

Rise and Fall of Nations 4

In our first three messages relating to the Rise and Fall of Nations, we examined the nation of Israel under her first three kings- Saul, David and Solomon. Each of these three men experienced an extended period of time when God's hand of protection and blessing was all over them and the nation they served. Their obedience and willingness to honor God in their private and political lives brought on irrefutable evidence of divine intervention for the good in the affairs of the lives of the Israelites. They were blessed, protected, and feared by their enemies. We also saw how failure to obey God in private or public life brought the just, swift and powerful judgment of God on them personally and on the nation they were supposed to serve. It is vividly clear that sin in any area of the life of a person, especially one in a position of authority, will bring on the righteous judgment of God. And, it will not only affect the sinner but will likely also negatively impact the constituents he or she is supposed to be serving.

Since after Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel was divided and began a long term period of rebellion against God with very few obedient leaders until the captivity, today we are going to move to the time of the early church after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
Background.....

Herod was the family name of a succession of kings who ruled the Roman occupied region of Palestine from 37BC to 95AD. Herod the Great was the first of the family appointed to rule the regions in Galilee and Judea. He was the King Herod who ordered all the male children two years and under slaughtered in

his attempt to destroy the one born king of the Jews. Herod Agrippa 1 was the grandson of Herod the Great.

Herod Agrippa 1 was a hater and persecutor of the church. He was responsible for the death of James the disciple and brother of John. He also, as recorded in Acts 12 had Peter put in prison with the intention of putting him to death also. Four squads of soldiers were assigned to guard him. Prayer was being offered up by the church.

The night before Peter was to be executed, an angel appeared to Peter in prison, the chains fell off, the doors opened. The Lord had apparently caused a deep sleep to come over all the guards. Peter and the angel walked right out of the prison and into the city. The city gates opened automatically. The angel disappeared.

Peter went to the house where the prayer meeting was going on. It was probably very late in the evening or even early in the morning. Peter knocked on the door, Rhoda went to the door, recognized Peter's voice, and ran back in announcing that Peter was at the door.

"You're crazy" they said. "It's his angel." I can imagine that they actually got angry at Rhoda for disturbing the prayer meeting. Peter knocked again. She let him in. They had a celebration/testimony service.

The next morning there was all kinds of commotion back at the prison regarding what had happened to Peter. A search was made for Peter but he could not be found. Herod Agrippa 1 had all the soldiers who had been appointed to guard Peter executed.

Herod left Jerusalem and went to Caesarea. I presume he went out of fear.

I have shared all of this in brief so we can get to this point.....

20 He (*Herod Agrippa 1*) had been very angry with the Tyrians and Sidonians. Together they presented themselves before him, and having won over Blastus, who was in charge of the king's bedroom, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food from the king's country. ²¹ So on an appointed day, dressed in royal robes and seated on the throne, Herod delivered a public address to them. ²² The populace began to shout, "It's the voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ At once an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give the glory to God, and he became infected with worms and died.

Acts 12:20-23 (HCSB)

Daniel speaking of God to Nebuchadnezzar

21 He changes the times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings. **D**an 2:21 (HCSB)

Herod Agrippa 1 sins:

Hated, persecuted the church

Killed James the disciple

Imprisoned Peter with intent to kill him

Refused to give God glory

Not only did God quickly remove Herod from his position of authority through this horrible infestation leading to death, we can be confident that Herod was eternally condemned to hell.

Which of Herod's sins were worse? I can't say. All sin is bad. But this sin of refusing to give God the glory that brought on the immediate judgment of God was particularly egregious. It is a form of idolatry. It is self worship. It is pride. And, Herod as a person of great power and influence over the people refused to acknowledge God or use his influence to turn people to God. He made the foolish decision to allow himself to be worshipped.

Remember, a similar thing happened to Paul....

