

What Made America Great?

God is in control of the nations. He blesses nations that follow His principles, and judges nations that practice wickedness. As we read the Bible and its focus on Israel in the OT, and the Church in the NT, we sometimes forget that God is also concerned with the Gentile nations. He will judge them for their actions.

The Psalmist recognizes this in Psalm 33. Notice the emphasis on all nations.

- (Psalm 33:5) *"The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the **earth is full** of his unfailing love."*
- (Psalm 33:8) *"Let **all the earth** fear the Lord; let all the **people of the world** revere him."*
- (Psalm 33:10) *"The Lord foils the **plans of the nations**; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples."*
- (Psalm 33:12-19) *"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and **sees all mankind**; from his dwelling place **he watches all who live on earth**— he who forms the **hearts of all**, who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on **those who fear him**, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine."*

In Hannah's song of joy over the birth of Samuel, she recognizes God's control over all of the earth. **1 Samuel 2:6-8** *"The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; upon them he has set the world."*

Jeremiah testifies that God controls all of the earth. **Jeremiah 27:1-5** *"...send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ... 'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Tell this to your masters: With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please."*

When an adversary came against Israel, it was only because the Lord ordained it. **1 Kings 11:14** *"Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom."*

A striking passage comes from Jeremiah 18. The context surrounds the image of clay in

the hand of the potter. Israel was the clay, and the Lord is the potter. But the reality of God's control, and the requirement to obey His word goes beyond Judah. It extends to the Gentile nations as well. Notice the words of **Jeremiah 18:5-10** *"Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it."*

The Lord promises to reward the nation that trust Him, and to punish the nation that rejects Him! There is no greater example of this principle than the example of the wicked Assyrians and their capital city of Nineveh. After Jonah reluctantly preached to the city, they turned from their sin, and God blessed them and withheld His judgment. (Jonah 3:5-10) *"The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."*

All of these examples are summarized in the words of **Proverbs 14:34** *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."*

The principle is clear. God blesses the nations that honor Him. Might this have anything to do with the blessings so evident in this wonderful country? I do not think that you can separate our national blessings from God's hand of provision.

What Made America Great? Think with me about the answer that some give toward that question.

Read a student's text book, and it will infer that our greatness stems from the **natural bounty** of America.

- Our shores are blessed with many natural resources. Settlers who arrived in their ships were greeted with some of the worlds greatest natural harbors. In the age of the automobile, freight train and airplane we forget the absolute significance of safe harbors for shipping, goods and travel.

- A varied climate allows us to grow just about anything in our country. In October you can harvest cactus pears from the southern states, and in the same day view beautiful fall foliage in the northern states.
- Our Great Lakes contain 18% of the total fresh water in the entire world. They provide drinking water for 40 million in US and Canada, and the surrounding region produces 90% of the Iron ore used in our country.

But other countries have just as much in the way of natural resources. Many nations with abundant resources never achieve the prosperity that America has enjoyed for generations. There must be something more than abundant resources to which we owe our greatness.

Well then, someone might insist that our greatness is found in the **form of government** that we possess. But if that were true, why have the paths of America and France been so different? The French Revolution took place roughly the same time as the American Revolution (1789). http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/French_Revolution.aspx

- But in the past 200 years, France's government has changed 7 times, with its current constitution dating only dating back to 1958. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0858213.html>
- France lost to the British under Napoleon, the British and the Indians in America, and the Germans in WWI and WWII. Were it not for the intervention of the US in both wars, France would have lost their independence.

Our heritage as a democratic republic means that our government functions under the direction of the governed. Democracy is the best form of government and no nation has influenced the world as much for democracy as the USA. **When democracy works properly, the wealthy and powerful are hindered from abusing their wealth or power to hurt others and expand their fortunes on the backs of the oppressed.** But democracy is not perfect. If the governed ignore their responsibilities, or select wicked individuals to govern, the result is no different than when tyrants rule. Other nations exercise democracy, and sometimes rightly elected leaders do terrible things. America's greatness does not extend from democracy alone.

Well then, America's greatness must come from our **Religious Faith**. "Ah," you might say. "This is where he is going with this sermon." It may surprise you to hear this, but religious faith is not the specific reason that America has enjoyed 230 years of greatness among nations. Think about it. Afghanistan had religious faith under Taliban rule. Hitler and Germany's fascists were religious. The Communist regimes practice their own form of religion, it is called humanism. And there is no more zealous religion in the world today than Shia Muslims who advocate that their version Shariah Law be enforced on all people of the world. It is religion that motivated Mohamed Atta and the 18 other hijackers to fly American planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a farmer's field in Pennsylvania. There is plenty of religion in the world. Religious faith did not make America great.

