

## **Our Citizenship is in Heaven**

### **Philippians 3:20-21**

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

It is reported that there are 196 different countries in the world today. There are thousands of different language groups but politically about 196 countries. You could have been a citizen of any of them. We just need to be thankful we were born in America.

In Paul's day people longed to be a Roman citizen. This came with some very special privileges and rights that the rest of the world did not have. And if you remember from our first messages on this book the city of Philippi was a Roman city. It had been honored by giving Roman citizenship to those in the city.

This was something that the Philippians were very proud of and also very thankful.

But now Paul turns their attention to another citizenship, that of heaven.

- I. For
  - A. This is a word that is often used in argument.
    - 1. It is like saying several things and you say but!
  - B. Paul was referring to those who did not follow the pattern of life that he had displayed for the Philippians to follow.
    - 1. Philippians 3:18-19 (NKJV) 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.
    - 2. So he is contrasting the group of v-18-19 with himself and other Christians at Philippi.
      - a. He is saying that we are not like them.
      - b. And there is a reason we are not like them.
      - c. We come from different places and we are citizens of different countries.
  - C. So then we are to be set in contrast with the world and its citizens.
    - 1. It is not that we don't live here but rather that this is not our permanent home.
    - 2. Le 25:23 ¶ 'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.

## II. Our Citizenship

- A. The people of Philippi were living there as colonists while their citizenship was in Rome. Similarly Christians, while living on earth, have their citizenship elsewhere—in heaven. This contrasts with those in verse 19 whose minds are **exclusively on earthly things**. Lightner, R. P. (1985). Philippians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Php 3:20–21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
1. In verse 18-19 the people are citizens of earth. Which we all once were but now we have come to realize that our home is not this fallen world but heaven where everything is right.
- B. Abraham is our first example.
1. Heb.11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude — innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 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. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But 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.
- C. Jesus told Pilate.
1. John 18:36 (NKJV) 36 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."
- D. As God's people we live here in this world but this is not where our true allegiance lies.
1. The USA is a great place to live and people from all over the world will do most anything to get here.
  2. But there is a better place, a much better place.

- E. Even the best country here is this world is filled with corruption.
  - 1. It is a common problem because sin is a common problem.
  - 2. Even the best of men here are subject to their own sinful natures.

### III. Is in Heaven

- A. Heaven is for real.
  - 1. It is not just pie in the sky by and by.
  - 2. 2Co 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- B. It has its own records of membership.
  - 1. Luke 10:20 (NKJV) 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."
  - 2. Philippians 4:3 (NKJV) 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.
  - 3. Revelation 21:27 (NKJV) 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- C. It has its own characteristics.
  - 1. It has its own language.
    - a. Where we use such words as righteousness, faith, perfection, where evil is always spoken against and not place is given to it.
  - 2. It has its own rules and government.
  - 3. It has its own value system.
    - a. Not of gold or diamonds.
    - b. But of love, peace, goodness, holiness.
    - c. Where what you have makes no difference but rather what you are and have been in this life.
  - 4. It has its own depositories.
    - a. Not were men and women amass physical wealth.
    - b. But were things done here for Jesus will be treasured up.

- c. Matthew 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
  - d. 1 Peter 1:4 (NKJV) 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
  - e. Matthew 5:12 (NKJV) 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
5. It has its own rules.
- D. It is the place where our loved ones have gone and wait for us there.
  - E. It is the place where there is no pain or suffering.
  - F. There is not sin or anything contrary to the will of our loving Heavenly Father.
  - G. Col 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Though believers live in this world, they are citizens of heaven. They are members of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world (John 18:36). Their names are recorded in heaven (Luke 10:20; cf. Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8; 21:27); their Savior is there (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16); their fellow saints are there (Heb. 12:23); their inheritance is there (1 Peter 1:4); their reward is there (Matt. 5:12); and their treasure is there (Matt. 6:20). MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Philippians.

“Ver. 20. For our conversation is in heaven, &c.] The Ethiopic version renders it, "we have our city in heaven"; and the words may be truly rendered, "our citizenship is in heaven"; that is, the city whereof we are freemen is heaven, and we behave ourselves here below, as citizens of that city above: heaven is the saints' city; here they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come, which is permanent and durable; a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, #Heb 11:10: as yet they are not in it, though fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; they are pilgrims, strangers, and sojourners on earth, #Le 25:23 Heb 11:13;

but are seeking a better country, an heavenly one, and God has prepared for them a city, #Heb 11:16; they have a right unto it through the grace of God, and righteousness of Christ, and a meetness for it in him; and their conversation is here beforehand, while their commoration, or temporary residence, is below; their thoughts are often employed about it; their affections are set upon it, #Col 3:2; their hearts are where their treasure is, #Mt 6:21; the desires of their souls are towards it, and they are seeking things above, and long to be in their own city, and Father's house, where Christ is; and to be at home with him, and for ever with him. This is the work and business of their lives now, and what their hearts are engaged in. The Syriac version renders it, "our work is in heaven"; the business, the exercise of our lives, and of our graces, tend that way: "

*Gill*

The city of Philippi was a Roman colony. In Philippi the laws of Rome were enforced. The people wore the same kind of styles that were worn in Rome. They spoke Latin. Everything in Philippi was like Rome because it was a colonial city.

Today, believers, collectively called the church, should be a colony of heaven, and they ought to act like they act in heaven and speak the language of heaven. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, but it should be our goal. Paul is saying that we are ambassadors of Christ here on this earth; we are to represent heaven and heaven's message here upon earth today, because "our citizenship is in heaven." McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Php 3:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Luke 10:20 (NKJV) 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

(The Greek verb "written" in Luke 10:20 is in the perfect tense: "it is once-for-all written and stands written.") Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Php 3:15). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Citizenship in heaven (3:20–21). In the 1st century citizenship conveyed the right to hold office, the privilege of appeal to Roman courts, and protection anywhere in the empire. A citizen was not even responsible to local laws or courts without his consent. Paul reminds us that we are citizens of heaven. We live under God's protection. We can appeal directly to Him with any need. We do not give our consent to live by the values or ways of this world, but by the laws of heaven. We have a Ruler to whom we look, whose power "enables Him to bring everything under His control" and who will ultimately transform our bodies as well as our hearts and minds. Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion* (electronic ed.) (808). Wheaton: Victor Books.