

Citizens of Heaven

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 September 2008

[0:00] And the letter of God here says to us in Philippians 3, it tells us about heavenly citizenship, being heavenly citizens. Philippians 3, verse 20.

It says, For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body, our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. It tells you there that our conversation is in heaven. And some can translate that, our citizenship is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

All of us are citizens of an earthly nation. Mostly Australia. I don't know if there's anyone here tonight that's not an Australian citizen. Yeah? You're not an Australian citizen?

Well, I know I'm not a naturally born Australian. I'm not a naturally born Aussie. I'm not a dinky-dye, true blue one. I got converted to being an Aussie.

[1:08] I got naturalised. I asked the government if they'd let me be an Aussie. And they said that I could be one. And all of us are members of a nation.

We're citizens of a country. Whether by birth or by citizenship. By asking to be an Aussie. And as a Christian, our fundamental citizenship, where we fundamentally belong, our loyalty is to heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven. So we want to look at what it means for us, what it means for you tonight, to be a heavenly citizen. A heavenly citizen.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you today that we have your word in our hands, that we have this truth that we can hear and receive. Lord, help us to take it in, to receive it, to understand it.

Lord, that it can be life to us and that we can grow and know more about you and follow you. In Jesus' name we pray. Firstly, a country. A citizen has a country.

[2:11] In Hebrews 11 verse 16. It tells us here about a country. Hebrews 11 verse 16. It talks about people here. But now they desire a better country that is unheavenly.

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. A citizen has a country. Heaven is called a better country.

But now they desire a better country that is unheavenly. Our true home and treasure is heaven.

We're told that heaven is a better country. And we're told we should seek it, desire it, long for it.

Our true home, our true homeland, our all, our fatherland, our motherland really, is with him. And where he is in heaven. And we're told here in the word of God, people tonight, it's a better country.

It's a better country. It's better than Australia. It's better than any nation you could name on this planet. The nation that we belong to, our true homeland of heaven, is a better country.

[3:15] It's better in its wonders, in its glorious beauty, in its awesome treasures, in its riches, in the fullness of joy, in the blessings that Christ promises. More than we can ask or think.

It says in Ephesians 3 verse 20. We can have more than we can ask or think because of his grace to us. It's better in its wonders. It's better in its construction.

Now we can think of earthly homes here below. We know whatever our home is like, we can all find fault with our home.

We can all find a little crack here or something that needs repainting, something that needs refurbishing and replacing. And yet this place, this wonderful heavenly place, is perfect in its construction and its excellent design.

It's made by the great designer of the universe of the eternal mansions that await those that love the Lord. And it's a better country in its abundance.

[4:20] It's like Canaan, the promised land for the people of God as they travel through their various wanderings in the wilderness. It's like Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey.

It's a better country in its abundance. It's a better country in its residence. It's a better country in its presence.

It's a better country in its occupation. We'll all be engaged in serving and praising God. We'll be engaged in the highest form of our occupation we could ever long to do and be, to be able to be praising Him and serving Him.

And all of those various things that are better are based on an old-time preacher called Thomas Watson. He's an old-time Puritan preacher of long ago. And he's put some excellent material together.

And that's how he described how it's a better country. He also went on to describe the saints of God. The Greek word for saint, *hagios*, signifies a man taken away from the earth.

[5:54] A person may live in one place yet belong to another, says Thomas Watson. He may live in Spain yet be a free citizen of England. So a godly man is a while in the world, but he belongs to the Jerusalem above.

That is the place to which he aspires. And it's like that too for you and I. You might be an Aussie. You might be a member of a nation. Or you might have dual citizenship like I have, because I've still got a UK passport that has expired.

And I still have UK citizenship. We've got dual citizenship. And it's like that for a Christian, that we've got dual citizenship. In the sense that we have the citizenship that is in heaven.

Our conversation is in heaven. But we've also got to live and breathe. And we're in the world, but not of it. We also have a place here below. And we have that place to which we aspire.

And this word *hagios*, this word that relates to holiness, to sanctification, to the saints of God, the holy ones, it refers to the idea of consecration and of dedication.

[7:01] It's a Greek word that's a compound word. I don't normally go into all the Greek intricacies, and I'm not really one well-versed to be able to either.