America was Established on the Foundation of Christian Principles

- Murray Hornsby documented the fact that "97% of the Founding Fathers were practicing Christians and exercised their faith in public office, at work, at home, and had it taught to

their children in their schools. 187 of the first 200 colleges in America were Christian, Bible teaching institutions (including Yale, Princeton, and Harvard). Entrance in Harvard required strong knowledge of the Bible “ SOURCE: **Murray Hornsby** “Our History and Faith in God, American Heritage Alliance.”

- Author Stephen McDowell, wrote that “10% of all political writings in the Founding Era were preserved in the form of sermons.” SOURCE: Mark Beliles and Stephen McDowell, *America’s Providential History*, (Charlottesville: Providence Foundation, 1989), 122.
- In a powerful video, Christian historian David Barton referenced a study from the University of Houston. Their political science professors set out to determine the origins and influences on our Constitution. They collected 15000 writings. The task took them 10 years. The book most often quoted from was Bible, with 34% direct references. However, when you examined all of the sources, **90% of the quotations of the founders were directly or indirectly from the Bible.**” (David Barton, “America’s Godly Heritage”)

But you don’t have to go to such great lengths of research. Just read what our founders wrote and believed:

- George Washington. *“It is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible”*
- John Adams. 2nd Pres of the US. *“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”*
- Patrick Henry. *“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was grounded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ! For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity and freedom of worship here.”*
- Noah Webster. (Dictionary, school primers). *“Let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for yourselves rulers, ‘just men who rule in the fear of God.’ . . .If a republican government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the divine commands and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.”*

Not only did they speak and write about the importance of their religious beliefs, they lived out these principles publicly and without apology.

- First Act of the Congress under the Constitution - elect a chaplain
- Second act of the Congress was to approve the printing of 20,000 Bibles for the Indians.
- THOMAS JEFFERSON - In a treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians, Congress provided for a church building and a Christian chaplain. President Jefferson signed the bill into law.
- The Founders authorized the printing of Bibles with tax dollars
- They provided for chaplains for various branches of government AND the military.
- General George Washington demanded that his officers and enlisted men attend

- church service whenever they were not in battle.
- Presidents and congress routinely called for days of prayer, and fasting as well as days of national thanksgiving.
- References to God and quotes from the Bible appear throughout their writing, speeches and laws.
- Many states required Christian faith as a pre-requisite for holding elected office.
- School children were taught to read from the Bible and public education taught Christian doctrine up until about 50 years ago.

So then, we have established that Nations are held accountable for their obedience to God's principles. We have demonstrated that America's blessings originate from the fact that our foundation was strongly based on belief in God and adherence to His word. The question we must ask is this, Will God Continue to Bless America?

George Washington feared that we would LOSE this moral foundation. In his Farewell Address, Washington wrote, *Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.*

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Washington%27s_Farewell_Address

Our nation is already experiencing the Judgment of a God who has been grieved, rejected, mocked and legislated out of public life. What is needed? I believe that we simply need the preaching of Jonah! America is Nineveh, 800 BC. God's judgment is coming! The reality of coming economic collapse is already feared. Our standing among nations is a mockery. We cannot protect our own borders, or enforce our own laws. Our children mock their parents, and expect to receive everything that the desire without obligation to pay for it. Our citizens have figured out that by voting the right representatives into office, that they can coerce and extort their neighbors through the power of the central treasury.

Judgment is already upon us! Like Jonah, we must cry out to those in danger of the hand of God. Notice that Jonah's entire message can be found in (Jonah 3:4) "*On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be*

overturned.””

What was the power of Jonah’s message? It certainly was not Jonah’s eloquence. It was not his commitment to the Lord, or his love the the Ninevehites, or his great missionary zeal. He failed in every one of those areas!

The power was in the Love of God and the message proclaimed. You might feel inadequate to proclaim God’s message of salvation to this wicked and corrupt generation. You might even feel, like Jonah, that they deserve what is about to come to them. But GOD LOVES THEM. And whether or not you believe that God’s Word is powerful, IT IS.

Proclaim the message of salvation. It is the only hope for America. It is the only way that we will be saved from the judgment that most certainly is deserved. The Salvation of the US will not come from legislation, or politicians, or reformation. If we think that the Church will gradually improve the world, we are vastly mistaken. In the prophesy of Scripture, only the Coming of JESUS will turn the nations toward complete obedience. Until He returns, the hope for change is found in the message of the gospel.