

BABYLON OR ZION?

Choosing Your Citizenship in the Last Days

A Four-Lesson Study on Compromise, Culture, and the Kingdom to Come

LESSON 4: ZION'S CITIZENSHIP

Where Exiles Learn to Live Like They're Already Home

The Pilgrim's Road

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* opens with a man named Christian fleeing a doomed City of Destruction, a heavy burden strapped to his back, walking toward a Celestial City he cannot yet see. [Partway through the journey he has to pass through Vanity Fair](#) - a town built entirely around buying and selling, *all such merchandise sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts*. Bunyan wrote that inventory two centuries before **Revelation 18** would have meant anything to a Sunday-school class, and it still reads like John's merchant list from Lesson 2 with different spelling.

Christian doesn't linger in Vanity Fair. He doesn't argue that its merchandise is worthless. He simply keeps walking, because he already knows which city he belongs to, and it isn't this one. His companion Faithful doesn't get off so easily - he's mocked, beaten, and eventually executed right there in the fair, simply for refusing to buy what everyone around him was buying. Bunyan didn't invent that cost. He was describing something every citizen of Zion eventually discovers: Babylon tolerates tourists. She has never tolerated residents who refuse to shop.

That's the entire subject of this final lesson - not one more warning about Babylon, but what it actually looks like to walk through her fair without buying anything, because you're already a citizen somewhere else, whatever that costs you in a town that measures worth by receipts.

It's worth noticing what Christian carries the entire way through Vanity Fair and never once sets down: the burden on his back, which turns out to be his own sin, and the certificate in his hand proving where he's actually headed. He doesn't check either one at the town gate. Citizens of Zion don't get to leave their identity in storage while they pass through Babylon's territory. They carry it visibly, which is exactly what makes them recognizable enough to mock.

Citizens of a Different Country

Paul names the believer's actual address in blunt, present-tense terms: ["our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" \(Philippians 3:20\)](#). The Greek word behind *citizenship* is [politeuma](#) - it can mean a colony, an outpost of one nation planted inside the borders of another, governed by the homeland's law even while surrounded by a foreign one. Philippi itself was exactly this kind of colony, a Roman outpost inside Greek territory, and every believer reading Paul's letter would have understood the picture instantly. You don't stop being Rome's citizen because you live in Philippi. You don't stop being Zion's citizen because you live in Babylon.

Sojourners and Pilgrims

Peter gives the same status a more practical edge: ["I urge you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" \(1 Peter 2:11\)](#). A sojourner isn't a tourist passing through for the scenery, and it isn't a permanent resident who's stopped noticing the border. It's someone who lives fully in a place without ever forgetting it isn't home - present, engaged, working, paying taxes, loving neighbors, and still unmistakably foreign in allegiance. The Greek word behind *sojourner* is [paroikos](#) - literally *dwelling alongside*, the same root English eventually borrowed for *parish*. You can dwell alongside a culture, even serve it well,

without ever being absorbed into it. That tension is meant to stay uncomfortable. The moment it stops feeling uncomfortable is usually the moment Babylon has quietly finished the paperwork on your citizenship.

Daniel: A Citizen Who Never Filed the Paperwork

This course has mentioned Daniel in three separate lessons without ever stopping to look at him directly. It's time to fix that. Daniel was a teenager, deported to Babylon, given a Babylonian name, enrolled in Babylonian education, and offered a seat at the king's own table - full assimilation, freely offered, no threat attached. His response is recorded in a single deliberate verb: *"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8)*. *Purposed* translates a Hebrew word meaning to set, to fix, to place firmly - the same kind of settled decision Job made with his eyes back in Lesson 3. Daniel didn't wait for a crisis to decide who he belonged to. He decided in advance, while the decision was still cheap, so that it would already be made by the time it became expensive.

The Fiery Furnace

That advance decision eventually got expensive for three of Daniel's friends. Ordered to bow to a golden image or burn, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gave Nebuchadnezzar an answer that has outlived his empire: *"our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... But if not, let it be known to you that we will not serve your gods" (Daniel 3:17-18)*. Notice the order. Faith comes first - He is able to deliver us. Then comes something rarer than faith: But if not. Their citizenship in Zion didn't depend on God rescuing them on schedule, and it didn't depend on the fire cooperating either. It was settled before they knew how the story would end, which is the only way this kind of decision ever actually holds.

Joseph: Citizenship Without a Rescue

Daniel wasn't the first exile to hold his citizenship this way. Centuries earlier, Joseph was sold into Egypt with no furnace, no dramatic deliverance, and no voice from heaven - just years of slavery, false accusation, and prison, none of which he had any biblical promise would ever end. When Potiphar's wife pressed him toward the one compromise that would have cost him nothing visible, he answered with a question that assumed an audience Egypt couldn't see: *"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)*. Joseph had every earthly reason to believe God had forgotten him. He kept his citizenship anyway, decades before anyone rescued him, which is exactly what makes his story a template rather than a fairy tale.

Notice what Daniel and Joseph have in common that Vanity Fair never accounts for: neither of them needed a promise of rescue to stay faithful. Daniel's three friends didn't know the furnace would spare them. Joseph didn't know the pit and the prison would end in a palace. Citizenship in Zion isn't a bet placed on a guaranteed outcome. It's an allegiance held regardless of the outcome, which is precisely why it's called citizenship and not a transaction.

