

What does it mean to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God and what are the functions and responsibilities one is required to fulfil as a citizen.

What is citizenship?

- **Citizenship** denotes the link between a person and a state or an association of states.
- Possession of citizenship is normally associated with the right to live and work in a country.

A Different Agreement

The Sovereign Father's earthly children have a different agreement with him than the agreement national Israel had with the Creator God and the agreement that Israel will have after Christ returns. Because the Father's earthly children are of a completely different nation and priesthood, the apostle Peter wrote the following about the status of those called to salvation during this gospel age:

1.Pet.2:9-10 KJV

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy"

Although the Father's earthly children receive some of the same benefits promised to national Israel for obedience to his law, they are citizens of a completely different nation and are not subject to exactly the same rules and laws that governed national Israel.

The apostle Paul wrote the following to the elect at Ephesus about their past condition as a human and their present status as one of God the Father's earthly children and citizens of the Kingdom of God:

Eph.2:1-20 KJV Para.

1 And you has he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all lived in the past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of passion, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) 6 And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Before we became God the Father's earthly children we were just like any other human without hope of life after death. But now we have the Father's promise that we will live forever as an immortal spirit-being in his heavenly family and kingdom.

When Paul wrote that the Father has made us alive with Christ and has raised us together, he was

stating the fact that we now have everlasting life residing within us through the holy spirit and that we are in fact a part of the heavenly realm just as Christ is.

After stating the reality of the elect's present condition and heavenly status as one of God the Father's children in verse 5 and 6, he adds the following:

7 That in the ages to come he might show the tremendous riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Notice that it through those who participate in the first resurrection that the rest of humanity will see the result of the Father's grace and kindness through Christ.

An understanding of the Greek word charis (khar'-ece) which is translated into the English word grace will help to understand the concept Paul is trying to convey to the elect at Ephesus.

In the context of verse 7 and 8 charis (khar'-ece) means the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in one's life.

It is through Christ's sacrifice and the manifestation of the Father's holy spirit and its influence in our life which results in our being made a member of the Father's holy nation and family.

It is the result of this process of salvation in our lives which will be an example to humans after Christ returns.

In verse 10 Paul explains that the reason the Father calls people to salvation during this gospel age is for them to live a life of good works.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

These good works include, but are not limited to, maturing spiritually, reflecting godly character in one's life as an example to others, and producing something of value for the Father to claim as his.

11 Wherefore remember, that you were in the past Gentiles in the flesh, who were called Uncircumcised by those called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Before the advent Christ the only people on earth considered to be God's people were the Israelites.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who in the past were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two, one new man, so making peace;

enmity = echthra (ekh'-thrah); by implication, a reason for opposition:

16 And that he might completely reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having destroyed the opposition thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off (Gentiles), and to them that were near (Israelites). 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

strangers = NT:3581 xenos (xen'-os); foreign (literally, alien,);

foreigners = NT:3941 paroikos (par'-oy-kos); having a home near, i.e. (as noun) a by-dweller (alien resident):

fellow-citizens -NT:4847 sumpolites (soom-pol-ee'-tace); a native of the same town

saints = NT:40 hagios (hag'-ee-os); sacred I.e., the sacred or holy one's

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together grow into a holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Paul explains the uniqueness of the Ephesians call to salvation and the awesome opportunity and responsibility they have been given as a member of the Father's earthly family.

The Philippians

At the end of his warning in chapter 3 to the elect of Philippi to beware of the Jews and other evil people, the apostle Paul wrote the following:

Phil.3:20-21 NIV

"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 . . ."

Citizens of heaven are not of this world

Christ said the following about the elect's earthly status:

Jn.15:18-19 Para.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of this world, and I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you" See Rev.18:3-4.

Christ was not speaking philosophically to his disciples about their earthly status, he was speaking of their future status as a member of his Father's earthly family and their heavenly status as if it were already a reality.

Christ Hated

Why was Christ hated and why will those who are also citizens of the kingdom of God be hated?

The short answer is because the values and lifestyle of a citizen of the Kingdom of God are alien and repugnant to this world's lifestyles and values.

We of the elect should always remember that we are very different from other humans who have only the spirit of man dwelling in them. Because we have the Father's spirit dwelling in us and are not human as other humans, because we are of the Father's New Creation.

We are citizens of the Kingdom of God and therefore owe no allegiance to any earthly nation, we owe our allegiance and obedience to the Father, Christ, and the kingdom of heaven of which we are citizens.

Before he was betrayed to be crucified Christ ask his Father to protect those who were his disciples and others who would believe in him through these men:

John 17:14-21 KJV

14 I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

The English word world is translated from the Greek word kosmos (kos'-mos); which means orderly arrangement, by implication, the world (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitants

Notice that Christ said his disciples were not of this world as if this condition were already a reality.

This can also be said of we of the Father's new creation, because we are also not of this world, but are citizens of the heavenly Kingdom of God.

