

Exiles of Heaven

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Philippians 3;20

What does it mean to live as a exile of heaven? After all, we as believers have never seen this heavenly land. How can we long for something we have never seen? Does this mean we must go about with somber faces, drab clothes, and avoid those who are different than us?



When you live in a cultural context that is not your native culture, you will experience a phenomenon called culture shock. First, everything is new and exciting. Life is new, beautiful, and wonderful. After a time, the newness will wear off. Perhaps there are misunderstandings with your new friends/colleagues due to cultural expectations or language barriers. Or you want to stick someones head in a squatty potty because you're upset with each other and not even sure why. Maybe you will cry yourself to sleep at night and pray that you'll get malaria so you don't have to interact with others for a while. You will want to go home.

“Home” - where is home? Home is often described as a place that is comforting and familiar. Living in a another culture changes one's thinking and you become partly like that said culture. But you will never completely assimilate to the new culture and you will never completely re-assimilate to your previous one. A misfit, a foreigner, no matter where you go. But take heart! We are called to be citizens of a landless kingdom. The kingdom of heaven. If our citizenship is not in an earthly kingdom, then we are exiles on this earth. Here for a short time, eagerly awaiting the Lord's coming.

In the meantime, each day can be a joyful celebration that God has given us a new day to praise and serve Him. Thankful that we can get up, work, treasure our family and community, and have food to eat.

The challenges of culture shock will eventually change from frustration to constant amusement at the differences. It will require much patience! A new, matured, assertive, perspective changed individual emerges on the other side.

“This world is not my home/I'm just a-passing through/My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue/The angels beckon me from heavens open door/ And I can't feel at home in this world any more.”



Imana ishimwe! (To God be the glory!) - Grace Elliott