Heavenly Citizenship

Introduction

In the book of Philippians, the apostle Paul teaches the Philippian church that they and all church age believers are citizens of heaven. Paul was addressing Roman citizens regarding their spiritual citizenship in heaven. To teach this, Paul employs the verb politeuomai in Philippians 1:27 and the noun politeuma in Philippians 3:20 which are terms the Philippian believers would be familiar with since Philippi was a Roman politeuma. This citizenship is also alluded to in Ephesians 2:19 and Hebrews 11:14-16.

Philippians 1:27 Only conduct yourselves (politeuomai) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (NASB95)

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship (politeuma) is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB95)

The politeuma Metaphor is related to the uniqueness of the church age and the Christian’s responsibility to grow to spiritual maturity and become an invisible hero with an invisible impact on human history. Heaven is the source of the church age believer’s politeuma. In the metaphor, the foreign land is the world in which the church age believer presently lives.

Rome always set up the colony hence, heaven sets up the royal family of God. The third heaven (the abode of God) is analogous to the metaphor Rome while on earth is the locale of the politeuma. Church age believers are a special privileged group as members of the royal family of God. The church age believer has the privilege and opportunity to utilize privileges that no unbeliever has. Church age believers are a colony on earth. Church age believers live on earth with all the privileges of heaven. The church age believer is a privileged person because of his politeuma in heaven.

Greek Citizenship

The verb politeuomai (πολιτεύομαι) in Philippians 1:27 and the noun politeuma (πολίτευμα) in Philippians 3:20 have an interesting history which helps us to understand how Paul is using them in these two passages.

The word polis, attested from Mycenaean Greek is perhaps derived from an Indo-Germanic root meaning to fill. This may suggest the polis as a filled-in wall, which served as a fortress and refuge. As early as Homer ptopis and its lengthened form ptoliethron meant a city, state, and politeites a citizen. The polis in classical
Greek referred to the political or economic center of a district, or city-state. *Politeuomai* means to be a citizen, live as a citizen, to administer the state, and conduct public affairs. The abstract noun *politeia* means citizen’s rights, life of a citizen, his part in the life of the state, the condition or way of life of citizenship, and also civil policy, constitution, the state. The closely related noun *politeuma* had originally the same meaning. It was then used for individual political acts, measures or intrigues; in Aristotle for government, constitution, and also acts or branches of public administration. Later still the word meant political commonwealth, the state generally, and less frequently, citizen’s rights.

In the Hellenistic period colonies abroad with established political constitutions are also so described. *Polites* is a member of a city or state, or the inhabitant of a country or district. The *polites* has all the rights and privileges of a citizen participating in the *ekklesia*, “the assembly.” *Sumpolites* denotes a fellow citizen. *Politeia* signifies the relation in which a citizen stands to the state, the condition of a citizen, citizenship. The noun *politeuma* signifies the condition, or life, of a citizen, citizenship. It was used in classical Greek from the 5th century B.C. onward of various acts, departments, and functions of government. It was used of the business of government, the administration of government, and the policy of government both local and foreign. Aristotle employed it in his work *Politics* for the government, those who hold political power or who hold a share in it.

From the time of the third century B.C. *politeuma* also meant citizenship. *Politeuma* was frequently used to designate a corporate body of citizens, a colony of foreigners who are residents in a foreign city while their citizenship and allegiance is elsewhere. The -*ma* suffix denotes the result of an action therefore in this case the result of the verb, which gives us this verb *politeuomai*.

The verb *politeuomai* is frequently used in the middle voice and appeared first in Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. It signified, metaphorically, conduct characteristic of citizenship. *Politeuomai* means “to be a citizen, to live as a citizen, to act as a citizen by taking part in political life, to show public spirit, to administer the state.” The verb *politeuomai* means “to conduct oneself with proper reference to one’s obligations in relationship to others, as part of some community, thus to live, to conduct one’s life, to live in relation to others.” It meant “to behave as a citizen; to avail one’s self of or recognize the laws, to conduct one’s self as pledged to some law of life.” It means, “to have one’s citizenship, to have one’s home, to lead one’s life according to privilege.”

