

# God's Word to Our Nation (1)

by Albert N. Martin

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*The sermon emphasizes God's sovereign rule and accountability over nations, urging the audience to heed His word.*

**Duration:** 40:45

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "America"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the theme of God's relationship to the nations and the biblical doctrine of our solidarity as part of a nation. He emphasizes the importance of understanding God's rule over the nations and how it impacts our lives as individuals and as a nation. The preacher disclaims any special revelation or inspiration in delivering this message. He highlights the need for individuals to recognize their subjugation to God's sovereign rule and the significance of God's word for our nation.

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## Transcript

Now the subject announced God's word for our nation or to our nation. And as we address ourselves to this subject tonight and God willing at least tomorrow night, I believe it's essential by way of introduction to do at least two basic things. First of all, I want to make a very clear disclaimer.

In taking up the subject God's word to our nation, it is vital that you understand that I disclaim, first of all, any fanatical statements or intimations that I have received direct revelation from God or any special inspiration from God in the preparation of these messages. I do not come to you as Jeremiah and Isaiah could come to the nations of Israel and Judah and say, thus saith Jehovah. And their redeemed personalities, their mental faculties, their organs of speech and all of their faculties became the very instrument by which the living God spoke His infallible word to the nation.

And I want to make a disclaimer at the outset to any notion of a fanatical claim to direct revelation or to special inspiration. All of the raw materials of God's word to our nation as I attempt to bring it to you tonight and tomorrow night, those raw materials are contained within the pages of this book. I speak to you as one who believes that all special revelation is now contained within the pages of the Old and of the New Testaments.

And that as a servant of God, all I need to be thoroughly equipped to bring the word of God to our nation is these divinely inspired scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. For surely this is the clear teaching of

2 Timothy 3 verses 16 and 17. However, though I make no fanatical claims to direct revelation or special inspiration, if I properly expound and rightly apply this word, it comes to every man, every woman, every boy and every girl in this building, just as much as the word of the living God, as though God were to send Jeremiah back from the dead and he were to speak to you and to me and say, thus saith the Lord.

Though we make no fanatical claims to direct revelation, we hold the highest view of the authority of the word of God when rightly expounded and applied to the consciences. And then my disclaimer also takes within its perspective any irresponsible equation between the nation of Israel and the United States of America. Many a sincere preacher has preached an earnest sermon on such text as 2 Chronicles 7, 14, assuming a direct equation between the nation of Israel and the nation of America.

How many sermons have been preached on that text? If my people and my people is made to refer either to the citizens of the US or to the church, if my people will do this, this and this, I will hear from heaven, I will heal their land. That is the land of America. And that's an irresponsible handling of the word of God.

There is only one national entity into which God entered by way of special covenant in all the history of the human race. Through the prophet Amos, God could say to the nation of Israel, you only have I known among all the nations of the earth. In Romans 9 and verse 4, when the apostle Paul is delineating the peculiar privileges of the nation of Israel, he says, it is to that nation that God gave his oracles.

It is with that nation that God made his covenants. It is with that nation alone that God entered into this peculiar covenantal relationship. And therefore, I want to avoid at all costs that irresponsible equation between America and the nation of Israel.

So that's my disclaimer. But now, secondly, and more expansively, in our introduction to this subject, God's word to our nation, I want to give a biblical justification for preaching on such a subject. You see, the very title God's word to our nation assumes an awful lot.

It assumes that God sustains an intimate and present relationship to the nations of the earth, including our nation. Though we have disclaimed that he has entered into any special covenant with our nation, to take up the subject God's word to our nation assumes. Furthermore, I'm not speaking to the nation.

I'm speaking to you, a conference gathered here in Bluffton, Ohio. And yet to speak on this subject, unless we would say that the organizers were plotting and planning the essence of irrelevance, God's word to our nation must have something to say to this little handful of the nation. And that assumes, you see, a solidarity between us as individuals and our nation as an entire nation.

And what I propose to do in the time that remains tonight is to set before you by way of introduction a biblical justification for addressing such a subject. And first of all, we need to understand the subjugation of the nations to the sovereign rule of God. We will never be prepared to receive God's word to our nation unless we are utterly and intelligently convinced from the scriptures of the subjugation of the nations to the sovereign rule of God, or more simply stated, God's rule over the nations.

