

Question: Do you think that there is any sense in which the United States is God's chosen nation?

As much as we may love our native land and enjoy the freedoms and blessings of U.S. citizenship, we must be cautious of any attempts to claim that God favors us above the peoples of other nations on earth. The often-quoted golden text of the Bible says: "For God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, italics for emphasis only). Jesus came into the world to bring salvation from sin and new life to people from all nations on earth (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).

However, to say that God does not favor one nation above another does not mean he is not providentially working in the history of the United States or any nation to accomplish his divine purposes. The prophet declared that "the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes" (Daniel 5:21). To the proud Athenians, the apostle Paul said: "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26). God's hand is involved in the life of every nation.

Christians in the U.S. or in any nation on earth have a dual citizenship. As citizens of an earthly kingdom, Christians have a God-given responsibility to respect and submit to governing officials, to pay taxes and to pray for their governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:2-3). But they are also citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven seeking to bring about the doing of God's will on the whole earth as it is in heaven (Philippians 3:20; Matthew 6:10). The Kingdom of God transcends all national boundaries and political affiliations. The United States is not the Kingdom of God. Therefore, she should not be expected to take on the mission of God's Kingdom. It is the mission of God's Kingdom people, not the United States, to proclaim Jesus as the means to salvation and new life, to oppose evil and injustice and to help people maintain freedom from sin.

Many of our nation's founding fathers were devout Christians, and references to God were written into the historical documents of our country. But, we have not always acted in ways consistent with Christianity. At

the time of the Declaration of Independence, a sizable portion of the population was made up of captive slaves in forced labor. Much of our land was acquired by dispossession of the previous population.

But making a distinction between our nation and the Kingdom of God does not mean we should be unpatriotic. Give thanks to God for America and the principles of liberty, justice and individual dignity upon which our nation was founded. Joyfully celebrate our annual Independence Day. Work to maintain these great principles as best we can in a fallen world. But also know that our devotion to justice and abhorrence of prejudice and other evils grows out of a knowledge of God and a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Honor America, but also remember that America is not the Kingdom of God. Only the Kingdom of God is destined to stand forever (Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:32-33).

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/06/29