

What Is a Christian Nation? (Pt. 2)

Revelation 1:5

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In the previous sermon, we embarked upon a quest to answer the question, What is a Christian nation? We noted 5 characteristics of a Christian nation that were derived from Psalm 2: (1) A Christian nation officially confesses in its constitutional documents and swears allegiance (by way of its civil representatives) to the Triune God of the Bible; (2) A Christian nation officially confesses in its constitutional documents and swears allegiance (by way of its civil representatives) to Jesus Christ, as God's anointed Prince over the kings of the earth; (3) A Christian nation officially confesses in its constitutional documents and establishes (by way of its civil representatives) God's Moral Law as the supreme law of the land; (4) A Christian nation officially confesses in its constitutional documents and establishes by law the Christian religion in its most biblical expression (such as is summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith) as its national religion; (5) A Christian nation officially requires all its civil magistrates (from the least to the greatest) to confess and to swear to God and before the people that they will support and defend with their lives these basic principles of a Christian nation. In future sermons we will have opportunity to further develop and apply these principles to the nations of this world.

Not only did we note these foundational characteristics of a Christian nation, but we also observed how these underlying characteristics were clearly missing in the Constitution of the United States (a nation that is heralded by many as a Christian nation). As we examined various statements in the Constitution, we concluded not only that the United States was not and is not a Christian nation, but that to the contrary, the official religion of the United States is Religious Pluralism or Polytheism

(similar to that of ancient Greece or Rome where many different gods and religions filled their Pantheon). In fact, I would submit that our national Polytheism is a much more aggravated form than that of either Greece or Rome, for we have much greater light to the truth through the nation-wide distribution of Bibles in America than was ever present in either Greece or Rome. To whom much is given, much is required. Our sin as a nation, in officially tolerating and thereby officially establishing Polytheism as our national religion, was not an act of ignorance or forgetfulness, but was deliberately and willfully enacted after much discussion and debate by State Legislatures and in Committee at the Constitutional Convention before ratifying the Federal Constitution. The Triune God of the Bible who established civil government as His good ordinance to man, God's anointed Prince (Jesus Christ) who is given all dominion over the kings and kingdoms of this world, the Moral Law of God which defines all human rights and duties, and the true Christian religion of the Bible which alone infallibly teaches Christ's redeeming power to save fallen man, all these necessary and essential principles of a Christian nation were consciously rejected and denied a place in the Federal Constitution, the National Covenant forged by WE THE PEOPLE of the United States of America (which reminds me of the words of Psalm 2:1-3).

Now, many who hear this sermon perhaps living in other nations of the world may initially believe that I am only addressing the Polytheism of the United States. However, that would be a misconception. I address the constitutional documents, laws, history, monuments, and founders of the United States because of my familiarity with this particular nation, but you may apply the same 5 characteristics of a Christian nation to your own nation and judge whether your nation officially tolerates (and thereby officially promotes and establishes) Polytheism as its national religion as well. For remember, what a nation officially tolerates by law, it

officially promotes and establishes by law (whether it officially tolerates idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, the murder of unborn children, or immorality of every kind).

In the remainder of our time today, let us focus our attention on the following main points: (1) The New Testament Teaching Concerning Christ's Universal Rule as Mediator (Revelation 1:5); (2) More Testimony Indicating That the United States Is Not a Christian Nation.

I. The New Testament Teaching Concerning Christ's Universal Rule as Mediator (Revelation 1:5).

A. Our brief exposition of Psalm 2 in the previous sermon should make it clear enough that Christ's universal dominion as Mediator extends to all the civil rulers of all nations and to all the civil governments of all nations throughout the whole world without exception (see Psalm 2:1,2,8,10-12). Psalm 2 does not merely address the dominion of Christ as Mediator over Israel as a nation or merely over the Church of Jesus Christ, but rather demonstrates that all Gentile nations and all their magistrates are under Christ's dominion to the glory of God who established the Divine ordinance of civil government for His glory and for the good of the people who are ruled. But some may argue that I have merely produced an argument from the Old Testament. Yes, Psalm 2 is in the Old Testament, but It should be clear that it speaks of Christ as God's appointed Messianic King (which points to Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension according to Acts 2:29-36). Moreover, it should be clear that the apostles themselves understood Psalm 2 as being realized in the age of the New Covenant (Acts 4:24-28). But let us turn now to the New Testament and note that the teaching there only confirms what was taught in Psalm 2 concerning Christ's universal dominion as Mediator over all kings and all nations of the world (and by consequence the duty

of all civil rulers and nations of the world who have biblical revelation to “kiss” and “serve” the Son in their official capacities as civil magistrates).