Now, this truth is taught with such fullness in the Old and the New Testaments that one feels an embarrassment of riches in trying to pick out several key texts which state it unequivocally. But perhaps none is clearer than that very graphic incident recorded in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel. You will remember, I trust, that the book of Daniel finds its setting in the heathen kingdom of Babylon.

If you have your Bibles, and I imagine coming to a Bible conference you have brought them, turn please to the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel. The great world power in existence at the time of Daniel was the kingdom of Babylon. And at the head of Babylon was a man named Nebuchadnezzar.

And in the course of the outworking of his kingdom, God gave to Nebuchadnezzar an unusual dream. And he called all of the wise men of his kingdom and told them his dream and said, please interpret for me this dream. And they were unable to do so.

And so he calls in Daniel, having heard of his reputation in such matters. And Daniel is then called in to interpret this dream that Nebuchadnezzar recounts to him. But now the point that is so relevant for our study these nights is first of all found in Nebuchadnezzar's account of the dream, Daniel's interpretation of the dream, and then in the fulfillment of the dream.

And you will see that there is one fundamental focal point of this entire incident. In the dream itself, we read verse 17 of chapter 4 in Daniel, the sentence is by the decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones to the intent that the living may know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will and sets up over it the lowest of men. This dream, I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen.

And there is, as it were, one self-interpreting element of the dream. Nebuchadnezzar is informed in his dream that the purpose of whatever will come to pass as symbolized in the dream is that the living may know one simple fact. And remember, this is the living, not only in Israel, but the living in this heathen world power of Babylon.

That the living may know that it is Jehovah God who rules over the nations of men and gives the kingdom, not to the wisest, not to the most mighty, not to the most clever, but he gives it to whomsoever he will, and he even sets up the lowest of men over it. Then Daniel begins to give the interpretation beginning in verse 19, and he tells him what will happen, that the vision or the dream of a tree that is cut down in a stump alone is left and then it later blossoms forth is a prophecy of this strange dealings of God with this man, Nebuchadnezzar. He will become like a beast of the field.

He will become like an animal and will eat grass and his body will be wet with the dew of heaven that he might learn a very simple lesson. Notice now further in chapter 4 and verse 25, thou shalt be driven from men, thy dwelling shall be with the beast of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen and shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times will pass over you till you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will, and so the interpretation underscores the one element that was as it were self-interpreting in the dream itself, and then it does come to pass that King Nebuchadnezzar is made as a beast, eats the grass as oxen, his dew, his body is wet with the dew of heaven, and now we read in verse 34, and at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most high and praised and honored him that lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, his kingdom from generation to generation, and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what are you doing? And so God taught this lesson in such an unusual way to this man who was the highest leader on earth at that time, he taught him this great lesson that all of the nations, whether they acknowledge the presence of Jehovah or not, all of the nations are in subjugation to the sovereign rule of Almighty God. Job understood this and gave vivid expression to it in the twelfth chapter of the book of Job.

Turn there for a moment, if you will, please, for the description Job gives of the government of God is so vivid and graphic. Speaking of the doings of God in Job 20, 12, and verse 23, he, God, increases the nations and he destroys them. He enlarges the nations and he leads them captive.

He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and causes them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way, like a man lost in the woods who walks around and circles and cannot find the path by which to exit from the woods. When you see national leaders filled with confusion, it is Almighty God who causes them to wander as in a wilderness where there is no way. That's the statement of Job.

Then listen to what he says, they grope in the dark without light and he makes them to stagger like a drunk man. And when the leaders of the earth have no more power to sort out the problems of their nations than a drunk man to sort out the complex problems of an intricate mechanized system in a factory but merely stumbles and staggers left and right, Job says, God has been at work. His sovereign rule over the nations.

When we turn to the New Testament, we find the wonderful truth that that sovereign rule is now deposited in the pierced hands of the exalted enthroned Son of God who said before he commissioned his own, all authority, all right and power to rule and govern has been deposited with me in heaven and upon the earth. Where principalities and powers operate, where kings sit and rule, where presidents meet in the oval room, where the great ones of the earth gather in their council chambers, all authority in earth has been delivered unto me. And in Ephesians 1 verses 20 through 23, the apostle, as it were, expounds the statement of our Lord.

