



"Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving."

—W.T. Purkiser

16-Jan-04

## America the Great

A local, Christian radio station in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area has a curious tagline that it uses when it announces its station credentials.

"Broadcasting from the *greatest* nation on earth," it proudly proclaims. This patriotic moniker always strikes a chord in me, and more often than not, it is a discordant one. The self-congratulation in the voice of the announcer richly resonates through the speakers, leaving the listener wondering if the station producers have had a habit of turning off their headphones during the newsbreaks over the past few decades.

On one level, the assertion of *greatness* is correct—although undoubtedly not in the way the producers intended. [God](#) uses the term *great* to describe an adulterous capitol city—and by extension the rest of the unfaithful nation—ten times in the [book of Revelation](#) ([Revelation 17:1](#), 5, 18; 18:2, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21; 19:2). Greatness, however, is certainly not synonymous with [goodness](#). America has grown great indeed, and could very well be called the *greatest* nation. However, this is not a greatness of which we should be proud.

Regardless of whether one believes that the United States of America has descended from one of the "lost" [northern ten tribes of Israel](#), it is self-evident that this nation has been the recipient of many of God's blessings. From the providence given to the Pilgrims, to the Judeo-Christian ethic from which our Constitution was derived, to the overwhelming natural resources that comprise this "fruited plain," there is little doubt that we have been shown unusual and undeserved favor by God. But what have we done with it? [Jesus Christ](#) tells us, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required..." ([Luke 12:48](#)). Because we have been blessed so richly, we are all the more responsible for our conduct and our culture.

There is not a sane American alive today who is proud of the homegrown culture we have been exporting to [the world](#). "But that's okay," we might say reassuringly. "We are also 'exporting democracy'"—presumably so the underprivileged Iraqis can also gawk at Madonna and Britney locking lips. We are proud of our freedoms, our form of government, and our technology as abstract concepts, but who can be rightfully proud of what we have produced with these things? At every turn it has been a mixture of good and evil, and as the days stretch out, this concoction receives more of the latter and less of the former.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a political exile from Russia, explained in his commencement address to Harvard University in 1978 that wealth and progress simply for the sake of wealth and progress produce emptiness and spiritual destruction:

But should I be asked, instead, whether I would propose the West, such as it is today, as a model to my country, I would frankly have to answer negatively. No, I could not recommend your society as an ideal for the transformation of ours. Through deep suffering, people in our own country have now achieved a spiritual development of such intensity that the Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive. Even those characteristics of your life which I have just enumerated are extremely saddening

America has arguably had the greatest *potential* to glorify God of any nation in modern times, but we have failed miserably to live up to this calling. Instead, as Solzhenitsyn points out, our greatness is a liability because we are spiritually exhausted. Granted, "spirituality" is thriving in this nation, but our religions are a sham. Our "Christianity" has grown so weak that some conservative Christian groups in Africa actually send *missionaries* to this vast "plain of irreligion" to re-evangelize the increasingly-liberal Christians here!

On September 12, 2001, the day after the towers fell, Anthony C. LoBaido, a columnist for WorldNetDaily, had the courage to write an article entitled "Judgment Day in Mystery Babylon?" Mr. LoBaido received a tremendous amount of flak for daring to suggest that *we* might somehow be to blame for the tragedies of that day. Among other observations, LoBaido points out that

In the West, we most often see Islamic people as crazed and irrational. But have we considered that the Muslims might *not* be irrational when they consider America to be akin to [Satan](#)? Let's look at the Satanic Bible. What are the values of Satan? Lust, greed, gluttony, revenge. Hmm. Sounds like American society.

What have we done with our wealth, our power, our resources, and our technology? We have become a *great* nation. But it is all for naught unless we also become a *good* nation.

- David C. Grabbe

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Where Is the Beast? \(Part Five\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh warns that most people living in the end times (even those in God's church) will be oblivious to clear, obvious warning signals. Most Protestant commentaries show total ignorance of the race aspect (the

physical descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) of end - time Israel. Jerusalem (metonymically connected with modern Israel) has been equated with Sodom and Egypt. Because of modern Israel's vast material wealth and influence, the impact of her harlotry is exponentially worse than the disgusting perversions of original Sodom and Gomorrah. Arrogance, self-indulgence, and the proclivity to compromise (unfaithful to her solemn marriage covenant with God) in order to avoid suffering characterize the Great Whore in Revelation 17-18, a woman regarded as controlling and holding the Beast in check, for a time.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Today's Christianity \(Part One\): Christianity Goes Global](#)**

by Charles Whitaker

Americans and Europeans once provided the driving force behind Christianity, but Charles Whitaker informs us that Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans are re-energizing Christianity—and creating conflict with declining Western churches in the process.

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