B. The gracious benediction given by our Triune God to the seven churches of Asia begins in Revelation 1:4: “Grace be unto you, and peace.”

1. As John was banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian, the Lord Jesus Christ gave to him a glorious revelation of things to come throughout history, from his own time until the bodily, visible second coming of Christ at the end of the world to raise the dead, to judge the world in righteousness, and to bring in a new heaven and new earth.

2. It would have been humanly easy for John to think of reasons why he as an apostle of Jesus Christ shouldn't be isolated from family and friends on the Isle of Patmos. It would have been a time in which many of us would have been having a pity party and feeling sorry for ourselves in receiving such treatment for our faithfulness to Jesus Christ and His revealed truth. After all, John was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; John 20:2; John 21:7). He could have sinfully reasoned, “Is this the way to treat the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was among the closest and nearest of Christ's disciples?” But rather than crying, “Woe is me”, he was brought by God's rich grace to see and understand that there is a most holy, wise, and loving purpose for the suffering of God's people. That through many tribulations we enter into the kingdom of God. That as Christ the Head first suffered and then was glorified, so we as the body of Christ must likewise first suffer with Christ in order that we might be glorified with Christ. Dear ones, you will not gain the “peace” of mind that you need in the midst of all your suffering and that is mentioned in this benediction (in Revelation 1:4) without first having the “grace” of God (i.e. God's free and undeserved kindness) poured out abundantly in your life. It is always grace then peace, for

there is no peace without God's grace, and there is always peace (to varying degrees) where there is God's grace. Where there is the grace of regeneration and of a new heart given to a poor undeserving sinner, there will be the grace of saving faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness as one's only hope of eternal salvation, and the grace of forgiveness of all sin, and the grace of repentance, and the grace of love and hope, and the grace of new obedience, and the grace of sanctification and perseverance, and finally the grace of peace of mind knowing that the God who loves you with an everlasting love can do you no wrong in what you suffer for His sake.

C. This benediction here in Revelation 1:4,5 is a Trinitarian benediction, for it is a benediction that proceeds from **God the Father** ("from him which is, and which was, and which is to come", a way of describing the fact that God is ever present and from everlasting to everlasting). It is a benediction that proceeds from **God the Holy Spirit** ("and from the seven Spirits which are before the throne", a way of describing the perfection of God in seeing all that occurs in the world by His omnipresence, see Revelation 5:6). It is a benediction that proceeds from **God the Son** ("and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth").

D. The titles given to Christ in Revelation 1:5 describe His messianic offices as God's anointed Mediator between God and man.

1. Christ as Mediator is "the faithful witness" who as our **Prophet** has faithfully revealed to man the Word of God and Gospel of salvation. The word "martyr" comes from the Greek word for "witness", in other words, Christ was a faithful witness even unto death. He has shown to us the path of no compromise when it comes to the truth—no

compromise for the sake of family, friends, status, job, academic degrees, financial gain, or the applause of people.

2. Christ as Mediator is “the first begotten of the dead” who as our **Priest** died for our sins, but was bodily raised from the dead to demonstrate that all the sins of His people (past, present, future) were without exception paid in full, otherwise He would have remained in the grave, His suffering and death being insufficient to pay for every single sin of His elect. What an encouragement to those who suffer to remember that Christ’s death has set them free and His bodily resurrection secures their own bodily resurrection from the grave on that last day. Our suffering on earth is but for a moment, our reigning with Christ is forever.

3. And finally, Christ as Mediator is “the prince of the kings of the earth” who as our **King** reigns not only over His Church, but reigns as God’s appointed Prince and Ruler over all the kings of the earth. Christ as Mediator subdues, rules, and overrules in the kingdoms and nations of the world to the glory of God and to the good of His Church. Christ as Mediator is given the unmistakable title of supreme dominion over all the kings of the earth in Revelation 19:16, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Please note that the whole context surrounding Revelation 1:5 addresses the mediatorial character of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ is not “the Prince of the kings of the earth” due merely and only to His being God the Son (for in that sense the God the Father and God the Holy Spirit would likewise be Rulers of all the kings of the earth). But what we find here in Revelation 1:5 is the reward of Christ in fulfilling all the terms of the Covenant of Redemption for His elect as Mediator and receiving from the Father the reward of mediatorial dominion over all the kings and over all the nations of the world. Now if Christ is such a Ruler appointed by God over the civil magistrates and nations of this world, then it must be their supreme duty (in a land enlightened by biblical revelation) to officially confess in their constitutional documents and to officially swear allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords, and to willfully refuse to

do so must be a most serious act of rebellion against God and His anointed King. Thus, what was taught in the Old Testament (Psalm 2) is likewise taught in the New Testament (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16).

