

# Where Is Your Citizenship?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | July 3, 2019



Do you identify yourself as an American, Canadian, Australian, South African, or as some other nationality?

I was raised to be a proud American—to wave the flag, to celebrate Independence Day, and to revel in the storied history of my nation.

I grew up watching movies like *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and singing patriotic songs like “God Bless America,” “America the Beautiful,” and “America (My Country ’Tis of Thee)” — even Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the U.S.A.”

As an adult, I received a scholarship to medical school from the U.S. Army, completed my psychiatric residency at Eisenhower Army Medical Center, and served as the Division Psychiatrist for the 3rd Infantry Division. So, I know about patriotism, love for my country, and identifying as an American.

But as I grew in my relationship with Jesus Christ, I began to question this loyalty — this heart tie — to my nation of birth. Of course, while on this earth, we all have a legal national identity, and I still do recognize that this identity can be powerful common ground between two otherwise very different citizens.

However, I began to question whether my heart as a Christian should be so firmly tied to my nation. And further, I wondered, can such loyalties cause human division and even obstruct the unity that Christ came to bring?

I eventually realized that my heart's affections to my nation had not been superseded with heart affection for the kingdom of God, even though I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, believing fully in God. My loyalties were divided and I had not become a full and complete citizen of heaven in my heart.

We cannot be dual citizens; we cannot be a citizen of a selfless heaven while remaining a citizen of this selfish world.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The apostle Paul wrote:

In fact, many are Christ's worst enemies, taking his name while revealing in their characters the attributes of the evil one. They have refused Christ's true Remedy, and therefore their condition remains terminal; their god is self, and self-gratification is all they pursue. They are actually proud of the lewd, disgusting and shameful things they do. Their minds are focused only on things of this selfish, self-indulgent world. But our minds and hearts—**our very citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await the return from heaven of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:18-20 *The Remedy*).

In order to be a citizen of heaven, several things are required: First, our heart ties must be cut away from this world and its methods of fear and selfishness; second, we must be reborn with new hearts that are tied to heaven and are loyal to God and His principles of truth, love, and freedom.

- "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (Deuteronomy 30:6 NIV84).
- "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts" (Jeremiah 4:4 NIV84).
- "Circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God" (Romans 2:29 NIV84).

Whether we're talking about a biological circumcision or a circumcision of the heart, there is a difference in understanding the need for circumcision and actually having circumcision. Both are painful.

However, the younger we are, with fewer heart ties to this world, the less painful; the older we are, with heart ties more deeply attached to this world, the more painful. But it is a change that we must have.

But how do we experience this change of heart — this cutting away of our affections and loyalty to this world and establishing them with God, instead? By coming to know God as Jesus revealed Him (John 17:3). We must know the truth about God, which destroys the lies about Him and sets us free from fear and selfishness (John 8:32).

However, this is not mere cognitive awareness; it is an experiential truth. We must *know* the truth about God — who He is, how He governs His kingdom, how His law of love operates, and what His methods of transformation are, so that we can intelligently choose Him and reject the methods and

principles of this world.

To become a citizen of any nation of this world, one only has to meet the legal requirements of that nation. One does not need to have a sincere change of heart; one doesn't even have to love that nation. A person becomes a citizen in this world typically by passing a knowledge test, claim the privilege by declaring one's desire to be a citizen, perform a ritual (such as holding up a hand), make a public pledge of loyalty, and, finally, receive a legal declaration, such as a certificate or some other document.

Sadly, many people think that becoming a citizen of God's kingdom follows the same pattern — passing a test (know the correct creed), claiming the privilege (accept the legal blood payment), performing a ritual (be baptized in water), making a public pledge of loyalty, and then being legally declared a citizen (often in the form of a certificate of baptism by a church).

But, becoming a citizen of heaven is not achieved by learning enough Bible facts, by making a legal claim, by performing rituals, or even by publicly pledging loyalty. Becoming a citizen of heaven is not a legal process, but a transformational one.

To be a citizen of heaven, one must experience a recreation of the heart and a healing of the mind — a rebirth, a renewal of the whole being. It is a cleansing from fear and selfishness and a writing of the laws of God into the heart (Hebrews 8:10), laws that are the design protocols of life, the principles of love, truth, and freedom.

