Part One: Understanding Dual Citizenship

When it comes to understanding dual citizenship - Daniel got it. It was during Daniel's younger days, likely his teenage years, that King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians began the deportations of Jews from Jerusalem back to Babylon. Daniel was one of those deportees. Any casual observer could conclude that he had "lost" his citizenship and his identity as a Jewish person living in Jerusalem; he now was merely a captured servant or slave, living in a totally different country, serving ungodly rulers. One would think that his former life was over, his new life, whatever it would be, would be completely different. Daniel knew differently – because he understood the concept of dual citizenship.

Daniel Dual Citizenship isn't based on location, location, location. You see, it didn't matter ***where*** he was living, Daniel was a child of God, a member of God's household, God's kingdom. He knew that his citizenship card still stated, "Heaven" was his home. This is a truth and concept that made all the difference for him, and just as it does for us.

Keeping our Dual Citizenship in mind, assures that that our God is above all earthly powers and authorities; that he transcends all earthly borders or territories; and that no matter which metropolis or countryside you reside at, we have an eternal, lasting home in heaven. This citizenship is a gift that has been given to us by faith from our Triune God that no one can take away. When this is our mindset, it certainly guides us, especially when worldly circumstances change, as they often do.

Daniel's circumstances and location changed dramatically. In this new country, Daniel was recognized as one who might be good to utilize in the king's service. So for 3 years, he along with others, were to learn the language and customs and culture – at the Babylonian Cultural Immersion Training Center. It's one thing to study and learn a new language, to learn the customs and culture – but should any of those things go against the Word of God, that would not be an option.

The challenge came quickly, because part of the training involved eating a drinking the royal food and wine – which Daniel recognized would violate God's dietary instructions. Verse 8, ***"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."***

That's gutsy! Daniel is the captured slave and he's refusing to obey the king's orders?!? Even the officials who were carrying out the king's command knew that you don't disobey the king or you'd face death. That didn't matter to Daniel. Daniel was not about to disobey THEE King of kings and LORD of Lords, no matter where he was living. Daniel knew the True God – and to disobey him was sin, punishable by eternal death in hell. Daniel knew and trusted in the faithfulness of his God, the same God who promises forgiveness, life and salvation. No earthly king could promise that – just as no earthly king could take God's promises from him. He chose to follow the true God.

The True God was not only gracious, but he also blessed Daniel and his companions exceedingly much. We'll hear in a moment just how God worked all things for Daniel's good, and for the good of God's people who would be living in captivity for the next 70 years. God granted Daniel great wisdom and skill that was unmistakably recognizable, even by ungodly rulers. They could see that having someone like Daniel in a position of leadership would be helpful to them – and so for 70 years, living in a foreign land, serving kings who were not believers in the True God, Daniel carried out his role of leadership – knowing and remembering that above all, he was there to serve the True God. Daniel understood and lived out his dual citizenship to the fullest.

Like Daniel, we have dual citizenship. By God's grace, through the waters of Holy Baptism, we've been adopted into the most important nation and given the most valuable citizenship. There is no one higher, no ruler is more powerful, no laws, decrees and promises are more important that the Word of our God. No earthly power can even come close to accomplishing what Jesus Christ did on Calvary. No ruler has ever conquered death and the tomb like Christ our King. No ruler gives us the promise of grace and blessing as our God does – which is why we as Christians put our hope and our trust and our faith in God alone. Our citizenship is heaven.

And, while we temporarily reside on this earth, and hold citizenship in this country, or perhaps another as well, we ask God's help, his wisdom, his guidance each day to let the light of Christ shine so that others who do not yet know about God's heavenly kingdom, may come to enjoy the true peace and real freedom for sin and guilt and the fear of death. And when challenges, we will continue to put our confidence in our One True God – who works all things for the good of his people. A reading from Daniel 1:3-21

Hymn Response – 705 Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways

Part Two: Remembering Who is Truly in Charge

In just about every business there's an "Org-Chart." The Org chart lets everyone know the chain of command, who reports to whom, who are the managers… the middle managers… who's in charge of what… the roles and responsibilities… all flowing from the top. And at the top is the leader, the boss, the CEO, the Chairman, the President… whatever the title.

As a nation, at this time of our 250th Celebration, we think about our leaders, past and present, and all those who served under those leaders – to bring us to this point in our history. Bold and difficult decisions had to be made; wars were fought, people gave their lives in service to defend our nation and our freedoms - a tremendous sacrifice for which we are truly grateful.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Rome about their dual-citizenship, and what it means to live under earthly leadership. Those believers didn't have a C-E-O above them, they had and N-E-R-O – as in, Nero, the most ungodly, anti-Christian, wicked leader any believer could have. He persecuted the Church; he burned Christians alive, while feeding others to lions. When you consider this, it makes Paul's opening words in Chapter 13 – almost unthinkable! ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.***

These two verses can be some of the hardest words to swallow. Submit to those in positions of leadership? Should we discuss matters on the local level, perhaps the governor of our state? Or perhaps we can go national… the Senate… the Congress… the Supreme Court… what about the President? Considering the laws that are passed or the actions taken… it strains the brain as we remember that, YES, ***The authorities that exist have been established by God.***

Paul isn't confused here in what he writes; actually, he's spot on, because he goes back to the Org Chart. In the Org Chart – The One True God is still, and always remains, #1. Our Triune God is in charge of all things, including whom HE places as ***"Middle Managers"*** – which is what all governing authorities are. Majors, governors, Senators, Supreme Court Justices, Presidents, Kings, Monarchs – they are all ***Middle Managers*** – who will, at some point, have to give an account to the CEO – God – for their management. And God will judge accordingly.

