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Ambassadors for Christ

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

The Believer’s relationship to the world and to Heaven has been a challenging topic for Christians in every generation. But Scripture is very clear in its choice of words to help us understand what our situation truly is.

In speaking about our relationship to the world, David told God, “*we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope [abiding, prospect]*” (1 Chronicles 29:15) in the world. A sojourner is someone who is living in a foreign land temporarily—they are aliens (belonging to another nation), but are living side-by-side with the citizens of the land: “*By faith [Abraham] lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land[...], for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God[...], having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them*” (Hebrews 11:9a-16). As people of Faith, Believers are no longer citizens belonging to the world, but are aliens to it, for we have renounced it for loyalty to King Jesus. Therefore you “*are no longer strangers and aliens [to the Kingdom of Heaven], but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household*” (Ephesians 2:19).

But how are we citizens of Heaven, when we are not physically living in the Kingdom of Heaven? Because, “*we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*” (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is a citizen of his country sent by his government to live in a foreign land as a representative, serving the interests of his homeland, *peaceably* appealing reconciliation: “*don’t risk the wrath of my king.*” While living in the foreign land, he is respectful of the customs and laws, unless they require him to do things that harm his king. Ambassadors are only recalled to their homeland when war is declared, because the time for peaceful appeal has ended—violence now decides the dispute.

In like manner, the Believer remains an ambassador for the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, so long as the “cold war” of the Church-age continues. A “cold war” is a period of hostility between two kingdoms, but as neither one is prepared yet to go to full war, they maintain their embassies and seek to peacefully (yet forcefully) appeal for their interests. The Church-age “cold war” will end when God declares war on the world (the Great Tribulation), pouring out His wrath on the “*god of this world*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and “*all the kingdoms of the world*” (Matthew 4:8b). In this moment God will recall all His ambassadors to Him, “*catching*” us away (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) because our mission in the world is suspended until we return with Jesus when He physically invades and conquers the world. Then He will give us “*authority over the nations*” (Revelation 2:26b).

Until this time, we are to be faithful citizens and loyal ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven while we live and work in the world, rejecting its attempts to distract and tempt us to adopt its ways and culture. Even so, Amen.

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