

How God Uses Nations

By PAUL J. SCHARF

Another Memorial Day is upon us—a wonderful time to remember those who sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and to reflect upon all who have passed a spiritual legacy forward to us and blessed us—even in our own families.

During this patriotic season, it is also important to consider how God uses nations, and to meditate on the place that our nation occupies within the spectrum of Biblical teaching regarding the Lord's dealings with the people groups of this world.

The first point that we must recognize is that **God is the author of nations**. I understand that Genesis 10—which is known as *the table of nations*—follows Genesis 11 chronologically and describes the outcome of God's disbursement of humanity at the Tower of Babel. There all people had gathered in unified defiance against God and His post-flood commission to mankind: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1).

God supernaturally dispersed these people into groups formed around newly created languages. The result is listed in Gen. 10:32: "From these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood."

Why does God desire for people to organize themselves into nations? There are numerous reasons, but perhaps the most obvious is that there is significant danger with any system that unites all people—affected entirely, as they are, by the power of the sin nature—in a single alliance that has the potential to be profoundly corrupted, with no available alternative. Just as the branches of our government were designed to offer a check and balance on each other, so it is with the nations of the world—as Hitler himself profoundly discovered before the end of World War II.

Yet, just as everyone disobediently came together in one block, attempting to form the kingdom of man at Babel, near the beginning of history, so it will be at the end of history. Once again, the world will unify around the city of Babylon to form a worldwide religion and government—combined under the Antichrist to oppose the one true God.

Secondly, we must recognize that **God** first created (see Isa. 43:1-15) and then **chose the nation of Israel**. His covenant with the father of the nation, Abram, in Gen. 12:1-3, is foundational to all of God's work in all the rest of Scripture, and of history. God would use this man—taken from the very geographical area of Babylon—to build the kingdom of God in a new land that He would provide.

Implicit within the promises of this covenant is the provision of salvation to the whole world—through a Jewish Savior, who is revealed in the Jewish Scriptures (both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament), and who will bring a Jewish kingdom to the world. When we believe in Him, we become the spiritual children of Abraham (see Gal. 3:7, 29).

And this leads us into the next point: **God blesses and curses nations.** These actions are the most pronounced in the Old Testament—when God was working directly in the world through His chosen theocratic nation, the people of Israel.

Yet it also appears from passages such as Matt. 11:24 that national entities will still be held accountable to some degree at the final *judgment*. Scripture assures us, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, *And* all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17).

Conversely, there is blessing for nations that repent when confronted with the “grace and truth” (John 1:17) of God. The great example of this, of course, is Nineveh in Jonah 3:1-10—after their *king* led them in national repentance. Certainly, God’s blessing and cursing of nations revolves largely around their blessing or cursing of His chosen nation of Israel (Gen. 12:3).

Does God curse nations in this New Testament age, in this day of grace, in which God is working directly through the church? The passage that provides a template to answer this question is Rom. 1:18-32. It demonstrates how God deals with a culture that chooses to “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18). The penalty involves a descent into the quicksand of far greater sin (see vv. 24, 26 and 28).

Fourth, we realize that **God has a plan for the nations.** It is clear from 1 Cor. 10:32 that—for those outside of Christ—national boundaries still matter. This is significant for the prophetic future. Gentile nations will have a prominent place right up to the final return of Christ (see Luke 21:24). Until Jesus returns, there will be “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). In the meantime, Christ’s gospel is to be “[p]reached among the Gentiles” (1 Tim. 3:16).

We know, of course, that God also has a future for His beloved, chosen nation of Israel. He will fulfill every promise He has ever made to them—and every prophecy He has ever given. As He has been with them in their Biblical past, so He is with them in the strategic present, and so He will be with them in the prophetic future.

All of this leaves us wondering about one specific question: What does the future hold for our beloved nation, the United States of America? It appears that, in the coming seven-year tribulation, she will simply be rolled into one of the 10 divisions of the global kingdom of the Antichrist (see Dan. 2:42; 7:24; Rev. 17:12). Of course, this will be precipitated by the rapture of the church—after which America will be all but incapacitated by the departure of the true church for heaven (see 2 Thess. 2:7).

Which leads us to our final point: **God has limits for nations.** This is clear from passages such as Gen. 15:16 and Dan. 8:23. Indeed, there will be a day when “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom. 11:25). The church age will end and, with it, God’s special outpouring of grace upon the Gentile nations, which has gone on now for two millennia. God’s work on the Earth will again be focused on the nation of Israel.

Where does that leave America today? Certainly, many continue foolishly “treasuring up ... wrath in the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5).

We certainly desire God's blessings, but do we return "the sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb. 13:15)? He has blessed us in innumerable ways since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers. I believe that a primary reason for such blessing has been our nation's support of the Jewish people. He has stirred this country to become the missionary sending nation for all continents, and made us the center of the Christian world.

But America will not last forever. It will neither produce nor host the kingdom of God upon the Earth. And if we desire God's blessings upon America to continue, we would do well to take some time this Memorial Day weekend to actively ponder "His wonderful works that He has done" (Ps. 78:4)—"[a]nd forget not all His benefits" (Ps. 103:2).

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

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