

Creator and Ruler of the Nations

Acts 17:26-27

1. God made the nations of the world. v.26a

- From one man (i.e., Adam). Gen. 2:7. Greeks only believed in 2 people groups: Greeks & barbarians. -Esp. in KJV: He made “of one blood all nations of men”. -v.24: “The God who made the world and everything in it...”
- God created the nations to live on all the face of the earth—to fill and inhabit the world. Ref. Gen. 11:9 -Ref. Babel. Gen. 11:1-9. The nations of the world are a “checks and balances” on one-world power.
- Nations are a good thing created by God.
- In Revelation we get pictures of heaven—not where nations are erased—but where people from every nation are gathered to worship the LORD who made them.

-Rev. 5:9: And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation....

-Rev. 7:9: After this 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

-Rev. 15:3: And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!

2. God providentially (sovereignly) rules the nations of the world. v.26b

- God determined the TIME (“allotted periods”) in which people live.

→ God determined that YOU would be living now—in this time.

- God determined the PLACE (“the boundaries of their dwelling”) in which people live.

-Deut 32:7-8: Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. ⁸When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples.

→ God determined that the Founding Fathers would live in the American colonies.

→ God determined that YOU would live Here in America. Have you considered what a blessing this is?

“the determination of a man’s home preceded his creation in the divine plan”

→ God ordained where and when you would live before He even created you.

3. God providentially rules the nations of the world for this purpose: that the nations would seek Him. v.27a

- That they should seek God and find him.

→ God’s purpose for having nations is so that the peoples of the world would seek and find God.

→ Logically deduce from this:

Nations function the way God intends when they are ordered in such a way that they facilitate people finding God.

→ John Witherspoon: May 17, 1776 sermon entitled “The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men” on Psalm 76:10, in which he preached, “The knowledge of God and his truths have from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely, confined to those parts of the earth, where some degree of liberty and political justice were to be seen.”

-NOT when God is *imposed* on the people and NOT when God is *ignored* by the people.

4. The individual’s salvation is not lost in these matters—indeed, it is central to it. v.27b

- Paul connects the first half of v.27 with the individual’s salvation.
- Paul moves from the corporate idea of nations to the individual man or woman.
- “Nations” seek Him—because individuals in the nation seek Him.

Westminster Confession of Faith
Chapter 23: Of the Civil Magistrate

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates, to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.
3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.
4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the pope any power and jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people; and, least of all, to deprive them of their dominions, or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretense whatsoever.

From the General Assembly meeting
of the Presbyterian Church in America last week:

[this is part of a larger resolution giving the reasons for the following Resolution]

Therefore, be it resolved that the 53rd General Assembly issue a formal “Declaration of Thanksgiving for the United States of America (USA) on the Occasion of the 250th Anniversary of the Nation’s Founding” on July 4, 2026 by publishing the foregoing statements together with this resolution, to be spread upon the minutes and published electronically by the Administrative Committee through byFaith [magazine]; and that the churches of this Presbytery and the whole denomination would be stirred up to fervent prayer—in accordance with our *Larger Catechism*’s exposition of the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer (*WLC* 191), that the gospel may be propagated throughout the world, that the Church may be furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate—**that the same God who has preserved a faithful Presbyterian witness in Philadelphia for more than three centuries and granted our nation 250 years of ordered liberty would continue to pour out His Spirit upon us, that we may walk worthy of our calling with living faith, humility, and zeal for the gospel.**