Grace Teaches Us to Live

Every lesson in this course has said some version of come out. Titus explains what to walk into instead: *"the grace of God... teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12)*. This is grace as a teacher, not merely a pardon - actively instructing a citizen of Zion in how to live inside Babylon's calendar without adopting Babylon's curriculum. Paul isn't describing a future retirement from the world. He's describing a curriculum for *the present age* - this one, the one with a mortgage and a phone and a marketplace, the same age every lesson in this course has been examining. Paul finishes the thought with the reason any of this is even possible: *"our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us... and purify for Himself His*

own special people" (Titus 2:13-14). Citizenship in Zion was never earned by refusing Babylon hard enough. It was purchased, at a price the citizen didn't pay, and the refusing is simply what a redeemed person eventually looks like from the outside.

This matters because it changes the whole tone of this course's final lesson. Every warning in Babylon or Zion could be misheard as one more performance standard to hit - watch less, spend less, resist harder. Titus corrects that before it takes root: the citizenship came first, purchased and finished, and the living differently is simply what a person who already belongs somewhere else eventually does. You are not auditioning for Zion. You already hold the passport.

Zion's Colony Today

This is where the whole course converges. A citizen of Zion living inside Babylon in this present age still uses money - but circulates it like Lesson 2 described, aware of which master it actually serves. Still watches a screen - but behaves like Lesson 3's covenant with the eyes, asking what's being formed rather than simply what's entertaining. Still walks through Vanity Fair's actual streets, her actual feeds, her actual checkout lines - but as a colony representing a different King the whole time, the way Philippi never forgot it answered to Rome.

None of that requires leaving your job, your neighborhood, or your century. It requires the same settled decision Daniel made before Babylon ever tested him - purposed in advance, renewed daily, visible mostly in what you quietly decline rather than in anything you'd post about.

Come Out of Her, My People

Every lesson in this course has circled back to one verse, and it deserves to be heard in full at the end rather than only in pieces: *"Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4)*. Notice who's being addressed - not the world, *my people*. This command was never aimed at Babylon's citizens. It was aimed at Zion's citizens who had wandered inside her walls and stayed long enough to start feeling at home, the way a colonist can live so long among a foreign people that the homeland's accent starts to feel like the odd one. Four lessons ago that verse was a thesis statement. Now it's a question with your name already filled in.

Coming out was never primarily geographic, even for the exiles who first heard it. Daniel and Joseph both stayed in Babylon and Egypt for the rest of their lives - it was their allegiance that left, not their address. Coming out means the same thing today: staying exactly where your job, your family, and your city have already placed you, while quietly and permanently changing which King you're actually answering to while you're there.

Which City Will You Build?

Lesson 1 asked which spirit you were living under. Lesson 2 asked which currency you were circulating. Lesson 3 asked which screen you were living in. This final lesson asks the question underneath all three: whose colony are you actually representing, in the small, unglamorous, unrecorded decisions nobody else will ever see?

Citizenship was never going to be settled by one dramatic altar moment and then left alone.

Daniel's decision held because he made it early and kept making it, meal by meal, for decades, long after the initial danger had passed and it would have been easy to quietly let it go. Zion's citizens are not the ones who felt something once. They're the ones still purposing in their heart on an ordinary Tuesday, with nobody watching and nothing obviously at stake.

Joshua's challenge from Lesson 1 was never really answered on the day it was asked - it gets answered again every single day after, in decisions too small to preach a sermon about. That's the real finish line of this course. Not a dramatic conversion story, but a life quietly indistinguishable

from Daniel's - purposing, meal by meal, decade by decade, which city gets your allegiance long after anyone is still watching to see if you meant it.

The Questions Babylon Doesn't Want You Asking

Ask these as a whole course, not just a single lesson. Looking back at your money since Lesson 2, whose currency have you actually been circulating? Looking back at your screen time since Lesson 3, which city has been shaping your imagination? If Daniel's decision was made in advance, before the pressure arrived, what decision do you need to make right now, before your own furnace shows up unannounced? And if someone else were writing your biography from your bank statement and your watch history alone, which city would they say you were a citizen of? One closing question, harder than the rest: is there anything in your life right now that a citizen of Zion, purposed in heart the way Daniel was, would already have let go of?

The Verdict Is Yours

Revelation doesn't end with Babylon's ashes - it ends with Zion's arrival, and the promise attached to her citizens deserves the last word in this course: *"God will dwell with them, and they will be His people... and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying"* (*Revelation 21:3-4*). Babylon's citizens got a marketplace, a theater, and eventually an obituary. Zion's citizens get a King who moves in permanently. That is the actual trade being offered at the end of every lesson in this course - not less pleasure, but a different city to belong to entirely. Bunyan's Christian finally reaches the Celestial City at the very end of his journey, and the trumpets that greet him make an entire book of hardship look small in hindsight. Every citizen of Zion is promised the same reception, on the far side of whatever Vanity Fair, whatever furnace, and whatever ordinary Tuesday stands between now and then. So close this course the way Daniel would have - not with a feeling, but with a decision you make before you need it. Pick one concrete area - your money, your screen, or your calendar - and purpose in your heart, today, which city it will answer to from here forward. You don't need Nebuchadnezzar to build a furnace before you decide. You need only enough honesty to decide now, while it's still cheap - because that decision, made early and kept daily, is what it actually means to belong to Zion, no matter which of the four lessons in this course finally got through.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).



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