17 Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The English words sanctify and sanctified are translated from the Greek word hagiazō (hag-ee-ad'-zo); and in this context means to purify, consecrate or (mentally) to venerate:

Questioned by Pilate

While questioning Jesus to determine what crime the Jews had accused him of, Pilate said the following:

John 18:35-36 KJV

35 . . . Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me: what have you done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then my would servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

In The Beginning

Remember that during Paul's explanation to the Ephesian elect regarding the uniqueness of their calling and the awesome opportunity and responsibility they were given as a member of the Father's earthly family, he mentions that the elect are created to do good works:

Eph.2:10

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

But what are these good works and how does one perform them as a citizen of the Kingdom of God?

In order for the first citizens of the Father's holy nation to perform their individual and collective responsibilities, each citizen was given physical and spiritual authorizations and power.

These authorizations and powers made it possible for them to do a great work for the Father before they disappeared from the world scene as a powerful collective entity.

In Paul's letter to the elect at Corinth he talks about the supernatural gifts given to individuals who are citizens of the Kingdom of God in order for them to fulfill their personal and collective responsibilities within the Father's holy nation:

1.Cor.12:4-7 LPB

"Now God gives many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same holy spirit which is the source of them all. 5 There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. 6 There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. 7 The spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church"

There are over 21 different special abilities which can be given to the elect through the Father's holy spirit. Some of these abilities are given for work within the church and some for the collective work of the church in order to proclaim the Gospel message.

Teaching of Wisdom

1.Cor.12:8-12 KJV

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; 9 To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages: 11 But all these work that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing [to distribute] to every man severally as he will. 12 For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"

Although there are many different authorizations and supernatural abilities and powers which can be given to an individual, all are given for our benefit and for us to be able to carry out the various works we have been called to perform.

Each citizen must actively use whatever they have been given in order to fulfill their personal functions and responsibilities to further the collective work of the Father's holy nation on earth.

1.Cor.12:13-16 KJV Para.

"For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have been all made to drink of one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?"

Paul repeatedly stressed the point of unity within the Father's holy nation and the necessity for each citizen to diligently work to accomplish its common goals.

1.Cor.12:17-23 KJV

"If the whole body were an eye, where is the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where is the smelling? 18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where is the body? 20 But now are they many members, but yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness".

God the Father has specifically called each individual he wants to be a part of his holy nation (i.e., his holy priesthood, his royal household, the body of Christ) (Jn.6:44,65). Each individual who accepts the Father's call is just as important to him as any other individual he has called. None are superior to the other.

1.Cor.12:24-26 Para.

"For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it"

Individual citizens must endeavor to have godly love, attitude, and behavior, and be supportive of one another in order to foster peace, harmony, and team work. When this is accomplished, all of the kingdoms' citizens can rejoice.

1.Cor.12:27-30 KJV

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of languages. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with languages? do all interpret (i.e., explain)?"

1.Cor 12:31 Para.

31 But desire the best gifts: and yet I will show you something more desirable.

When the Father calls individuals to become citizens of his holy nation, he calls some to fulfill specific functions and responsibilities, he then gives these individuals physical and supernatural gifts which are necessary for them to fulfill their particular function and responsibility.

Eph.4:11-13 KJV

"And he gave some apostles; and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Until we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"

When a person is made a member of the Father's earthly family and holy nation and is given a position of authority, responsibility, or supernatural ability, these are not given for one's personal aggrandizement or entertainment.

These are given for the work of proclaiming the gospel and for the edification and enrichment of the elect who are being perfected in God' law and way of life in order to serve him, each other, and eventually all humans through his family and government.

Citizenship Today and The Future

Being a productive citizen in the Father's holy nation today and after Christ returns is a major part of our calling; therefore, it behooves each of us to diligently strive to be a productive citizen.

Some of the ways we can do this is through the study and practical application of the Father's laws, precepts, and principles and through showing concern for the well-being of our fellow-citizens.

Regardless of whether or not we are able to fellowship with others of the Father's household and regardless of our geographical location or personal circumstances, each of us is expected to fulfill our function and responsibility as citizens of the Kingdom of God to the Father, Jesus Christ, and to our fellow-citizens.

As citizens of the kingdom we must maintain a righteous attitude and behavior in order to promote the kingdoms' overall goals. Some of which are the follows:

- To help each fellow-citizen grow toward spiritual maturity
- To prepare to help Jesus Christ rule this world after his return
- To show the benefits of following the Father's ways
- To proclaim the Father's good news message about Christ, salvation, and the Father's coming kingdom

Just as in the beginning of the Father's holy nation, each citizen has a function and responsibility and each citizen is an integral part of the whole (1.Cor.1:1-31).

Some citizens are responsible for leading and shepherding their fellow-citizens or doing the work of an elder, teacher, evangelist, or prophet, while others have equally important

responsibilities which are necessary in order to accomplish the common goals of the Father's holy nation.