When speaking of the measure of the power of God, he says, it is the power which was wrought in Christ when God raised him from the dead and seated him in his own right hand far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but in that which is to come and he hath put all things under his feet and has given him to be head over all things to his church which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all. If the scriptures teach anything, they teach the subjugation of the nations to the sovereign rule of Almighty God. Without that conviction, I would have no rationale to address you on the subject God's word to our nation.

If the fate of the nations is left to the wisdom and the scheming and the power of men, good or evil, if it is simply left to the forces of blind faith, then there is no word to bring to the nations. But if Almighty God rules over the nations, if Almighty God holds the reigns of government and governors and kings and rulers, good and evil, then indeed there is hope that there is a word from this God to the nations whom he governs. Then in the second place, a biblical justification for this subject involves our thinking at least briefly on this fact, the accountability of the nations to the just judgment of God.

Not only the subjugations of the nations to the rule of God, but the accountability of the nations to the just judgment of God, or more simply stated, God's judgment of the nations. He not only rules the nations, he sits as judge over the nations. And here again the scriptures are full of teaching in the Old and the New Testaments.

Suffice it to say that a passage such as Romans chapter 118 through the end of chapter or the middle of chapter three clearly teaches that all the nations, whether they have ever received special revelation in terms of the scriptures of the Old or and New Testament, or whether they have merely the revelation of God without in the heavens that declare his glory, the revelation of himself within in their own moral consciousness, Romans 2, 14 and 15, that passage clearly establishes that all of the nations, not just the

covenant nation, all of the nations are accountable to the just judgment of almighty God. This is why the psalmist could say in Psalm 9 and verse 17, the wicked shall be turned into hell and all, all the nations that forget God, whether they forget him as we have in Romans 11:8 and following through the end of the middle of chapter two, dealing with the forgetfulness and the rejection of the knowledge of God in general revelation, or whether it is the forgetfulness that comes after exposure to special revelation, all of the nations are accountable to the just judgment of almighty God. And perhaps the most graphic illustration of this in the Old Testament pertains to God's word to Abraham with respect to the prophecy that the nation that would be formed through Abraham would go down into Egypt and there for 400 years would suffer oppression and opposition.

One of the great reasons for which the nation was to wait that long time before being called out in the deliverance through Moses is this, I read now from Genesis 18, I'm sorry, Genesis chapter 15 and verse 16, and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. It's as though God anticipates the question of Abraham, oh my God, why should my people have to wait 400 years before coming out of a state of oppression? And God says one of the reasons is this, the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. The Amorites were not a covenant nation, they were a pagan nation, and yet God was taking account of all of their sins.

And as it were, God says the scales are not yet full, but when the scales are full and are kicked in the direction of my judicial judgment, then I will bring forth the nation that comes from your loins, Abraham, and then I will bring them in to dispossess the heathen lands. And as we shall see in a subsequent message, God uses what we would call very coarse language. Why were the Canaanites driven out by the Israelites? Well, you say to fulfill the promise of God, and that's true, but it was also to be the executors of the judgment of God.

For in Leviticus we read chapter 18, verses 24 to 28, it is for the abominations of the lands of Canaan that the land vomited them out. Israel became God's feather to tickle the throat of the nations there in Canaan, because God said their sins, for which they are accountable to me, were of such an aggravated nature that the land vomited out entire nations. Those nations that had never heard the ten words of Moses, those nations that did not know a word of Mosaic legislation, they were answerable when they defiled themselves in every form of idolatry, every form of sexual perversion, when they indulged themselves in every form of the account and astrology.

In Deuteronomy 18 and 19, God said, for this reason, I cast out those nations that were before you. We must understand the accountability of the nations to the judgment of Almighty God. If that's true, then God does have a word for our nation.

For you see, God does not await for a decision of the Supreme Court to hold the United States of America accountable to himself. God does not sit with hands folded and speak from heaven and say, because you are so committed to the principle of separation of church and state, which you have now interpreted to mean the ungodliness of the state, I will bring you to court as to whether or not. No, a thousand times, no.

This nation is accountable to Almighty God. Let the Supremes to the contrary. Let the American Civil Liberties Union scream and cry and multiply and try to wrench this nation from accountability to God.

