

The Light for America

Proverbs 14:34; Isaiah 60:1-3, 12

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On our national birthday, let's give thanks and also reflect upon what was in God's mind in birthing our nation. Our birth as a nation was not an accident of nature. It was a work of God.

The Bible says:

From one man he (God) made every nation of men (Acts 17:26, NIV)

That means God made us. God wasn't drunk. God wasn't impulsive. God was purposeful. In fact, the Bible reveals that God was detailed. He made every nation:

That they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:26-28, NIV)

God determined the times for the United States of America. God set the exact places where we should live. God did this so that all people, all nations would seek and find the God who in love created them and has acted to redeem them.

It is instructive to remember that the United States was not born in a vacuum. We came alive in suffering and revolt. Ours was a bloody birth. On July 4th, 1776 a document explained why we revolted and formed a new nation. It began:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

What cause justifies the formation of a separate and sovereign nation? The colonist, who would surrender their livelihood and lives for this cause, explained:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

America was founded in the belief that all men are created equal, that God created no classes of human beings. The colonists acted on the belief that God did not create one set of human beings to rule over another, one class to hold the power and the money, to do the thinking and make the decisions. This was different. In the east, emperors were worshiped as the image of God. In the west, bloodlines and classes were honored as especially endowed and authorized. However, in America a people acted on the biblical truth that all are created equal, indeed, in the image of God. Therefore, they are justly ruled only with their consent.

Is this not a light that reveals humanity and the God who made us? Were not we formed as a city on the hill, for the blessing of humanity? This does not diminish the purposes of other nations, or suggest that their founding was not of God. God made all nations. It is not to exalt ourselves over others as better, more moral or more favored. Instead, let's acknowledge that we ourselves are a work of God and have divine purpose that is beyond our self-fulfillment.

It is vital that we understand that these connections we have as a people of a nation is divinely planned. God planned that we be connected together as a nation. We have purpose as a nation. We are intended to bless other nations. The prophet Isaiah spoke:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. (Isaiah 60:1-3, NIV)

In part, that prophecy was fulfilled here in America. Peoples suffering across the world came to our nation and formed new governments based on the light that arose here. Europe, Africa, and South America have all been reshaped by the light, by what transpired and resulted from our birth.

The light that shined in America was from God. It was the glory of the Lord. At our very inception, America's founders looked to God for their justification and also their protection. In the Declaration of Independence, they appealed to the "Supreme Judge of the world" for "the rectitude of their intentions;" and they pledge to each other their lives, fortunes and honor with firm reliance on "the protection of Divine Providence." Whatever variations of faith they possessed, our founders corporately looked to God for their approval and help. With so many guided by faith in Jesus, they became a light to nations.

It makes sense that God would create and care about nations because they are a means by which he cares for and connects with his children. Government is to work for God. The Apostle Paul wrote:

He (a ruler) ***is God's servant to do you good.*** (Romans 13:4, NIV)

Government has a call from God to do us good. Government leaders are public servants. They serve the good of the people. They do not always agree with the people. In South Africa,

President Nelson Mandela, who as a militant black leader had been imprisoned for 27 years, confronted a country of blacks who wanted their pound of flesh from the whites. They had suffered, and now they wanted the white people to pay. At great personal cost, the President chose another way: the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. He refused to cave to bitterness. We must also refuse such temptation.

We live in a nation and among a people that have lost their fear of God and their faith in God's word. Consequently, we no longer treat one another with great respect and honor. Our public discourse is full of insult. As disciples of Jesus, we must not render insult for insult, accusation for accusation, evil for evil. We must not succumb to the spirit of division, vulgarity and hatred that tempts us in disagreement. The Bible says:

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. (Proverbs 14:34, NIV)

It is never righteous to degrade those in public service. It is never righteous to condemn those who disagree with us. Our mouths are swords and they must be used for righteousness, not evil. The sword of our words must be wielded with care, not recklessly.

There is a light for America. There is a hope. There is power that blessed and will bless. It is Jesus. He raises up, and he tears down. He is the tree of life, and the leaves from this tree heal nations. Twice since our founding, the Spirit of Jesus visited America with such power and conviction that the high and low alike turned to God. These great awakenings, spiritual revivals brought untold blessings and changed the course of history. Those great works of God began with personal repentance as believers turned to God and prayed for the healing of their land.

The fate of America does not rest in the Democrat or Republican Party. It depends upon the faith and actions of those who believe in Jesus. Will the light of God's glory rise upon them?

Will they repent, believe and seek salvation for their nation? Will we walk with Jesus in our special connection to one another as a nation? God wills it. Will we?