

Citizens of Heaven

When I flew to Ireland, I needed a passport; proof that I am a citizen of the U.S. Being a citizen carries with it not only benefits but obligations and responsibilities. I am afraid many have forgotten what citizenship means.

The Constitution and laws of the U.S. give many rights to its citizens:

- Voting
- Bringing family members to the U.S.
- Obtaining citizenship for children born abroad
- Traveling with a U.S. passport
- Becoming eligible for Federal jobs
- Becoming an elected official

With these rights come responsibilities when you take the Oath of Allegiance:

- Give up all prior allegiance to any other nation or sovereignty
- Swear allegiance to the U.S.
- Serve the country when required
- Responsibility to participate in the political process by registering and voting in elections
- Serving on a jury

In an article entitled “What does it mean that our citizenship is in heaven?”, the author contrasts the kingdom of this world with the kingdom of heaven from the perspective of citizenship.

A citizen is a person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country. Citizens adopt the culture and practices of the nation or kingdom to which they belong. Every human being is born into the kingdom of this world, in which Satan rules ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#); [1 John 5:19](#)).¹

...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God...We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Consequently, we grow up adopting the culture, practices, and values that he (the Enemy) instigates ([1 John 2:16](#)).”

¹ This and following paragraphs taken from GotQuestions.org - “What does it mean that our citizenship is in heaven?”

For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Satan’s kingdom enslaves its citizens ([Romans 6:16](#)).

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

With darkened hearts and minds, we blindly follow our leader into the very sins that pull us deeper into slavery. We remain captives in this kingdom of sin, headed for destruction, until Jesus frees us ([Ephesians 2:1-3](#)).

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and^p were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

[Philippians 3:18–19](#) highlights the differences between those who desire fellowship with Jesus Christ and those who focus on earthly pursuits: “*For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.*” Those who do not know Christ live only for this world and the pleasure they can find for themselves. They are “citizens” of this world and live by its rules and value system.

When I am caught up in the world, depressed by what it offers, angry by what I observe, I remind myself to whom I belong and where my true citizenship resides.

Once source puts it this way. When we are born again by faith in Jesus Christ ([John 3:3](#)), we are born into the **Kingdom of Heaven** ([Matthew 7:21](#)).

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Speaking of those who have had that spiritual rebirth, [Philippians 3:20](#) says, “*Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Jesus spent much of His earthly ministry explaining the Kingdom of Heaven. He compared it to many things, including a wheat field in which weeds grew along with the wheat. The plants appeared identical at first, but were separated at the harvest. The truth is, often the citizens of

heaven and those of this world *appear* identical, and no one but God knows the difference. Many people may appear to be citizens of heaven, when, in fact, no rebirth has ever taken place in their hearts.

To be adopted into the family of God means that we become citizens of an eternal kingdom where our Father is the King. Our focus turns toward eternal things and storing up treasure in heaven ([Matthew 6:19-21](#)).

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.

We consider ourselves ambassadors to this earth until our Father sends for us and we go home ([Ephesians 2:18-22](#)).

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

We live for a short time in these physical bodies, anticipating the bright future in our real home. While here, we share Abraham's experience, living "*like a stranger in a foreign country. . . looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God*" ([Hebrews 11:9-10](#)).

GotQuestions.org

Matt Watson, in his article titled *Benefits of Heavenly Citizenship*, makes the following point. "*I am a citizen of heaven. I belong, body and soul, to God. My ultimate loyalty must belong to him. Not to the USA, **which is secondary at best**. My heavenly citizenship supersedes my earthly citizenship because God is the highest authority. Though Christians belong to God above, we are called to live here, deployed in our various capacities as ambassadors to everyday people on behalf of King Jesus.*"

When we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we are under new management. We owe our unconditional allegiance to the King. We receive a new passport as citizens of heaven with its benefits and responsibilities (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Tiffany Cole in *Heavenly Citizenship* stresses that *“We now follow a different set of rules and laws. We are called to live our life in accordance to the laws of heaven, which is where our true citizenship lies, and not according to the world we live in.”*

Let’s summarize the benefits and responsibilities associated with being citizens of heaven.

Our Benefits:

- Adoption into the family of God
- Salvation that begins with conversion (an event)
- Salvation that continues until we are in our heavenly home
 - Freed from the penalty of sin
 - Freed from the power of sin
 - And ultimately freed from the presence of sin
- We become new ‘creatures’ (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- The Holy Spirit begins to transform our sinful, worldly desires into those that glorify God (Romans 12:1-2)
- We are given the power to become like Christ – Christlikeness (Ephesians 4:13, 15)
- We are given the power of exiting the world’s flawed value system and living for eternity in Christ’s presence (1 John 2:15-17)

Our Responsibilities:

1. To become holy (being holy is respecting the rules God gives you, and handling those rules carefully and correctly. Holy means "set apart" (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15-16)
2. To become ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)
3. To represent God and His kingdom to a fallen world (Ephesians 5:1-23)
4. To bear the fruit of the Spirit – our code of conduct (Galatians 5:22-24)
5. To live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-14)
6. To say no to ungodliness and worldly passions (Titus 2:11-14)
7. To set our affections on things above (Colossians 3:1)
8. Be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15)
9. Do not conform to the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2)
10. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2)

This may seem a tall order to live by. And, if we did it on our own, it would be. However, the Bible tells us we are given everything we need to live a life of godliness ([1 Peter 1:3](#)).

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

All that is required is obedience, the true standard for our expression of love to Him. Obedience produces strength, disobedience produces weakness ([Romans 5:9](#); [6:16](#); [2 Corinthians 9:13](#); [10:5-6](#); [1 Peter 1:2](#); [14](#); [2 John 6](#))

Let's review... in summary:

#1 We are Citizens of Heaven

But **our citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. ***Philippians 3:20-21***

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. ***Ephesians 2:19-22***

#2 We are Aliens and Strangers

Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens and strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. ***1 Peter 2:11-12***

#3 We are not to conform to the World

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. ***Romans 12:2***

#4 We are not to be lovers of the World

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. *1 John 2:15-17*

#5 We are not friends with the World

You adulterous people, don't you know that **friendship with the world is hatred toward God**? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. *James 4:4*

#6 We have a mandate to follow

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. *Titus 2:11-14*

To whose kingdom do you belong?

To whom do you give you allegiance?

Whose flag are you flying?