

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#03-09124

Colony of Heaven

May 20, 2009

But we are a colony of heaven, and we wait for the Saviour who comes from heaven.
(Philippians 3:20 JMT)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20 NASB)

I referred to this verse in the series on New Jerusalem (#03-0998), but as Paul wrote in the same epistle, to write the same things is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard to you (Philippians 3:1). Besides, I want to elaborate further on the body of Christ being a colony.

Like the NASB, most translations of the Greek text use the word *citizenship* in the above verse rather than the word *colony*.

In the Greek, there are at least four different words that refer to citizens, citizenship, or behavior becoming a citizen. In Philippians 3:20, the Greek word is *politeuma*, which Strong's Concordance defines as "a community" in an abstract sense and "citizenship" in a figurative sense. The KJV translates the word as *conversation*, which is an archaic (antiquated) reference to "a manner of living." Further, *politeuma* comes from the word *politeuomai*, which means "to behave as a citizen," which, in turn, comes from the word *polites*, which means "a townsman, a citizen." The word *politeai*, which means "citizenship" (translated as *commonwealth* and *freedom*), also comes from *polites*. Thus, the root meaning has to do with being a citizen or member of a community and behaving in a manner befitting that community. You might notice the similarity to the English word *polite* in each of these Greek words. The word *polite* means "polished; cultured; refined; correct" or "having good manners; courteous."

These meanings are clearly seen in the following verses, with the first two speaking of citizenship and the last two speaking of behavior or conduct.

"So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens [polites] of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." (Luke 15:15 NASB; also Luke 19:14)

(11) For this reason, be remembering that you at one time [were] the Gentiles in [the] flesh, the ones called Uncircumcision by the ones called Circumcision, performed by human hands in the flesh (12) that you were at that time apart from [or, without] Christ, having been separated from [or, a foreigner to] the citizenship [fig., community] [politeia] of Israel and strangers to [fig., excluded from] the covenants of the promise, having no hope [or, confident expectation] and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:11-12 ALT; also Acts 22:28)

Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived [politeuomai] my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." (Acts 23:1 NASB)

Only conduct [politeuomai] yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ....
(Philippians 1:27 NASB)

Now, returning to our opening verse, it seems to me that the phrase *a colony of heaven* best captures Paul's intended meaning. After all, a colony is "a group of people who settle in a distant land but remain

under the political jurisdiction of their native land” or “a community of people of the same nationality or pursuits concentrated in a particular district or place.” Another way to look at it is that a colony is an outpost in a foreign land.

Today, the body of Christ is among the nations of the earth. But what is the body of Christ? It is a body made up of many members, each of which has been born from above with the seed of Christ within, each growing up to be a mature man in Christ, to the end that each believer will be conformed to the image of the Son of God who is the Celestial One. All who have been born from above have the seed of Christ within them (see issue #02-0887, July 7, 2008, *His Seed Abides In Him*), the seed from above, and one day this seed will be fully grown and will burst through the cords of death, taking on an immortal, spiritual, celestial, glorified body in the image of the Celestial (1 Corinthians 15:49 CV). This grand event will take place when the Savior comes from heaven. At that glorious moment, those counted worthy to reign with Christ for the eon to come will be resurrected in the first resurrection (asleep in Christ) and transfigured into the likeness of the Son, along with the worthy saints who are alive on earth.

As He faced the cross, Jesus declared that His kingdom is not of this realm or world (John 18:36), that is, His kingdom is not of the character of the kingdom of the world that stood before Him and demanded His crucifixion. His kingdom is one of righteousness, justice, peace, impartiality, and mercy; qualities that are not standard fare in the kingdom of men.

When the spirit of God breaks into our lives and we are given the faith of the Son to believe, we are brought into a new realm, the celestial, spirit realm. Obviously, we are not transported to some galaxy far, far away, for we remain on earth in bodies of death. However, we are given an earnest of the spirit of God as a down payment or a foretaste of what is promised when Christ comes and we are changed into His likeness. (See issue #03-0931, April 8, 2009, *Earnest of the Spirit*.) But this does not change the fact that until we are set free from mortal bodies, we remain in the world, which could be described as hostile territory. Collectively, all of us believers, as the body of Christ, are a colony or a community on earth. We are like an outpost in a foreign land holding our position in Christ until our Savior and King comes out of heaven to meet us and transfigure us so that we can enter into our true destiny and calling in His life.

When the Romans conquered other lands, they established colonies in these foreign territories, and these colonies were to operate exactly as if they were in Rome. They were not to become like the land they occupied; rather, they were to bring Rome into the occupied land. In like fashion, the body of Christ, the colony of heaven, is not to conform to the world but to come out of it and to establish heaven on earth, that is, to establish the character of the realm of the King on earth within their sphere of influence. This does not mean that the body is to take over the nations and rule the earth. We cannot do this apart from our Savior coming out of heaven and us being transfigured. We are to be in subjection to the governing authorities, **for there is no authority except from God** (Romans 13:1). However, while in subjection, we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, **walking in a manner worthy of God who invites us into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2:12). We are not to be rebels or agitators but rather lovers and peacemakers, full of mercy. **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God** (Matthew 5:9). We are to be **the salt of the earth and the light of the world** (Matthew 5:13, 14). **We are to be polite!**

Dear brethren, whether you see yourself as a citizen of heaven or a colony of heaven matters not; they are one and the same, for a colony is made up of the citizens of the nation or kingdom from which they came forth. In the case of believers, like our Lord Jesus who came down out of heaven, we have been born from above, having our spiritual birth in Jerusalem above; we are registered in Mount Zion, the city of the living God. In this day, we are to hold our position in Christ until He comes, and this requires patient endurance. **If we endure (to the end), we will also reign with Christ** (2 Timothy 2:12). We are not called to rule over the nations apart from immortality, and when we do receive our immortal bodies, we are not to fly off into space (heaven) and leave the earth and the nations to fend for themselves. No; in the coming eon, we will have a mighty work to do as we establish the kingdom of our Lord not only on earth, as we teach the nations, but also among the celestials as we judge the angels.