

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 1 of 12

---

Today I want to call your attention once again to the great exhortation given to us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul, in Colossians chapter three, beginning at verse one. As always, I trust that if you are able to do so as you are listening, that you will turn to this passage in your own copy of God's Word, and focus your attention upon the words with me. Colossians chapter three, 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. (Colossians 3:1-4)

The passage we have just read speaks to us about one of the great problems of the Colossian church. The Colossian believers were in great danger of becoming earth-bound, rather than heaven-bound, in their thinking. They were in danger of focusing upon the things of earth, rather than the things of Heaven. They were in danger of being caught up in the philosophies of the pagan world around them. They were in danger of being bound up in the dead legalism of the Old Covenant. They were in danger of being cheated of their reward in Christ by making themselves subject to man-made spiritual authorities and man-made doctrines.

And so, the Apostle Paul writes to them to provide them with the only sure protection against such evils. He writes to provide them with the only sure remedy

---

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 2 of 12

---

for earth-bound thinking and living. He focuses their attention upon the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He focuses their attention not on things on earth, but on things above.

Paul begins his letter by reminding them that their salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and their love for their fellow believers in Christ, are, verse five, "because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel."

You see, the Gospel is a heavenly Gospel. The Gospel has its origins in heaven, not in earth. The Author and Finisher of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, is of heaven, and not of earth. He condescended to come to earth and die our death for sin, in order to deliver us from this earth. In the same way, Paul reminds the Galatian church, chapter one, verse four, that Christ "gave Himself for our sins" – Why? – "that He might deliver us from this present evil age."

God is not in the business of making this earth a better place. God is in the business of saving a people for the New Earth to come. This earth is under God's curse because of sin. This earth is doomed to destruction because of sin. Paul reminds the Colossian believers, chapter one, verse twelve, that God the Father "has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" – in the New Heavens and New Earth, in which righteousness will dwell, in which there will be no night (Revelation 21:25, 22:5).

Paul reminds the Colossian believers that God "has delivered us from the power

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 3 of 12

---

of darkness" – the power of this present earth, the power of sin and of Satan – "and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love," Jesus Christ.

### **Earth-Bound Thinking**

Dear friends, in our day, vast segments of the church have lost sight of these things. Vast segments of the church have become earth-bound rather than heaven-bound in the way the church thinks and the way the church operates. Practically speaking, much of the church is perverting the opening verses of Colossians chapter three. Practically speaking, much of what is being taught and much of what is being done in the church today says, "Set your mind on things on the earth, not on things which are above" – "seek those things which are on earth, where you are, rather than those things which are in heaven, where Christ is seated."

This is the great problem of many Christians and of much of the church today. Many Christians and much of the church are driven, are motivated, not by the things of heaven, but by the things of earth. The value system of many Christians, and the value system of many churches, is earth-bound rather than heaven-bound. And so the witness of many who call themselves Christians, and the witness of many churches that call themselves Evangelical, is focused on the things of this world, and not on the world to come.

To listen to many Christians, and to listen to the preaching of many churches, one would think that this world is all there is. One would think that this life is all

---

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 4 of 12

---

there is. One would think that this world is permanent. One would think that the treasures of this earth are the real treasures and the only treasures. One would think that salvation was all about self-esteem and success in this present life. One would think, listening to many who call themselves Christians and listening to many preachers who call themselves Evangelical, that the message of the Gospel is merely about a change of earthly circumstances. One would think, quite often, that the Gospel has little or nothing to do with heaven at all.

This is the thinking of the church that has surrendered to the world, and not to Christ. This is the thinking of the church that has set its mind on the things of earth, as though these things are lasting, as though these things are permanent, as though the inventions of man can be brought into the church and into the life and thinking of the Christian, and this will be enough.

Dear friends, the church desperately needs the Biblical cure for this kind of earth-bound thinking, and this kind of earth-bound living, and this kind of earth-bound preaching, and this kind of earth-bound witness. We need the cure for these things that we find in Colossians chapter three, verses one through four:

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.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 5 of 12

---

Now as we look at this great statement, as we look at this great imperative, we must ask questions. We must understand exactly what Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit means by these words, so that we may know what God requires of us, and do what God requires of us.