*Politeuomai* does not occur in the canonical LXX except in the additions to Esther appended to 8:12. It does not occur in 2-4 Maccabees where it always means to live or conduct one’s life, to live life in accord with the law of God and the religious traditions of one’s forbearers.
The verb *politeuomai* appears twice in the NT (Acts 23:1; Philippians 1:27). The noun *politeuma* is a *hapax legomenon* (Philippians 3:20). The noun *polites* is found 4 times in the NT (Luke 15:15; 19:14; Acts 21:39; Hebrews 8:11). The noun *politeia* appears twice in the NT (Acts 22:28; Ephesians 2:12). The noun *politarches* is found twice in the NT (Acts 17:6, 8). The noun *polis* appears approximately 160 times in the NT. The noun *sumpolites* is a *hapax legomenon* (Ephesians 2:19). The noun *politeuma* was used in reference to the believer’s heavenly *citizenship*. The verb *politeuomai* was used in reference to the believer’s *conduct* as a citizen of heaven.

Late in the fifth century B.C. in Greece, the word *politeuma* was used for individual political acts or dealings. Eventually it came to mean “constitution, state, commonwealth.” It meant *privileges* that belong to citizens. The word was used in the golden age of Pericles. Attica was the poor part of Greece and was famous for olive oil and arts. Silver was discovered and silver mines belonged to the state. Every Athenian citizen received an equal share from the silver mines every year and had same privilege as *politeuma*. The Athenians shut down this citizenship at 30,000 people. The Aeolians, Boetians and Spartans and other Dorian groups were poor.

*Politeuma* was used of a new system of Greek colonization in Athens a couple of hundred years before the time of writing. When the Athenians defeated the Boetians and their allies the Calsidiens, they took possession of part of the land called Kelcis, and took the best part and called it the Celonstine plain. A very famous Athenian statesman named Cleisthenes divided the land 4000 lots, big lots, called *kleros*. He settled a corresponding number of Athenians there and these Athenian citizens were very disturbed that moving to this lot might mean that they would lose the privileges of their citizenship. They asked Cleisthenes about this matter and he said no that they would not lose their rights and privileges as citizens and therefore invented a new system of colonization to send people into a foreign land retaining all of the privileges of their citizenship.

Herodotus later called these settlers, *kleroi*, and “allotment people.” Eventually that word died out and a new word took its place. Cleisthenes is regarded as the founder of Athenian democracy, serving as chief archon of the city-state from 525-524 B.C. Cleisthenes successfully allied himself with the Popular Assembly against the nobles and imposed democratic reform. Perhaps his most important innovation was the basing of individual political responsibility on citizenship of a place rather than on membership in a clan. He persuaded the people to change the basis of political organization from the family, clan and phratry (kinship group) to the locality. Public rights and duties would depend on membership of a *deme*, or township, which kept its own register of citizens and elected its own officials. The citizen would no longer be known only by his father’s name but also or alone by
the name of his deme. When the whole system of Cleisthenes was finally put together it was called by two words: (1) Politeia (2) Politeuma.

**Politeuma** was “having the status to live in a foreign country but to have the status, the rights, and the privileges of the citizenship of your home country.” During the Hellenistic period, politeuma was used for citizens living in a foreign country in a colony who retained their national citizenship and political privileges pertaining to that citizenship. Alexander the Great had a policy of interfusion and mixture of the races he conquered and this resulted in the loss of national identity apart from what Alexander called politeuma. So it came down to Roman times through Alexander, therefore the Jews from Alexander for example were called politeuma by Josephus and Arian Dydimus of Alexandria, the famous Stoic philosopher. In Crete, district of Arseno (sister of Cleopatra) there was a Roman colony called politeuma. Idomeans living in Memphis in Egypt had politeuma. These politeumati are not private associations but they were publicly recognized national groups living away from home and under the laws, rights and privileges of the mother country.

**Roman Citizenship**

Paul in his day was a Roman citizen. The Roman’s took this from the Greek and called it civitas which was the same principle Cleisthenes had invented some 600 or 700 years before.

