

Big Q's

Today kicks off a series that will provoke you, challenge you and hopefully to encourage you to ask yourself a simple question, "What would Jesus think about...?" We will look at a number of questions that have caused me to want to dig deeper than just the superficial answers of shallow Christianity. Christ followers should want more...a lot more!

Part I: American Patriotism...Our Declaration of Dependence July 4, 2010

What makes someone patriotic? What do these patriots have in common? **See PP.** Love for soccer, pride, wearing the colors of their flags, etc. Today we will look at a Biblical few of Patriotism. Was Jesus patriotic?

Introduction: A few interesting facts...

1. The original Declaration is now exhibited in the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom in Washington, DC. It has faded badly, largely because of poor preservation techniques during the 19th century. The document measures 29-3/4 inches by 24-1/2 inch. **See PP**
2. Of the 56 men who signed it 2 were twenty years of age, 16 were in their thirties, 20 in their forties, 11 in their fifties, 6 in their sixties, and 1, Benjamin Franklin, over 70.
3. All but two were married. Each had an average of 6 children. 24 were lawyers, 9 were merchants, 14 were farmers, 4 were doctors, and one was a preacher. Ironically, George Washington our first President was not a signer!
4. Three American presidents died on the Fourth of July, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson (1826), and James Monroe (1831). Actually, Monroe was ready to die several days before but doctors kept him alive with drugs just long enough so that he could die on the fourth of July.

5. Calvin Coolidge was born on that day in 1872. West Point opened, July 4th 1802. The song "America" was sung for the first time on July 4th, 1832 in Boston. Alaska and Hawaii both became states on the July 4. Slavery was abolished in the state of New York on July 4, 1845.
6. The document only has 1321 words, it takes just eight minutes to read, and God is mentioned 4 times, twice at the beginning and twice at the end.

Question: Were our founding fathers really Christians? Do we really have a Godly heritage? Why is the Declaration of Independence and July 4 as important to us as Christians?

I. The declaration itself acknowledges that there is a Creator/God

- A. *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*
- B. When the Declaration of Independence was signed in July, 1776, **Samuel Adams** exclaimed: "We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come."
- C. Any government that steps in and tries to be the one that "gives" rights, and not just protects ones already given, ultimately tries to take the place of the Creator. It's a symptom of humanism. When a Christian stands up for the principles like this (being patriotic), they are ultimately standing up for their God, and keeping Him in His rightful place as the giver of all good things." (**Marc Judd**)
- D. **John Adams** said, "The general principles on which the Fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity". Adams went on to say that in observing the

4th of July, "It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

- E. Ours was not a "revolution" like others. The Founders were motivated by faith and righteous principle. Our Republic, where God is acknowledged as the Supreme Author of our "unalienable rights," was not just the fruit of brilliant statesmanship or even the shed blood of patriots, but the grace of God. Our Forefathers were led by Providence.
- F. "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not but religionists but by Christians, not on religion but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."
Patrick Henry
- G. "Do not let anyone claim tribute of American patriotism if they even attempt to remove religion from politics."
-- **George Washington Farewell Address to Nation**

II. Godly men suffered and died so we could enjoy the freedoms we take for granted today.

- A. **Who were the signers? What kind of men were they?**
 - 1. A popular misconception is that they were deists or worse unreligious secular humanists. Wrong! 52 of 55 were orthodox believers...not just religious people. They founded the American Bible Society. God was woven into the very fabric of their existence! Our founding document was written by men who loved God, not by religious Deists who had only cursory knowledge of the Almighty!
 - 2. Years ago a political science professors at the University of Houston did a research on who did the founding fathers quote the most?" They spent 10 years and examined 3154 documents and cataloguing some 15,000 writings of the founding fathers. Who did these men quote the most? Three writers: Blackstone, Montague/Montesquieu and John Locke. They quoted the Bible 4 times more than Montague/Montesquieu, 12

times more than Blackstone and 16 times more than John Locke. 34% of the FF quotations were word for word from the Bible and another 60% of their quotes were quoting men who were quoting the bible. Do the math: That is a total of 94% of the FF quotes based upon the Scriptures. Does that sound like Deists to you?

3. **Ben Franklin** at the Constitutional Convention June 28, 1778. He said, “In the days of our contest with Britain, when we were aware of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers were heard, and they were graciously answered. Have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing upon our deliberation are held in this assembly every morning before we proceed with business.” Later when addressing the ambassador to France he said, “He who shall introduce into public affairs the principles of Christianity, will change the face of the world!”
4. Summary: We’re not talking about low life’s, drifters and rebels. We’re talking about educated, civilized men who were willing to sacrifice everything for a cause that they believed in. And history shows us that they paid the price for that bravery.