Remembering our **Dual Citizenship** keeps us focused on **"Who's in charge."** While the government leaders may not understand this, it's vitally important for us to recognize this Chain of Command. Yes, there are earthly and temporal rulers, but they are ones whom God has established. Since the beginning, God has allowed the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms. In the Old Testament, time and again God used ungodly nations to carry out His Will, including the Romans! God used that ungodly man, Pontius Pilate, and the ungodly rule of that nation, to carry out his plan of salvation. And because he did, because you and I and all believers are now eternally blessed, which gives us a godly perspective of the beauty of Romans 13.

In a moment we'll hear those words, "submit to the authorities… paying taxes, owing honor and respect to the authorities…" As we do these things, we are demonstrating our trust in God and acknowledging that HE is #1. And God in His infinite wisdom will utilize those taxes and revenue to accomplish HIS Divine Perfect Will; even if, in our short lifetime, we may not see how it all plays out. Therefore a believer can very well pay taxes and give honor and respect – because doing so demonstrates our trust in God above all. After all – Our God is the only one atop the ORG Chart.

As we look back over 250 years, God has indeed raised up many Middle Managers who established this nation on principles that they penned on paper, including the freedom of religion. They didn't have to. God didn't command them from heaven to do so. Of their own free will did chose to craft the laws and liberties… and we've been blessed tremendously by them. As Christians, we've been able to build churches and schools. We've been able to establish colleges and seminaries to train the next generation of pastors and teachers. We've been able to freely speak our faith in public and witness to others of the truth of the Gospel. Many other countries around this world don't have these privileges; how grateful we are that God guided our leaders to establish such laws.

And as God allows and has given us these freedoms, let us both not take them for granted, and let us make the best use of them. Speak your faith freely. Honor God both privately in your homes and publicly as you gather for worship. And, even as we honor and respect our leaders, in the way we speak about them and discuss matters of our state and country, we can do so in a way that clearly gives witness to the fact that our God always remains #1 and the authorities that exist – he has established.

A Reading from Romans 13:1-7

We sing Psalm 146D

Part Three: Honoring God and Caesar

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he faced opposition. In our Gospel reading we see the opposition coming directly from the Spiritual Leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees. In the plot to trap him, they bring into politics into the discussion to see if they could get Jesus to misspeak. And, just as it remains today a "hot-button" topic, so it was in Jesus' day – TAXES! Who wants to pay taxes?? Where does that money go? Who's using it, and for what? Would Jesus stumble? To add to this, the Pharisees made sure some from the Herodians were to witness how Jesus would reply. The Herodians were Jews who were much more politically minded than spiritual; they were very pro-Herod the Great, very pro-Rome, all about keeping the peace and status quo of society. The trap was set.

Our Savior Jesus, even though he was true God and above all earthly power and authority, he clearly understood what Dual-Citizenship was all about. As true man, Jesus made himself subject to the authorities of this world and in our reading, he demonstrates the proper relationship a believer has with both Government and God. He saw the trap coming a mile away, but h doesn't protest, he doesn't post all over social media the atrocities of Caesar, – he very calmly, simply, easily states, ***"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."*** It's a sentence that is profoundly, deeply simple!

Jesus understood the facts, and no one could argue to the contrary. Jesus reminds them, and us, that God is the owner of all things, including money. Return to the Lord what belongs to the Lord – is a statement that reflects faithful, joyful stewardship. With the money God bestows upon us, we are return a portion to Him out of thanks and love. And – with some of the money that God bestows upon us, we are to return a portion to the government that God has established so that they can do their work of governing. No arguing, no complaining, no fussing – this is what we as believers do – because God has called us to honor Him and the leaders He has placed over us in this way. The Pharisees totally missed this simple truth. They had no answer and went away dumbfounded. The fact is, and Jesus exposed it, they were neither honoring God, nor honoring God's representatives.

As Christians, we strive to follow the example of our Savior. This simple, straightforward account of Jesus and his profound reply is one for us to take to heart and learn from our Savior how we can best put this into practice. Honor God and Honor his leaders – it's the privilege we have because we've been given this amazing Dual-Citizenship. After all, what's the alternative – singular-Citizenship?? Which would mean that we are only citizens of *this earth*, that our allegiance is only to *this land* and to fallible human leaders who cannot save – as Psalm 146 so clearly stated. That's not really an alternative that any of us want – because we know the eternal spiritual blessings our Lord has promised and freely gives to us.

So as long as our Loving Lord gives us life and breathe, whether in this country, or another country… whether we have the civil liberties we have now, or they are removed – we know who's in charge, we know the Org Chart, we know what is to honor, serve and obey and follow our Savior *first!* Therefore we keep our heads and hearts focused on the Great Commission He has given to us – *Go and Make Disciples of All Nations…* in this nation, in other nations… wherever God places us on earth. That's our #1 calling until Christ comes again and takes us to our heavenly home, the true and lasting Promised Land, free of sin, free of sorrow, pain, death and temptation, gathered around the eternal through of Christ together with people from every nation, language, tribe and people – praising our Lord Jesus Christ. A Reading from Matthew 22:15-22