

Lesson 3

A Kingdom Citizenship

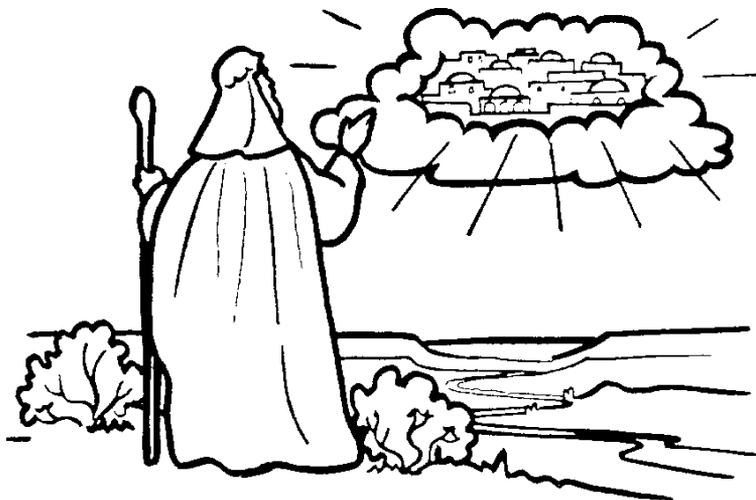
“In heaven”

Matthew 6:9

Why should we write about heaven when we are talking about prayer and worship? Well, for a very good reason! If we are to pray as we should, we must know who we are and where we belong. We must have the right relationship with the One to whom we are praying. We have to talk about things in which we are both interested. It is hard for a man who knows nothing about farming to find pleasure talking with someone who only talks about farming.

It is said that not everybody who talks about heaven is going there. That is true. But it is also true that someone who never thinks or prays about heaven probably is not going there either!

If heaven is only a nice place in our minds and not a reality, then praying about it would do no good. You can't think a thing into being. It either is, or it isn't. Heaven is a real place, and those who are sons of God are going there. Why, then, shouldn't we pray about it?



lesson outline

Our Heart and Our Home
Citizenship in Heaven
Strangers and Pilgrims

Hope for the Future
Heaven Is No Fantasy
Death Is No Failure of Faith

Prayer for This Present World
Too Little Care for This World
Too Much Care for This World

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Pray honestly that your affections will be set on things above and your life on earth will be that of a “pilgrim.”
- State how a person’s attitude toward death affects his praying.
- Recognize a citizen of heaven by his actions and attitude toward this present world.

learning activities

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, and 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. Write in your own words what these verses mean.
2. Think of someone who has died recently and pray for their unsaved relatives who sorrow and have no hope.
3. Do the lesson development section by section, answering the study questions. Take the self-test. Check your answers with those given. Review any questions answered incorrectly.
4. Walk through your home and ask yourself, "Can I leave all this without regret?" If your answer is "No," then pray for God to reveal to you the unseen and the eternal.

key words

affections

fantasy

foreigner

pilgrims

reality

saltiness

lesson development

OUR HEART AND OUR HOME

Objective 1. *Describe the things that identify the citizen of heaven while he is here on earth.*

Our prayers and our worship will only be acceptable to God if our riches and our home are in heaven. Belief in a life in heaven after death is one of the things that makes the Christian different from others in the world. Faith in the unseen and for the future separates the believer from the unbeliever. It separates the man who prays from the man who does not pray.

- 1** Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement.
 - a** The unbeliever's riches are in heaven.
 - b** The believer's home is in heaven.
 - c** The Christian is different from others in the world.

Do you remember what the Bible says about Jacob and Esau? They were both guilty of many wrongs. While one wanted

things that were future and unseen, the other cared only about what he could see and enjoy day by day. What did God say about them? He said, “I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau” (Romans 9:13). The difference between the children of God and children of the devil is the place of their riches. “For your heart will always be where your riches are” (Matthew 6:21).

People pray about the things that are most important to them. The early Christians were poor, but they were not unhappy. They suffered, but they did not complain. Heaven was very real to them. It was the place where their Father was, and therefore it was home to them. They cared nothing for this world. Their prayers were for strength, for patience, for faithfulness, and for love to forgive their enemies. If they were delivered from danger and persecution, they rejoiced. If they were not delivered, they faced death without fear. Their persecutors could destroy their bodies, but they could not destroy their souls. The Christians knew that when death came they would be going home. They looked forward to being in their Father’s house.