But *hagios* has got two elements to it. It's got *ha*, or *a*, which is a negative. And it's got *ge*, which is the word from which we get geography, geology.

It means the earth. So it means *ha*, not of, *geos*, the earth. That's what it means. It's an interesting thought, isn't it? That *hagios*, sanctification, being holy, means that we are not of the earth.

We're not of the earth. We're passing through. This world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. There's a Bible truth to that, because we're not of this world. And as we see that, one who is sanctified, made holy, made a *hagios*, a *hagion*, or whatever the right word is, one who is sanctified is not of the earth, but is consecrated to God.

You belong to him. You're specially taken by him and consecrated belonging to him. And Paul talks here in Philippians 3, verse 19, of those who mind earthly things.

[8:15] We are not of those who mind earthly things. Our conversation is heavenward. Our mind is directed heavenward. This heavenly country, in a sense, is God's kingdom.

In 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 12, it says that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. Don't you want to walk worthy of him?

He that has called you to his kingdom and to his glory. We should want to walk worthy of him. The Lord Jesus talked about how my kingdom is not of this world.

In John 18, verse 36. His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. And we are truly citizens of a kingdom, not of this world. The world passeth away.

It says in 1 John 2, verse 17. The world, as in the system, the worldly system, will pass away. This country that we truly belong to is an eternal kingdom.

[9:16] So we have a country, number one. We have a country. Secondly, we have a king. We have a king. It says in Colossians 1, verse 13, of our Lord Jesus, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption or freedom from slavery.

We've been liberated. We've had redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. We've been taken as slaves from a slave market, purchased by this one, who's paid for us by his own precious blood, and adopted into his family, made not just free as free slaves, but as sons, as daughters of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

And he's delivered us from the power of darkness, translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Luke 19, verse 14, talks about the Lord telling a parable, but his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, we will not have this man to reign over us.

It's the citizens that didn't want the King to reign over them. Friends, if you're a Christian tonight, you have a king. And he has every right to rule over you, to reign over you, to be your master, to be the one that you bow the knee to, to be the one that you pledge allegiance to, and follow as the King of your soul, as the King whom you truly belong to, and that as you, as his citizens, belong to this kingdom, we have a king.

And he, this king that we hear about here, this king is above and beyond any earthly imagination we can think of, of a king or queen or sovereign.

[10:59] We know there's many earthly sovereigns in our world who claim some lineage and some right to a throne and a crown. But this king, he is the King of kings.

He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. It's used of Jehovah. It's used of the Lord Jesus Christ, this same expression, King of kings and Lord of lords, because he is one and the same, Jesus Christ the Almighty.

He is our Heavenly Father. And we are actually members of the Royal Family. And so we pray to him, Thy kingdom come. The King, the King demands our allegiance.

He deserves our obedience. He warrants our faithfulness as his subjects, as his children. God is our King. Think of his royal power, of his dominion, of the extent of it, of the extremity of it, of the absolute rule and ultimate authority, the infinite power of our sovereign ruler.

He rules and reigns and he wants to be king, especially in your life. And not just in some glib, token, acknowledgement, just words that you say when you don't really mean it within.

[12:15] It's much, much more. It's not just saying, Jesus is my Lord. It's meaning it. It's speaking it from your heart. It's having that king in every area of your life.

And as citizens of heaven, we're commanded to be obedient to the King, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we should submit to his Lordship in every area of our life in thought, word and deed.

So as citizens of heaven, we have a country, a king, and thirdly, we have a community. We have a community. As citizens, we've got fellow citizens.

It tells us here in Ephesians 2, verse 19. Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

It's got the sense here that we're fellow citizens. It's not Christianity. It's not a stand-alone kind of thing. We're in isolation from our fellow brothers and sisters, from our fellow believers.

[13:17] We're fellow citizens. We're brothers and sisters together. We need each other. I know I need my brothers and my sisters to pray together, to be strong together, to grow together.

And being a citizen of heaven means that we're fellow citizens of the saints. We're family members. We're fellow citizens, natives of the same town. And there are people in this building who could be our neighbours for all eternity.

That's amazing, isn't it? To think that we could be walking the golden streets, so to speak. And we know that, of course, there'll be that heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem that will actually come down to the earth.