It cannot do it because the scripture tells us Almighty God is judge of the nations. And then thirdly, a biblical justification for such a subject, God's word to our nation involves not only an acknowledgement of the subjugation of the nations to the sovereign rule of God, the accountability of the nations to the just

judgment of God. But oh, hear me.

It also involves the responsibility of the nations to hear the word of God. God has a right to address his subjects in all the earth. And again, how many times this is illustrated in the scriptures of the old and the New Testaments? I said earlier in my disclaimer, we do not equate America with Israel, but it was to an Israelite prophet that God spoke Jeremiah.

And he said in Jeremiah one five, I have appointed you a prophet, not just to Judah, but to the nations. And Jeremiah had the temerity to stand in the covenant nation and hurl the word of God into the conscience of non-covenant nations. He speaks to Babylon and pronounces the forthcoming judgment of God upon that very nation, that heathen, pagan, non-covenanted nation.

And God says, I reserve the right to address the nations. When the sin of Nineveh cried out to God, God said to a prophet, go, go to Nineveh and cry unto that city forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. God didn't send a telegram from heaven that I've made no special covenant engagements with you, and therefore I would mix up things that differ.

God had the wittest prophet to do what he told. God had the wittest prophet until he stood upon those shores and he'd made no apologies. He said forty days, Nineveh.

If anyone had the temerity to say who in the world, you're not one of our priests, who in the world are you? That prophet had one answer. I'm a man back from the dead, a thick-headed, stubborn prophet, and God had to get me to your shores by way of the belly of a whale. And I'm here because Jehovah, God of the nations, has sent me.

And the teaching of the prophets is beautifully summarized by Isaiah. And I say it's only a summary, for it's found in Amos, it's found in Hosea, it's found in Ezekiel, again and again God addresses his word to the nations. But oh, there is this sweeping, eloquent, impassioned cry from the lips of Isaiah in chapter 34.

Come near, ye nations. Come near, ye nations, to hear. Harken, ye peoples.

Let the earth hear, and the fullness thereof, the world, and all things that come forth from it. For the Lord has indignation against all the nations, and wrath against all their hosts. Do you feel something of the urgency of the prophet? Something of the burning, yearning of his heart that the nations would hear, whether they acknowledge it or not? They are under the rule of God, answerable to the judgment of God, and it is their wisdom to hear what God the Lord will say to them.

You and I must understand that though we are not Israel, God has a right to address us as a nation, for that has always been his right to address any of the nations of the earth with his own holy and infallible word. But not only does the justification of this theme demand at least that threefold understanding of what is really, I've given you in a nutshell, a theology of God's relationship to the nations, that you must understand, and this is the final point I'll make in this introductory meditation, you must understand something of the biblical doctrine of our solidarity as part of the nation. Now what do I mean by that big word? Simply this, we Americans love our individual liberty.

Some of us who've traveled in other parts of the world never cease to be amazed how the nation that can send men into orbit and send men to the moon and accomplish so many marvelous things in the realm of technology can't create a decent mass transportation system. One goes to England, one goes to Europe, and can go almost anywhere on clean, safe, reliable, functional, on-time public means of transportation.

But not in our country.

You know what one of the fundamental reasons is? We're such a stubborn, stinking, individualistic people. We want to catch not the 822, but if we want to pull out the door at 823, fully on the train, I'll hop in my set of wheels. Though the Arabs can get me by the tail and squeeze, it doesn't matter.

We're a crassly individualistic people. We're for nothing unless we can vote about it. And there's an element in that that's good.

But ah, listen, listen. God does not deal just with individuals, though he does deal with individuals. You were born as an individual, you'll die as an individual, you'll go to judgment as an individual.

But God deals in solidarity. That is, he deals with men in ordained groups of men. One man's actions affect many, and he did this from the very beginning.

Romans 5, 12. Wherefore, as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death passed upon all men, for that all, all sin in Adam. Wait a minute, but you say I don't like it, it doesn't seem fair.

Don't you dare cavil with almighty God. Facts are stubborn things, and it's a fact that in the one man, behold, as in Adam, all by 1 Corinthians 15, 22. God deals, you see, in solidarity.

