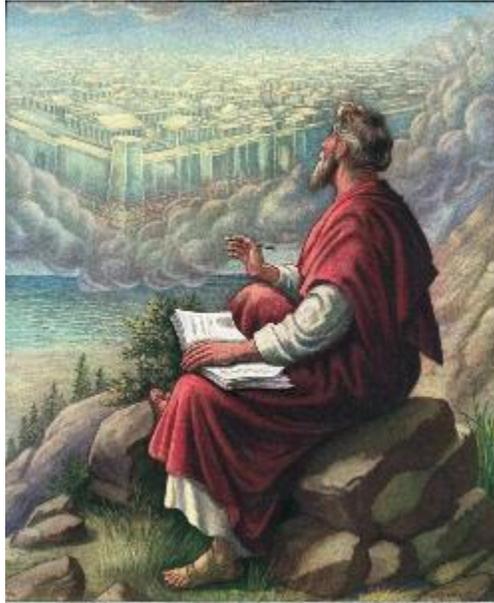


**Was the Apostle John Unpatriotic
because he criticized his nation in the harshest language?**



Was the Apostle John unpatriotic and a traitor to Rome because he criticized his nation with the harshest language?

As we approach Independence Day, it is a good time to reflect on the true nature of patriotism. What is patriotism? Was the Apostle John unpatriotic for criticizing the Roman Empire in the most unflattering language? Recall, that John called Rome a “beautiful and wealthy whore,” an “abomination,” because Rome placed greater value on economic prosperity, military might, and political power than justice for every human being:

Revelation 17:4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Revelation 18:11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: 12 "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

What about other Christians who lived in the first century who were executed as traitors of the State? Were they unpatriotic? What about Jesus who was executed for crimes against the State? What about the Apostle Peter who was also executed for being unpatriotic?

In fact, the reason that Christians were marked people in the first century was that they were viewed as political instigators and enemies of the State. They were all branded insurrectionists who made Rome feel very uncomfortable about its immorality.

While there were many social norms that the Christians violated, like saving unwanted newborn babies who were taken out of their homes and placed out in the elements to die ("if dying was the will of the gods"), the main reason they were labelled as traitors to their nation was because they put morals and God above the state. They would not put the emperor or the social-economic-political forces above God.

What about Nazi Germany? Who were the true patriots? The vast majority of Germans who followed Hitler and the State, or Germans, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who rejected the immoral actions of the existing German government? Who really worked to help the State be what it should be?

What is the connection between the State and Religion? How should Christians view the State? Both Scripture and history demonstrate that Christianity should never marry the State or seek the State to implement its religious tenets. The State will always be corrupt and when Christianity joins the State, it will become corrupt with her.

In sum, our job as Christians and citizens is to help the State be the State it should be. And the most fundamental function of the State is justice—not economics. History is replete with examples of what happens when justice takes a back seat to economics (untold millions brutalized and murdered).

To be a true patriot requires a transcendent view of God and morality. Only with a transcendent view can one be a good citizen who obeys the laws of the land (Romans 13) and yet be honest and open about evils of one's government.

I would argue that only Christians can possess a transcendent view of government and thus help America be what she should be. Without a transcendent view, one simply ends up captured by the Democrats or Republicans, precisely because temporal issues have destroyed the transcendent divine view by making the State transcendent in itself—in other words, make the State a god, an idol.

The current polarization in America is simply a manifestation of Americans making the State transcendent in itself. Instead of having a transcendent view of God and morals over the State, the State becomes the transcendent principle. The State becomes a god—an idea that is repudiated throughout the Bible. One manifestation of this is when Christians separate from fellow Christians over political matters and find more sympathy and union with unbelievers due to political compatibility. In other words, when politics become more important than Christianity—when money and political matters become more important than Jesus Christ and the spiritual life, when the ways of the world become more important than the ways of God, when our hearts are more into socio-economic-political items than the eternal spiritual things of God.

In His Matchless Grace,

Pastor Don