

America's Parade of God's Blessings
Deuteronomy 28:1-8
June 28, 2026

Please open your Bibles today to Deuteronomy 28. Pew Bible. This is a very special week in our nation's history. You and I are privileged to live at a time when America is celebrating its 250th birthday! Some of us are old enough to remember our 200th in 1976 and what a special time that was. I still have some memorabilia from it. I remember parades even as we are seeing again this year in various places. Today, we want to look back at a 419 year parade of God's blessings on this nation and consider our future together.

Let's begin where many of our early leaders began. If you are able, please stand as we read Deut 28:1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. 7 The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. 8 The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

This passage and one similar to it in Leviticus 26 were very important to the early settlers in this country. In fact, they often quoted from throughout the book of Deuteronomy as Jesus Himself did. Let's understand before we go any further that the context of Leviticus and Deuteronomy both was for the Israelites as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land which they again inhabit. These passages were not originally intended for the USA, BUT, to say they were **only** for the Israelites is to dismiss much of the Bible as only for them and not for us. In these passages and others like them, God lays out basic principles for how He operates which the early colonists were very wise to recognize. They clearly saw the similarities between themselves starting afresh in a new land and the Israelites doing the same 3000 years earlier. The same principles apply today and I would encourage you to read the rest of these chapters for they also contain warnings and curses for failing to honor and obey God. But let's look at some of the ways God did indeed miraculously bless and guide the formation of this nation and glorify God for it as we observe some floats in our nation's historical parade.

Hopefully you remember some of the history you were taught in school and hopefully it's still being taught. Originally inhabited by many different Indian tribes, this continent held unnumberable riches and wonders. Here comes our first parade float. Say Columbus. In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue and discovered this heretofore unknown land. At least unknown to Europeans. This explorer has been much maligned as a destroyer and oppressor, but the truth is much different. While he, like us, was not without sin, he sought to introduce the Native Americans to Jesus. About a month after his arrival, he wrote back to the Spanish rulers about his desire to see all the Indians converted to Christianity. Did you ever hear about that in history?

After he returned, he wrote, "I gave them many beautiful and pleasing things ... in order to win their affection, and that they might become Christians ... Let Christ rejoice upon Earth as He rejoices in Heaven, as He foresees that so many souls of so many people heretofore lost are to be saved..." He later said that the Holy Spirit motivated his courageous voyage and that, "No one should be afraid to take on any enterprise in the name of our Savior if it is right and if the purpose is purely for His holy service. . . And I say that the sign which convinces me that our Lord is hastening the end of the world is the preaching of the Gospel recently in so many lands." Did you ever learn of Christopher Columbus's heart for evangelism? This painting of Columbus's landing by John Vanderlyn is one of 8 in the US Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC and it depicts him looking upward in prayer surrounded by crosses of Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus!

Let's fast-forward in our parade to when the English arrived in North America forming the basis for what would become the USA. The first were those in Jamestown. In December of 1606, The Virginia Company of London sent an expedition of 3 ships carrying 105 men and boys to establish a settlement in the Virginia Colony. After a 4 month voyage, they reached the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. And on April 26, 1607, upon landing at Cape Henry, Chaplain Robert Hunt offered a prayer, and they set up the cross of Jesus Christ. This site came to be known as the "first landing." Here is a reenactment of that event. Later, it was Captain John Smith who saved the Jamestown settlement by applying Biblical principles, specifically, the one from 2 Thess 3:10, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

We're all aware of how Pocahontas saved the life of Captain John Smith 8 months later and 6 or 7 years after that, she placed **her** faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and was baptized. Her baptism is **also** depicted on the wall of the capitol rotunda painted by John Gadsby Chapman. Shortly thereafter she married not Smith, but John Rolfe. She was not only the first known Indian to become a Christian, but this was the first interracial marriage on American soil. When questioned about him marrying a "savage," Rolfe mentioned "her desire to be taught and instructed in the knowledge of God." Oh that we all might have **that** desire! That instruction in the knowledge of God likely came from the Geneva Bible those settlers brought with them on the first voyage. Jesus and Biblical

teachings played an important role in this oldest permanent English settlement in the new world.

