



Articles

Our Citizenship

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OUR CITIZENSHIP

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus announced news of the imminent coming of the “kingdom of heaven.” Jesus, as well as John the Baptist, declared that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” ([Matt. 3:2; 4:17](#)). The apostles of Christ were told they would be given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” ([Matt. 16:19](#)). The nearness of this kingdom is further evident in the Lord’s promise that “there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power” ([Mark 9:1](#)). Then in Acts 2, we see the apostles using those “keys” as they preach the gospel by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the declaration that the risen Christ is seated at the right hand of God on the throne of David, having been made both Lord and Christ. Men and women on the day of Pentecost became citizens of the kingdom of heaven as they placed their faith in Christ, declared their allegiance to him and his authority, and humbly submitted to his will.

Since that day, believers have come to the Lord to acknowledge him and submit to his rule. When do so, they learn that they no longer belong to this world, but live here as “aliens and strangers” ([1 Pet. 2:11](#)). Paul described those who, before coming to Christ, walked “according to the course of this world” but were made alive with Christ and set apart from this world ([Eph. 2:1f](#)). Those Gentiles before were “strangers and aliens” from the commonwealth of Israel,” but now had become “fellow citizens with the saints.”

Writing to the Christians in Philippi, Paul said, “For our citizenship is in heaven” ([Phil. 3:20](#)). He wanted to remind them not to walk as some walked, “who set their mind on earthly things” (v. 19). So, he called to their mind a great truth in terms that were especially meaningful to them. Consider the following comments on this passage by William Barclay:

Here was a picture the Philippians could understand. Philippi was a Roman colony. Here and there at strategic military centres the Romans set down their colonies. In such places the citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time—twenty-one years—and who had been rewarded with full citizenship. The great characteristic of these colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakeably Roman. Paul says to the Philippians, “Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.” (Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. Daily Bible Study Series. Rev. Ed.)

As Christians, we are citizens of a kingdom not of this world ([John 18:36](#)). Our conduct of life must therefore be in harmony with heavenly not earthly things. We seek the things above where Christ is ([Col. 3:1-4](#)). Our affections—what we love—cannot be this world or the things of this world ([1 John 2:15f](#)). Our priorities of life are ordered in keeping with our great citizenship; thus we “seek first His kingdom” ([Matt. 6:33](#)).

Let us never forget that we are citizens of heaven. And may our manner of life match our citizenship.

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