B. What happened to them?

1. When **Carter Braxton** of Virginia, signed the Declaration of Independence, he was a wealthy planter and trader; but following his signing his ships were destroyed and to pay his debts, he lost his home and all of his property and in the end he died in rags.
2. **Thomas McKean** of Delaware was so harassed by the enemy that he was forced to move his family five times in five months. He served in Congress without pay, his family in poverty and in hiding.

3. All 3 signers from Georgia had their properties vandalized: **Lyman Hall, Button Gwinnett, and George Walton**. 12 had their homes ransacked and burned.
4. **Thomas Nelson, Jr.** of Virginia raised two million dollars in his own name to help fund the war. After the War, he personally paid back the loans, wiping out his entire estate; he was never reimbursed by his government. And in the final battle for Yorktown, Nelson, urged General Washington to fire on Nelson's own home, then occupied by the enemy. He died bankrupt.
5. **Francis Lewis (NY)** had his home and everything destroyed, his wife imprisoned--she died within a few months.
6. **Richard Stockton (NJ)** who signed the Declaration, was captured, mistreated and his health mortally broken. And then his estate was pillaged.
7. **John Hart (NJ)** was driven from his wife's bedside while she was dying; their thirteen children fled in all directions for their lives. His fields and gristmill were destroyed. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves and returned home after the War to find his wife dead, his children gone, and his properties gone. He died a few weeks later of exhaustion and a broken heart.
8. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration...
 - 5 were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died.
 - 9 died fighting on the battlefield.
 - 4 either had sons that were captured or died in the Revolutionary War.

C. What did they say?

1. **Patrick Henry**...On March 23, 1775 as they were about to go into the revolutionary War, he said, "We shall not fight alone. **God presides over the destinies of nations.**

The battle is not to the strong alone (Jer. 9:23-24). Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! Give me liberty or give me death!”

2. "The 1st amendment has created a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall, **it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government.**" President **Thomas Jefferson** in an address to Danbury Baptists.
 - This is freedom of religion not form religion!
3. In 1787 prayer helped determine the future of our country in a significant way. The Constitutional Convention was on the verge of total failure over the issue of whether small states should have the same representation as large states. In this hopeless situation, 81-year-old **Benjamin Franklin** offered a suggestion.

He was convinced Scripture is right when it states, *“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1)*, so he said: “Gentlemen, I have lived a long time and am convinced that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? I move that prayer imploring the assistance of Heaven be held every morning before we proceed to business.”

The motion carried. From then on prayer was offered each morning. The change after prayer was introduced was so dramatic that in a short while a compromise was reached which is still in effect today.

III. The Bible gives us the **basis** for true freedom

Our founding fathers knew the importance of the Bible to the blessing of a nation and for their need for guidance from God. It was on July 30th (1789) that President George Washington gave his inaugural address, 1/3 of which was dedicated to the direct

supplication to God for guidance and strength for our nation. And with that start, God has blessed our nation! Let me wrap up by looking at the Biblical basis for our freedom!

A. When countries **honor** God they will be blessed

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His inheritance." Psalms 33:12

And if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14

B. We need to **remind** our families of God's faithfulness

God is faithful (I Cor. 1:9)

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (I Thes. 5:24; cf II Thes. 3:3)

We have heard with our ears Oh God, Our fathers have told us what you did in their day long ago. Psalm 44:1

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Prov. 3:6

C. Our personal freedom gives us permission to **serve** not be selfish. *But you were called to Freedom brothers, but do not use your freedom for an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Gal. 5:13*

1. We don't abuse our freedom in Christ to trample God's grace.
2. Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can. -- **John Wesley**, founder of Methodism
3. We are freedom compels us to serve a greater cause...the sharing of the gospel!

D. Ultimate freedom only comes through **surrender** to Jesus Christ.

1. We are slaves to Jesus (I Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6) but ultimately he calls us friends (John 15:15).

For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. (I Cor. 7:22)

⁶not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Eph. 6:6

¹⁵"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. John 15:15

2. This earth is not our home (John 14:2-3).

²"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

E. Conclusion: Let's thank God for what He has done. Jesus would have been a patriot of heaven!

Resources for Further Study:

- ✓ Barton, David. *The Myth of Separation*. Wallbuilder Press, 1992
- ✓ Federer, William J. *America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*. FAME Publishing, 1999.
- ✓ Foster, Marshall. *The American Covenant*. The Mayflower Institute, 1992.
- ✓ Grant, George. *The Patriot's Handbook*. Cumberland House Publishing, 1996.