**Politeuma:** The rights, the privileges in the status of citizenship of a free state. A corporate body of citizen’s resident in a foreign country but under the laws of their homeland. One of the interesting systems for acquiring Roman citizenship was the autocratic grant of citizenship to slaves who had been freed. It was done with great formality. Touching of the lictor’s rod called Vindicta. Done in the presence of Magistrate. Enrolled immediately in census list of citizens with master’s approval. Imperial policy meant Emperor could grant citizenship that princes of another country if he desired. Rights of Roman citizens were required in different ways: (1) Birth (Roman parents). (2) Legislative extension. (3) 25 years of military service in Roman army. (4) Manumission from slavery. (5) Purchase of citizenship (million dollars in today’s money). (6) Imperial policy of granting citizens who did well in Roman Empire in some way.


**Politeuma** in Paul’s day meant a Roman colony in a foreign land. It meant the rights, privileges of Roman citizens in Roman colony.
The Philippians

The Philippians were Roman citizens so Paul use of these terms were a part of their frame of reference. They would be able to identify with citizenship since the Philippians greatly valued their Roman citizenship. Philippi is named after King Philip II. He took it from the Thracians and gave it his own name in 356 B.C. It was situated about 9 miles from the Aegean Sea and northwest of the island of Thasos. Philippi was situated near the eastern end of the Engatian Road (via Egnatia) which was the major overland route traversing the Balkan Peninsula. It is located in a broad flat plain and is surrounded by mountains. This broad flat plain extends generally to the northwest. Today much of the area has been reclaimed, and the swamps now yield both fruit and grain. To the south of Philippi lay its port city of Neapolis, which is known today as Kavalla and in medieval times as Christopolis. To the north are the foothills of the Balkan highlands. To the east is Mount Orbelos and to the west Mount Pangaeum. Philippi was a city of great strategic importance to the Greeks as well as the Romans by virtue of its being surrounded by mountains on almost every side. It was very close to the sea and was near the borders of Thrace. Gold was discovered at Mount Pangaeum, and the settlers from the island of Thasos seized the area. The Thracians called the city Krenides which means “springs,” or “fountains.”

Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, realized the importance of Krenides and captured and rebuilt the city, renaming it Philippi. The Thracian settlers were driven out or were incorporated into the large influx of Macedonian inhabitants. What made Philippi important was not its mineral resources but its geographical and strategic location. It commanded the great high road between Europe and Asia. It served as a gateway between the two continents of Asia and Europe by virtue of its almost continuous mountain barrier, which was depressed so as to form a natural gateway. It was this advantageous position which led Philip to fortify the site and which led Octavian to plant a Roman colony there.

After the battle of Pynda in 168 B.C., Macedonia passed into the hands of the Romans who in turn made it a Roman colony in 146 B.C. Aemilius Paullus, the Roman consul, divided Macedonia into 4 major regions or districts according to the historian Livy (Livy xlv. 29). Philippi was situated in the 1st district, whose capital became Amphipolis. By the time of Caesar, Philippi had become a small settlement. Strabo says Philippi was a “small town.”

After assassination of Caesar in B.C. 44, a Civil War began in SPQR, which had a great effect on the future of Philippi as a city. Gaius Cassius Longimanus, the leader of the conspiracy and an experience general took over the Roman province of Syria. During this Caesar’s nephew Octavian and Marc Antony joined forces to
deal with Civil War. They are called the Second Triumvirate because it was made up of three men: (1) Octavius (2) Marc Antony (3) Lepidus.

The Civil War pitted Brutus and Cassius vs. Octavius and Antony. The former represented those who were proponents for continuing the Republic while the latter represented those who were proponents of a Principate. Philippi was also the site of the pivotal battle to determine the future of the Roman Empire.

