

DATE: May 23, 2009 Memorial Day Weekend

TEXT: Philippians 3:20-21

TITLE: "Citizenship"



I had a bit of a dilemma as I prepared this sermon. I am preaching through the Gospel of John and my next sermon is on John the Baptist. But I also knew I had to prepare a short sermon for this morning. I have decided to preach on citizenship this Memorial Day weekend. The truth is this. We are citizens of the United States. That is a joy. That is a source of pride. Our American citizenship is worth protecting... it is worth dying for. But the Bible also teaches that, as Christians we have a second citizenship. We are citizens of God's Kingdom....we are citizens of heaven. I will share 4 facts about our dual citizenship.

**Fact # 1** Both governments have a controlling constitution. We have, in the USA a constitution and many, many laws. Our founding fathers were wise men. They created a form of Government that has survived for over 200 years. They created a balance between government power and individual power. Our laws attempt to balance societal order with individual rights.

Our heavenly citizenship also has a constitution. It is called the Bible. The Bible gives us

truth. The Bible gives us guidelines and laws that govern our behavior. *2 Tim. 3:16 states*

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

The contrast is this. The constitution and all our laws are the creation of men... wise, brilliant men..... the bible is given to us by God. It is truth. It never changes. It can be obeyed, or it can be ignored... but that does not lessen its truth.

**Fact # 2** Our American citizenship is temporary... our heavenly citizenship is eternal.

Here is a truth... there will be no nationalities in heaven. I have been on mission trips to Brazil and Bolivia and Mexico. I have meet many Christians from Africa and Asia and Europe. It is a joy knowing we will be together in Heaven. There will be no such thing a national borders.

There will be no 1<sup>st</sup> world nations and 3<sup>rd</sup> world nations. There will be no distinctions based on skin color.

The truth must never be forgotten... our heavenly citizenship is eternal. *Eph. 2:19 states*

**Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

Our heavenly citizenship is with Jesus Christ and it is eternal.

**Fact # 3** The United States has a President.... the heavenly Kingdom has a King. As

American citizens we are to respect the office of the president of the United States. We may have a Republican president or we may have a Democratic president.. They come and go...but we are to respect the office of the president. But we all know... the president is a fallible person.

President Bush certainly made mistakes. President Obama has certainly made mistakes. It is also true that presidential authority is balanced by congressional authority and judicial authority.

The Kingdom of heaven has a King... the Lord Jesus Christ. *Philippians 2:9 states..*

**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**

Every knee shall bow before Jesus... he is King. He is God. There will be no balancing of power. He is King. There will be no discussion of his Word. He is king. We as Americans often don't like that. We want to vote. We want to govern ourselves. Heaven is not a democracy. Christ is King. But let me give two other critically important facts. Jesus Christ

know each and every one of His subjects. President Obama does not know me. Will almost certainly never meet me. Jesus Christ, because He is God, know each and every one of his subjects. Second, Jesus Christ loves each and every one of his subjects.... as a matter of fact, Jesus does not leave us as just subjects... he makes us children. President Obama does not love me... Jesus Christ loves me....as an individual. Good news... our father is the King! We are the Prince... we are not the Pauper. (That was my favorite book as a teenager)

**Fact # 4** We become American citizens by birth in this country... We become citizens of heaven by choice. *John 1:12*

**Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—**

Jesus, is asked how to be a citizen of heaven... he gives the answer in *John 3. Selected verses*

**In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." .....**

**Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.....**

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.[g] 19This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. .... But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."**

**The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. 36Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."**

In a way it's very simple. You are an eternal citizen of heaven when you allow Jesus Christ to be your king. You must **"live by the truth."** It is indeed a voluntary citizenship. In a sense it's like being a naturalized citizen. When you are a naturalized citizen you stand before a judge and you promise to obey the law and the authorities of the United States. To be a citizen of heaven... you surrender to the kingship and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If you do not want Him to be king... if you do not want the Bible to be your source of truth.... he will not force his kingdom upon a person. He will be King to those who chose him as king.

Celebrate our citizenship as Americans. It is an honor... it is a privilege. But also celebrate this... We are citizens of heaven.... for eternity

AMEN