So there's a sense where we'll still be living on the earth in the sense of the redeemed earth, the regenerated earth. And there'll be the sense where there'll be that heavenly city, the heavenly Zion that will come down, as we told in Revelation.

And so there's all kinds of pictures here. And some of it is not described in detail of the makeup of this city. But certainly there is the new Jerusalem. And this heavenly city, this heavenly place will come down to earth like a huge cube.

[14:26] So we can't really fathom how it's going to look or imagine it. But we know it's going to be a glorious place. And it does talk about golden streets. Maybe we might be walking there in three or four thousand

years.

And we might just bump into each other, David, on those golden streets and say g'day to each other. You know, we can't fathom it, can we? It's just beyond comprehension. But we're going to be neighbours for all eternity.

And the Australian government says... I got this from somewhere, I can't remember now. But the Australian government says, as an Australian citizen, it spells it out, what you have to do.

It says you are a formal member of the Australian community. When you make a commitment, when you get naturalised, you make a commitment, it goes on, to Australia and to the values and the principles that underpin Australia's democracy and its public institutions.

You make a formal commitment. It's like that when you become a Christian, isn't it, really? You make a formal commitment to become a heavenly citizen, to be a member of God's very own community. And citizenship gives us a sense of identity, of belonging.

[15:36] We truly belong. We belong to heaven. That is our state, our homeland. And we join together in this. It's a joint thing. We're members, one of another, we're told, in Ephesians 4.25 and Romans 12.5.

What a great mutual community we have as Christians, as believers together, that we're part of this. And our national heroes, our national heroes, are here in this book of the history of heaven, of heaven past and of heavens to come.

Our citizens of heaven, the true greats of history, are recorded in this book. And we know through books like Fox's Book of Martyrs since then, are the greats of missionary exploits and of the men and women of God through history who have stood for the truth through church history.

And we see in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Fame, the heroes of the fame. And friends, you have a country, a country, and it's a better country, it's a better country than even our fair land of Australia, a much better country.

You have a country, you have a king, a king who deserves your allegiance, the king of kings, the lord of lords. You have a community, a community as fellow citizens of this citizenship of heaven.

[16:51] And lastly, you have a conduct that should be evident that you belong to heaven. There should be a conduct, a conversation.

This is the sense of the word, as we see read in Philippians 3, verse 24, our conversation is in heaven. This word conversation in the King James, it's got the sense of lifestyle.

We've got a conduct of a way of life, of a way of living, our conversation. The same word is used in Philippians 1, verse 27, where it says, I mean, let your conversation, your conduct, your way of living, your way of life, let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

That whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. So here it's got the sense, this manner of life, this sense of the way of behaviour, of living as citizens, as a way of life.

Our conduct should reflect who we belong to, of where we belong, of heaven that we belong to. And we command it to be citizens, with godly character, walking worthy.

[18:05] Now we all can have moments where we don't live up to heaven. And I know, for one, that I have very much lacking. When you see the example of our Saviour, when you see, as Paul said, be followers of me as I am of Christ, and we can all reflect about our conduct.

Is it conduct becoming of a citizen of heaven, or conduct unbecoming? Who do you represent? When you walk the streets of life, when you live about your workplaces and homeplaces and school life, your conduct, is it becoming?

Does it reflect well upon the kingdom and the king that you represent? And the conduct of a citizen, in the worldly sense too, the conduct of a citizen encompasses so many things, of rights, of responsibilities, of obligations.

When you have a commitment to a nation, you've got a commitment to the ideals of that nation, to the values, as we saw earlier. You've got an obligation to pay taxes.

There's a sense where, as a Christian, there's obligations, there's requirements to fulfil, there's a liability to be called to arms. When you're a citizen of a nation, you can be called to arms for that nation.

[19:22] As a citizen of a nation, we should be law-abiding, and abide and submit to the authority of that nation. And as a Christian, as a servant,

as a follower of this king, we should want to be gladly, willingly, serving and living, as would be pleasing to him.

People who apply for Australian citizenship have to prove that they are of good character. Not everybody gets in. And of course we know now, the Aussie government's got this test of certain knowledge that even people need to be able to prove that they're going to meet the requirements to be granted citizenship.

