

SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

The beginning of the third chapter to the *ekklesia* at Colossae contains a vital admonition to be spiritually minded, an admonition that is not heeded by so many today. For we are to be a spiritual people - the stars in Abraham's sky, in a manner of speaking - and this spiritual heritage is an immense blessing and privilege.

Let me hasten to add, that to be spiritually minded is not to glide around with one's nose in the air, thanking God that we are not like the "tax collectors", but rather it is having one's mind illuminated by Christ, and set upon the Father and Son in the heavenly realm. This echoes the words of Jesus Himself:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" (Matthew 6:19-21)

How many of us can truly say that our heart and mind are set upon heavenly things? Indeed, the professing church has to a large degree become a political and corporate entity, machinating in earthly affairs, taking its pattern from the business world, and straying dangerously close to declaring "*We have no king but Caesar!*"

But what does the scripture say about those various faithful overcomers from ages past?

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

How many of us truly have this mindset, confessing that we are pilgrims upon the earth. How many of us have our eyes set upon the heavenly city that is to come, when the Father shall rule in all of the elect and the Lamb shall be our light? How many have a concept of the Zion that is our inheritance?

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. ²⁰(For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." ²¹And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")²² But you have come to

Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-24)

To return to the original passage, we see that we were (past tense) raised with Christ, and we see in another place that this means we are also seated with Him:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Let us ponder the richness of those words! We have not only been crucified and raised with Christ, but also seated with Him in the heavenlies! We must understand that this spiritual quickening is akin to a two dimensional being suddenly being able to operate in a three dimensional reality, though even that is but a poor analogy. Yet to carry it further, if such a thing were to be, would it not be unseemly for that same awakened being, now able to experience life in a higher dimension, to meddle in and obsess over things in the two dimensional realm from which he was called? How much more unseemly then, for a spiritual being, who has been seated with Christ in the heavenlies, to meddle in and obsess over earthly things!

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” (John 18:36)

Brethren, as a covenant people, we have a calling to be ambassadors of Christ, people in whom are displayed the glories of the ages to come, as the Holy Spirit writes the nature of God into our hearts to be read by those around us:

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

Our calling is therefore spiritual in nature, and this earthly realm is the place we are sent to as heavenly representatives, rather than abiding in as though putting forth roots. Even as Israel was set apart by God to display His name among the people of the earth, so the *ekklesia* (called-out) have been set apart for the same, being built up as a temple for the most holy Spirit of God. So then, we should be expected to stand out in ways both strange and marvelous, as we are not conformed to the world, but rather transformed into the image of Jesus Christ:

Do all things without complaining and disputing,¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast the word of life... (Philippians 2:14-16)

For what message does it send to the world when we claim to be spiritual, yet copy the things of the world, and model our supposedly spiritual life upon the ways of this present age? Can a body of people be truly set apart, if they model themselves according to the wisdom of the flesh as an earthly organization, and behave as the world behaves in all things?

Let me put this another way. If a man were to come from Japan as an ambassador to the United States, in order to represent his homeland and show forth the beauty of its various ways and customs, how would he be received if he looked, thought and acted exactly the same as those in the United States, and set his affections upon the same things? Would not the people he was sent to shrug and say “*He is no different to us. Japan is a different place in name only.*” How much more then, will they shrug off our supposed spirituality and confession of Christ, if there is no spiritual fruit to serve as evidence? Why should Christ be seen as beautiful and worthy of affection by the world, if even His own people are indifferent to Him?

Let us always remember, brethren, that we have already died, and now live to serve another, and more than this, to have His life displayed in us and through us:

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

The wonders of this scripture are worth meditating upon. Our life is so bound up in Christ, that we have no life of our own. Christ is our very life. How blessedly it follows that we must therefore appear with Him in glory when He appears! How wonderful the thought, and how very generous the inheritance! For the Father has decreed in His goodness that we should be co-heirs with our own Lord!

When these truths are allowed to sink into our ears and settle in our hearts, the luster of earth’s finery fades like an old garment, and all that remains is the ever brightening outshining of His glory. And we look to the fulfillment of that promise, that even as we once resembled Adam, so we shall one day perfectly resemble the Christ of God:

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear^[f] the image of the heavenly Man. (1 Corinthians 15:48-49)

Amen!