2 What did the early Christians pray for when in trouble?

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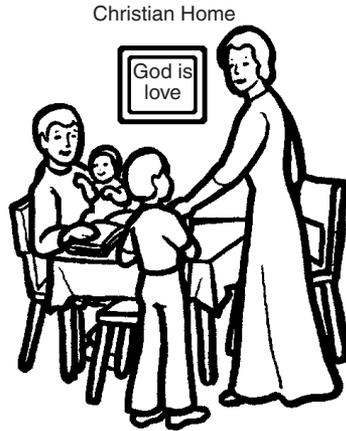
Citizenship in Heaven

You can usually tell what part of the country a man is from just by listening to him talk. Where we live has a lot to do with our actions—the way we do things. It is difficult for a foreigner to hide the fact he is not a true citizen.

You can also quickly recognize a citizen of heaven. His speech will reveal who he is. He may talk about things in this world, but if you wait a little while he will soon be talking about Jesus and about “home.” His speech will not be coarse and unkind. He will be slow to anger. His words will be truthful and loving.

- 3** You can recognize a citizen of heaven by
- a) the fact that he is called a Christian.
 - b) his speech and his behavior.
 - c) the teachings of the church he goes to.

You can know a citizen of heaven by his praying. The foreigner prays to his gods, but his prayers are without hope. His prayers are full of fear. Heaven’s citizens pray with joy. They know that Jesus is alive and that He hears, even though they cannot see Him. They know that He is there and will answer!



You can know a citizen of heaven by his earthly home. You will not find hate and envy in it. There will not be any books or magazines with evil stories and pictures. You will hear singing, praying, and worshipping there. It will be full of peace and happiness. The

4 What are the believer’s home on earth can have a bit of heaven in it!marks of a Christian home?

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Strangers and Pilgrims

Sons of God are in the world, but they do not take part in the evils of the world. They are like a boat in the water. All is well as long as the water does not get into the boat.

Sons of God are strangers in this world. They are foreigners. They live here and they work here, but they do not belong here. They are from another country! They do not think like the citizens of this world. They do not value the same things. They set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth!

5 Why can the child of God be called a pilgrim?

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That was how it was with Abraham. He lived in a tent. He did not consider the tent his home. He looked for a city whose builder

and maker was God. This made his life different. This made his praying different. He had wealth, but he did not seek wealth. His nephew, Lot, sought wealth and lost everything. Abraham sought the will of God above everything else; and God provided all that he needed. Heaven’s citizens pray for the right things!

It was the same with Moses. He chose to suffer with God’s children rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He did not pray for himself. He did not seek his own comfort. He sought to do the will of God. His rejoicing was in the fact that God’s people had been set free from Pharaoh. His happiness was because they were going home to the promised land. This hope made his work untiring and his prayers unselfish.

6 How were Moses and Abraham alike in their praying?

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Paul’s prayers were seldom for personal deliverance. He prayed that the Word of God would be well received. He prayed for power to preach it. His heart and his home were in heaven. Paul said he would rather “go” than “stay.” Yet, he stayed, and he prayed, because there was much work to be done. He was willing to be a foreigner, and to live in a strange country in order to bring the good news about Jesus to those who had not heard. He was willing to wait for awhile on earth so that he could add to the “progress and joy in the faith” of others who, like himself, were pilgrims here (Philippians 1:25).

7 Why was Paul willing to stay on earth rather than go to heaven at once?

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HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Objective 2. *Explain why the death of a believer is not a failure of faith, and how hope affects the kind of prayers we pray.*

“For it was by hope that we were saved; but if we see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who hopes for

something he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:24-25). It would be well for you to learn these verses of Scripture. Remember, hope helps us to wait patiently for heaven.

We live on this earth without having seen heaven. We have never seen our home! We live by hope. While we are on earth there are many things to discourage us, for we share the same curse that came upon all men because of sin. We get tired. We get sick. We get thirsty and hungry. So we groan. The unbeliever also groans, because he suffers just as we do. But our groaning and the unbeliever’s groaning are different. The unbeliever groans without hope. The believer groans with hope. We know that one day we will leave this world and go to heaven. Hope makes patience possible. The unbeliever has no hope. After the suffering of this life, he faces only greater suffering!

