



Lie #13: “The United States Is God’s Favored Nation / God Favors One Political Party Over Another”

Opening Prayer

Introduction

It is popularly said (especially within conservative Christian circles) that “the United States is God’s favored nation.” What “evidence” is often cited to support such a claim? We will evaluate some of these claims later in the lesson.

The Origin of Government

1.) How would you characterize society before the Flood?

Genesis 4:8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Genesis 4:23-24 Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. ²⁴ If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

Genesis 6:4-5, 11 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. ⁵The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ... ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.

2.) What stipulation did God give Noah and his descendants after the Flood?

Genesis 9:5-6 And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. ⁶ Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

3.) After the Flood it is evident that governments of various sizes and extents came about. For example...

- Nimrod founded a kingdom in Shinar (Babylon) with four city centers and moved on to Assyria (Genesis 10:10-12).
- By the time of Abraham there were city states in Canaan and alliances among them (cf. Genesis 14:1ff). Egypt was established as a nation with a Pharaoh in control (cf. Gen. 12:10ff).
- Four hundred years later Pharaoh had a vast kingdom and administrative network that enabled Joseph to save the ancient world from a famine (cf. Gen. 41:41ff). Moses fled Egypt because Pharaoh prosecuted murders, and later Pharaoh led his chariot army into the Red Sea.

God and Government in the Old Testament

At Mt. Sinai God officially established the nation of Israel and took them as his chosen people (Exodus 19:5-6). As outlined in Exodus and Deuteronomy their national constitution was a bilateral covenant with God. This was a theocracy with God as supreme ruler and daily oversight entrusted to his appointed priests, kings (Deut. 17:14ff), and prophets. It is important to note that God never told nor expected any other nation to replicate this system.

1.) Within this framework God gave Israel what could be classified as moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. What was the intent of each of these sets of laws?

- Moral Law –
- Civil Law –
- Ceremonial Laws –

2.) What do the prophecies of Jeremiah and Daniel reveal about the relationship between God and the government? Can you think of any Biblical examples of either coming true?

Jeremiah 18:7-10 “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰ 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.”

Daniel 2:31-35 “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.”

3.) How did God instruct the Israelites to live while living under Gentile governments?

Jeremiah 29:4-7 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

4.) How did Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego exemplify God's directions?

Daniel 1:3-7 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. ⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishaël, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

5.) What is the limit of our service and obedience to the government authorities?

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

Daniel 3:4-6, 16-18 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: ⁵ As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." ... ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Daniel 6:6-7, 10 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den." ... ¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

God and Government in the New Testament

1.) While he was here on earth living as our substitute, how did Jesus show respect for the governing (Roman) authorities?

2.) Read Paul and Peter's instructions about the government and answer the following...

Romans 13:1-7 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on

the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. ⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Peter 2:13-14, 17 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ...¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

a.) Which governments are instituted by God?

b.) From God's point of view, what is the role of earthly governments? What means does he give them to accomplish that end?

c.) In contrast, what is the Church? What is the role of this spiritual kingdom? What tools is the Church given to fulfill its mission?

1 Peter 2:9 You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Matthew 16:16-19 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

d.) Which form of government (democracy, republic, monarchy, oligarchy, dictatorship, etc.) does God prefer, which is the best?

e.) What does Solomon tell us to expect from earthly governments? Why?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there.

Ecclesiastes 5:8-9 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

f.) Whatever form a nation's government may take, what do we Christians owe the authorities? How are we to live?

1 Timothy 2:1-2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

g.) What two reasons do the apostles give for why Christians should submit to the government?

Group Discussion

Respond to the following: "The United States is God's favored nation because...

- a.) ...The original colonies were founded by Christians fleeing persecution."
- b.) ...Our nation was founded on Christian principles and a Christian world-view." (For example: *The Declaration of Independence* includes four references to God: "...Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," "...all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," the concluding paragraph appeals to the "Supreme Judge of the world," and the final sentence expresses a "firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.")
- c.) ...The Establishment Clause of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment generally provide for religious freedom."
- d.) ...The *Pledge of Allegiance* includes "under God" and our money is stamped with "in God we trust."
- e.) ...The majority (~60%) of Americans identify as Christians."