

WHO IS YOUR GOD?

INTRODUCTION

So what will it **really** take to “Make America Great Again?” Red MAGA hats? A booming economy? The de-nuclearization of Iran and North Korea? A strong military? Solving the crisis at the border and fixing the immigration laws? A rousing, unifying speech on the 4th of July?

In 1831 a French statesman and historian by the name of Alexis de Tocqueville toured America for the purpose of observing the American people and their institutions. The result of his findings was published in a two-part work entitled *Democracy in America*. Here is one of his more famous quotes:

“I sought for the key to the greatness and genius of America in her harbors...; in her fertile fields and boundless forests; in her rich mines and vast world commerce; in her public school system and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic (small “d”) Congress and in her matchless Constitution.

Not until I went into the **churches** of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power.

America is great because America **is good**, and if America ever **ceases to be good**, America **will cease to be great.**” (*America’s God and Country*, William J. Federer, pg 205, emphasis mine).

America will become great again when the people of America **humble** themselves before God and **obey** God instead of rebelling against Him. Please take your Bibles and turn to Psalm 33. Notice verse 12: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.” Greatness — blessing from God—is bestowed upon those who make the LORD their God. A question I would like us to consider—and one which will also serve as the title of my message—is this: *Who is Your God?*

1. The pertinence of this pronouncement

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...” **Who** does this pronouncement pertain to? Does it apply to Israel only—or does it include America or any nation that seeks and worships God? Does it still apply **today**—or is it no longer relevant because the nation of Israel has been scattered over the face of the whole earth? And if it is relevant for us today, how does it apply?

A. Specific application to the nation of Israel

As much as I would like to say “God had America in mind when He wrote this verse,” I can’t say it because it is **not true**—God had Israel in mind! I hope that doesn’t disappoint you or discourage you, but we know Biblically that the only nation God hand-picked and required that all the people of the nation follow Him was Israel.

i. Israel as a nation was selected by God

Notice Exodus 19:1-6.

--v 5 “ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...”

--v 6 “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

Deut 4:34 “Or hath God assayed [undertaken] to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?”

ii. Individuals were “forced” to follow God

Lev 20:2 “Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.”

Lev 20:27 “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.” (See also Deut 13:6-10 and 17:1-7)

There is no chapter-and-verse that makes a similar claim of God designating America as a special nation and we certainly don't require people to worship God or kill them if they don't! I'm not a mind-reader, but some of you may be thinking 'Okay, Pastor, if it doesn't refer to America and if it *only* applies to Israel, how does that affect me?' Great question! Here's how—some of the same words God used to describe His relationship with **the nation of Israel** He uses to describe His relationship with those **who are His children** now!

B. Individual application to God's children now

I Peter 2:9 "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:"

Does this mean that God is done with Israel and that the church has replaced the nation of Israel? No; God still has an incredible future for Israel; namely that King Jesus will reign on earth in Jerusalem and Jerusalem will be the center and focal point of all the nations on earth! Until that happens, though, God's people come from all nations of the earth—not just one in particular.

In the way of application, however, a nation is comprised of people—not just land or a flag. As the people in the nation go, so goes that nation. And the more of God's children there are in a particular nation, the godlier that nation ought to become and the more likely it is that God will bless it. So as we go through the rest of this message, here's what I'd like to have you keep in the back of your mind—just as the nation of Israel was blessed when their God was the LORD; we as individuals can experience that same blessing.

2. The Possibility of having a false "god" instead of the LORD God

We see the possibility of having a different "god" in the first part of Psalm 33:12—"Blessed is the nation whose **God is the LORD...**" The implication is that Israel could have had other "gods;" they could have worshipped someone or something other than Jehovah God.

A. Other "gods" Israel had or were warned about

The list I'm about to give you is by no means all-inclusive—we could spend literally the rest of our time—and all afternoon—looking at verses in both the OT and NT that warn against idolatry. What *is* idolatry? It is not limited to bowing down to a statue—it is much more than that. One man wrote that idolatry is "whatever your heart clings to and relies on for ultimate security." Another wrote: "The idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone." (*We Become What We Worship*, G.K. Beale, p 17). What was Israel warned against when it came to worship?

i. Graven images

Exodus 20:3-5a "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them..."

