



9th April 2023 | Resurrection Sunday

A visual excursion to experience heavenly realities

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God."

(Colossians 3:1-3 The Living Translation)



To understand the truths contained in Paul's letter we need to go on a spiritual excursion, a little like a train journey of faith. Each station we stop at reveals a deeper truth of what Jesus did for us.

What we are to learn, through our spiritual excursion, is that we are to keep our heart and mind fixed on the spiritual realities of God's truth rather than get bogged with worldly affairs.



Intro |

Today I'd like to do something very different.

The passage I'd like to focus on is from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

But, rather than just speaking *about* these truths, I'd like us to step into these truths, so we experience them as spiritual realities. Let me explain.

If I wanted you to experience the refreshing waters of the ocean, I'd take you to the beach and invite you to swim with me – you'd experience the physical reality of water on your skin and the taste of salt water on your lips.

Or, if I wanted you to feel some intense emotions like sadness or grief, I may invite you to watch a gripping movie like Gallipoli or Schindler's List (while having plenty of tissues close at hand).

So, if I want you to experience *spiritual realities*, I need to take you on a spiritual excursion to places only accessible through your imagination.

So, close your eyes, and we'll embark on our spiritual excursion.

Imagine that you are driving along in your car. We know what this feels like, its warm and safe and we are totally in control, with our hands firmly gripped to the steering wheel.

Most of us here today, at some stage of our spiritual journey, stopped our car, moved out of the driver's seat, and allowed Jesus to step into the driver's seat of our lives.

As soon as Jesus took control of the steering wheel, however, he began turning our lives in new directions, taking us places we didn't plan.

The first place Jesus took us was a train station called "God the Father".

We've stood on the platform and watched many trains come and go, forcing us to decide which train we would climb aboard.

We remember the day when Jesus offered us a ticket to join him on the train trip of a lifetime, as together we climbed aboard, entering a carriage named 'Anglican'.

There are many other passengers already seated in the carriage, and you notice they are all wearing quite extraordinary clothes.

You take a seat, noticing that on the back of the seat in front of you is a pouch filled with books, labelled "required reading".

Although you see many passengers enjoy these resources as they ride along, you realise you can learn a fair amount just by watching and listening to their conversations.

Some have been on the train for years! They tell you of the strange sights they've seen, the people they've met, and the adventures they've experienced when they embarked at different stations.

It doesn't take long, before you notice the train pulling in at a station: It's called "King's Cross". You follow everyone as they pile out of the carriage and start walking along a narrow pathway, up a steep hill where a huge wooden cross stands.

You learn that this is the place where Jesus gave his life, so you did not need to stay in the fearful, confusing world you had previously called home.

As you kneel at the foot of his cross, the acknowledgement of all you have done wrong fills your heart with shame and guilt.

When you can bare it no longer, you sense Jesus at your side. And you hear him whisper, "My child, I laid down my life so that this heavy burden of sin may be removed. The punishment for the past has been taken care of. When I hung on that cross, you were with me. I bore all your shame and guilt. Your old life is dead and gone."

As Jesus was speaking, he let out his breath and said, "Receive my Spirit. Breath Him in. He will make you a new person with a new heart."

Within moments, two angels appear, carrying a robe of light, which they drape around your shoulders.

Now, as you climb back onboard the train, you realise you're clothed with the same garment of light as the other passengers. No longer are you the odd one out, finally you know you belong.

As the train pulls out of the station, you realise how dark the world outside really is. The sky is black, the atmosphere thick with smoke-like fog. You marvel at how volatile this world is: one moment all is bright and cheerful, and the next its grey and foreboding.

You begin to notice, however, that the train begins a steep climb.

Your neighbour, whose name is Christian, leans over and whispers, "We are about to start our ascent up Revelation Mountain. If you thought King's Cross was important, just wait till we arrive at our destination."

After what seemed like hours climbing through dark ominous clouds, you suddenly feel the warmth of the sun against your cheeks.

Your eyes gravitate towards the beauty out the window. Your journey up Revelation Mountain has allowed you to rise above the dark, thunderous weather which still looms below. Here, however, the light shines unobstructed, the air is clear and the grass is vibrant with life.

You notice your fellow passengers are collecting their all their belongings, as the train pulls into the station marked "Heaven's Newcastle."

'A castle you think. Surely, I won't be let in. Such a place is only for the privileged.'

However, as you step onto the golden platform, with angels to accompany you, a brightly lit sign says:

"Those who are one with Christ in his death, shall live with him in his risen life. You are welcome to sit with him in the heavenly realms, because you're one with Him." (Ephesians 2:6)

Your newly created heart draws you to follow all the other passengers as they walk towards the magnificent castle with pylons so tall, they disappear into the clouds.

Being in this place is so glorious, you lose all track of time. There are so many treasures to be discovered, and the Spirit never stops teaching you more and more about the privileges of living in this heavenly Kingdom.

One day, however, Jesus taps you on the shoulder.

"It is time for your body to get back on the train and return to the world that lays beneath."

"But I do not want to go back into that dark, evil world." you hesitantly reply.

"Your heart will always be with me here in the heavenly realm, and the treasures you've found will never be taken from you. This is where your real life remains. However, there are many who need to hear about what you have seen and heard."

So you return back to the train, and climb back into your car – ensuring that Jesus stays in the driver's seat.

Welcome back!

The truths we learnt on our spiritual excursion into the heavenlies come from Paul's words when he wrote to the believers at Colossae. I'll read it from the Message translation,

So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from *his* perspective.

Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your *real* life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. *He* is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.

So, let us all be so heavenly minded, we become of great earthly use!