

# River Stone Fellowship Pulpit

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 2020, BY

*MICHAEL D. LACOBEE,*

AT RIVER STONE FELLOWSHIP, NIXA, MO.

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*“Open American Exceptionalism”*

*For King and Country*

# PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

## DEUTERONOMY 7:1-11 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, <sup>2</sup> and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. <sup>3</sup> “Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. <sup>4</sup> “For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. <sup>5</sup> “But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. <sup>6</sup> “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; <sup>10</sup> but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. <sup>11</sup> “Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.

## PRAYER

## RECAP / INTRODUCTION

Good morning Church family, I'm so thankful that we are able to gather together again this morning, in the goodness and grace of God, as we aim to make much of Jesus. If you haven't already, grab your Bibles and turn with me to **Deuteronomy 7:1-11**.

For the last few weeks now, we have been in a wonderful series called, “For King and Country.” We have looked to the Word of God for those truths surrounding political theology and our role as citizens of the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms this world. In our time together over the last few weeks, I pray that we have rightfully discovered that God is, as Psalm 47 tells us, “...the King of all the earth,” that He “reigns over the nations,” that He “sits on his holy throne,” and that all of the rulers of the earth “belong to God.”

Last week, we studied the truths of our focus needing to remain on the Kingdom of God in all things, but also our influence in culture and society as Christians. As His Church, His Kingdom people, we are to set our minds on the things above, and not on the things that are on earth (Col. 3:2), because the world is passing away, and all its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:17). Therefore, whatever it is that we do, in word or in deed, we are to do all in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (Col. 3:17).

Now, I want to make the case that the word “whatever” in the commands of “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” does not diminish us to some sort of silent monk lifestyle in our faith, nor in the practice of it. “Whatever you do in word or deed,” includes our being involved in the affairs of this world. Christians were never called to be uninvolved in the affairs of this world. We’re no doubt called to be holy and set apart, but that is in **who** we are, not **where** we are. And, **who** we are and **how** we live, as Christians, is unmistakably important to the lost world around us. This morning, I want us to consider the uniqueness our second citizenship, not at all abandoning our heavenly citizenship as followers of Jesus Christ, but engaging our earthly citizenship as citizens of the United States of America.

What I have found to be surprising in this study “For King and Country” is how deeply Biblical and theological it has revealed itself to be; not merely in one nation, regardless of it’s uniqueness, but of GOD’s Sovereign rule and reign over His creation, and His personal and expected involvement in it. I have for us three important subjects that we will study from this morning. We will first look at **THE MAKING OF AN EXCEPTIONAL NATION**, where we will look at the exceptional beginnings and claims of the American way. Secondly, we will rightly understand what is known as American Exceptionalism by exploring **THE MYTH OF A MESSIANIC NATION**. And lastly, we will explore **THE MODEL FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING** as we strive to live as an example of justice, of freedom and equality, with Christlike, Christ-proclaiming compassion, with integrity, decency, and dignity toward human flourishing, in the very least, according to God’s common grace to all His creation.

# THE MAKING OF AN EXCEPTIONAL NATION

I cannot explain to you enough how much there is to study, to learn, and to apply when it comes to studying national and world history. In fact, the more I read and studied, just this week, the more I realized how much there is to know about our human history in general.

One of the very interesting studies, in our somewhat recent human history, is the beginning events in the founding of our very young nation of the United States of America, and most certainly not referred to the United States of America in the discovery of and colonization of this land of North America.

It may not begin where you think it would. Some of you may be familiar with a man by the name of King Henry VIII. King Henry VIII ruled as King of England for 36 years, and did so at a time where what we now know as the Protestant Reformation was sweeping through England. King Henry VIII is famous for his inability to keep a healthy marriage. He is known to have married six times and for all the “right” reasons of political alliance and advancement and to have a son that would be heir to the throne. All of his marriages ended up in either annulment, natural deaths, and two of his wives’ were beheaded for adultery and treason. From those marriages, King Henry VIII had three children, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, and each of these children would take their turn as England’s King or Queen.

