

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heavenly Christ Revealed" (Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 17:1-5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 10/13/2013

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Let me call your attention once again to the passage in the Word of God that is the present focus of our study. Please turn with me in your own Bible, if you are able, to Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one. Let us once again focus our minds upon the great imperative that is given to us here by God the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul. Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

In this series of messages, at the present time, we are focusing on the question that is central to an understanding of the verses we just read. We cannot truly grasp the commandment that we are given in these verses unless we truly understand who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

We cannot properly understand that we as believers have been raised with Christ unless we truly understand who He is.

We cannot properly seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, unless we understand who He truly is, because the things which are above that we are to seek are, as we have seen, the things that have to do with the person and work of Jesus Christ Himself.

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We cannot truly understand the unprofitableness of the things of this earth unless we understand the great contrast, indeed the great gulf, between the things that have to do with this cursed and perishing world and the things that have to do with the perfection and glory of Christ who is the One who has purchased our redemption for life, eternal life, in the world to come.

Present-Day Confusion About Christ

Now, it may seem to be an absurd thing to say that this is an area on which professing Christians need to focus our attention. It is very easy for us to say, "Of course we know who Jesus Christ is." But as we began to see in our last message, there is a great deal of confusion in much of the nominally evangelical church today concerning the true identity of Jesus Christ, and especially about who He was when He came into the world as the incarnate Son of God.

And so, in our last message, we looked briefly at one of the key passages concerning the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in Philippians chapter 2. We saw in particular that the original Greek text of Philippians chapter 2 tells us several important things.

It tells us, first of all, that the One who miraculously came into this world and was born of a virgin by the overshadowing of the Spirit of God is One who has always been, and always will be, fully God.

Philippians chapter 2 also tells us, secondly, that the Second Person of the

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Godhead, God the Son, came into this world taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And thirdly, Philippians chapter 2 tells us that God who came into this world in a human body and was given the name Jesus - meaning "Jehovah saves" - at the instruction of an angel of God, this One who came into the world in human form remained fully God. From the time of His conception He was, and He is, and will forever be, both fully God and fully man, two natures in one body.

And fourthly, Philippians chapter 2 tells us that God the Son came into the world in the form of human flesh in order that He might die the death of the cross in the place of sinners. He came in order that He might take the punishment that sinners rightly deserve, so that He might propitiate the wrath of God against sin, and open the way to eternal life in the New Heavens and New Earth for all who will believe in Him.

The Essence of the Confusion

Now, I want to go back and re-emphasize the great cosmic truth that we find in Philippians chapter 2, that Jesus Christ was and is both fully God and fully man. Or, as we find it in the book of Colossians, "all the fullness of the Godhead in a body." The essence of the confusion and the false teaching that we find in the church today concerning the true identity of Jesus Christ stems from this tragic fact: There is, in the church in our time, a great - and at times even blasphemous -

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over-emphasis on the humanity of the incarnate Christ, and along with that a great under-emphasis of the divinity of the incarnate Christ.

The fact is that these two truths must be taken together in balance. But what is that balance? The weight of that balance is strongly, in fact I would say infinitely, on the side of the need to emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews chapter 2 tells us that Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." That is why God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, came into this world. The Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 14 tells us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." Literally, this verse says that Jesus Christ "tabernacled" among us, "pitched His tent" among us.

We have at times what I believe is a very imprecise and inaccurate way of speaking of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. We often hear it said that, "God became man." But that is not accurate. And that is not the force of the original language in the Gospel of John. And that is certainly not the force of the language of Philippians chapter 2.

The idea of "God becoming man" has far too often introduced the idea that when Jesus was on this earth He was something less than God, or something less than fully God. That is absolutely not the case.

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The Fullness of God in a Body - From the Womb to the Cross

What is true, what is accurate to say, is that God *took on the form* of a man. This is the great miracle: God, the fullness of the Godhead, entered into a human body, born of a virgin, a body that began with conception in a womb. A body that was born as an infant. A body that grew to adulthood.

But listen to me carefully: That body always contained the fullness of the Godhead, from conception. When that body was in the virgin Mary's womb, even when it was only beginning to be formed, it contained all the fullness of the Godhead. When that infant was born, and laid in a manger in Bethlehem, that infant body contained the fullness of the Godhead.

When that young boy as a child of 12 asked questions of the religious teachers of the law at Jerusalem, as we read in Luke chapter 2, all the fullness of the Godhead was in a boy's body. When that man of 30 years old called disciples to Himself, and began to preach and to perform miracles, all the fullness of the Godhead was in that man's body.

And when that same body hung on a cross for sinners, the fullness of the Godhead was in that body. At every point of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, from the womb all the way to the cross, and beyond, the fullness of God was living in the body of a man. All the attributes of God - holiness, deity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence - were within that body.

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The Attributes of God in a Body

Hebrews chapter 7 verse 26 tells us that Jesus is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The writer to the Hebrews in this verse piles one adjective upon another in order to emphasize the complete and absolute holiness of Jesus Christ while He was on this earth.

He did not sin, and He was incapable of sin, because He is God. His perfect sinless life was, first of all, a demonstration of the fact that this man Jesus was and is God the Son in human flesh. His perfect sinless life demonstrated that He was qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And not only that, but also the perfect High Priest to offer His own blood on the heavenly altar, at the mercy seat of God, on behalf of sinners.

Jesus did not hesitate, even as a boy of 12, to declared to His parents, when they returned to Jerusalem searching for Him, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" He did not hesitate, even at that point, to declare the fact that He was God the Son, even though at the time His parents did not understand what He was saying.