E. **Objection.** But civil government originates and is established by God as the God of nature, not by Christ as the Mediator of grace. The Church of Jesus Christ is established as a kingdom of grace by the Mediator of grace. Though Christ as Divine Creator exercises dominion over civil magistrates and nations of this world, Christ as Mediator only exercises dominion over His Church.

F. **Answer.**

1. It is true that civil government immediately originates and is established as an ordinance of the God of creation and nature, rather than as an ordinance of the Mediator of grace and salvation. Had Adam not sinned, and had there been generations of sinless human beings born, there would still have been a need for an orderly government in the civil realm just as there was a need in the familial realm (1 Timothy 2:12,13). However, it is also true that civil government has been delivered over (along with all things in the universe) to the dominion of Christ the Mediator to rule for the good and benefit of the Church (Ephesians 1:22; Psalm 2; Revelation 1:5).

2. By virtue of the Covenant of Redemption made in eternity, the reward promised to Christ in securing the redemption of His beloved elect was dominion over all nations to the end of the earth (Psalm 2:8). This mediatorial dominion over all nations was given to Christ as a reward for His obedience in fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption; therefore, it did not belong to Christ as He was merely God the Son, for all things were His as He was God the Son and Creator of all things (John 1:1-3). Thus, there is a dominion over the magistrates and nations of this world that

was given to Christ and belongs to Christ as exalted Mediator, as the Prince of the kings of the earth, as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

3. By way of analogy, we might also say that marriage and the family was ordained and established by God as the God of creation and nature (for it was ordained and established before the fall of man into sin, Cf. Genesis 2:21-25 with Genesis 3:1ff). And yet marriage and family relations are clearly under the mediatorial dominion of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-27). Though marriage and family were instituted by the God of creation, nevertheless, marriage and family have likewise been given under the dominion of Christ to the glory of God and to the good of His Church as another part of the “all things” that were put under Christ’s feet as Mediator and Head (Ephesians 1:22). Just as every marriage and family that has access to biblical revelation is bound and obligated to confess Christ as their King and to swear allegiance to Him since it falls under His dominion, so likewise every civil magistrate and nation that has access to biblical revelation is bound and obligated to confess Christ as King in their constitutional documents and to swear allegiance to Him.

II. More Testimony Indicating That the United States Is Not a Christian Nation.

A. The Treaty of Tripoli (1797).

1. The history of this Treaty is very interesting and significant as it applies to the matter of the United States being a Christian nation. For as we noted in the previous sermon, it is stated in Article VI of the Federal Constitution: “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof: **and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the land:** and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby.” Carefully note that included in that which is identified as the supreme law of the land are “all Treaties made, or which shall be

made, under the Authority of the United States.” Why is the Treaty of Tripoli of such importance in the present discussion?

2. In the 1790s, U.S. ships were being destroyed and U.S. seamen were being captured and held as prisoners by pirates of the Barbary coast in general and of Tripoli (in what is now called Libya) in particular. This was no small problem and negotiators were sent by the United States to seek a solution to the problem. In November 1796, near the end of George Washington's second term, Mr. Joel Barlow, a U.S. diplomat, drafted a treaty with the "Bey [or Ruler—GLP] and People of Tripoli", promising cash and other considerations to Tripoli in exchange for peace.

3. The Treaty of Tripoli, however, did not come before the Senate until May 1797 (by then John Adams had become the new President). Copies of the Treaty of Tripoli were made for every Senator and it was read aloud in the hearing of all the Senators. The Treaty was unanimously approved by Senate. It was only the third time that a vote was recorded when the vote was unanimous! There is no record of any debate or dissension in regard to the Treaty.

4. President John Adams signed the treaty and proclaimed it to the nation on June 10, 1797 with the following words: "Now be it known, That I John Adams, President of the United States of America, having seen and considered the said Treaty do, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, accept, ratify, and confirm the same, **and every clause and article thereof.** And to the End that the said Treaty may be observed and performed with good Faith on the part of the United States, I have ordered the premises to be made public; And I do hereby enjoin and require all persons bearing office civil or military within the United States, and all other citizens or inhabitants thereof, faithfully to observe and fulfill the said Treaty **and every clause and article thereof.**"

5. Now remember this Treaty was unanimously ratified and signed into law as “the supreme law of the land” just 10 years after the

Constitution was ratified and just 6 years after the Bill of Rights was ratified. Surely, those who signed this Treaty believed it to be perfectly consistent with the Constitution of the United States and its Bill of Rights.