Now let’s focus on his daughter Mary. Mary was King Henry VIII’s daughter with a woman named Catherine of Aragon. Long story short, with King Henry VIII’s terrible treatment of marriage, Catherine of Aragon never provided him with a male heir to the throne; therefore, he divorced her and married another woman by the name of Anne Boleyn. This left her daughter Mary to be declared an illegitimate child and she was separated from her mother Catherine, whom she dearly loved.

Now, eventually King Henry VIII died, leaving his dysfunctional family units to fight over who would reign. Edward, King Henry VIII’s only son, succeeded him as King first, yet became very sick in only a few short years and died. Edward wanted nothing to do with Mary for many reasons, nor did he want her to have a chance at the throne at all.

Just before Edward died, he made sure that his cousin Lady Jane Grey would take his place as ruler, and she actually did. But, after only ten days, Mary raised up an army, defeated Jane as Queen of England, and rode into London triumphantly in August of 1553. And, even though Mary had finally become Queen of England, she would discover that the rest of her life would only bring problems and difficulties. Mary was a devout and passionate Roman Catholic, which was one of the reasons King Edward, her estranged brother, never wanted her to have the throne.

Through poor leadership and marriage decisions, Mary had little trust from her people and she herself grew constantly suspicious of plots against her and Protestant threats against the Catholic Church, which again, she dearly loved. In 1555, this led Mary to begin a brutal initiative against the anyone who would identify as Protestant. She hated the Protestants, and showed it off quite violently. She became known as “bloody Mary” because of how awfully she would torment Protestant Christians. During her reign it is said that she burned at the stake over 300 people. Her victims were bound to a large stake in the ground, surrounded by a great pile of dried brush and doused in pitch and tar. I even read this week, that she would “show a bit of mercy” by first strangling the Protestant victims and then lighting them on fire.

This obviously caused many of the Protestants to flee into all of Europe, which led to an immense growth in Reformation Theology and they were greatly influenced by the writings of William Tyndale. who is very famous for translating the Bible into English, and ultimately being burned at the stake for it. In fact, **Tyndale** once wrote of this opposition,

*“The preaching of God's word is hateful and contrary unto them. Why? For it is impossible to preach Christ, except thou preach against antichrist; that is to say, them which with their false doctrine and violence of sword enforce to quench the true doctrine of Christ.”*

As the Protestant population exploded into Europe, one of Tyndale's theological distinctives, that of national election. This theological distinctive of a nation being elected by God came during many of the persecutions as many English Protestants believed that England existed in covenant with God as His chosen people. They truly believed that it was their calling from

God to restore England back to a right standing with God, in hopes that God would remove His wrath and judgment from a wicked and perverse nation, due to the false teachings and murderous actions of Queen Mary and the Catholic Church. These Protestant exiles, persecuted and pummeled in many ways by Queen Mary and the Catholic Church, returned to England after Mary died, and were the pathfinders of the Protestant Puritan movement.

Now, I have not merely wasted your time with what might seem to be unholy history as we seek to honor the Lord and know more of Him this morning. Scholar **Richard Hughes** tells us that, William...

*“Tyndale’s vision of covenant...was the soil in which the notion of chosenness would slowly germinate until, finally it would spring full-blown in the United States.”*

Now, in the making of an exceptional nation, which I truly believe America is an exceptional nation, we must remember the great potential for idolatry and false worship in such a citizenship. We are Kingdom first Christ followers, and if this nation has ever been exceptional at all, in the economy of God, it has been when the Church has prioritized the Word of God, the Gospel, and true Christian living, and these things have been alive and well in the founding and development of our nation.

From some of the earliest stages of our nation America's founding figures and its citizens drew from their Christian convictions to eventually create a constitutional order that makes our nation unique, and blesses us even today as citizens of the United States. I want to do a little bit of ground work here to reveal this amazing heritage we have as American citizens.

As I just stated, From King Henry VIII, to Mary I, to William Tyndale, to the effects of the Protestant Reformation, from England, to New England...that's us, any serious historian can clearly see that not only had the nation begun to really develop in the eighteenth century, but it can be argued that our nation actually began about 150 years prior to the signing of the declaration of Independence as many Puritan colonists were significantly settling into the Northeast sections of our nation.

