

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 1 of 12

I want to call your attention once again to the main passage we are considering in our present series, Colossians chapter 3, verses one through four. As always, I hope that if you are able, you will follow along in your own copy of God's Word as I read this passage, and as we consider other related passages in the Word of God today. Let us begin at Colossians chapter 3, 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. (Colossians 3:1-4)

The Imperative, and the Reason For It

This passage points out to us the main thing that should be true in every Christian believer's life, and the main thing that should be true in the life of the church as the body of Christ. We are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." We are to set our minds "on things above, not on things on the earth."

The reason for this imperative in the life of every Christian and in the life of the church as a body is because each true believer in Jesus Christ has died with Christ, has been raised with Christ, and we shall appear in glory with Christ. Once you become a believer in Christ, your relationship to this world entirely changes. It radically changes.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 2 of 12

You are no longer merely a citizen of this world. Your citizenship, the Word of God tells us, is in Heaven.

You are dead to this world. You are dead to the things of this world. You are dead to the philosophies and religions of this world. You are dead to the material things of this world. And those things are dead to you. Those things are passing away. Those things will burn up with fervent heat at the end of time.

Only your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, only the things that pertain to the fact that your life is hidden with Christ in God, will last for eternity. Therefore, those things must be the primary focus of the life and thinking and witness of the Christian and of the church.

Illustrations: Isaiah and John the Baptist

We see this illustrated for us many times throughout the Word of God. God has given us an abundance of examples in the pages of Scripture. And in this series, we have been considering a few of them. We saw Isaiah taken into the very throne room of God in Heaven. Isaiah was shown the absolute holiness of God. Isaiah was shown his own absolute depravity. Isaiah was shown that the only authority and the only power that could enable his prophetic ministry as the spokesman for the Lord was the enabling and the empowerment of Heaven.

We saw this also in the Gospels with John the Baptist. The Jewish religious leaders, who had replaced the true worship of God with a religion of man-made regulations and

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 3 of 12

self-righteousness, questioned John the Baptist's authority to call the people to repentance and preparation for the coming of Christ. And so, we saw in John chapter 3 that John the Baptist declared to them that his power and his authority were from Heaven.

John openly declared to them that he was not the Christ, that he was the forerunner, but that he spoke the truth which comes from the only source of truth, the only seat of truth, which is the abode of God in Heaven. And he proclaimed Jesus Christ as the truth. And the Apostle John, the writer of the Gospel account, proclaimed that Jesus Christ is the *Logos*, the One who is the embodiment of all truth.

And so Isaiah's thinking and orientation were directed toward Heaven. John the Baptist's thinking and orientation were focused upon Heaven. And the Apostle John and the other Gospel writers, as they wrote down the record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had their minds set upon the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, and not on the things of earth.

Jesus Corrects the Disciples' Earth-Bound Thinking

The passage that we are considering in Colossians chapter 3 gives us this imperative, this commandment, to orient all of our living and thinking toward Heaven. And that is because of one of the great pitfalls that is a danger to every Christian and to every church. That pitfall is to become earthbound in our thinking and living. That pitfall is to substitute the things of earth for the things of Heaven in our daily lives, and in the life and ministry of the church.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 4 of 12

Satan desires nothing more than to take the focus of the Christian off of things above, and to focus our attention instead on the things of earth. We see this also in the book of Acts. We see it especially in Acts chapter 1. Turn with me, please, if you are able, to the book of Acts chapter 1, verse four. Here we have once again the two parts of the picture we are dealing with. We have the reason for the imperative of the Heavenly orientation, and we also have illustrated for us the pitfall of earthbound thinking. Acts chapter 1, beginning at verse four.