Thirteen years after Jamestown was founded and the cross was planted on VA soil, the Pilgrims set sail in August of 1620. They were Separatists who were often imprisoned for not agreeing with the state church in England. And their commitments to Jesus puts ours to shame. Not only did they endure persecution willingly, but they often walked 16 miles to worship Jesus each Sunday. Worship began at 8:00am with a prayer that lasted an hour after which they sang a psalm before a sermon that lasted hours. After lunch, they returned for a similar service followed by a discussion period and then walked back home. Maybe my sermons aren't so long after all.

After a very difficult ocean crossing, 101 men, women, and children arrived in Massachusetts in November of 1620. While still onboard, these first New Englanders drew up the Mayflower Compact which begins with the words, "In the name of God, Amen!" They stated that the purpose of their mission was, "...for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith and Honor of our King and country..." They also stated that their colony would be governed by law, not man, and this would be done only by the consent of those who were so governed. They used the word covenant to describe their mutual commitment to this arrangement and in so doing, they became the first to establish a limited representative government by covenant. The Mayflower Compact would become the foundation upon which the Declaration of Independence would be written 150 years later and the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights after that.

The Pilgrim's leader, William Bradford, also instituted free enterprise that saved the colony from an early form of socialism. Of course, most of us are aware that our Thanksgiving celebrations came from these Pilgrims who did give thanks a year later, although by that time, nearly half of them had died from malnutrition and disease. But they gave thanks anyway! Most of us also remember the Indian, Squanto, who taught them how to survive in this new land. He had earlier trusted Jesus while in Europe as a slave. Do you think God might have prepared him for such a role? The Embarkation of the Pilgrims by Robert Walter Weir also hangs in the capitol rotunda depicting a worship service around a Geneva Bible before leaving for England.

In one of the other paintings in the Rotunda, William Henry Powell's Discovery of the Mississippi shows De Soto arriving at the River on May 8, 1541. To the right, a monk prays as men set a cross in the ground. A fifth painting, done by eyewitness John Trumbull, portrays the signing of the Declaration of Independence which was likewise accompanied by prayer. Five of the 8 paintings include crosses, a baptism, two prayer meetings, and a worship service. These men and women wanted to share Jesus and for God to bless their endeavors!

Here in the Shenandoah valley, we're well acquainted with George Washington who surveyed most of this land. One of my ancestors voted for him when he ran for the VA House of Burgesses in 1758. What many do not know is how God miraculously spared his life many times. Three years before he was elected in Virginia, Washington accompanied British General Edward Braddock in the Battle of Monongahela. Washington warned his commander about spreading out their army over several miles which Braddock ignored. When the French and Indians ambushed them near what is now Pittsburg, they killed or wounded over 700 of them. Every English officer including Braddock was killed except for George Washington who rode back and forth across the battlefield delivering Braddock's orders even though he himself was recovering from illness. Why wasn't he targeted, you ask? He was. Years later, Shawnee Chief Red Hawk said he had personally shot at Washington 11 times but missed every time. His rifle was not known to miss. He eventually quit shooting at him because he became convinced that the "Great Spirit" was protecting this man. Two horses were shot out from under him and four bullet holes were later found in his coat. God protected the man who would be crucial in forming the future nation. Isaiah 54:17 says, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper."

Two years earlier, at age 21, Washington was returning in the winter from a 500 mile trip delivering an English message to the French near Lake Erie. He and his guide were ambushed by Indians but escaped. As they hastily fled, they came to a large river which was not yet frozen. While we remember Washington's crossing of the Delaware at Trenton, many have never heard of this earlier miracle. For after building a small raft, they attempted to get to the other bank using push poles. Unfortunately, the current wrecked their raft, and they ended up on a log in the icy water. They spent the night on an island where his guide's toes literally froze. The next morning, they walked to the opposite bank as the river had frozen during the night and returned to Virginia. Coincidence? I don't think so.

Later, in August of 1776, early morning fog near New York City allowed Washington's troops to avoid detection and retreat safely, averting an early and decisive defeat in the American Revolution. New York City hardly EVER has dense fog in August. Now it's smog. In March of that same year, a massive snowstorm prevented the British from attacking Boston and caused General Washington to say, "That this most remarkable Interposition of Providence is for some wise purpose, I have not a doubt." He knew God was involved.