To become a citizen of God's kingdom, we can apply even while we are not of good character. That's a wonderful reality. You don't have to, as some would think, they have to be good enough to become a Christian.

As people think, well, I know that I've got these things wrong with me, and I'll wait till I've overcome these hang-ups and habits and faults and sins that are in my life, and when I try to be good enough, then I might repent and come to God and become a Christian.

But of course we know, the Bible says, come just as you are. Of course, it's like, it says, just as I am, the old hymn says, just as I am.

[20:47] I come. Of course, when we come to Him, we don't stay the same way. We don't leave the same as we came. Because when we come to Him, He changes us. He transforms us. He converts us.

But we can come just as we are. And that's a wonderful truth. We don't have to be of good character to be accepted as a citizen of heaven. We just need to come in His terms, at His request. And so once we become citizens of heaven, shouldn't our way of living show who we belong to and show where we belong? Once we become citizens of heaven, shouldn't there be a difference? Is our conduct and our character heavenly? Is there a heavenliness of our deportment, of our disposition, of our manners, of our actions, of our makeup, of our nature?

Philippians 3, verse 20, Our citizenship, our conversation, is in heaven. And we set our affection on things above. It says, Colossians 3, 2. We have a different way of communicating.

[21:47] We learn the language of heaven. Let's watch that our language reflects the nation that we truly belong to. In Colossians 4, verse 6, it says, Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.

So, how we speak should reflect that we belong to Christ. Thomas Watson said of the heavenly citizen, Heaven is in him before he is in heaven.

Heaven comes within you. As you trust Christ, you receive his eternal life in the here and now. You don't have to wait until the hereafter. It's like something, Well, I hope I'm going to get to heaven. I hope I'm going to have eternal life. I'm trying really hard to get it. I think I might have eternal life. I think I might be a Christian. But no, you can know.

You can know that you know that you know. You can know for sure that, as it says, this is the record, that if you believe, you have everlasting life. If you believe, if you put your whole trust and heart's faith and rest upon Christ as the one who can save your soul, it says that you have, present tense, present, permanent possession, eternal life, here and now, forever.

[23:08] You can have it and know you have it. And heaven is in him before he is in heaven. So, friends, you can know for sure if you just trust him. Of course, there's the elements of shedding the old life and of receiving the new.

There's much we could say, but it's a simple transaction. It's a simple trust. That is the essential, essential grace that God does in our lives.

Think of it as citizens, the privileges that you enjoy. The privileges that you enjoy because you live in this nation of Australia. The various rights that you enjoy.

The right to vote. The right to apply for an Aussie passport to leave this country and re-enter it without a resident return visa. The right to apply to enlist in the defence forces.

You have privileges as an Aussie. And likewise too, as a Christian citizen, as a citizen of heaven, you've got many rights and privileges too. A citizen has the benefits of certain privileges but also responsibilities.

[24:13] Being a citizen involves defending the nation if the need arises. Of obeying the law of the land. Of respect for civic values. Of patriotism. Of love for your country.

Of devotion to your nation. Of loyalty that's unswerving, that's all-consuming. You know, see how people act at the Olympics when their country does something great. You know, there's a sense of belonging, of pride.

Of being a part of that. Friends, you're a part of heaven. When the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents. You know, that's far greater than your favourite footy team kicking a goal or your nation winning the gold medal.

It's when one sinner repents. The angels in heaven rejoice. You know, that's who we belong to. That's the team that we want to barret for. And rejoice in that.

Rejoicing of salvation. The greatest thing we can ever experience this side of heaven. And in the world today, we often identify and recognise people by what country they belong to.

[25:17] If we speak of an American or a German or an Australian, we mean a person who has been formed and moulded by the culture of that particular country. Friends, if you're a citizen of heaven, you should be formed and moulded by heaven.

By heaven. By the king of heaven. By the nature of heaven. You should be identified with heaven. With his way of thinking of the king of kings, the king of kings, the king of kings.

Living should be leading you and forming you and moulding you to be more alike, more and more like the supreme lord and king. Our citizenship, our conduct, should be directed towards heaven.

Worthy of heaven. Conduct that honours the king. And for this to occur, we need a mind shift. A mind shift. A mind shift has to happen. A culture shift. A letting go.