The scriptures show that all functions and responsibilities within the Father's holy nation are inseparable from each other, because all must work harmoniously together in order to perform the kingdom's goals and to be an example of the way people should live in order to have happy, abundant, and productive lives and obtain eternal life.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of each person who is citizen of the Father's kingdom to diligently seek to do his will in order for all the kingdom's citizens to benefit from this awesome and wonderful opportunity.

The Father's will

The following warning of Jesus clearly shows the result of not knowing, understanding, and doing the Father's will in our life to the best of our ability:

Matt.7:21-23 KJV Para

"Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of the Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out devils and in your name done many wonderful works? But, I will say to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work lawlessness"

These are people who sincerely thought they were living in obedience to God and were worthy of eternal life. However, the path they chose is actually in opposition to God's way of life.

Although these people have done great works, they have missed the mark and their efforts have been in vain, because they have been practicing lawlessness. They have either never been on the path of righteousness or they have veered off of it and onto a path that has led them away from God.

Because it is the Father's will that citizens of his kingdom live in harmony with his precepts, principles, and laws and each other, it should be obvious that to be a law-abiding citizen we must become well-versed in what is and is not proper behavior.

This is one of the reasons the educational system was instituted within the Father's earthly family and one of the reasons that we must be perpetual students of truth.

Jesus said the following about doing the Father's will:

Mk.3:35 KJV

"Whoever does the will of God, that person is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

Doing or not doing the Father's will (i.e. his purpose for calling us to salvation in this age) has a direct bearing on our relationship with our Savior and whether or not we will successfully obtain eternal and immortal life.

The apostle Paul cautioned the Ephesians regarding the Father's will :

Eph.5:17 Para.

"Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"

To know, understand, and do the Father's will is vitally important to being a productive citizen in his kingdom.

The apostle Paul gave the following very good advice to those who are serious about their salvation and want to know the Father's will for them so they can please him with their life:

2 Tim 2:15 KJV

"Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Tim 2:15 NKJV

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

If we diligently study the biblical record which was written for our benefit, we will come to know and understand what the Father requires of us as citizens of his kingdom.

Make no mistake, each of us is expected to actively participate in the overall goals the Father wants the citizens of his kingdom to accomplish for him and for which we will be generously rewarded.

What are some of the responsibilities you have as a citizen of the kingdom of God?

Rom.12:1-17 NIV Para.

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 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 that which is God's good, pleasing, and perfect will.

The first thing we should do as a citizen of the kingdom of God, is to distance ourselves from altitudes and behaviors which do not reflect godly character.

In order to reflect godly character we must diligently practice godly precepts, principles, and laws to the best of our knowledge and ability.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. 4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us, whether prophesying in proportion to faith. 7 If it is serving, let us serve; if it is teaching, teach; 8 if it is encouraging, encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if mercy, do it cheerfully.

Although Paul writes of the unity of purpose which should be exhibited by each person within the church, today's reality is that there is little unity within the Father's earthly family.

However, this should not prevent anyone from fulfilling their responsibility to practice godly precepts, principles, and laws to the best of their knowledge and ability.

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

One of the three characteristics of the Father and Christ which are given to each member of the Father's earthly family through the holy spirit is godly love, which is to be increased and especially exhibited to our spiritual brothers and sisters. See 2.Tim.1:7

Rom 12:11-15 Para.

11 Never be lazy, be intensely serious and fervent in spirit; as a voluntary slave of your Master.

fervent = NT:2204 zeo (dzeh'-o); a primary verb; to be hot (boil, of liquids; or glow, of solids), i.e. (figuratively) be fervid (earnest):

12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Speak well of those who persecute you; speak well do not express loathing.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Para. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it be possible, as much as is in you, live peaceably with everyone.

19 Para. Dearly beloved, do not take revenge, but forgo violent passion: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.

20 NIV On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

1.Pet.2:5 KJV.

"You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"

Offering spiritual sacrifices as Peter instructs and being a living sacrifice as Paul instructs, is required of each citizen of kingdom of God.

Within the biblical record are many detailed instructions about how to offer spiritual sacrifices and be a living sacrifice. These instructions and an understanding regarding how to perform them can be found by those who seek this information and understanding.

Solomon wrote the following, which applies to a king-priest and citizen of the Father's heavenly kingdom.

Prov 25:2 KJV

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.

Christ said the following which also applies to the elect who are serious about knowing how to fulfil their function and responsibility as a member of their heavenly Father's earthly family and as a citizen in his kingdom.

Luke 11:9-13 KJV

9 And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. 10 For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to those that knock it shall be opened.

Jesus said the following about rewards for being a productive member of our Father's earthly family and citizen of his kingdom.

Rev.22:12 NIV

"Behold I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what they have done"

The apostle Paul wrote the following regarding the rewards which will be given to productive citizens in the Father's kingdom:

1 Cor 2:9-10 KJV

But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of people, the things which God has prepared for those that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.