These New England Puritans were no doubt serious Christians attempting to create, in the words of Massachusetts governor John Winthrop, “a city upon a hill.” This was a phrase he very clearly got from Matthew 5, in the great Sermon on the Mount. Many of these colonists demanded a separation of Church and state, but their understanding of that was not the invalidation of either. The New England Puritan founders desired for the Church and the state to work in tandem to support, protect, and promote true Christianity.

And, I'll say this, if you have your doubts in this, and “If the standard of being a Christian is moral perfection, no one has ever been a Christian,” and if you are looking for false beliefs that led to heinous sins, not only will you truly find them in their worst forms in the early years of our nation, and even today, but you'll certainly find them in the Church as well. Nevertheless, there is an unmatched solid examination that Christianity, true Christianity, had a profound influence on the founding generations of what would become the United States of America.

By the time we get to the such times as the War of Independence, we would eventually have that wonderful **Declaration of Independence**, which proclaims:

*“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.”*

It is clear that the founders use of Christian rhetoric and arguments become even more evident if you look at many of the statements in many of the other very famous documents of our country which would include, even as I read last week, calls to Christian prayer, to Christian fasting, to a nation being called to thanksgiving toward God the Creator and sustainer of all things. God and His right religion have not been left to some vague or possible mentioning of Him, but as an influential and explicit guiding factor.

I am not saying that all of these men and women were Christians, or that we are a Christian nation. I am saying that what we truly know of Christianity through Jesus Christ, what we're called to, how we live, how we treat others, and value what God values, in our nation, even

lost and ungodly men knew the value of Christianity and that shapes a nation very differently from others.

**John Adams**, signer of the Declaration of Independence, once said, that

*“The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity.*

Sixth President of the United States of America, **John Quincy Adams**, once said,

*The hope of a Christian is inseparable from his faith. Whoever believes in the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must hope that the religion of Jesus shall prevail throughout the earth. Never since the foundation of the world have the prospects of mankind been more encouraging to that hope than they appear to be at the present time. And may the associated distribution of the Bible proceed and prosper till the Lord shall have made “bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” [Isaiah 52:10].*

What about **Josiah Bartlett**, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and governor of New Hampshire, once called on the people of New Hampshire...

*“...to confess before God their aggravated transgressions and to implore His pardon and forgiveness through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ...[t]hat the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be made known to all nations, pure and undefiled religion universally prevail, and the earth be fill with the glory of the Lord.”*

One of my favorite discoveries has been the education of our nation's first generations of children. I discovered something called the New England Primer. The New England Primer was one of the textbooks during the early establishment of the original thirteen colonies. The New England Primer was the single most influential Christian textbook in history and it became the most successful educational textbook published in 18<sup>th</sup> century America and was known as the foundation of most schooling prior to 1790. In fact, I read this week that many scholars believe that most, if not all, of the Founding Fathers, were taught to read and write using the New England Primer just as most others were taught.

The primer aimed to combine the study of the Word of God, all the while, teaching the children the alphabet, proper vocabulary, and the reading of literary genres such as poetry



or short story. If you're wondering how influential this little amazing book was, you should be familiar with it because it provided the famous children's prayer "Now I lay me down to sleep."

## **SHOW YOUR COPY OF IT.**

Our nation is a nation that is truly exceptional. I don't say this in any form of nationalistic idolatry. I say this in a positive way for us to view the opportunity we have to look to the goodness of our nation, and even the sins of our nation, to the design and structure of our nation, and to rightly speak into it, to rightly live according to the Scriptures, as influential followers of Jesus in a very unique nation.

America, though full of sinners, has historically fought for equality and opportunity for all. While its greatest cynics, murmur, even its own citizens, within its own borders, tout their ingratitude and grievances, still much of the world, even if unknowingly, still looks to its promises for hope. Regardless of where you are and on the amount of exceptionalism this wonderful country possesses, what was accomplished in on July 4, 1776 was providential.

## **THE MAKING OF AN EXCEPTIONAL NATION** **THE MYTH OF A MESSIANIC NATION**

This point will be short, and you can study it on your own time no doubt. In fact, it is a worthy study, but I will tell you, if you are one who thinks that this nation is a chosen nation, by God, and if you have some sort of Messiah complex according to the United States of America, you are very very wrong in your convictions.

