

God and the Nations -Part 1

Written by Calvin Fox

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"Nations" in this paper will mean "States", geo-political entities, a people sharing a a single political and territorial identity. It may well also be a union of peoples with different ethnicities and cultures and languages. Many Nations in the Bible share many of the characteristics of States. The latter is usually what the most common word for "Nation" (GOY) means in the Bible. It applies to Israel and the "Nations" around them such as Egypt and Assyria, i.e.-they were geo-political entities. Thy were ruled by Kings or Emperors. There were no modern Nation-States or Democracies in the Bible. The type of Government is irrelevant to the definition.

[Note: a Study of Greek and Hebrew words for "Nations" is appended to this Essay]

God judges Nations today and does so on the singular basis of His Law, summarized in the Decalogue and as it is revealed to all by Natural Law.

Rom.1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Rom.2:12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Scripture gives ample evidence that God uses the principles of both Tables of His Law to judge the domestic and foreign Policies of Nations.

Dualistic Christians who separate heaven from Earth, focusing on the spiritual and separating their Faith from the mundane social, economic and political dimensions of life need to remember the lessons of Incarnation and Resurrection. There would be no Salvation apart from the external, physical world.

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The entire Bible makes it very clear that God works out His Redemptive Plan in real History. We can take the following text as literally true.

Eph.1:9 [God]...making known... his purpose, 10 ... a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth. 20 [God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet...

Saying that "History" is His Story is literally true. God is directly involved in the origins, affairs and demise of real world, geo-political Nations or States through out History, in today's current events and on into the future. He has and shall direct them to His predetermined Goal. He holds them all accountable for the decisions and actions they make. He uses them, blesses them or destroys them as He will.

All this seems incontrovertible to me and clearly revealed in the Bible. However, there are Christians who see God as only involved in the lives of individuals. The command to make disciples of all Nations is interpreted by them to mean "Make disciples of Multitudes (of individuals) or of People everywhere around the globe." Others Christians define the word "Nations" (*ethne*) as simply "People Groups" i.e.- unique groups of people and they have a burden and vision of reaching all of them with the Gospel. That is commendable and to be encouraged.

When we try to define "people group" definitions and numbers vary. There are maybe 16,000 "cultural, ethnic, linguistic" groups according to the Joshua Project website.

An "ethnic group" may be defined as a "self-perpetuating group sharing an interest in a homeland connected with a specific geographical area, a common language and traditions, including food preferences, and a common religious faith" - Wikipedia

There are more than 5000 ethnic groups in the world. Many States/Nations have many such groups, often a source of division and conflict within that Nation.

The Bible says,

Rev.7:9 I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes ...

Rev.5:9 they sang a new song, saying, "[Christ] you were slain, and by your blood you

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ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...

Notice that the word "Nation" (*ethnos*) in these texts is used in addition to tribes, peoples and language (groups). Nation is a different category. If we ignore or deny "Nation" as Nation, i.e.- as a geo-political State, the teaching in the Bible about God and His involvement with actual Nations in the world and in today's news is missed. That is a major mistake.

The Nations, i.e.- States, must be taught (confronted with) the truth that that God is in control of their Future and is directing everything to fulfill His Plan for that future. Nations (States) must guide their Policies with that in mind.

Psalm 2:10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all [kings and nations] who take refuge in him.

Eph.3:10 ...through the church the manifold wisdom of God [should] be made known to the rulers and authorities [the reference here is to both the political powers as well as the spiritual powers that indwell and control them] e.g. see Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1 and Matt 4:8-9 with Job 2:1-2

We have written elsewhere that all the Kings and Kingdoms of the world shall be superseded by Christ and His Kingdom (Dan 2:28-47) But first there will be a day of Reckoning. All orthodox Christians confess they believe Christ shall come and judge the living and the dead. Many seem to be unaware that Christ shall judge the geo-political Nations as well and are therefore not confronting the Nations with His claims over them.

Rev.17 - The Woman (Babylon) is supported by the Beast from the Sea (the Anti Christ), functions with the help of various Rulers and dominates multitudes (vs. 7-13). Babylon represents materialistic, hedonistic Culture. Satan wields his control over the nations through civil governments with the aid of False Religion, Ideology and Propaganda; but, that control is most evident in commerce and popular culture. It is on this everyday, man-in-the street, level that Satan exerts his control most directly in people's lives. Hitler was elected by the citizens of Germany. Many of these same citizens were loyal to the Dictator and his nefarious schemes even while claiming to be Christians. Many Christians in America, including our then President, supported Stalin.

ADDENDUM: Definitions from the Bible

The Greek word for Nation, *ethnos*, is translated as

1) a multitude associated or living together

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2) a tribe, a people group

3) Pagans, Gentiles (non-Hebrews)- this is the most common translation of *ethne* (pl)

The Hebrew words for "Nation" -main source: DOTTE

goy (goyim) - often paired with "king" and "kingdom": a city-state, nation-state or empire; a territory (a Land) but held together by political and economic factors, not ethnic or cultural or linguistic ones; also- simply refers to all non-Hebrew people

am - an ethnic community based on blood relationship, a People

leom [rare word]- usually paired with goy or am, a people or population

'iy [e] island, often associated with goy = island nation, foreign nations, nations at the end of the earth

'ummah [Aramaic word] - a people descended from a common "mother"

Ideally, Israel could not conceive of itself as a Nation without God, "David" and The Land

Definitions from other sources of "States: compared to "Nations"

In common contemporary usage, a "State" is a self-governing political entity. A "Nation", however, is singular people which share a common culture.

<http://geography.about.com/cs/politicalgeog/a/statenation.htm>

A State refers to a legal/political entity that is comprised of a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) a government ; and d) the capacity to enter into relations with other States. All States seek to preserve their political autonomy and their territorial integrity.

<http://www.towson.edu/polsci/ppp/sp97/realism/whatisns.htm>

The State is a political and geopolitical entity; the Nation is a cultural and/or ethnic entity. The term "nation-state" implies that the two geographically coincide, and this distinguishes the nation state from the other types of State, which historically preceded it. [Most writers see the origins of the "Nation-State" in the 19th Century]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_state

"For purposes of clarity, it is best to refer to a Nation when we mean a group of people that is bound together by a sense of national unity. A State is a legal entity which enjoys or seeks the diplomatic and legal recognition of other States. When we speak of a Country we are usually talking about a Nation-State, that is a legal entity in the international community which enjoys diplomatic recognition and is bound by a common sense of national unity that is widely shared

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by its citizenry."

<http://www.unm.edu/~gleasong/a/notes/topic12.html>

Estimates vary, but by most accounts there are 194 sovereign States (commonly called Countries or Nations) in the world today. Republics are a union of smaller States and together but are considered to be one Nation or Country. What we will learn applies to each and all of them.

<http://www.infoplease.com/countries.html>

<http://www.mapping.com/countries.html>