

## Rev. Jonas Clark and the Battle of Lexington April, 1775

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The most historic band of minutemen was led by Deacon Parker under the auspices of Rev. Jonas Clark. Clark was pastor of a church in Lexington, Massachusetts. Since the struggle over the Stamp Act in 1765, this clergyman had become this town's principal leader in its town meetings and issues of liberty and government. Almost every crucial state paper written to represent this town was authored by Jonas Clark. His home was a frequent meeting place for men like Samuel Adams and John Hancock when safe locations could not be assured inside Boston. Such was the case on the night of April 18th, 1775. Adams and Hancock were visiting for the night, unaware that the British had decided to send troops to Lexington to destroy the town's military supplies and capture these two men. One of Clark's house guests asked him on that night if the Lexington people would fight if necessary. Clark, who had laid a solid foundation concerning the duty of self-defense of inalienable rights for years through his sermons, responded confidently: "I have trained them for this very hour!" [1] Clark had prepared this people so well in the Scriptures as they related to the issues of the day, that the first shots of the entire war were providentially selected to be fired on his church lawn.

William Wells records this first battle and the role of Paul Revere in his book *The Life and Public Service of Samuel Adams*:

"Paul Revere had previously concerted with Colonel Conant and some others in Charlestown that, if the British went out by water, he would display two lanterns in the North Church Steeple, and if by land, one, as a signal that the news might be conveyed to Lexington, should the communication with the peninsula be cut off. Having instructed a friend to that effect, he was rowed across the Charles River. It was the young flood, the ship was winding, and the moon rising. Landing in Charlestown, Revere found that his signal had been understood. He then took a horse, and rode toward Lexington."

"After several adventures on the way, in which he narrowly escaped capture, he reached the house of Mr. Clark about midnight, and gave the alarm. He was just in time to elude the vigilance of the British in Boston; for Earl Percy, having accidentally ascertained that the secret was out, gave orders to allow no person to leave the town. Revere found the family at rest, and a guard of eight men stationed at the house, for the protection of Adams and Hancock. He rode up, and requested admittance, but the Sergeant replied that the family before retiring had desired that they not be disturbed by any noise about the house. 'Noise!' replied Revere, 'you'll have noise enough before long. The Regulars are coming out.' He was then admitted."



Old North Church

“About one o’clock on the morning of the 19th, the militia were mustered on the green near the meeting-house, and messengers sent for additional information. By two o’clock the countrymen numbered one hundred and thirty. The guns were loaded with powder and ball in the presence of Adams, Hancock, and Clark. One of the messengers returning with the report that no troops could be seen, and the weather being chilly, the men were dismissed with orders to appear again at the beat of the drum. Most of them retired to Buckman’s Tavern, near by.”



“Colonel Smith had marched his column but a few miles, when the ringing of bells and firing of guns satisfied him that the country was alarmed. He immediately detached six companies of light infantry, under command of Major Pitcairn, with orders to press forward, and secure the two bridges at Concord, while he sent back for reinforcements. By capturing those whom he met upon the road, Pitcairn prevented the news of his approach from going before him, until he came within a mile and a half of Lexington meeting-house, when a horseman, who had succeeded in eluding the troops, galloped into the village. Then, about seventy townspeople assembled as the drums beat, and at the sound the British halted to load. The advance guard and grenadiers then hurried forward at double quick, and when within five or six rods of the Provincials, Pitcairn shouted, ‘Disperse, ye villains! Ye rebels, disperse! Lay down your arms! Why don’t you lay down your arms and disperse?’ Most of the minutemen, undecided whether to fire or retreat, stood motionless, having been ordered by their commander not to fire first. Some were joining the ranks, and others leaving them, when Pitcairn in a loud voice gave the word to fire, at the same time discharging his pistol. The order was obeyed at first by a few guns, which did no execution, and immediately after by a deadly discharge from the whole British force. A few of the militia, no longer hesitating, returned the fire, but without serious effect. Parker, seeing the utter disparity of forces, ordered his men to disperse. The Regulars continued their fire while any of the militia remained in sight, killing eight and wounding ten. The village green, where this event took place, has been aptly termed by the historian, ‘a field of murder, not of battle.’”

“A few farmers had assembled, willing to defend their homes, but determined not to commence hostilities, and unsuspecting of the sudden onslaught. The firing was soon over, and the royal troops remained masters of the field; but the sacrifice of that little band revolutionized the world. It was the first scene in the drama which was to carry with it the destinies of mankind.”



*The Battle of Lexington: “From this day will be dated the liberty of the World!”*

“Adams and Hancock, as the soldiers made their appearance, were persuaded to retire to the adjacent village of Woburn, their safety being regarded as of utmost importance. Passing through the fields, while the sunlight glistened in the dew of the fresh spring morning, Adams felt his soul swell with uncontrollable joy as he contemplated the mighty future, and with prophetic utterance of his country's dawning independence, he exclaimed, ‘O! what a glorious morning is this!’” [2]

It was a glorious morning. Why? Because as Rev. Jonas Clark preached: “From this day will be dated the liberty of the world!” [3]

The Providential hand of God is evident in this event. About one month earlier, on March 22, the Governor of Connecticut had called upon the colony to observe a “Day of public Fasting and Prayer... that God would graciously pour out his Holy Spirit on us, to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation;... That He would restore, preserve and secure the liberties of this, and all the other American Colonies, and make this land a mountain of Holiness and habitation of Righteousness forever.— That God would preserve and confirm the Union of the Colonies in the pursuit and practice of that Religion and virtue which will honour Him...” [4]

What day had Governor Jonathan Trumbull selected for them to be praying? “Wednesday, the nineteenth Day of April” – the very day that fighting had begun! God had an entire colony praying on the day that the “shot heard ‘round the world” occurred, which eventually led to the independence of the United States and a new era of liberty for mankind.

## End Notes

1. Franklin P. Cole, ed. *They Preached Liberty*, Indianapolis: Liberty Press, p. 39.
2. William V. Wells, *The Life and Public Service of Samuel Adams*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1865, Vol. 2, pp. 291-294.
3. Cole, p. 39.
4. Jonathan Trumbull, A Proclamation for a Day of Publick Fasting and Prayer, issued March 22, 1775, to be observed April 19. A Copy of the Proclamation is reproduced in Verna Hall, *The Christian History of the American Revolution, Consider and Ponder*, San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1976, p. 407.