8 How is the believer’s groaning under the curse different from the groaning of the unbeliever?

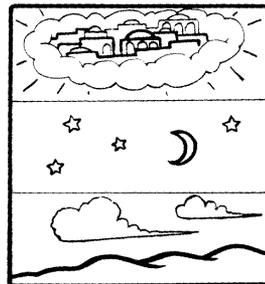
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We have another hope. We pray for the return of Christ before we die. If He comes before we die, we will go with Him to heaven without dying. Wouldn’t that be wonderful? It was something that the early Christians prayed for, and it is something for which we today should also hope and pray.

Heaven Is No Fantasy

Our praying and our hope will mean nothing if heaven is only a dream or an idea of our minds. Heaven is a real place. God, our Father, is in heaven.

Paul said that he was taken to the highest heaven. He was talking about the heaven where God is. There is a heaven of the clouds. There is a heaven of the stars. There is the “highest heaven,” the heaven where the Father is.



Paul said he heard things there which cannot be put into words, things that human lips may not “speak” (2 Corinthians 12:4). Paul had no doubt about a real heaven. He had seen it! No wonder he said he would rather go to be with Christ than to stay on earth!

9 Read 2 Corinthians 12:3-4 and tell what Paul’s reaction was.

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The Holy Spirit makes the truth of heaven very real to new converts. The early Christians lived with heaven on their minds. The book of Revelation tells of things that will happen in heaven at the end of time. It especially talks about the glory of the King of Kings whose throne is in heaven. Praise God! When heaven becomes real to the believer, worship and praise are the fruit of his faith!

10 Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement.

- a** Each man makes his own heaven by his attitude in life.
- b** The highest heaven is the place of God’s throne.
- c** The reality of heaven is made known to the believer by the Holy Spirit.
- d** The truth about heaven is only for older mature believers.

Death Is No Failure of Faith

We need to say something about the death of the believer. When our loved ones are sick, we always pray for their healing. It is right to do so. Jesus healed the sick, and He still heals today. But, not all sick believers are healed. Some die. Is their death a failure of faith?

There are those who look on death as defeat. They pray for healing and deliverance for someone. Then, when death comes instead of healing, they act as though something terrible has happened. They get a feeling of guilt, as though they had somehow failed in prayer and in faith.

How can “going home” be a failure? If death has lost its sting, why should we be pierced with guilt? Why should a believer’s departure to heaven be a disaster?

Is death a failure of faith? No. A thousand times, no! Hebrews 11:39 speaks of those who died and were not delivered. It says, “What a record all of these have won by their faith!”

11 Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement.

- a** Jesus still heals and delivers believers from death.
- b** When a believer dies it means someone’s faith has failed.
- c** The believer should not fear death because its sting is gone.
- d** Those who were not delivered in Hebrews 11 died in faith.

Death is not a failure of faith. The true citizen of heaven knows this. Those whose affections are too much on this world forget this. Their praying is not perfect, because they love this present world too much!

PRAYER FOR THIS PRESENT WORLD

Objective 3. *Name some activities in this world that we should seek to influence through prayer.*

The world is not forever. It will pass away. Should we pray for it? Should we try to improve it? The Bible tells us that we should pray for our leaders. It says we should pray for those who rule over us. It says we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). So the answer is, “Yes, we should pray for this world.” We must be concerned with getting men to live in a better world. But, we should also be trying to make this world a better place in which to live. As Christians that is part of our job.

Too Little Care for This World

The citizen of heaven should be a good citizen on earth. In fact, he should be the best citizen on earth. He believes in obeying rulers and the laws that govern the land. Heaven’s citizens should not willfully break the law. They should pay their taxes. A believer who has to pay a fine because he willfully broke the law is a poor example for his “country.” A believer in jail for a crime committed after his salvation would have a hard time making those in jail with him believe that he is a citizen of a kingdom of righteousness!

We should pray that God will help us be good citizens. Some believers are so “heavenly” minded that they are of no “earthly” good. This should not happen. We are the salt of the earth. Salt improves the taste of food. Believers improve the earth. The world is blessed because believers are in it. Their presence brings peace and joy. Their prayers uphold rulers. Their righteousness strengthens the nation.