God's laws are not like man's law, a list of rules to which we must obey. God's laws are the protocols upon which reality is designed to operate. If we violate those laws, the natural result, without God intervening to heal, is death.

When God says that He will write His law on our hearts and minds, He is saying, "I will heal you from all the damage of sin and restore you to my perfect design. I will restore your hearts and minds to love, truth, and liberty. You will function within my design parameters for life, not because you are afraid, but because you love others and are in agreement and in perfect harmony with me. You will become like me in character, methods, and motive."

This is how we become citizens of heaven: by being united with God in mind and heart, thus becoming a member of His family. We are adopted into His family — not in a legal way, but in a functional way. In trust, we open our hearts to Him and adopt His character, His law of love, into our hearts. In short, we become partakers of the divine nature! When this happens, our desires, longings, values, and motives change. The things of this earth lose their appeal. The methods of this world become offensive. The kingdoms of earth will be seen as beastly, coercive, corrupt — and we will distance ourselves from them.

We no longer get tricked into trying to promote God's kingdom through earthly governments, but, rather, we live under a higher authority than any earthly government. We see all human beings as children of God, and we seek to bring to every person the truth about Him. We invite them to become citizens of heaven with Christ as our true King, as the Lord of Lords.

When our understanding of reality changes, we become spokespersons for God — people who know Him, understand His methods, and are eager to tell others about His principles. We understand reality, what is actually wrong and God's solution for it. We realize that God's kingdom is nothing like the nations of this sinful earth, because His law is nothing like the laws that sinful humans enact.

God is Creator. His laws are the protocols upon which all reality operates — from gravity to the laws of health and the moral laws. Breaking any of God's laws damages and destroys those who break them. However, God is always working through Christ to heal and restore us back to into harmony with His design, back to a life of love.

While no quiz or test can determine the status of one's heart, and therefore cannot determine whether someone is a citizen of heaven or not, a genuine citizen of heaven will grow in their knowledge of God. They will advance in their understanding of God's methods and principles and ever increase their ability to accurately promote His kingdom of love and tell the truth about Him. With this in mind, I wrote out some questions below that a mature citizen of God's kingdom would have little difficulty in answering.

- **What is the supreme law of God?**
  - The law of love—the principle of giving or beneficence
- **What are some other laws of God (name at least two)?**
  - The law of liberty
  - The law of worship
  - The law of exertion
  - The law of truth
  - The law of restoration
  - The laws of health
  - The laws of physics (such as gravity)
- **From where does God's law originate?**
  - From God's character and nature of love
- **What is the purpose of God's law?**
  - To maintain the lives, health, and happiness of all His creation
- **How does God's law function?**
  - Design protocols upon which life is constructed to operate
- **What is the problem with breaking God's law? Why is sin wrong?**
  - It deviates from what is necessary for life and causes injury and death to the one who breaks it—like tying a plastic bag over your head will kill you because it breaks the law of respiration
- **What three threads of evidence has God given to reveal truth to us?**
  - Scripture
  - Science
  - Experience
- **What is the source of God's authority?**
  - Truth—which ultimately originates in Him and leads us back to Him
  - Reality—all reality is built by God, sustained by God, and operates only upon His design laws and methods; thus, all reality leads us back to God
  - Scripture—the Bible is not *the* source of God's authority, but rather His instrument in communicating authoritative truth to us
- **What did Christ accomplish at the cross?**
  - The remedy to cure the sin problem
- **How does a person become a citizen of heaven?**
  - By trusting God and experiencing a change of heart
- **What promise do you make when you become a citizen of heaven?**
  - To be loyal to God—and to love and trust Him with your entire being
- **How do we show loyalty to the kingdom of heaven?**

- By living in harmony with God's methods and principles (laws)
- By revealing and telling the truth about God
- By loving others as God has loved us
- **Name the two supreme responsibilities that citizens of heaven have?**
  - To love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength
  - To love your neighbor as yourself
- **What are the three great principles of God's kingdom?**
  - Love
  - Truth
  - Liberty
- **What mission did Jesus give to the members of His kingdom?**
  - To take the truth about His kingdom of love to the world

If you are not already a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom, I invite you today to go to God and surrender your heart to Him, to invite Him in, asking for fear and selfishness to be removed and His law of love to be written in. Then go forth every day to grow in your love relationship with God and share the truth about Him and His kingdom with others, inviting them to also become citizens of heaven.