

I have always wondered about the Biblical authority for the American Revolution. There were so many clergy involved and willing to lead out, and God seemed to intervene time and time again on behalf of those seeking independence. They were almost all men who believed the Word of God. They had legitimate grievances. Yet, Romans 13 clearly tells us to submit to the governing authorities.

*<sup>1</sup> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup> for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.*

Romans 13:1-6

My heart said the American Revolution was blessed by God and resulted in the freest, most prosperous nation on earth. Yet, my mind did not understand how that fit with Scripture (Acts 17:11). It was only in reading the introduction to a book on the impact of the Gospel in India that it became clear to me. What no American explained to me was made clear by an Indian professor, Dr. Vishal Mangalwadi. I'll be extensively borrowing from what he wrote in the introduction to the book, *Let there be India!* by Babu Verghese.

Should nations control their borders? Is it our moral duty to pay taxes when our government misuses the funds and insists that immorality is a right? These questions are philosophical, but their implications have serious effects on society. Our present culture's (postmodern) answers are unclear (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Perhaps a more important question to ask is this: **Are nations sacred?** If they are not, then why shouldn't Russia swallow up the Ukraine? After all, it was recently a part of Russia. Why shouldn't ISIS take over nations to build an Islamic Caliphate? Why shouldn't Mexico walk across the border and reclaim Texas and Arizona? On the other hand, why would Great Britain allow Scotland to vote on whether to secede or not? Or to my original question, "Why would God bless the colonists who wanted to secede from England?"

We see an emotional response of national unity when our nation experiences a crisis. If attacked, we all feel it personally. Dr. Mangalwadi suggests that great nations are built upon truth, upon a rational worldview that affirms sanctity of nations through language, literature, education, and media that promote nationalism as a virtue.

**Commented [PW1]: Acts 17:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**Commented [PW2]: 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

What would the world look like if, after winning the Second World War, the USA decided to colonize Germany and Japan? In partnership with England, the two could have made the world submit to The United Empires. Instead, President Franklin D. Roosevelt demanded, as a pre-condition to joining the war, that the Allies dismantle their colonial ideology and promote the United Nations. He did so because, at the time, we still thought nations were sacred. They were God's idea, therefore they were moral.

Empire building came from pagans such as the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans. The British worldview was a fusion of Roman and Biblical thought which led to confusion. How can nations be sacred and yet taking them over to exploit them by building an empire be consistent? This was the reason that the Revolutionary War was not violating the command to submit to the authorities God established. God never established England as the authority of another land. And as we shall see, a land area is part of what makes up a sacred nation.

The world followed America's moral vision and disbanded their colonies. Those colonies became nations. **For the first time in history, it became international law and a sacred moral principle to respect "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of nations.** What we failed to do was nurture the theological roots of the UN and many of those former colonies. Deprived of theological nutrients, those roots have dried up. The result is that the very concept of "nation" is in deep trouble in our day. While trying to encourage individuality and cooperation, the unintended consequences have been to provide an opportunity for a powerful despot or religious fanatic.

Intellectuals rightly blamed the Second World War on German nationalism. Secular intellectuals and the mainline churches took it a step further and condemned the very concept of "nation." They missed the fact that it was God who established nations. Even more importantly, **they failed to see that God promised to make Abraham a great nation through whom all the nations might be blessed (not dominated).**

Pre-war Germany could not become a great nation, that is, a nation that unites other nations, for they sought to dominate rather than to bless. They had rejected the cultural authority of God's Word. The university and media used the abuse of nationalism to make the concept of "nation" and "nationalism" abhorrent. Once the idea of "nation" was ridiculed, there was no moral ground from which to oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine or ISIS attempt to create a Sunni Empire. If nations are not sacred, then why should they not do so?

America's vision of an independent nation uniting its colonies came from Genesis 10 and 11. In those chapters, God destroyed Babel in order to divide mankind into nations. **Chapter 10 defines nations three times as a people, with a distinct language, in a given territory** (Genesis 10:5, 20, 31). I'll just read the first. <sup>5</sup> *From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.* Genesis 10:5

"Genesis chapter 12 then begins the Bible's grand narrative of transforming a nomad, Abraham, into a great soul as well as into a 'great nation' in a given territory that it

**Commented [PW3]: Genesis 10:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

**Commented [PW4]: Genesis 10:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

**Commented [PW5]: Genesis 10:31 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

owns and manages." So we see a nation as a people group, governing its territory, in its own language. A "great nation" is one that is able to merge various peoples into one governing structure for the good of all in a given territory. Israel did this with their 13 tribes. America did the same with 13 colonies. When tribalism dominated, Israel split into two kingdoms. Is it coincidence that America almost did the same?

