

CITIZENS AT 250 AND BEYOND



²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

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The apostle Paul knew the value of citizenship.



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“Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?” (Acts 22:25)



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“Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.” (v. 29)



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Paul's "citizenship in heaven" superseded his Roman citizenship and directly affected how he stewarded his earthly citizenship.



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The Greek word that gets translated as “citizenship” here can carry the sense of “a colony of citizens living according to the laws of their home city while residing elsewhere.”

²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

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Paul is standing in Athens... the intellectual capital of the ancient world.



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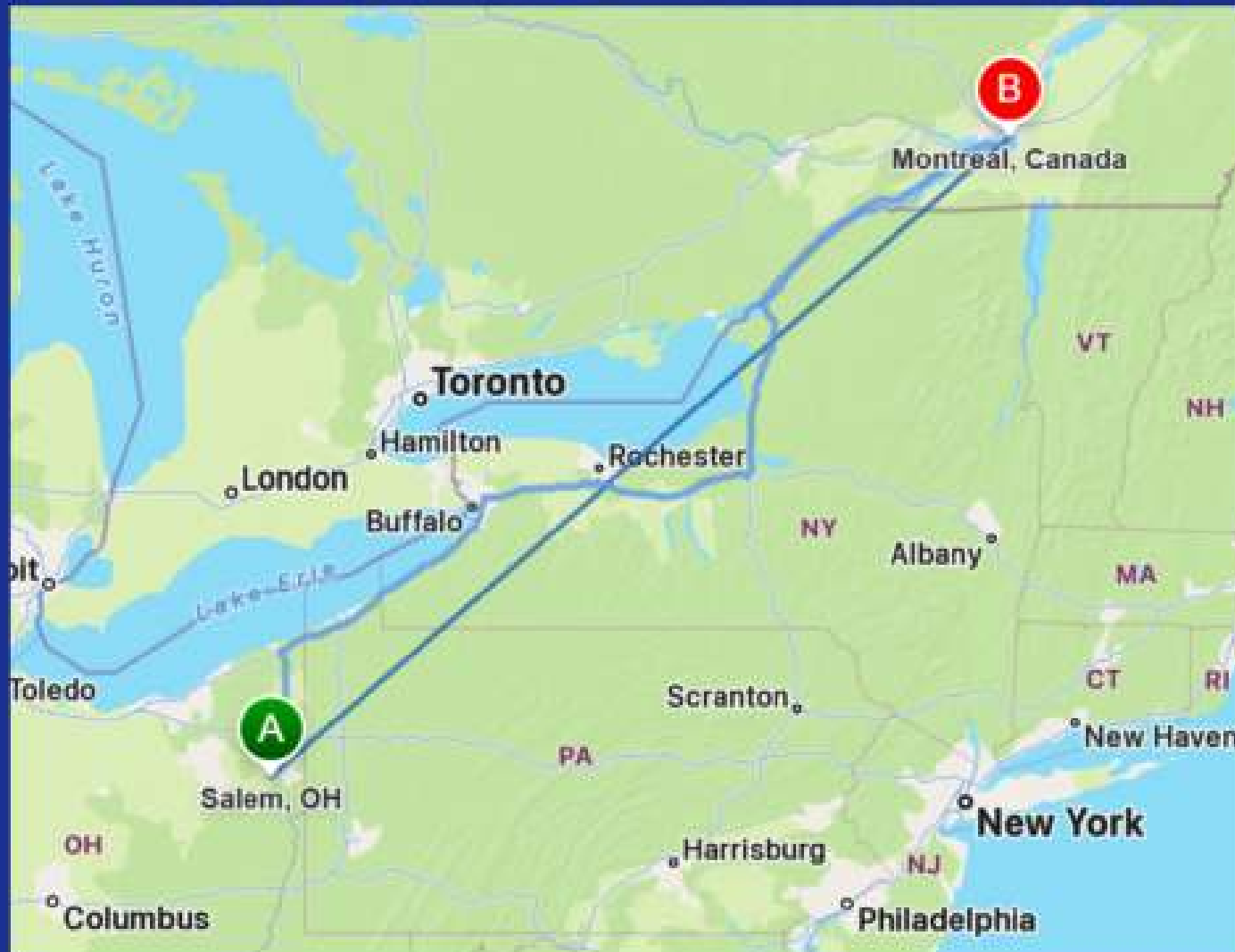
God shapes the history and geography—the times and boundaries—of the nations to maximize the possibility and potential for people seek and find him... to know that he is with us, for us, and much nearer to us than we realize.

Jeremiah 29:4, 7

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This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon... "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

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God's people are living under a pagan empire, surrounded by values that contradict everything they've been formed to believe.

Yet, God's word to them is: Seek the peace and prosperity of the city. Pray for it.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone... ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

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"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

(Martin Luther King Jr.)

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

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John's vision of the New Jerusalem is not a vision of one nation's vindication. It's a vision of all the nations walking by the light of the Lamb.

“The kings of the earth bring their glory into the city... the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”

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This is where our true and deepest citizenship is found. Everything we are and everything we do as citizens of our earthly nation comes from here.

In what ways are you tempted to elevate your earthly citizenship over your deeper citizenship in the Kingdom of God?

What would it look like for you to genuinely seek the peace and flourishing of your specific neighborhood or community this week—not as a program, but as a posture?

Who in your life feels more like an enemy than a neighbor right now? Pray for the strength to do whatever is within your power to choose peace with him/her.

Where is there an opportunity in front of you to bring some glory and honor to God—a small piece of splendor you could offer him—through how you live as a citizen this week?

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