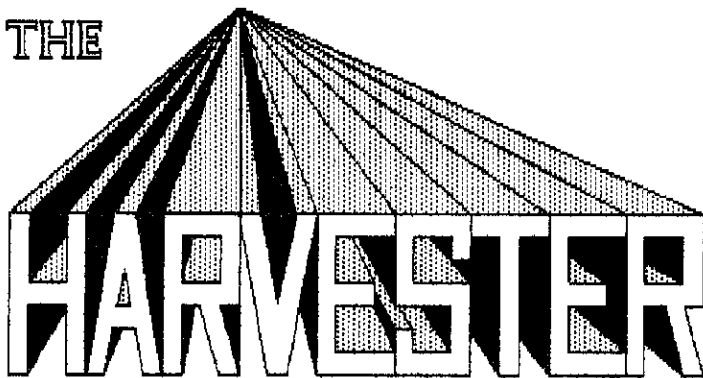


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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No. 154

OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

As citizens of the United States we enjoy many privileges and considerations: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, an abundance of material blessings, and a safe, permanent residence, to name a few. Certainly people from different countries have desired to become U.S. citizens just to have access to these 'inalienable rights' which we often take for granted. How precious it is that we are American citizens.

As Christians we are even more blessed because we enjoy a citizenship that is

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far and above out of this world -- a heavenly citizenship! Think about that, brethren. When we are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), when we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), when we are translated into His dear kingdom (Col. 1:13), God automatically makes us citizens of heaven (Eph. 2:19). True, we are not currently residing in that place of paradise and enjoying the full and lasting benefits as a U.S. citizen does today in our country, but "our ticket is stamped," as the saying goes! If we remain faithful to the very end (Matt. 24:13), our Heavenly Father has promised that he will save us from eternal destruction (2 Thes. 1:7-9) and we will dwell with him forever in heaven. If our name is written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27), we will be resurrected to reign with our Savior in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Oh, how wonderful to be considered a citizen of heaven! How glorious to obtain a heavenly citizenship that will entitle us to be in the presence of God forever!

Our citizenship status should not be taken lightly. Paul wrote to this effect when he penned his epistle to the church at Ephesus. Although he spent several years laboring with these brethren, he felt it was necessary to jog their memory concerning their heavenly citizenship. He begins by recalling their spiritual state BEFORE they obeyed the gospel. *"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in this world"* (Eph

2:12). Paul then shows the contrast of becoming a Christian through baptism into Christ's death. *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ"* (v. 13). After discussing some of the other results due to the Lord's supreme sacrifice, Paul concludes with this thought: *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"* (v. 19). As Christians we are all citizens of heaven!

What should come to mind, then, as we reflect on our heavenly citizenship? First of all, it should be a source of real joy. *"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven"* (Luke 10:20). All of heaven rejoices whenever a new citizen is added. The church rejoices whenever a new member is added. Similarly, we should be exuberant to be members of the Lord's body and have our names *"written in heaven"*.

Our heavenly citizenship assures us of future exaltation. In describing what His disciples had to look forward to, Christ said, *"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Luke 22:30). Surely He was speaking in figurative terms, but what an honor it will be to reside in heaven! Did not Jesus promise that those who are humble in this lifetime will be exalted in the next life (Lk. 18:14; 1 Pet. 5:6)?

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Ray McManus
 1208 Lafayette Hwy
 Roanoke, AL 36274
 Phone: (334) 863-5537

Our heavenly citizenship promises us a place of permanent residence. For the time being we are living in a temporary body in a physical world. But our Lord made a commitment to us that He would have a special place in heaven ready for us. *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:2). Every citizen in heaven will find a permanent place of dwelling in God's presence.

Our citizenship in heaven furnishes us an undying hope -- the hope of peace and love and eternal happiness. *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 3:20). As Christians we have something truly significant to hope for and to look forward to -- the second coming of our Savior. *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and*

so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes. 4:16-18). For heaven's future citizens, the event described above is a message of faith and everlasting hope.

Finally, our heavenly citizenship provides us a glorious inheritance. Just as people on this earth have benefited greatly from a material inheritance, Christians will receive an important blessing when our Heavenly Father presents his riches and treasures to his children, "*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Pet. 1:4). To every citizen God has reserved a special inheritance!

Everybody wants to be a citizen of heaven. But have we already applied for and secured that heavenly status? Have we obeyed the gospel and been added to God's kingdom? Is our name still written in the Lamb's book of life? The only way we can find eternal joy is by obtaining a heavenly citizenship.

RAY McMANUS

If your efforts are sometimes greeted with indifference, don't lose heart -- the sun puts on a wonderful show at daybreak yet most of the people in the audience go on sleeping.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who did God raise up to deliver Israel from the King of Mesopotamia, according to Judges 3?
2. In Pharaoh's dream, interpreted by Joseph, how many ears of corn were there?
3. What happened to the baby in Elizabeth's womb when Mary came to see Elizabeth?
4. For what is "The Pavement" noted?
5. Did Joshua complete the conquest of the promised land?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. What was Abraham to call his wife after God changed her name? SARAH (Gen. 17:15)
2. Where was it Paul's ambition to preach the gospel according to Romans 15? WHERE CHRIST WAS NOT NAMED (Rom. 15:20)
3. After the resurrection, what breakfast did Jesus serve the disciples? FISH AND BREAD (John 21:9,12)
4. Who said, "But I am a worm, and no man"? DAVID (Psa. 22:6)
5. In Exodus, what brought the plague of locusts into Egypt? EAST WIND (Exo. 10:13)

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Take note of these findings.

The Institute For American Church Growth asked over 10,000 people this question: "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?" Their replies were ...

- a. I had a special need - 3%**
- b. I just walked in - 3%**
- c. I liked the minister - 6%**
- d. I visited there - 1%**
- e. I liked the Bible classes - 5%**
- f. I attended a gospel meeting - 0.5%**
- g. I liked the programs - 3%**
- h. A FRIEND OR RELATIVE INVITED ME - 79%**

What can we learn from a survey like this? If the church is to grow, it will be through the efforts of the individual members. The churches of the denominational world rely on "smooth" preachers, Sunday school classes, youth ministers, and large, beautiful buildings to attract a crowd and to keep their crowd. We have none of these things. Yet, what we have is more powerful, more wonderful! We have the simple truth of the Word of God!

Paul asked of the Colossians that they would pray ... *"for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ ..."* (Col. 4:3). May it be our prayer that a door would be opened for us as well!

CHAD PRINCE
311 Golden Crest Circle
Birmingham, AL 35209

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
October 2 - 4	Burkesville Church Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
October 2 - 4	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
October 9 - 11	Summit, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 19 - 22	Pisgah, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 30 - Nov. 1 TN)	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

* * * * *

SEVEN SUBSTITUTES OF FALSE WORSHIP

1. Substitutes our way for God's way (Isa. 55:8,9).
2. Substitutes our thoughts for God's thoughts (Isa. 55:8,9).
3. Substitutes man's inventions to supply God's silence (Eccl. 7:29).
4. Substitutes modern for ancient and established practices (Jer. 6:16).
5. Substitutes the demands of worldliness for the commands of Jesus (Col. 3:17).
6. Substitutes the touches and tastes of tradition for the doing and doctrine of the apostles (Col. 2:21; Acts 2:42).
7. Substitutes man's instrument, the piano, for God's instrument, the heart (Col. 3:16).