God's purpose in making Israel a great nation was to bring the light of God's Word and the knowledge of the one true God to the nations of the world (Genesis 12:2-3; 18:18; 22:18). The surrounding empires did not understand or respect nationhood. The ancient world was motivated by greed and power. Not much has changed. Still, Israel's survival was miraculous, in spite of its many failures. The key to its success, perseverance, and global influence was the compilation of its literature into one book, the Bible. Their adherence to the Scriptures brought the blessing of God. When they abandoned it, their hearts turned from God to the gods of the world and they would face defeat and even captivity.

As much as I would love to see revival happen in America today, we have traveled well down that road of abandoning the Word of the Lord and exchanged it for the opinions of man. We have many guests from around the nation and the world that visit this church. They are almost shocked that we teach and preach the Scriptures, word for word, verse by verse. Some love it, and some hate it. Many are hungry for it because they don't have it in the area in which they live right here in our own United States.

Dr. Mangalwadi writes, "Every nation became a great nation that followed Israel's example and paid serious attention to the book that Moses began to compile. One fact that made the Bible-based nations 'great' is obvious: In his fifth book Moses taught that nations were sacred because they were God's creation." <sup>8</sup> *When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.* Deuteronomy 32:8

The Greeks began with a democratic city-states but soon discarded democracy in favor of Persian patterned empire building. The Apostle Paul tried to share with them the divine origin of nations. <sup>26</sup> *And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,* <sup>27</sup> *that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,* Acts 17:26-27

Mangalwadi writes, "Nation is a moral idea. Nations are sacred because they are divine creation. In an empire you are a subject. In a nation you are a citizen with rights and responsibilities, with duties and opportunities. In an empire you are taxed without anyone seeking your consent about how much you should be taxed and how your tax money should be spent. In a nation, there is no taxation without representation."

The first book of the Bible tells us nations are sacred because they are God's idea. He is the origin and gave us the concept. The Bible concludes with God's plan for healing the nations that are a part of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 22:2). Jesus' great commission is to disciple the nations (Matthew 28:19). By bringing the light of Jesus to

**Commented [PW6]: Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

**Commented [PW7]: Genesis 18:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

**Commented [PW8]: Genesis 22:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

the nations we instruct them how to live (Revelation 21:24). We instruct them with the written Word of God, the very Word our nation is currently rejecting (Hosea 4:6).

So why was the Revolutionary War one in which God seemed to side with those who were rebelling against authority? England had gone from being a nation to building an empire, dominating areas that were not a part of their national land area. The people of the new land were from various countries but were united in their desire for religious freedom. Here in this new land area, these people with a common passion to worship freely as they felt led were a united people, a nation in its own right.

Thank you Dr. Mangalwadi for helping me see what was clearly in Scripture but had to be pointed out to me so that I could understand the reason. I might add that King James II and George III were not abiding by the authority under which his authority was derived. That was the complaint of the colonies. The Magna Carta declared that a tyrant is a ruler who ceases to act under the law and denies his subject their rights as guaranteed by law. The Parliament of England defined tyranny as taxation without representation (2 Samuel 23:3).

God blessed the colonists and intervened on their behalf because that land area was not appointed to England, nor was the King of England operating under the authority granted him. I hope you have been able to follow along this morning and now understand why God intervened for the colonists. Time and time again weather favored them and opportunities England had to defeat them were passed up for inexplicable reasons.

Now, where are we today? As Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others warned Israel, forsaking God means hardship will eventually be required by the merciful hand of God to turn us back from our own destructive ways (Zechariah 1:3). No country has ever been able to print their way out of debt. It only makes the consequences harder to bear. No country has survived moral decay. Sin has consequences (Isaiah 1:28).