The first battle of Philippi took place on October 24, 42 B.C. By a series of maneuvers, these two great armies came near the ruins to what is called Philippi. Army of Octavian and Antony numbered: (1) 85,000 infantry. (2) 13,000 cavalry. Army of Brutus and Cassius numbered: (1) 80,000 infantry. (2) 20,000 cavalry. This famous battle proved that Octavian was not a good general and Brutus was the best general in the army of the Assassins. Brutus did a smart thing at dawn and attacked the camp of Octavius and almost wiped him out. Octavius actually fled to the ruins of Philippi. Marc Antony not knowing about this in the meantime attacked Cassius and wiped him out. Cassius fled with part of his army and then he turned and attacked the camp of Brutus. Brutus upon hearing that his camp had been attacked by Marc Antony thought all was over, and stood near the ruins of Philippi and committed suicide and therefore the battle was called a draw.

Both armies soon regrouped and on November 16, the positions of the armies remained the same. This time Antony attacked through a swamp performing a very famous single envelopment on the left bank of Brutus. Octavian’s core acted as the pivot since Octavius was not a good soldier. In the battle south of Philippi, Marc Antony with his famous march through the swamps routed the Republican army under Brutus. Brutus managed to escape through parts of four regions but he decided it wasn’t worth it and he committed suicide. Philippi therefore became a Roman politeuma.

In honor of this victory Philippi was made a Roman colony and was named by Octavian *Colonia Victrix Philippensium*. Octavian gave the town its notable title of *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensium*, which appeared on coins. Philippi became a Roman colony primarily composed therefore of the victorious veterans of the Civil War for many who fought in the battles of Philippi received as rewards after retirement the land around Philippi. Philippi became a thriving city and many veterans after twenty years of service with a pension moved to Philippi. Philippi became sort of a colony for retired Roman soldiers of Marc Antony and Augustus. A Roman colony had to be made up of Roman citizens. Octavian planted in Philippi a colony of Roman veterans with farms attached, a military outpost and miniature of Rome itself and the language of Philippi was Latin.

As a Roman colony, Philippi received many privileges that other cities in the empire did not have. There was the freedom from taxation, scourging, freedom from arrest save in extreme cases, and the right of appeal to the Emperor. Of all the
privileges, which this title conferred, the possession of the “Italic right” (*ius Italicum*) was the most valuable. It meant that the colonists enjoyed the same rights and privileges as if their land was on Italian soil.

Philippi became so great that every time that there was privilege to be granted to that part of the country, the Philippians were always involved. If you lived in Philippi as a Roman citizen you had no taxes for the rest of your life. Philippi was a Roman colony in a foreign country. They could vote and were governed by their own senate and legislature. Philippi was in effect a “little Rome” in itself. Hence, the Philippians had tremendous civic pride because of their intimate attachment to Rome. Luke brings out the fact that the Philippians had great civic pride in Acts (Acts 16:21). The Philippians took great pride in their Roman citizenship and Paul makes allusions to it in this epistle with the use of words such as *Philippenses*. Official names are used such as *duoviri* (Acts 16:21; 16:37), and “lictors” in Acts 16:35. Paul speaks of “citizenship” in Philippians 1:27 and 3:20, a term which would have special appeal to the Philippians who took great pride in their Roman citizenship. It truly was the “leading city of the district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12). It was the principle town of its district by virtue of its privileges as a Roman colony. The citizens of Philippi had good reason to claim that their large “colonial” city was the leading city of the district of Macedonia for it was made so by the Emperor Octavian himself.

Luke’s description of Philippi in Acts 16:12 is therefore an accurate one, prote *tes meridos tes Makedonias polis kolonia*. It was the 1st city in the district of Macedonia by virtue of the Imperial edict, which proclaimed it a Roman colony. Philippi’s intimate relationship with Rome made it the leading city of Macedonia. The inhabitants of nearby cities such as Thessalonica, Amphipolis and Neapolis did not have privileges that the Philippians enjoyed for they were not Roman colonies. Only Philippi could make the claim of being a Roman colony.

