thoughts lead us to reconsider the way we “do” church? What of the role of women in ministry in our church—do our ideas/practices need to be changed? Do we need to reform our administrative structures to make them more gospel-orientated?

We can certainly choose to think new thoughts as the Lord leads us! It’s certainly true that the mind matters.” If we accept this as being a fundamental truism, then what follows? That it’s wrong to exclude thinking from our religious experience, in fact we should encourage it. That we should emphasize clear thinking in our theology, rather than make use of “dark speech.” We worship a God who makes sense, not a God who is fickle, capricious, and non-sensical.

Ellen White Comments

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. He presented to men that which was exactly contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the paternal love of the Father, who [JOHN 3:16 quoted.] He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this he was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. Those who accepted his teaching were under the guardian care of angels, who were commissioned to strengthen, to enlighten, that the truth might renew and sanctify the soul. Christ declares the mission he had in coming to the earth. He says in his last public prayer [JOHN 17:25, 26 quoted] {CE 74-5}