Let me set the scene for you. The account that we are about to read is the last time that Jesus met with and spoke with His disciples before He returned to Heaven. In fact, we understand from other Scriptures that this interchange between Jesus and the disciples happened on the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem. Immediately after these words were spoken, Jesus ascended out of their sight into Heaven. And so please follow with me, as I read from the book of Acts, chapter 1, verses four through eight:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 5 of 12

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8)

Here we have, first of all, the reason for the imperative of a Heavenly orientation on the part of the believer. Because we have been raised with Christ, every believer in Christ receives the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God who is sent from Heaven.

This is the power of the Christian life. This is the power of the Christian church. Not impressive buildings. Not a wide range of programs. Not skilled management. Not clever marketing. Not attractive entertainment. The power of the Christian life and the power of the Christian church is to be found in none of these things. The power of the Christian life, and the power of the Christian church, is the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

"You shall receive power" Jesus said, "when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." And it is by His power that you shall be witnesses to Me.

The Reality That Is Missing From Much of Today's Church

Dear friends, this is the reality that is missing from so much of the church today. Those who are seated in the services of nominally evangelical churches in our time are rarely reminded that they are the living temples of the Holy Spirit of God. This is the tragic fact today: Because of the entertainment and marketing orientation of the

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 6 of 12

nominally evangelical church in our day, and because these efforts of the visible church are bringing people in the doors but are not bringing people to Christ, increasingly we have nominally evangelical church services that are filled with people who are in need of salvation. Services that are filled with people who have been made to think that they are Christians, but they are not, because they have never truly been indwelled by the Spirit of God. They are not saved.

And so the thinking of these people is earthbound. It is essentially the same thinking that they had when they were outside of the church. It is the only way that they can think, because, as we have seen in previous messages in this series, in First Corinthians chapter 2, the natural man, the unsaved man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.

And dear friends, because this has been going on now for multiple generations, the sad fact is that we have many people in the leadership of the nominally evangelical church who have never been indwelled by the Spirit of God.

The nominally evangelical church in our time is increasingly becoming what the mainline denominational churches became in the 20th century. They became spiritually cold. They became spiritually dead. They became earthbound.

The thinking and living of those 20th century churches became rooted and grounded not in Christ and in His Word but in the thinking and philosophies of this earth. The Heaven-bound orientation was gone. And we are seeing the same thing today in what

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 7 of 12

is called the evangelical church. But in many cases, what is called the evangelical church no longer knows anything of the evangel, the Gospel.

In fact, in much of the church today we see exactly the same problem that we see in this passage in the first chapter of Acts. The nominally evangelical church has, in many, many cases, adopted an orientation toward political solutions, an orientation toward changing the situation in which fallen man finds himself, rather than seeking by the power of the Holy Spirit the necessary and radical change that must take place in the heart of man himself.

Increasingly, the nominally evangelical church today is oriented toward making this present life a more comfortable life, and making this present world a more comfortable place. There is little recognition in much of the evangelical church today of the momentous fact that this earth is perishing, that this earth is under God's curse, that this earth will be destroyed, and that only the things that pertain to a life that is hidden in Christ with God will last.

What Today's Church Has Forgotten

The nominally evangelical church, in many, many places, seems to have forgotten that God's purpose in the Great Commission is not to make this perishing world a better place, not to lie down in comfort here, but to save a people from this world that is about to be destroyed, in order that they may be citizens of the world to come. There is very little orientation toward eternity. And that is because there is very little

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 8 of 12

orientation toward the things of Heaven, the "things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."

Dear friends this is not a new problem. We see it here in Acts chapter 1, as we see the question that the disciples ask the Lord Jesus Christ during this, their final conversation with Him, before He ascends to Heaven. Even after three years of following Him every day, and even after 40 days of intensive instruction after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples still ask this question, Acts chapter 1, verse six:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Even at this point, even after all their instruction in the truth, the disciples were still prone to fall into this trap of the Devil. They were still looking for earthly change. They were still looking for a political coup. They were still looking for the overthrow of the authority and oppression of the Roman Empire. They were still looking for Jesus to set Himself up as an earthly king.