The History of Rome is generally divided into two periods: (1) The Republic (2) The Empire (Principate). During the Republican period a Roman citizen was technically one who had been born or adopted into one of the 3 original tribes of Rome. In practice this meant all males above 15 years of age who were neither slaves nor aliens, and all aliens received a grant of Roman citizenship. Roman citizenship was jealously guarded and highly prized during the Republican period and at the onset of the Empire. It meant membership in the relatively small group that was soon to rule the whole Mediterranean area. It brought immunity from legal torture or duress, and the right of appeal from any official in the Empire to the Assembly-or, later, the Emperor-at Rome. Obligations went with these privileges. The citizen, unless quite poor, was liable to military service at call from his 16th to his 60th year and he could not hold political office until he had served 10 years in the army. His political rights were so bound up with his military duties
that are most important voting was done as a member of his regiment, or century. The first person in Roman law was the citizen. He was defined as anyone who had been accepted into a Roman tribe by: (1) Birth (2) Adoption (3) Emancipation (4) Governmental grant. Within this franchise were 3 grades: (1) Full citizens who enjoyed the 4-fold right of voting (ius suffragii), of holding office (ius honorum), of marriage with a freeborn person (ius connubii), and of engaging in commercial contracts protected by Roman law (ius commercii). (2) Citizens without sufferage who had the rights of marriage and contract, but not voting or office. (3) Freedman who had the rights of voting and contract, but not of marriage or office.

The full citizen had certain exclusive rights in private law: (1) The power of the father over his children (patris potestas). (2) The power of the husband over his wife (mancipium). (3) The power of an owner over his property, including slaves (dominium). (4) The power of a freedman over another by contract (mancipium).

A kind of potential citizenship, called Latinitas or ius Latii, was conferred by Rome upon the free inhabitants of favored towns and colonies, whereby they acquired the right of contract, but not of intermarriage, with Romans, and their magistrates received full Roman citizenship upon completing their terms of office. Each city of the Empire had its own citizens and conditions of citizenship and by a unique tolerance a man might be a citizen and enjoy the civic rights of several cities at once. The most precious privilege of a Roman citizen was the safeguarding of his person, property, and rights by the law, and his immunity from torture or violence in the trying of his case. The imperial period witnessed a large-scale spread of citizenship among provincials who retained their foreign residence and nationality. The beginnings of this development lay actually in the republican period when, as a consequence of a bloody rebellion of Rome’s Italian allies (Social War, 90-88 B.C.), the citizens of the Italian cities received the status of Roman citizens.

Under the Principate, citizenship was often given to outstanding men in provincial cities. More important, it was regularly given to honorably discharged veterans of the army which then consisted largely of non-citizens. The effect of this policy was a change in the character of Roman citizenship. In theory, it was still conceived as that of the city of Rome, thereby retaining some of its splendor, in actual fact, it became an Empire citizenship.

Philippians 1:27 and 3:20

**Philippians 1:27** Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (NASB95)
“Conduct yourselves” is the second person plural present middle imperative form of the verb *politeuomai* (πολιτεύοµαι), which means “to conduct one’s life according to the privilege and responsibility as a citizen of heaven.” It means “to have one’s citizenship, to have one’s home, to lead one’s life according to privilege.” It means to conduct oneself according to the privileges and responsibilities as a citizen of heaven which is worthy of the gospel of Christ. It means to behave in a manner which is in accordance to the privileges and responsibilities as a citizen of heaven.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB95)

“Citizenship” is the noun *politeuma* (πολίτευµα), which occurs only in the NT in this passage and means “citizenship”

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, “politeuma, ‘the condition, or life, of a citizen, citizenship’; it is said of the heavenly status of believers, (Philippians 3:20), ‘our citizenship (KJV, "conversation") is in Heaven.’ The RV marg. gives the alternative meaning, ‘commonwealth,’ i. e., community.”

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised defines *politeuma*, “the administration of a commonwealth.”

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon defines the word: (1) The administration of civil affairs or of a commonwealth (2) The constitution of a commonwealth, form of government and the laws by which it is administered (3) A state, commonwealth.


Louw and Nida define word, “the place or location in which one has the right to be a citizen – ‘state, commonwealth, place of citizenship’ (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, volume 2, page 132).