For many reasons, the men and women from England to New England, puritans, reformers, and the like, mostly were convinced of what is known as National Election theology. They may claim something very similar to this...

JUST AS GOD CHOSE ISRAEL, HE TOO HAS CHOSEN US FOR SPECIAL MISSION OR PLACE IN THIS WORLD.

Specifically, many of the founders, from the colonies to even today, would refer to the Abrahamic Covenant or Mosaic Covenant as models for how God was now in covenant with America. They essentially believed in passages and promises of Scripture like **2 Chronicles 7:14**, where God tells Israel,

*“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.”*

Basically, if we as American citizens, because we believe we are God's chosen nation, if we walk in faithfulness to the covenants of God by obeying His law, then we will prosper as a nation, we will flourish, and we will multiply in the land which God has given us. The Old Testament book of Exodus provided some of the major images for early Americans. From God bringing Israel out of Egypt, they believed they too were brought out of their own Egypt and now free. If American enemies were being destroyed and those battles were being won, then it was easy for them to relate that to the same militant favor that God showed Israel in the Old Testament. Benjamin Franklin, when proposing what the Great Seal of the United States should symbolize, said that it should picture the Red Sea crossing to commemorate American Independence. John Adams, wrote in a letter to his wife stating that Benjamin Franklin's seal pictured “Moses lifting up his wand, and dividing the Red Sea, and Pharaoh, in his chariot, overwhelmed with the waters.”

Pictures of the wilderness, of providence, of protection, of promise, of land, of flourishing...so many Old Testament Israel truths, in my assessment, wrongly pictured for the American people. To be fair, we don't have to be some sort of new Israel to be a nation blessed by God, or providentially purposed by God, but we are not Israel, we are not a chosen nation, and we need not have Messiah complex to be beneficial to the world around us.

Church, we must rightly discern between nationalism and patriotism. Nationalism, if wrongly perceived, is idolatry, false religion, false worship, false teaching, tribalistic, exclusivistic, and violates God's plan for His Church in so many ways.

You cannot be a healthy follower of Jesus and possess the idolatrous ideals of nationalism. It is full of hateful, godless, ideals.

**Read an excerpt from John Wilsey's book, pp. 116-117.**

## THE MAKING OF AN EXCEPTIONAL NATION THE MYTH OF A MESSIANIC NATION **THE MODEL FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

In presenting to you this morning a model for Christian living, we know good and well, at least here at River Stone Fellowship, that this comes from the unashamed allegiance to Jesus Christ, to obedience to His Great Commission, from such inspired teachings as we find in Colossians 3.

Read through Colossians 3.

Now, I want you to know that not only is this an amazing and eternal experience for the one that knows Jesus, but it is our very knowledge and experience of these wonderful truths which ever make any nation stronger under God's common grace, and in hopes that His common grace would be made known unto the grace that truly saves.

The Church, not a nation, not a law, not a government, is the light of the world. The Church communicates God's moral expectation of all humanity, the Church communicates to this world of chaos that God demands holy order, the Church distributes compassion, hope, joy, fulfillment, and blessings, not in and of themselves, but because they are indwelt by God. If any nation will ever be considered blessed it will be because Jesus is made known to be better than everything else. God's common grace is seen in God's continuing care for his creation, his restraining human society from becoming altogether intolerable and ungovernable, it is God making it possible for mankind to live together in an orderly and cooperative manner, and maintaining man's conscious sense of basic right and wrong behavior, and I beg the Lord, and equip the Church to allow such common grace, to always

be utilized as agent of truth where we can not only proclaim the Gospel, but become so fluent in its truths that it truly transforms every area of our lives.

John 17:13–21 (NASB95)

<sup>13</sup>“But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

<sup>14</sup>“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

<sup>15</sup>“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

<sup>16</sup>“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

<sup>17</sup>“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

<sup>18</sup>“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

<sup>19</sup>“For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

<sup>20</sup>“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

<sup>21</sup>that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

## CONCLUSION