12 State three reasons why a citizen of heaven makes the best citizen on this earth.

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Too Much Care for This World

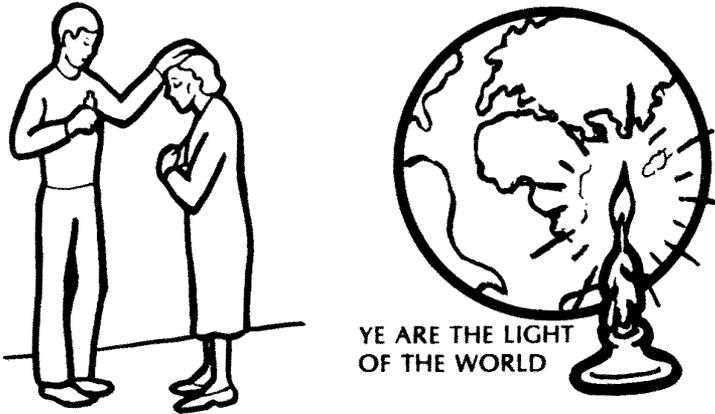
Of course, it is possible to become so busy with the affairs of this world that we forget why God put us here. We are the salt of the earth, but our “saltiness” is the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the righteous life He helps us live. We cannot be the salt of the earth if we ignore the fact that we are strangers and foreigners here. We can only help the world if we help it understand the plan of God. We must not let the things of this world cause us to neglect the task Jesus has given us.

13 What is the “saltiness” of the believer?

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We should pray for two things. We should pray that our affections will not be drawn to the things of this world. “Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father” (1 John 2:15). That’s the first thing we should pray for when thinking about trying to improve the world and setting a good example in it.

The second thing to pray for is that we will not fail to do the task God has given us. “While I am in the world, I am the light for the world” (John 9:5). Jesus said these words while He was in this world, and He is our example. He went about doing good. We should also go about doing good. He prayed for the sick. We should also pray for the sick. He cast out demons. We should



cast out demons also. He preached the gospel of the kingdom. We should preach the gospel of the kingdom also. While He was in the world, He was the light of the world. Jesus said so. He said, “You are like light for the whole world” (Matthew 5:14). He also said, “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples” (Matthew 28:19).

14 Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement. Believers should pray that

- a** their favorite politician would win.
- b** their love will not be drawn to the things of the world.
- c** that they will have what their neighbors have.
- d** that they will not fail to do the task God has given them.

So, while we are strangers in this country, we have a great task to do. It may cause us suffering and pain, but it also caused Jesus suffering and pain. When Jesus died upon the cross, He spoke of His work on earth and said, “It is finished.” Then He went to heaven. He went home! We, too, have a task to finish. When it is done, we can rejoice as Jesus rejoiced, and say, “It is finished.” Then we, like Jesus, can go home. What a day that will be, when we all get to heaven.

self-test

SHORT ANSWER. Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1 Name three things that reveal the citizenship of a son of God.

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2 Where are the riches of the believer?

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3 Tell how the faith of Abraham and Moses concerning the reality of heaven affected their prayers.

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4 What is the difference in the way the knowledge of the curse affects the believer and the unbeliever?

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5 What did Jesus mean when He said that we are the salt of the earth?

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6 Name two things a citizen of heaven should pray for concerning his stay on earth.

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7 TRUE-FALSE. Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement.

- a** Death should not come to a Christian.
- b** Death of a believer is a failure of faith.
- c** Death's sting has been removed for the believer.
- d** Death will not come to believers alive at Christ's return.

answers to the study questions

- 8** The believer groans with hope.
The unbeliever has no hope.
- 1 a** False.
b True.
c True.
- 9** He could not put what he saw into words.
- 2** Strength, patience, faithfulness and love to forgive their enemies.
- 10 a** False.
b True.
c True.
d False.
- 3 b)** his speech and his behavior.
- 11 a** True.
b False.
c True.
d True.
- 4** No hate or envy, but singing, praying, worshiping, peace and happiness.
- 12** He respects leaders, he obeys the law, he pays his taxes.
- 5** He is really a citizen of heaven and traveling here on earth for only a short time.
- 13** The knowledge of Jesus Christ and the righteous life He helps us live.
- 6** Both sought to do God's will.
- 14 a** False.
b True.
c False.
d True.
- 7** So that he could add to the progress and joy of other believers still on earth.

For Your Notes