The human race was being dealt with in Adam, and throughout the scriptures, God deals with families, and often the sin of the head of the family passes on by way of judgment to the entire household. And we see God dealing with nations in which righteous men suffer with the wicked. We see also wicked men being blessed because of one righteous man.

In our family worship, we're reading in Genesis, and I was struck again with that statement about Joseph. God blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake. Now, we know his wife, she was no queen of virtue, but she was part of that household, that scheming, rotten woman who tries to make this holy man fall, yet she was part of a household.

That solidarity, the household in which Joseph lived was blessed because of Joseph's sin. Now, why do I say that? All follow, though I know the hour is late, but we must grasp this, or all the rest that is said will fall, if not upon deaf ears, ears not sensitized to receive the full impression. Follow me now.

We're going to consider God's word to our nation, and much of it will be a word of rebuke and enunciation for the aggravated sins of our nation. But you say, Pastor Mark, you don't mean to infer that the majority of us, or even a few of us, are presently willfully indulging in the sins of our nation, do you? Well, I certainly hope not. But may I remind you of the three great national penitential prayers in the Old Testament? Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9. Three holy men, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, when they go before God to pray, and they confess the sins of the nation, they don't pray, Oh God, have mercy upon them, for they have done wickedly, and they have sinned, and they have forsaken thy commandments.

Read those prayers. Ezra says, Oh Lord, I am ashamed, I blush, and I cannot look up. We have done wickedly.

We have forsaken thy commandments. We have not kept thy laws. He understood the principle of solidarity.

He stood as a member of the nation that had departed from God, and as surely as every individual receives the blessing when it comes in solidarity, when God blessed the nation of Israel through the reign of a righteous king, many unrighteous people were participants of that blessing because of the principle of solidarity. When one man sinned, one man sinned, 3,000 Israelites lost their lives at Ai. The whole nation was brought to an impasse through the sin of one man.

Why? Because of the principle of solidarity. And dear people, you and I are part of this nation. Through no choice of our own, and in many cases through very little effort of our own, we have reaped the great mountain of blessing that has come to us because we are members of this nation.

And we cannot be recipients of its blessings in solidarity because of the vision, the prayers, the blood that was shed to maintain our liberties by men in the past. But when it comes to accepting responsibility for the sins, opt out of solidarity into crass individualism and say, well, they're not my sins. They're not my declensions.

They're not my apostasies. We cannot do it. It is unscriptural.

It is irresponsible. It is nothing short of wicked. For I remind you in closing that when God was about to bring judgment upon his ancient people, you have that very unusual incident in Ezekiel 9, in which the man with the inkhorn was commanded to go through the city.

And he was to put a mark upon the godly remnant, those who were true Israelites within the nation of Israel. And do you know how they're described? He said, put a mark upon all those who sigh and who cry for the abominations that are done in the land. Not only were they different from the rest of their fellow countrymen by non-participation, non-conformity, not only were they different by turning away from the patterns of ungodliness in the way of, but they were conscious, even walking in a path of righteousness.

They were part of a nation in solidarity, a nation that had previously sinned, and they sighed for the abominations done in the land. And we will never feel the weight of God's word to our country in this conference, unless we're prepared for the spiritual pain of making the sins of this nation ourselves. And feeling our identification with a nation whose sins cry out to the God of heaven, and may I say it reverently, tax his long-suffering and patience, as perhaps they have never been taxed in the history of non-covenant nations.

And if there is any hope, it will be when people like yourselves, who long to please God, are prepared for the spiritual pain and anguish of identifying yourself with this sinful, this iniquitous, this apostate nation, and sighing and crying to the God of heaven. Not that he will come and preserve our affluent lifestyle, not that there'll be more opportunity to buy more things and export them to the world, but if it must be at the price of being stripped of all our things, we shall be brought into a way of righteousness that will avert the total judgment of almighty God. But is God's word to our nation? I believe it is epitomized in that text familiar to many of you.

I leave it with you to meditate upon and pray over in preparation for tomorrow night, Proverbs 13, 14, 34. Righteousness exalts the nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. God's word to our nation.

You'll never be convinced there is such a word unless you're convinced of his rule over the nation, his judgment of the nations, his right to address the nations. And unless you're convinced, you are in solidarity with the nation. May we reflect upon these things and come prayerful and expectant, believing God to

Speak to our hearts.

Let us pray.

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