

Nationalism can be defined as loyalty and devotion to a nation, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Nationalism often involves exalting one's own nation above all others, and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations. There is nothing wrong with loving the area in which one lives. Respecting and obeying the laws of the land is required by Almighty God himself (**Romans 13:1-7**). But is nationalism for Christians? If we examine the Bible carefully, do we find that nationalism could be considered idolatry?



Is nationalism for Christians?

“No one can serve two masters.” (Matthew 6:24) The principle here applies not only to material things coming before God, but to anything that we might put ahead of God and Jesus. This includes all nationalistic ideologies.

“It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:24) Our service to Christ must take priority over everything else. National flags and nationalistic holidays in places of worship violate this principle.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3) This eternal principle of our Creator, Almighty God was expressed as the first of the ten commandments. Nationalism places the nation ahead of God Almighty, in violation of this eternal principle.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.” (Exodus 20:4-5) Despite vehement denials, pledging allegiance to a national flag, or saluting it, is not in harmony with this eternal principle, embodied in the second commandment.

“He took the gold... and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, ‘Israel, this

is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 32:4-5 HCSB)

Nationalism attributes good things that come from the true God – unto the nation. Peace, prosperity, security, a good way of life, etc. are all attributed to the nation, often even more so than God.

“Aaron built an altar before the statue and made this proclamation, ‘Tomorrow there will be a feast in Yahweh’s honour.’” (Exodus 32:5 NJB) Nationalism claims the true God as the backer of the nation. Nationalism conflates patriotism with the Gospel of Christ. An example of this is the slogan: “God and country.”

“Just as their fathers forgot my name for the name of Baal.” (Jeremiah 23:27 REB)

Nationalism in churches shifts the focus of a worship service from the Christian focus on the Gospel to a civil observance. When God and Christ are not the main focus, worship is no longer Christian.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world.” (1 John 2:15-17) Nationalism engenders love of this world – the nation. The “My country, right or wrong” attitude.

“Friendship with the world is hostility toward God.” (James 4:4 CSB) Nationalistic songs, sermons, video clips, etc., encourage one to be a friend of this world. **“Friendship with the world”** should be avoided by true Christians.

“We must obey God rather than human beings.” (Acts 5:29 NLT) **“Obedience to God comes before obedience to men” (Acts 5:29 NJB).** Love of God should always come before civil allegiance. **(Romans 13:1-7)** So we should resist any tendency to suggest that love of country equates to love of God.

“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.” (John 11:48) Nationalistic fervor ran high then among the Jews, as it does today in many nations. Christians who are not

nationalistic are often ridiculed, persecuted, etc. Christians should resist any tendency to take the scriptures out of context by attempting to baptize nationalistic fervor. Using **2 Chronicles 7:14** this way is very common these days.

“It is not by humans methods that we do battle. The weapons with which we do battle are not those of human nature, but they have the power, in God’s cause.... It is ideas that we demolish.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NJB) Christians should resist any temptation to Christianize national military objectives or operations.

Jesus is the **“Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)** As such, he does not support any wars among the nations.

“Leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps... he did not retaliate.” (1 Peter 2:21-23) Christians, following Jesus’ example, should be neutral regarding wars.

“Can a corrupt throne be allied with you - a throne that brings on misery by its decrees?” (Psalm 94:20) With all of its benefits, the historical facts are that many nations were built on rebellion, land seizure, and broken promises, treaties, murder, oppression, etc. A nation’s status in the world is often achieved through “misery” on the backs of the rest of the world. True Christians serve a higher throne. **(Revelation 5:13)**

“They go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty... and the cities of the nations collapsed.” (Revelation 16:14-19) All nations are doomed under God’s wrath. Nationalism in this context makes no sense. Why idolize something God opposes and will destroy?

“Have nothing to do with idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14 REB) Avoiding idolatry takes real effort in this nationalistic world. The real Christian will act and think differently than most, due to not idolizing the nation.

“Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father.”

(James 1:17 NLT) Anything good, such as peace, prosperity, etc., ultimately comes from God, not humans. Rather than primarily praising the nation for good benefits received, Christians should praise and thank God, who is the real giver of all that is good.

All Bible quotes from New International Version (NIV) unless noted otherwise