And how did Jesus respond to them? Acts chapter 1, verse seven:

And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

What was Jesus saying to them? He was saying, this is not the time nor the place for the establishment of an earthly kingdom. The great need of man is not political change, or social justice. *The great need of man is Me.*

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 9 of 12

The great imperative, from this day forward until I come again, is that you shall be witnesses to Me. The great imperative is that I, Jesus, am going to use you, My disciples, by the power of My Holy Spirit, to redeem a people from this present evil and perishing world for life in the world to come. That is where your focus must be. And that is the realm in which My power shall be exercised. Acts chapter 1, verse eight:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

God's Plan For This Present World

Dear friends, God's plan for this present world is not to improve it. What is true of man as an individual is true of this world as a whole. Mere improvement is not enough. Fallen man may do all the good works that he can, but they will not save him. Fallen man may do all that he can to improve himself, but at the very best his efforts fall far short of God's holy standard.

All of our righteousnesses, Isaiah chapter 64, verse six tells us, are as filthy rags in the sight of God. And the same goes for man's efforts to improve this fallen and doomed world. God's plan for this present world is not improvement dear friends. It is destruction. It is a complete renovation. It is the creation of a New Heavens and New Earth wherein righteousness will dwell.

God's plan in this present world is to save a people for Himself. It is God's will that

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 10 of 12

Christians shall be conformed more and more to the image of Jesus Christ, crucifying the old nature, and walking in newness of life. There is never any hint in the plan of God as revealed in Scripture of anything but a remnant of believers, ever. Christ said in Luke chapter 12 verse 32 that the Father will give the kingdom of the New Heavens and New Earth not to an overwhelming mass of converted humanity, but to a "little flock."

Nominal Evangelicalism's Futile Quest

Many nominal evangelicals today talk of "reclaiming our country for Christ," or "reclaiming the culture for Christ," or "reclaiming science for Christ," or "reclaiming the arts for Christ," or "reclaiming government for Christ." If only we could "reclaim" these things, they say, the world would be so much better. The church would have so much greater influence.

Is this kind of thinking true of you, dear friend? I hope it is not, because it is contrary to God's Word. This kind of attitude that is being taught in so many of our churches and Christian institutions today reveals a tragic ignorance of what the Word of God tells us in several key areas.

First of all, this earthbound mentality of improving this present world reveals a tragic ignorance within the church of the fact that all of these things are under the authority of Christ *now*. He has all power *now*. The book of Colossians tells us that Jesus Christ is the One who has disarmed principalities and powers at the Cross. These things are now under His authority just as those who put Him to death were under His authority.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 11 of 12

Jesus said to Pilate, You cannot do anything to Me unless I permit it (John 19:11). Jesus said to His disciples, when men came to arrest Him, Put away the sword. Put away human power. Do you not know that right now I can call more than ten legions of angels to deliver Me? But I am not going to do it, because the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Matthew 26:52-54).

Secondly, dear friends, this earthbound mentality reveals a tragic ignorance within the church of the fact that the pattern revealed in Scripture is not the upward progress of man, but the downward progress of this earth and this world system toward judgment and destruction. Human government and human efforts have failed. They will continue to fail. They will always fail until the curse of sin is removed forever. Human culture has failed, it will continue to fail. It will always fail until the curse of sin is removed.

Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling

This earth is dying, dear friends. Heaven is calling. And so this is why our focus must be toward things above, dear friends. The things that have to do with Christ, and not with this world and this world system that are passing away.

The power of the Christian, and the power of the church, is not earthly power, dear friends. The authority of the Christian, and the authority of the church, is not earthly authority. The power of the Christian and the power of the church is Heavenly power. Let me repeat: The power and authority of the church are not earthly, but Heavenly.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Earth Is Dying, Heaven Is Calling" (Colossians 3:1-4, Acts 1:4-8)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/25/2013

Page 12 of 12

We must constantly remember the end goal of Christ for us as we find it in Colossians chapter 3 verse four, that "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
- 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.**