Later, at the Battle of Cowpens in South Carolina in January of 1781, Generals Daniel Morgan and Nathaniel Greene led the Americans in a rapid retreat after scoring a major victory against British Generals Cornwallis and Tarleton. As the Americans moved north, they came to the Catawba River in North Carolina. Just two hours after they crossed it at Sherrill's Ford, their enemies arrived at the same place only to be blocked by a flash flood brought on by a fierce storm upriver. Over the next few days, Cornwallis

would have defeated them at the Yadkin River, but rain flooded it as well. When both armies raced to the Dan River, the Americans successfully crossed but the British Commander Clinton wrote, "Here the royal army was again stopped by a sudden rise of the waters, which had only just fallen (almost miraculously) to let the enemy over." These thwarted river crossings culminated in Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown that fall. How differently things might have ended if "the weather" had not helped. Vs 7, "The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven."

Similar "coincidences" happened during The War Of 1812 when British Admiral Cockburn set Washington, DC on fire. Shortly thereafter, a tornado touched down (in August no less) in DC followed by 2 hours of pouring rain which put out the fires. A month later, heavy rains so softened the ground surrounding Baltimore's Fort McHenry that most of the British cannonballs did not explode but sank into the mud. It was during that battle that Francis Scott Key wrote our national anthem including the fourth verse that boldly declares, "Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, And this be our motto - "In God is our trust,""

And of course, being near Woodstock, we should all be familiar with the Rev John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg. He not only preached Jesus in German in the Lutheran Church, he also preached Jesus in English for the Church of England. But as the Revolutionary War began, he felt the call to become personally involved and on January 21, 1776, he preached on Ecclesiastes 3 and removed his clerical robe to reveal his Continental uniform. His statue is not only in front of our county courthouse, but it is also in the US Capitol Building in DC.

Muhlenberg was not the only preacher to become involved. The Black Robed regiment, as they were known, preached that Americans were created by God to be free. The story of George Whitefield is well portrayed in the movie that will be shown again this afternoon, A Great Awakening. Although he died 6 years before the Declaration of Independence was signed, his preaching on Jesus planted the seeds of revival that not only produced the fruit of salvation in many colonists, but also planted the seeds of liberty that produced the fruit of our freedom.

None of these individuals were perfect. Some owned slaves. But before you condemn them too harshly, know that they will ask us how we could allow 60 million babies to be killed within their mothers? How could we not vote? How could we not use our freedom of religion, which they bled and died for, to attend worship EVERY Sunday we're physically able. What will you put on your float in this parade? None of them nor us are perfect. But, they did believe God's Word and they tried with all they had, including their money and their blood, to shape and form a country that would enjoy the blessings of God we read about in Deut 28 and avoid its curses. Indeed, God has blessed this land in its city and its country. He has blessed our crops and livestock as the US has

led the world in agricultural production and innovation for the last 100 years. God has blessed us when we went in and came out and He repeatedly intervened to grant us victory over our enemies. I could list countless other examples of God's miracles. He has blessed most everything we've put our hands to in this land He has graciously given us. But if we fail to honor Him, the curses are also promised just as surely.

Next week, God willing, we'll talk some more about this and where we may be headed. But today I want us to consider the evidence. To realize that this is not just a parade of amazing coincidences. **God** is responsible for our nation's founding and 250 years of existence and blessing! If and when we forget this, as I fear we now are, He cannot help but remove His hand of protection and blessing from us and deliver the curses He has also promised. The very moment **we** claim credit for all He has done will be the moment of our great demise. Let us worship God, through Jesus His Son, as did those early leaders, and seek His forgiveness and His help. Do not worship our country or its leaders or our political parties! Oh please, my brothers and sisters, let us open our eyes and see God's blessing on our nation then and now and let us make it known to others! Not simply for our nation's sake, but for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! No other nation has sent out as many missionaries as has ours. God only knows how many people have been and are being saved because of US missions. Columbus, Washington, and others would be happy and I pray Jesus is most of all.

This nation's parade, is no accident. God raised us up for a reason and for a season. I pray we are accomplishing His reason and that we are not yet at the end of our season. May we use His blessings to glorify Him, to bless others, and to make Jesus known. Let's ask His help to do that right now.