It wasn't long before they broke this commandment, was it? While Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights speaking with God, the Israelites became restless and said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this man Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex 32:1). Not only were they forbidden to make graven images, they were to avoid...

ii. False "gods" of the surrounding nations

--Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians we're told in I Kings 11:5

--We read of the prophet Elijah and his show-down with the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel in I Kings 18

--We read of Chemosh the god of the Moabites in I Kings 11:33

--We see Dagon, the god of the Philistines, "falling down" before the ark of God in I Sam 5

--We noticed a reference earlier to Molech in Leviticus 20:2

Thirdly, they were warned against making themselves the “god” of their life.

iii. Themselves

Can we make ourselves “god” in our life? We most certainly can!

--Twice in Judges it says “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25)

--**Proverbs 3:7** “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”

--**Jeremiah 17:5** “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.”

Let’s consider our verse again: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...”

--**NOT** “Blessed is the nation whose “god” is graven images”

--**NOT** “Blessed is the nation whose “god” is a dead and false “god”

--**NOT** “Blessed is the nation whose “god” is themselves!

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD;” Jehovah, God Almighty, the God of the Bible!

Let’s consider now...

B. Other “gods” we can have and are warned about in the NT

I mentioned this just a moment ago, but what is an idol? An idol is anything that you give affection and allegiance and loyalty to that belongs to God alone. Are there other things God warns us about in the NT besides graven images and false gods and the worship of ourselves?

i. Tradition over Word of God

Please **turn to** Mark 7:5-9, 13. In verse 13 “making the Word of God of none effect”—USELESS a note in my Bible says—“through your tradition....” They chose their tradition—the do’s and don’ts that they had made—and gave them greater authority than the Word of God!

ii. Praise of men over praise of God

John 12:42-43 “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Talk about peer pressure! They were more concerned with their reputation and their place in the synagogue and having people think highly of them than they were about what God thought of them!

iii. Service of self over service of God

Romans 1:25 “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

Who is your God? You have one—we all do. From the youngest to the oldest—and all of us in between—we have a “god.” Who is **your** God?

--Is it a graven image—a statue of an animal or a person? Probably not, but entirely possible

--Is it a false “god”? Buddha is a false “god;” so is the “god” of Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons because they are not the LORD Jehovah, the God of the Bible.

--Is **tradition** your “god”? If you are counting on tradition and what a church says **more than** what the Bible says, then tradition is your “god”! I shudder to think of how many will be shut out of heaven and cast into hell because they chose tradition—the teachings of a man and a church—over the plain teachings of the Word of God!

--Are **you** your own “god?” Do you worship you more than you worship **God**? Paul Tripp in a book entitled *How People Change* gives four typical patterns of false worship (pg 204):

- The physical is more important than the spiritual
- The temporal is more valuable than the eternal
- A relationship with a person is more satisfying than a relationship with God
- When your desires overrule what God says you need

We are worshippers of someone or something—who is your God?

Back to Psalm 33:12 “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...”

--We saw first that although this verse pertains primarily to Israel, there is an application for us. It would not be wrong to say “Blessed is the **person** whose God is the LORD...”

--We noted second that there is the possibility of having a false “god” over the one and only true God, the God of the Bible.

Next let’s consider the last half of verse 12 “...and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.”

3. The people God chooses to be His

Who does God choose to be His children—and why does He choose them?

A. Not everyone is a child of God

We have the words of Jesus Himself regarding this matter recorded for us in **Mt 7:13-14, 21** “wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction...” “...narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven...”

B. Becoming a child of God is dependent on His mercy—not our works

Titus 3:5 “Not be works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”

So many places we could turn to, thought it would be best to go to just one book. Please **turn to** the book of I Peter, chapter 1.

--v 3 “according to His abundant MERCY hath He begotten us again...”

--We are begotten again—a phrase meaning born again—because of His mercy

--v 4 We have a perfect, never ending life with God in heaven reserved for us

--v 5 “Who are kept by the power of God”—not our own power—through faith (not works)

--v 18 “For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed”—bought back/rescued from—“your vain conversation” (empty life) “received by tradition”—inherited—from your fathers

--v 19 “But with the precious blood of Christ”—sin’s price—the penalty that must be paid for our sin—cannot be paid for by money or by works. Only Christ’s blood can do that!

--v 23 “Being born again...”

--2:6-7 The chief cornerstone is Christ

--He that believeth on Him (v 6); Unto you therefore which believe He is precious

--2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation...”

Who does Peter say that of?

He says it of those who are **born again**. How does a person become born again? It is a work that God does in the heart of a person, but it requires...

--a recognition on our part that we **cannot save ourselves** and that we need **mercy** from God

--a receiving of Christ—God’s love gift to us—because only His death on the cross can satisfy the punishment for sin that we deserve.

Have you done that? If not, God is not your God!