### **Raised With Christ**

First of all, what does it mean to be raised with Christ? Of course, the Apostle Paul is reminding us of what he has already said in chapter two, when he gave his great defense of the preeminence of Christ against the evil of worldly philosophy. Note once again, Colossians chapter two, verse twelve: "you also were raised with Him" – raised with Christ – "through faith in the working of God, who raised Him [Jesus] from the dead." Christ was raised from the dead. He is the firstfruits of our coming resurrection.

In the mind and plan of God this is already an accomplished fact. We *were* raised with Christ. The language in the Greek indicates a fulfilled condition, an action that has been done once, and will never be repeated. And what does this mean for the Christian? What does it mean, that you and I have been raised with Christ? Paul gives the answer not only here, but also in Romans chapter six, verse four: "Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Being raised with Christ should mean an entirely new way of thinking and living for the believer in Christ. Second

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 6 of 12

---

Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

And how is it that all things have "become new"? Jesus gave the answer when he spoke to Nicodemus in John chapter three, verse three: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Born again" – the word in the original language means, literally, "born from above." The new birth is "from above." It is not "from this earth." It has no origin here. The new birth originates in heaven, and it culminates in heaven. "Unless one is born from above, he cannot see" – he cannot know, he cannot experience – "the kingdom of God."

Dear friend, unless you are born from above by faith in the finished work of Christ, you will never see or know or experience the kingdom of God. It is impossible. But once you have been born from above, you can see the kingdom of God. You can know it. You can experience it – the kingdom of God here and now in a foretaste, and the kingdom of God in the life to come in all its fullness. And because you have been born from above, because you are now a member and a citizen of the kingdom of God, because your citizenship is now in heaven and not on earth, "seek those things which are above, where Christ is."

Some teachers try to make a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, but the fact is that Jesus Himself used the terms interchangeably. Do not fall into the trap of those who would try to tell you that

---

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 7 of 12

---

there are two kingdoms, one for Israel and one for the Church, or who would try to make some other un-Biblical division. All who are born from above are citizens of the kingdom of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The "things above" of which Paul speaks in this passage belong to every believer of all time.

### **What Are the "Things Which Are Above"?**

What are those things? Paul tells us in Colossians chapter three, verse one. They are the things that are "where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."

In fact, they are things that are in Christ. They are the things that are integral to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And that is why we are to seek Him. We are to seek Him in His divinity. We are to avail ourselves of His divinity. All the wondrous attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ are seated at the right hand of God in the person of Christ.

*His eternity is seated there.* The One we are to seek is the One who had no beginning, who will have no ending, the one who is our High Priest forever before the heavenly altar.

*His holiness is seated there.* The One we are to seek is the Holy God, the One who says, "Be holy, for I am holy." We are to seek that holiness. We are to seek to be more and more conformed to the image of Christ. We are to seek to be not conformed to this world – Romans chapter twelve, verse one – but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, literally the renovation of our minds,

---

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 8 of 12

---

the conformity of our minds to the mind of Christ, in order that we may prove, that our thinking may be in conformity to, the will of God.

Not only is Christ's eternity seated at the throne of God, not only is His holiness seated at the throne of God, *His immutability is also seated at the throne of God*, in His person. The Christ we are to seek at the throne of God is unchanging and unchangeable. He is Jesus Christ who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He is not moved or affected by the events of this world. On the contrary, He is the Lord of all events. He is in charge of them. Who better can we seek, than the immutable Christ – the One who has never changed and will never change?

Furthermore, *the omnipotence of Christ* is seated in the heavenlies in His person. He possesses all power. He possesses all authority in heaven and in earth. Paul tells us in Colossians chapter one that the Lord Jesus who is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high sustains the entire universe by His power. Who can we seek on earth, who can exercise such power on our behalf?