8 In Lystra a man without strength in his feet, lame from birth, and who had never walked, sat ⁹ and heard Paul speaking. After observing him closely and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰ [Paul] said in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he jumped up and started to walk around. ¹¹ When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men!" ¹² And they started to call Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the main speaker. ¹³ Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the town, brought oxen and garlands to the gates. He, with the crowds, intended to offer sacrifice. ¹⁴ The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their robes when they heard this and rushed into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵ "Men! Why are you doing these things? We are men also, with the same nature as you, and we are proclaiming good news to you, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, **who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.** ¹⁶ In past generations He allowed all the

nations to go their own way, ¹⁷ although He did not leave Himself without a witness, since He did good: giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and satisfying your hearts with food and happiness.” Acts 14:8-17 (HCSB)

Paul used his attention getting experience to deflect the glory away from himself and to God who alone deserves the praises of men. Paul also used the commotion to witness to the crowd. On the other hand, Herod received all the glory for himself. Remember.....

18 Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall. Prov 16:18 (HCSB)

Sadly, this same kind of thing that happened to Herod, happens often to young men and women in politics, sports, or entertainment who once had strong, noble, and even Christian foundations and values who become corrupted by their power or fame. For many, they simply fail or forget to give God the glory. This causes pride. Then comes destruction. (Brittney Spears, Whitney Houston, Tom Hanks)

We certainly can't predict how quickly or severely that destruction, that fall may come, but we can be sure, God is God, it will come.

There are some today who say that faith and politics should not mix. They say that Christians in particular should stay home and keep their mouths shut. But faith, or lack thereof, sure got mixed up when Herod made his political speech. God Himself responded immediately to the self-glorifying Herod Agrippa 1. God's came because Herod left God out of the political arena.

There are those that say Christians should stay out of the political arena, but that was certainly not the opinion of our founding fathers nor most, if not all of the subsequent presidents.

George Washington- “True religion affords to government its surest support.” “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”

“It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God and to obey His will”

John Adams- “Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” (Muslim countries- democratic processes?)

Samuel Adams- “Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness.”

Benjamin Franklin- “God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”

John Quincy Adams- Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer’s mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?

Thomas Jefferson- “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”

Abraham Lincoln- Of all the presidents, one of the most publicly vocal about his faith. “Nevertheless, amid the greatest difficulties of my Administration, when I could not see any other resort, I would place my whole reliance on God, knowing that all would go well, and that He would decide for the right.”

“In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not

know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.”

Calvin Coolidge- “The foundation of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country.”

FD Roosevelt- “Many people have urged that I call the nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.” “O Lord, give us faith. Give us faith in Thee; faith in our sons; faith in each other, faith in our united crusade. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower- “The real fire within the builders of America was faith- faith in Provident God whose hand supported and guided them: faith in themselves as the children of God... faith in their country and its principles that proclaimed man’s right to freedom and justice.”

John F. Kennedy- “The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.”

Ronald Reagan- I believe that faith and religion play a critical role in the political life of our nation — and always has — and that the church — and by that I mean all churches, all denominations — has had a strong influence on the state. And this has worked to our benefit as a nation.

Supreme Court Justice David Joseph Brewer (1837-1910)

”The American nation from its first settlement at Jamestown to this hour is based upon and permeated by the principles of the Bible.”

(I doubt you'll find any of these quotes in modern text books)

Billy Graham- “The legacy we leave behind for our children, grandchildren, and this great nation is crucial. As I approach my 94th birthday, I realize this election could be my last. I believe it is vitally important that we cast our ballots for candidates who base their decisions on biblical principles and support the nation of Israel. I urge you to vote for those who protect the sanctity of life and support the biblical definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Vote for biblical values this November 6, and pray with me that America will remain one nation under God.

We have seen the judgment and destruction, sometimes immediate, sometimes delayed, brought on by Saul, David, Solomon, and Herod's refusal to obey and honor God. It matters that you and I get involved in the political process and it is crucial that we vote first and foremost for those who come closest to honoring and obeying God in their platforms, policies, and personal lives.

This coming election is not about race, though some have tried to make it so. It is in truth about core ideology. It is about whether we want to be the America our founding fathers intended based on biblical principles and values acknowledging and honoring Jehova God or a new, perverted America of Godlessness, socialistic leanings, and amorality. You pick. You vote!