A switching of allegiance. You know, there's some people, I know for me as a UK citizenship, sorry, as a UK citizen, I didn't have to abandon my citizenship of the United Kingdom.

[26:35] I could still remain a citizen of the UK. Because there's dual citizenship between Australia and the UK. But for some countries, you have to actually say, no, I'm not going to be, I don't know, whatever country you can think of, I'm not going to be a German anymore.

I've stopped being a German citizen. I've relinquished my rights as a German citizen. Even though I was born in Germany, I'm no longer related to that country.

I'm no longer loyal or have an allegiance to that country. I'm now a naturalised Australian. And that's really what it's like when you become a Christian is that we let go of our allegiance to the world.

We let go of it, we don't belong to it anymore. And Paul wrote in Acts 23 verse 1, I have lived before God in all good conscience. The sense here is to live as a citizen.

When you live before God in all good conscience. And friends, we are seated in heavenly places to rule in and with Christ. And there's a sense where there's an eager expectation of our being with the Lord of Heaven in His coming again.

[27:46] We know that Heaven is really yet to come in a sense but the Bible does say that for you, for me, if, you know, God forbid, but if you should get run over by a truck tonight, that moment that we step from this life to the beyond, as a Christian it says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

So, of course, we know the eternal Heaven hasn't been finalised yet but there is the sense where you will be present with the Lord. You will be in His presence. And of course, we know that He has ascended into Heaven so in a sense we'll be with Him in that place wherever He is, in that presence of our Lord.

And then, as we know, the time will come when the dead in Christ shall rise first and we which are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and there's a sense where those physical bodies will be resurrected.

So, our soul that's gone before will be reunited with our body that's resurrected and will be in a physical form once again. Whilst we're with our Lord in Heaven, we're with Him in a spiritual form and then, as we're resurrected, there'll be a physical form again to our being that we'll have.

And so, the point is, are you ready? Are you ready? Think about Heaven, think about your state today. Are you ready? Now, not that are you fit for Heaven, really none of us is fit for Heaven.

[29:23] None of us is fit by our own doing or making or being of ourselves. But are you ready in the sense that is Christ yours tonight? Is Christ your King? Is Christ the King of your heart?

Have you bound your will and life to Him? Friends, someone put it like this, for a Christian, living on the earth is like travelling through a foreign country. You respect the government, but your heart is elsewhere.

And it's obvious that you are a foreigner. As people observe your lifestyle and see where you invest your energy and resources, they ought to be able to see that you are committed to the Kingdom of God.

Paul put it this way, set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Where is your allegiance? I know for myself, as a young man, I came to Australia about eight and a half years old and I spoke a different language.

I spoke the language of Manchester and the language of Coronation Street. and I had to learn how to change how I talk. I know I probably still talk a bit funny, but I don't use some of those expressions quite the same as I used to.

[30:32] And I used to get picked on as a child and called Pommy and suffer all that being different, of being from another nation, of another country, even though there were other Pommies in the schoolyard too at that time.

And then, at the age of 15, my parents decided to go back to England to live. And then, they were calling me Aussie over there. As I did my final, my year 11 equivalent over in England.

And I was talking funny over there too. And it's like that as a Christian, isn't it? We talk funny. We're different. As you go about your life in your workplace and you don't join in the same smutty jokes, the same coarse remarks, the same innuendos and talk and goings-on, we are different.

You are different. And it's good to be different. It's good to be different as a Christian. You should be glad that you're different. You should not be ashamed of Christ and of being different.

And let them say what they will. Our allegiance is to Him. It's not to them. It's not to anything other than Christ. And 1 Peter 2.11 it says, Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and as pilgrims.

[31:54] It's that sense of being foreigners, of travelling through. Abstain, or keep from, fleshly lusts. Abstain from it. Guard yourself from it, which war against the soul.

We are strangers. It's got the sense there's no permanent dwelling here. You know, I've travelled a lot through life and in my early married life too, travelling in four different states of Australia and different places and parts of our country.

And it's like you've got no permanent dwelling place. It's like that as a Christian too. Really, really we're just passing through. a Christian too.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33:55] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[36:25] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38:55] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.