Furthermore, *the omniscience of Christ* is seated in the heavenlies in His person. We are to seek the one who is not only all-powerful but also all-knowing. Where on this sin-cursed earth, where in the things of this earth, the philosophies of this age, can we find such knowledge?

And further yet, *infinite wisdom* is seated in the heavenlies in the person of Christ. The One we are to seek not only possesses all power, He not only



Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 9 of 12

---

possesses all knowledge, He also possesses all wisdom to employ that power and that knowledge for His glory and thus for our eternal good. Go to the ends of the earth, collect all the knowledge man possesses, collect all the power man possesses, collect all the wisdom man possesses, and it does not begin to compare with the knowledge, power, and wisdom that we find in heaven in the person of Christ.

And furthermore, as we seek the Christ who is above, seated at the throne of God, we find *infinite love*. We find *infinite grace*. We find the grace that saves to the uttermost the deepest of sinners. We find the love that compelled our Lord to come into this world, to take on the form of a servant, and to die the death of the cross in our place.

And further yet, the Christ above whom we are to seek is *the head of the Church*. Colossians chapter one verse eighteen declares to us that Jesus Christ seated in the heavenlies "is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). This world is passing away. But Christ's church is eternal.

And so, Ephesians chapter five tells us, He is now at work sanctifying us by the cleansing power of His Word, "that He might present [us] to Himself" – on that great day when this world passes away and the New Heavens and New Earth commence – "that He might present [us] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but...holy and without blemish" for eternity.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 10 of 12

---

## **"A Better Country"**

Dear friends, where on this earth can we find this? It is impossible. Therefore we must seek those things which are above, where Christ is. We must seek and lay hold of the very attributes of our Lord, which are our only resource for life in our short time in this world, and for our life in eternity to come.

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Seek the heavenly altar on which we find His blood, offered once for all as the full and final atonement for our sins. Seek the throne of grace. Seek the One who intercedes for sinners at that throne.

The writer to the Hebrews declares this, in chapter four, verses 14-16: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Where on earth, where in the things of earth, can we find such a Great High Priest? Where on earth, where in the things of earth, can we find "grace to help in time of need"? It is impossible to find those things on this earth. Seek them all you want. Seek them as long as you want. Seek them wherever and in whatever you want. But you will not find them. You will come to the end of that quest empty-handed. You will only find these things as you "seek those things which are

---

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 11 of 12

---

above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." You will only find those things as you "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

And let me remind you, last but certainly not least, that heaven is where we find the place that is being prepared for us. Jesus told the disciples in John chapter fourteen, "I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you to Myself." And on that great Last Day, Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 25, verse 34, He will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And we shall rule and reign with Him forever.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that those in the great roll-call of faith of chapter eleven demonstrated the fact that they desired a better country than any that can be found on this earth. They desired, he says, "a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16).

Is that what you are seeking, dear friend? Are you seeking the things that will prepare you for that life to come? The true Church of Jesus Christ, the truly blood-bought, Spirit-indwelled believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, must utterly reject the things of earth. We must despise these things. We must flee to the preeminent Christ. We must flee to the heavenly altar. We must flee to the heavenly throne of grace.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "The Heaven-Bound Church" (Colossians 3:1-4)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/21/2013

Page 12 of 12

---

"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." And then note well the great promise: "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

#### **About the Broadcast**

**The Scripture-Driven Church** airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is that of the Great Commission: to preach the Gospel to the world, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God's Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

#### **How You Can Help Us**

*Above all, please pray for us.* The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to all we do. We thank you for bringing this ministry before the throne of grace.

The broadcast is supported entirely by the gifts of God's people. If the Lord leads you to help us financially, you can:

- Call us toll-free at 888-804-9655 to give a gift by credit card
- Give a gift online at our secure website, [www.teachingtheword.org](http://www.teachingtheword.org)
- Mail your gift to TeachingTheWord, Box 2533, Westminster, Maryland 21158

**TeachingtheWord Ministries** is recognized as a tax-exempt religious organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U. S. Internal Revenue Code.

**May the Lord richly bless your personal study  
of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**