6. Article 11 of the Treaty of Tripoli reads as follows: **“As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion;** as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of Mussulmen [i.e. Muslims—GLP]; and, as the said States never entered into any war, or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions, shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.” The supreme law of the United States declares that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.” This Treaty (and “every clause and article thereof”) was unanimously approved and signed into law within the lifetime of the founding fathers of the United States, and as I said, a few years after the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and without any recorded debate or dissension in the Senate or by the President.

7. Dear ones, if that is not a declaration that the United States was not and is not a Christian nation, it would be hard to imagine what might have been said in the Treaty to make it more clear.

B. The Constitutional Amendment to declare the United States to be a Christian nation.

1. If what has already been provided by way of documentary evidence is not sufficient testimony to demonstrate that from the very foundation of this nation, Christ (as God’s Mediator) was not officially and nationally served and kissed (as is true of a Christian nation) nor was biblical Christianity officially established by law as the national religion (as is true of a Christian nation), then perhaps one might consider that on several different occasions, a Constitutional Amendment was presented

before Congress to amend the Preamble of the Constitution with words that would honor the God of the Bible as the source of all civil authority, Christ as God's appointed King over all nations, and the Bible as God's revealed standard to which all laws should conform.

2. In 1864, the National Reform Association, presented the following memorial to Congress formally proposing it as an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, "We, the people of the United States, humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the nations, His revealed will as the supreme law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government, and in order to form a perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the inalienable rights and the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to ourselves, our posterity, and all the people, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Although this Amendment might not specifically say all that it might have said in regard to the official establishment of the Christian religion as the national religion of the United States, it does explicitly declare the rightful place that God, Christ, and the Bible ought to have in the constitution of a Christian nation. Congress completely ignored the proposed Amendment in 1864. In 1869, there was an Illinois petition submitted to the Senate which included in it the following words, "praying for an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, recognizing the obligations of the Christian religion." This petition did not find even one Senator in Congress to support it. In 1874, the proposed Christian Amendment did make it to the committee stage, but it died in Committee as the House Judiciary Committee did not support it. Major campaigns to include the Christian Amendment in the Constitution were also launched in 1884 and 1910, but to no avail. In 1947 and 1954, the National Association of Evangelicals sought unsuccessfully to amend the Constitution with the

following words, “This nation divinely recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of Nations, through whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God.”

3. If, indeed, the United States is a Christian nation, why would all such efforts to officially declare it by law be intentionally ignored and refused by the official civil representatives of this nation? One might think that the founding fathers simply forgot to include God, Christ, the Bible, and the Christian religion in the Constitution (which as I have said was not the case), but when a specific document is presented to Congress that denies the United States to be founded in any sense upon the Christian religion (and it is unanimously ratified), or documents are presented to Congress that specifically call for official and statutory approval of Christ, the Bible and the Christian religion (and they are refused), it cannot reasonably be affirmed that the founding fathers or subsequent leaders simply forgot to “kiss” the Son as civil rulers in their official capacities. No, they did not do so for one simple reason: the United States was not constituted as a Christian nation by its founding fathers, and therefore is not presently a Christian nation (to its shame and disgrace). Ought it to be a Christian nation? Absolutely, it should declare itself to be so and amend its Constitution, laws, and treaties accordingly. The United States through its civil rulers ought to own and swear unto God and before the people of this land the faithful and biblical Solemn League and Covenant which covenantally yet binds this country as a descendant of England.

C. In the next sermon we shall consider various arguments offered by many professing Christian which they believe warrant them to call the United States a Christian nation. Many professing Christians when asked what is the remedy for our present troubles as a nation believe that if we would simply get back to following the Constitution, we would once again find the greatness and of God we once enjoyed as an alleged Christian

nation. For many, all that is necessary is not to fundamentally alter or change America, but rather to restore America to those founding principles in the Constitution. However, dear ones, I submit to you that going back to the Constitution where God, Christ, the Scripture, and biblical Christianity finds no place at all IS THE PROBLEM and can only be remedied by nationally repenting of such grievous sins, calling upon the gracious forgiveness of Christ, renewing the faithful and sacred National Covenant of our forefathers (i.e. the Solemn League and Covenant), and officially and constitutionally “kissing the Son” who is “Prince of the kings of the earth.”

Rather than going back to the Constitution of the United States as that which will deliver us from God’s impending judgment, we ought rather to go back to the Solemn League and Covenant which states in Article I:

That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavor, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of GOD, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall endeavor to bring the churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of Faith, form of church-government, directory for worship and catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, **and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.**

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