Only God knows if we have passed that point of no return. When we quickly abandoned church after the temporary revival following 9/11, it appeared our repentance was insincere. When that happened with the earliest colonies, the result was the Indian uprising, plague, and crop failures. Our entertainment grows more vulgar, our education more useless, our reasoning based less and less on reality and more and more on opinions. We are deeply divided, a fact we see in every election cycle. As Jesus declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." (Matthew 12:25)

There comes a time in the history of nations when the warnings of God go unheeded. The most hardhearted of the original colonists would turn to God in repentance when the weather destroyed their crops. Today we see weather or any calamity and God as being completely unrelated (Zechariah 7:13).

God told Jeremiah on three different occasions not to pray for the people of Judah (Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). Why would God do that? Because God knew mercy would only deepen their guilt. Prolonging the judgment would make it even more

**Commented [PW9]: Revelation 21:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,

**Commented [PW10]: Hosea 4:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

**Commented [PW11]: 2 Samuel 23:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,

**Commented [PW12]: Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

**Commented [PW13]: Isaiah 1:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

**Commented [PW14]: Matthew 12:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

**Commented [PW15]: Zechariah 7:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> "As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts,

**Commented [PW16]: Jeremiah 7:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> "As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

**Commented [PW17]: Jeremiah 11:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> "Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble.

**Commented [PW18]: Jeremiah 14:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> The LORD said to me: "Do not pray for the welfare of this people.

severe. God wants what is best for us as individuals and as nations. If mercy would turn us, He would bring revival and prompt us to cry out for mercy (Ezekiel 14:14).

I remember the call in the 1990s. I joined 10,000 people who fasted for 40 days for the nation under the direction of Bill Bright. I attended rally after rally under the banner of 2 Chronicles 7:14. But the nation would not turn, and only became more determined to turn from God's Word. Francis Shaffer predicted these days of tyranny of the Judicial Branch of the government.

The causal issue is the desire to be free from restraints. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. "Hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1) The Bible calls it the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:7). It is the spirit of the anti-Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3). God gave us boundaries, both physical and spiritual, for our good. We ignore them to our own peril. Instead of the freedom lawlessness promises, we end up enslaved.

You might be thinking, "Pastor, this is depressing. I came to church to be encouraged, but it's not happening!" Let me remind you of our study in Isaiah. Remember that Isaiah was writing of the inevitable captivity of the nation. Then, half way through, he started writing of hope and comfort for them when they would be in exile. God deals with us for our good. God promised to hold the right hand of those in exile (Isaiah 41:10). He promised to lead them home again and bless them (Isaiah 42:16).

We have to realize that God will do whatever it takes to bring us back to where we can be blessed. The blessing He is seeking for us is not just temporal, but eternal. While we are each a part of a nation that God will deal with as a whole, we are also individuals that God deals with uniquely. **The best way to prepare for whatever is ahead is to be completely submitted to God's will and surrendered in every area of life.**

Luke's message on John 15 started me thinking about abiding in Jesus (John 15:4). It means to live in Him. We make our home in Him. And He makes His home in us (John 14:23). But is my heart a place He is comfortable being? Am I comfortable being in His holy heart? The only way either are possible is when I completely let go and give Him the place that belongs to Him, the throne in my heart. He must reign in me. It must be His righteousness, because I do a terrible job at being righteous. I have to give the controls to Him and just obey. That's when I am comfortable in Him and He is in me. That's when it feels like home. That's when circumstances don't bother me as much, for I am home.

God will deal with the sins of the nation (Psalm 9:17), but while doing so He will walk with those who are His. That is when we are most useful, for it is a crisis that is often needed to turn people back to God. That is when they are willing to hear. And that is why it is necessary. When we began the series in Isaiah, I knew we would find some parallels with our nation. I just didn't realize how closely the pattern would fit.

**Commented [PW19]: Ezekiel 14:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.

**Commented [PW20]: 2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

**Commented [PW21]: Genesis 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

**Commented [PW22]: 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

**Commented [PW23]: 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

**Commented [PW24]: Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

**Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 42:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

**Commented [PW26]: John 15:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

**Commented [PW27]: John 14:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**Commented [PW28]: Psalm 9:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

## Questions

- 1 Are nations "sacred"?
- 2 What are "great nations" built on?
- 3 What was Roosevelt's demand?
- 4 What's wrong with empire building?
- 5 Why was the UN a failure? Results?
- 6 What is the Bible's definition of "nation"?
- 7 What was God doing through Abraham?
- 8 What defines a "great nation"?
- 9 What was the key to Israel's success?
- 10 What is the difference between nation and empire?
- 11 Where's the encouragement?
- 12 What do we do to be prepared?