Here in Philippians 3:20, the word *politeuma* should be translated “citizenship” since it denotes the status of being a citizen. It denotes the concept of possessing the privileges and responsibility of a citizen of your homeland although living in a foreign land. It is a concept that the Philippians would be familiar with since they were Roman citizens living in a Roman colony.

Paul is writing as a citizen to citizens: (1) Roman citizen to Roman citizens. (2) Heavenly citizen to heavenly citizens. Politeuma in Paul’s day meant a Roman colony in a foreign land. It meant the rights, privileges of Roman citizens in Roman colony.

By employing this word *politeuma* here in Philippians 3:20, Paul is contrasting the Christian attitude and lifestyle here with that of “the enemies of the cross of the Christ” in Philippians 3:18-19. Those who apply the three great fundamental
principles of Biblical Christianity as listed in Philippians 3:3 did not live for self, or according to the old sin nature, the cosmic system or the traditions of men. The conduct of the Judaizers is the exact opposite as Paul states at the conclusion of Philippians 3:19: *hoi ta epigeia phronountes*, “those who are continually occupied with earthly matters.”

Those who are living according to the spiritual code of conduct mentioned in Philippians 3:16-17 which is enumerated in Philippians 3:3, are living in agreement with their status as heavenly citizens. It is actually a subtle rebuke to the regenerate Judaizers whose conduct is not agreement with their status as citizens of heaven. Those who are living according to the spiritual code of conduct are living up to their responsibilities as citizens of heaven because they are utilizing the privileges as citizens of heaven. Those privileges are mentioned in Philippians 3:3 and if they are faithful to death in living in those privileges, they will receive the ultimate privilege of reigning with Christ, which is noted in Philippians 3:12-14.

**Philippians 3:12** “(I am) not (saying) that I have already achieved this, or I have already been brought to completion, but rather I am sprinting, if (by sprinting) I also may have captured the prize for which I also have been captured by Christ Jesus. 13 Brothers, I do not evaluate myself to have captured the prize, but I am in fact continually concentrating on one thing, namely, by forgetting the past and by extending myself forward towards the future, bearing down upon the objective. 14 I am sprinting towards the finish line for the prize, which is God the Father’s invitation to privilege residing in the Person of Christ Jesus.” (Author’s translation)

Those in Philippians 3:18-19 are not conducting themselves as citizens of heaven, whereas those in Philippians 3:16-17 are doing so. The church is actually a “colony of heaven” since heaven is the source of the church age believer’s politeuma and what is literal for the Roman citizens of Philippi is even more literal for the church age believers today as members of the royal family of God.

Wuest commenting on the word in this passage, writes, “The stability and security of the citizen under Roman Law filled the thoughts of the time with high conceptions of citizenship and its value. Philippi, being a Roman colony, and its citizens therefore, Roman citizens, thought in terms of citizenship. Paul seizes this fact as a good opportunity to illustrate to the saints their heavenly citizenship with its privileges and responsibilities. What a contrast between those mentioned in 3:18, 19, who are citizens of this earth, and those spoken of in 3:20-21, who are citizens of heaven” (Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, volume 2, page 102).

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ became a citizen of heaven at the moment of conversion through faith alone in Christ alone which results in regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit. Therefore, they did not have to pay for this citizenship
since they received it simply by making the non-meritorious decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). In fact, as we noted, the doctrine of election states that the church age believer was elected to privilege in eternity past since God the Father from His omniscience looked down the corridors of time and saw that the believer would make the non-meritorious decision to believe in Christ for salvation if given the opportunity to do so. So actually the apostle Paul is referring here to election since he employs the verb hyparch (ὑπάρχω), which refers to antecedent condition protracted into the present.

This word politeuma also conveys the fact of the church age believer’s position in Christ is a result of the baptism of the Spirit where the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit placed the believer in union with Christ at the moment of conversion. Paul is saying that the Philippians and himself possess the status of a citizen of heaven from eternity past under election and that they are people given great privilege and as a result, great responsibility.

