

PATRIOTISM is IDOLATRY

Text of Commentaries Cited in the Message



Philippians 3:20-21

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Commentary by John Gill:

For our conversation is in heaven,.... The Ethiopic version renders it, "we have our city in heaven"; and the words may be truly rendered, "our citizenship is in heaven"; that is, the city whereof we are freemen is heaven, and we behave ourselves here below, as citizens of that city above: heaven is the saints' city; here they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come, which is permanent and durable; a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, [Heb 11:10](#), as yet they are not in it, though fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; they are pilgrims, strangers, and sojourners on earth, [Lev 25:23](#); but are seeking a better country, an heavenly one, and God has prepared for them a city, [Heb 11:16](#); they have a right unto it through the grace of God, and righteousness of Christ, and a meetness for it in him; and their conversation is here beforehand, while their commoration, or temporary residence, is below; their thoughts are often employed about it; their affections are set upon it, [Col 3:2](#); their hearts are where their treasure is, [Mat 6:21](#); the desires of their souls are towards it, and they are seeking things above, and long to be in their own city, and Father's house, where Christ is; and to be at home with him, and for ever with him. This is the work and business of their lives now, and what their hearts are engaged in. The Syriac version renders it, "our work is in heaven"; the business, the exercise of our lives, and of our graces, tend that way:

from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Christ is now in heaven, at the Father's right hand, [Act 2:33](#), appearing in the presence of God for his people, and making intercession for them, [Heb 7:25](#); and so will remain, until the time of the

restitution of all things; when he will descend from heaven, and be revealed from thence: and this the saints look for, and expect; they have good reason for it; from his own words, from the words of the angels at the time of his ascension, [Act 1:11](#), and from the writings of the apostles and they expect him not merely as a Judge, under which consideration he will be terrible to the ungodly, but as a Saviour; who as he has already saved their souls from sin, and the dreadful effects of it, from the bondage and curse of the law, from the captivity of Satan, and from eternal ruin and wrath to come, so he will save and redeem their bodies from the grave, corruption, mortality, and death, as follows.

Commentary by Albert Barnes:

For our conversation is in heaven - That is, this is true of all who are sincere Christians. It is a characteristic of Christians, in contradistinction from those who are the "enemies of the cross," that their conversation is in heaven. The word "conversation" we now apply almost entirely to oral discourse. It formerly, however, meant conduct in general, and it is usually employed in this sense in the Scriptures; see the notes at [Php 1:27](#), where the verb occurs, from which the noun here is derived. The word used here - [πολίτευμα politeuma](#) - is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of a state are administered; and then the state itself, the community, commonwealth, those who are bound under the same laws, and associated in the same society. Here it cannot mean that their "conversation," in the sense of discourse or talking, was in heaven; nor that their "conduct" was in heaven - for this would convey no idea, and the original word does not demand it; but the idea is, that they were heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community, They were governed by the laws of heaven; they were a community associated as citizens of that world, and expecting there to dwell.

The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe - that of the world, and that of heaven: that governed by worldly laws and institutions, and that by the laws of heaven; that associated for worldly purposes, and that associated for heavenly or religious purposes; and that the Christian belonged to the latter - the enemy of the cross, though in the church, belonged to the former. Between true Christians, therefore, and others, there is all the difference which arises from belonging to different communities; being bound together for different purposes; subject to different laws; and altogether under a different administration. There is more difference between them than there is between the subjects of two earthly governments; compare [Eph 2:6](#), note 19, note.

From whence also we look for the Saviour - From heaven. That is, it is one of the characteristics of the Christian that he believes that the Lord Jesus will return from heaven, and that he looks and waits for it. Other men do not believe this [2Pe 3:4](#), but the Christian confidently expects it. His Saviour has been taken away from the earth, and is now in heaven, but it is a great and standing article of his faith that that same Saviour will again come, and take the believer to himself; see the [Joh 14:2-3](#), note; [1Th 4:1](#), note. This was the firm belief of the early Christians, and this expectation with them was allowed to exert a constant influence on their hearts and lives. It led them:

- (1) To desire to be prepared for his coming;
- (2) To feel that earthly affairs were of little importance, as the scene here was soon to close;

(3) To live above the world, and in the desire of the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

This was one of the elementary doctrines of their faith, and one of the means of producing deadness to the world among them; and among the early Christians there was, perhaps, no doctrine that was more the object of firm belief, and the ground of more delightful contemplation, than that their ascended Master would return. In regard to the certainty of their belief on this point, and the effect which it had on their minds, see the following texts of the New Testament; [Mat 24:42](#), [Mat 24:44](#); [Luk 12:37](#); [Joh 14:3](#); [Act 1:11](#); [1Co 4:5](#); [Col 3:4](#); [1Th 2:19](#); [2Th 2:1](#); [Heb 10:37](#); [Jas 5:7-8](#); [1Jn 3:2](#); [Rev 22:7](#), [Rev 22:12](#), [Rev 22:20](#). It may be asked, with great force, whether Christians in general have now any such expectation of the second appearing of the Lord Jesus, or whether they have not fallen into the dangerous error of prevailing unbelief, so that the expectation of his coming is allowed to exert almost no influence on the soul.

In the passage before us, Paul says that it was one of the distinct characteristics of Christians that they looked for the coming of the Saviour from heaven. They believed that he would return. They anticipated that important effects would follow to them from his second coming. So we should look. There may be, indeed, a difference of opinion about the time when he will come, and about the question whether he will come to reign "literally, on the earth - but the fact that Christ will return to our world is common ground on which all Christians may meet, and is a fact which should be allowed to exert its full influence on the heart. It is a glorious truth - for what a sad world would this be, and what a sad prospect would be before the Christian, if the Saviour were never to come to raise his people from their graves, and to gather his redeemed to himself! The fact that he will come is identified with all our hopes. It is fitted to cheer us in trial; to guard us in temptation; to make us dead to the world; to lead us to keep the eye turned toward heaven.