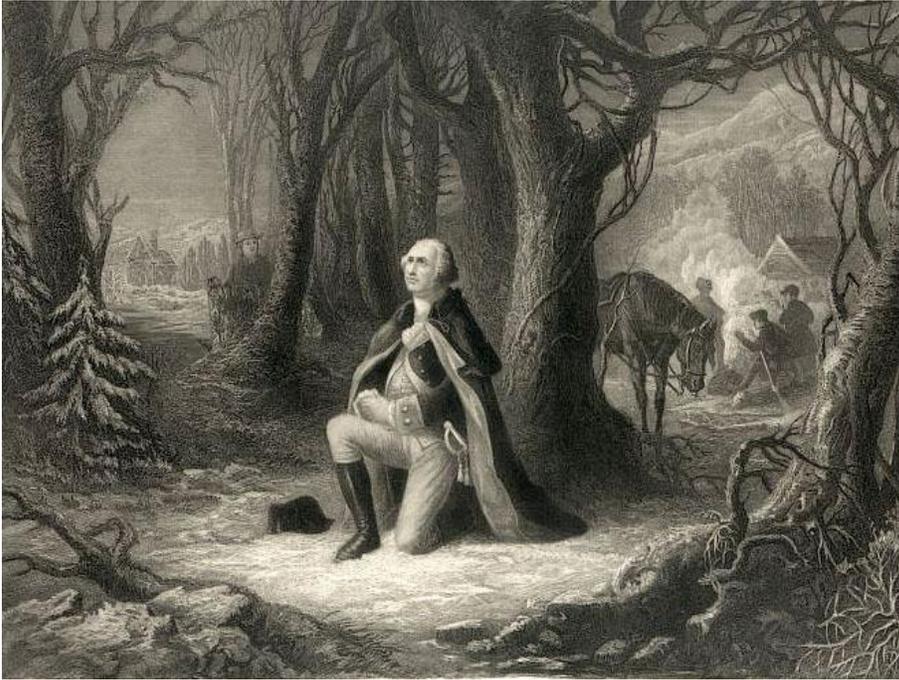


George Washington (1732-1799)



George Washington in Prayer at the Battle of Valley Forge

Key Designation: “The Father of Our Country”

Key Background Information:

- ◆ Well-bred, Washington excelled first as a surveyor, where he became known for his accuracy and honesty, sparking the saying that he could not tell a lie
- ◆ Raised in the Anglican Church, later became a Vestryman, and regular attender at his church, and after the war, an Episcopalian.
- ◆ Inherited a tobacco plantation with slaves, which he later educated and released through a manumission society that he help start
- ◆ His wife Martha was also of a wealthy family
- ◆ He became known as an excellent military leader in the French and Indian War
- ◆ Later led the Continental Army in defeating the British
- ◆ Easily elected the First President of the United States and re-elected. Patrick Henry said of him, “First in War, First in Peace and First in the hearts of his countrymen!” Still recognized as one of the greatest presidents, if not the greatest President of our Country
- ◆ Known as a man of Prayer, the U.S. Capitol has a prayer room with a stained glass window depicting Washington in prayer. It has come to be known as “Washington’s Gethsemane.”

- ◆ Regularly read sermons, and often would recommend certain ones to friends in letters (many of which have just recently been made available to the public)
- ◆ He was the strong, silent type, who seldom spoke unless spoken to, and seldom offered his opinion until it was asked.
- ◆ A Mason, he was sworn into office with his hand on the Masonic Bible. At that time, the Masons were often more a meeting place for the Revolution than for any other reason.

Key Events:

- ◆ Developed his own manual of behavior as a very young man
- ◆ Had a very strict code of ethics for the Continental Army, requiring Chapel attendance on Sunday, and no initiation of battle on a Sunday, in honor of the Lord's Day. He instructed all chaplains to as much as possible to lead all soldiers to become Christian soldiers.
- ◆ The annals of the First Baptist Church of New York City records that their pastor, John Gano, served as the Chaplain for Washington and his army. During the Revolutionary War, Washington submitted himself for baptism by immersion in a river. Gano clearly affirmed this event (see portrait below found in FBC of New York City). Skeptics tried to deny this, saying that Washington did not so much as know Gano. However, there has been discovered in Washington's Journal that Gano was among several whom he entertained for dinner. In addition, Gano was personally selected as the Chaplain. If Gano was at all dishonest, he certainly would not have been selected by Washington for that very important position. The fact that Washington never mentions this in public is an argument from silent, for we know he was extremely reticent to make personal statements about his faith.
- ◆ In the Treaty with Tripoli in 1796 which he signed but did not write, Washington makes it clear that the United States is not a "Christian nation." In other words, to be an American does not make you automatically a Christian. Pirates from Tripoli were holding one of our ships hostage and the Muslim government was accusing them of being Christians.
- ◆ Issued frequent Public Prayers as President, revealing a deep sense of reliance upon God's Providence for the destiny of the nation
- ◆ October 3, 1789- the first proclamation of a national day of Thanksgiving



Chaplain John Gano baptizes General Washington

Key Ideas:

- ◆ Believed that the President should lead the country in affirmation of its divine origin, lead in the country in prayer, and call upon its citizens to remain faithful to the Faith
- ◆ Reason and experience teach that refined education can not replace the role of religion: “Of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports.”
- ◆ “It is impossible to rightly govern the people without Christ and the Bible.”
- ◆ May have been the one to coin the phrase “the free exercise of religion,” believing every man should worship God “according to the dictates of his own heart.”
- ◆ Believed that the President should be a man of the people, and often travel alone on his horse to visit in towns.
- ◆ Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Key Works

- ◆ Washington did not pen any books, but wrote letters nearly daily as well as his diary.
- ◆ The best and most reliable biography was written by the Rev. Mason Locke Weems entitled *The Life of George Washington....* Though recent liberal critics said that Weems didn’t know Washington, and therefore could not have known so much about his spiritual life. However, a careful examination of Washington’s diary records Rev. Weems as a guest at his home for dinner. Weem’s provides the most insightful work on his life that has ever been written.