The Christian is positionally a citizen of heaven because of the baptism of the Spirit and in fact it originates from eternity past under the doctrine of election. He is stating here by using this word politeuma that they should live in a manner that is in agreement with their status and position as a citizen of heaven. Their conduct should agree with their position or status as citizens of heaven, sons of God.

There are three characteristics that the believer as a citizen of heaven now possesses positionally as a result of regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit: (1) Christ is their King rather than Satan. (2) They have a different life rather than death and live under a different system than the cosmic system. (3) They have new rights, privileges and responsibilities.

The church age believer as a citizen of heaven has the privilege of having an audience with the King through prayer in order to make petitions and requests. As a citizen of heaven the believer has his name registered on the legal records in heaven and in particular the “book of life,” which is mentioned in Philippians 4:3.

The citizen of heaven is under law just as those who were citizens of Rome and Greece. The life of the believer should demonstrate that he is a citizen of heaven, but that doesn’t always take place because the believer reverts back experientially as a citizen of the cosmic system when he operates in the old Adamic-nature and employs cosmic viewpoint. The cross condemns what the world values. The citizen of heaven is not to live according to that which the cross of Christ condemned, namely, self, sin nature, cosmic system of Satan and traditions of men.

Everything that the Judaizers advocated had been condemned and eliminated by the substitutionary spiritual death of Christ on the cross. Christ ended the entire sacrificial system of the OT or the ritual plan of God when He made one sacrifice for sins at the cross (Hebrews 10:1-4). By His death and resurrection, He accomplished a “spiritual circumcision” that made ritual circumcision unnecessary.
(Colossians 2:10-13). Everything that the Judaizers lived for was condemned by the cross, thus they were the enemies of the cross.

The citizen of heaven whose conduct is in agreement with his position in union with Christ in His death and resurrection will experience the crucifixion of his old sin nature (Galatians 5:24), and the crucifixion of the cosmic system (Galatians 6:14). The believer’s citizenship is directly related to his membership in the kingdom of heaven which is synonymous with the term kingdom of God. Entrance into the kingdom of God takes place through regeneration (John 3:3, 5). The overcomers or winner believers will inherit the kingdom of God, i.e., the kingdom of heaven. This is the believer’s inheritance, which is reigning with the Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity. Not all the citizens of heaven, i.e., members of the kingdom of heaven will receive their inheritance and reign with Christ and the reason for this is the function of each member’s volition for not all the citizens of heaven will choose to utilize their privileges and fulfill their responsibilities on earth as ambassadors for Christ.

So heaven is the source of the church age believer’s politeuma. What is literal for the Roman citizens of Philippi is even more literal for the church age believers today as members of the royal family of God. The Politeuma Metaphor is related to the uniqueness of the church age and the Christian’s responsibility to grow to spiritual maturity and become an invisible hero with an invisible impact on human history. In the metaphor, the foreign land is the world in which we live as born-again believers. Rome always set up the colony hence, heaven sets up the royal family of God. The third heaven (the abode of God) is analogous to the metaphor Rome while on earth is the locale of the politeuma. Born-again believers are a special privileged group as members of the royal family of God. The special privileges are the two great divine provisions: (1) Word of God (2) Spirit of God.

Church age believers are a colony on earth. They live on earth with all the privileges of heaven. They are a privileged group of people because of his politeuma in heaven. In the politeuma metaphor, heaven is the abode of God and is analogous to Rome while planet earth is the local of the politeuma, which is a heavenly colony. The politeuma metaphor is related to the uniqueness of the church age, the Christian’s responsibility to become an invisible hero through the divine provision of the unique grace support of this Christological dispensation. In the dispensation of the hypostatic union there was politeuma for one person-the Lord Jesus Christ. In the dispensation of the church age there is politeuma for all believers-the royal family of God.

Paul is writing as a Roman citizen to Roman citizens and as a heavenly citizen to heavenly citizens. Paul is commanding the Philippians in Philippians 1:27 and 3:20 and all church age believers to whom it is applicable to conduct themselves as citizens of heaven while here on earth. He is commanding the Philippians and all
church age believers to function or conduct themselves under all the privileges and responsibilities that their heavenly citizenship confers.