In John chapter 14 verse nine, Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." And in John chapter 10 verse 30 Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." In Matthew chapter 15 verse nine, Jesus said that He, God in flesh, was worthy of worship. And repeatedly in the Gospels we find people coming and worshipping Jesus. A leper in Matthew chapter 8. A Jewish ruler in Matthew chapter 9. Those

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who were in a boat with Jesus on stormy seas in Matthew chapter 14. A woman of Canaan in Matthew 15. A man who was born blind but received his sight from Jesus in John chapter 9. Jesus always received their worship. There is no record that He ever said to them, as Peter would say to Cornelius later on in the book of Acts, "Do not worship me, because I am merely a man like yourself." No. We never hear that from Jesus.

The incarnate Son of God not only demonstrated holiness and deity, He also demonstrated omniscience on a number of occasions. We find in Matthew 12, and in Luke chapter 6, and in John chapter 6 and in John chapter 13 that Jesus knew people's thoughts. And in Luke chapter 2 and in John chapter 17 Jesus spoke of having been with His Father in Heaven before He came to earth.

Not only did Jesus demonstrate His deity in all of these areas, He also demonstrated omnipotence, that He possessed and could exercise all power. In the book of Mark, in chapters four and five, we find Jesus performing four specific and mighty miracles. First, He demonstrated His power over the creation. He stilled a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee by rebuking it with only His spoken word. Secondly, He demonstrated His power over the forces of the Devil. By His spoken word He commanded a legion of demons to come out of the man of Gadara, and He sent those demons into a herd of swine, which then ran headlong over a precipice and drowned in the sea.

Thirdly, Jesus demonstrated His power over disease and sickness. Without even

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a spoken word, He healed a woman who had a problem of uncontrolled bleeding for 12 years. This woman did nothing more than to touch Jesus' garment, doing this in faith that He could heal her. And fourth, Jesus also demonstrated His power over physical death. In Mark chapter 5, He raised a young girl from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. And once again, Jesus merely spoke the word. He said, "Little girl, arise" and she was restored to life.

The Transfiguration: Deity Uncloaked

But the most striking and vivid evidence and demonstration of the glorious deity of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was on earth is to be found in the record of the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus that we find both in Matthew chapter 17 and in Mark chapter 9. Let me read that account for you from the book of Matthew. Please turn with me in your Bible, if you are able, to Matthew chapter 17, beginning at verse one. Matthew chapter 17 beginning at verse one. We read this:

...Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

And then in verse five we read that "a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' "

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Now it is important for us to understand from the original language exactly what was happening here. Verse two says that Jesus was "transfigured." Jesus' appearance changed before the three disciples who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration.

What exactly were Peter and James and John witnessing? In order to understand this we need to understand the word that is translated "transfigured" in verse two. The word is actually a form of our English word "metamorphosis." This is a form of the same word that we found in Philippians chapter 2 regarding the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, where the word is translated "form" (F-O-R-M).

Let me remind you that this is a word that indicates that the outward appearance of an object or individual is a completely accurate reflection of the inner nature of that object or individual. In the second chapter of Philippians we have the noun form of this word, and here in Matthew chapter 17 we have the verb form of the same word.

So the sense of the passage is that when Jesus was transfigured, His changed outward appearance was still a completely accurate reflection of His inner nature. The change on the Mount of Transfiguration is the reverse of the one that we saw pictured in Philippians chapter 2. In Philippians 2 we see that when Jesus came to earth He did not actually lay aside His glory, but rather He took on a different outward appearance so that He could live among men and do the work for which the Father had sent Him. But here in the Transfiguration, for a brief time, Jesus permits His glory to shine through the human vessel of clay. He pulls back the

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cloak of human flesh so that the three apostles can see that the One they have been following for the last three years is indeed God Himself.

John speaks of this in his Gospel account in chapter 1 verse 14, when he says that "the Word [God the Son] was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and [notice] we [the disciples] beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Peter also speaks of this event in his second epistle, in chapter 1 at verse 16. Peter writes, "for we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty...when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

Dear friends, God the Holy Spirit, throughout the pages of Scripture, makes it clear that we cannot possibly overemphasize the deity and the holiness and all the other attributes of Godhood that we find in the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate on this earth. But yet, as I said in our last message, there is this terrible tendency to minimize and to even effectively deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the preaching and teaching of the church in our time. The true church of Jesus Christ must once again become unequivocal, unapologetic, and unashamed in its proclamation of the holy Majesty of the incarnate Christ.

Do You Fear the Majesty of Christ?

Dear friend, if you are truly saved, you have no reason to fear the Majesty of the

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Lord Jesus. God commands you through the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2 to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" because "your life is hidden with Christ in God" - the ultimate and eternal place of safety. But the book of Revelation tells us that at the end of time, unsaved man will indeed fear to see the face of Jesus Christ. Revelation chapter 6, verse 15:

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This same Jesus, who lived among men on this earth, is going to judge all men at the end of time. And His own wrath - the wrath of this same Jesus - will be poured out in final judgment on all who refuse to believe in Him.

Dear friend, as you listen to me today, let me ask you the most vital question that anyone can ever ask about you: Are you in Christ? Are you saved? Have you been born from above? Is your life hidden with Christ in God? Are you in the ultimate place of safety not only for this life but for eternity?

Or are you among those who may live to see a coming day when you will fear to see Christ's face, fear to see His glory? Are you among those who will hide yourself from the face of God? Are you in fact hiding yourself from God even

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now? Are you still in your sins? Are you still under the sentence of eternal death because of your sin? If that is the case, you need to come to the Lord Jesus Christ - now. There is no other way to eternal life. All other ways lead to eternal death.

It would be our privilege to explain to you from the Word of God your condition in the eyes of God apart from Christ, and the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. We would count it a privilege to communicate with you. I hope that you will listen for our contact information in the closing moments of today's program. You may not see tomorrow, my friend. Don't let another day go by, don't let another hour go by, without Christ.

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