



THE STORY
OF JESUS
IN THE
GOSPEL
OF MARK



FALL 2025
SPRING 2026

People's Hearts

- Jesus' ministry revealed whether people's hearts were receptive or stubborn.
- Mark 4:1-20
- This is the first real block of teaching in Mark, and it starts with a parable that tells us exactly what we saw in the last lesson.

People's Hearts

- People will respond differently to Jesus and the Gospel.
- Most Bibles title this “the parable of the sower,” but it’s more about the different kinds of soils than the sower himself.
- The sower scatters His seed the same way each time.
- It’s the kind of soil that determines whether it grows.

People's Hearts

- Jesus offers the Gospel to every person equally, regardless of background, social status, ethnicity or religious fervor.
- The invitation to repent, believe in the Gospel, and follow Him to find rest for our souls is open to everyone equally.
- Jesus didn't show any favoritism of any kind; all are welcome to come to Him (Acts 10:34).

People's Hearts

- The seed is also the same every time.
- The message of the Gospel is the same for every single person – repent, believe the Gospel, and follow Jesus.
- All human beings are sinners in need of salvation.
- There is not one who is righteous, not even one (Psalm 14:1–3).

People's Hearts

- But not everyone receives His offer.
- Though Gospel means “good news,” not everyone hears it as good news because of the condition of their hearts when they hear it.
- Jesus explained the parable to the disciples. The “good soil” refers to those whose hearts are fertile to receive the Gospel.

People's Hearts

- But there are those with stubborn hearts, like the Pharisees Jesus had just encountered (3:5).
- When Jesus offered them the Gospel, it was like scattering seed on a path. It never gets planted at all; Satan takes it away as soon as it is heard.
- Those with stubborn hearts hear the Gospel and immediately reject it as untrue or foolish.

People's Hearts

- Then there are those whose hearts are rocky soil. They receive the Gospel with joy at first but don't grow any roots.
- These are the kinds of people who might pray the prayer of salvation to get their "ticket into heaven" but never really follow Jesus. They haven't really accepted the Gospel because they haven't repented or changed. When trouble comes, they turn away from the faith, because their faith was never real in the first place.

People's Hearts

- There are others whose hearts are like soil that has thorns.
- They also hear the Word, but it doesn't take root. The worries of this life and the desire for other things, like wealth and power, choke the Word so it never bears fruit.
- These are people who would say they believe the Gospel, but their life shows that their true "gods" are the things of this world, not Jesus.

People's Hearts

- This is an explanation of why many of the people they had encountered thus far had rejected the Gospel or seemed to accept it but then fell away.
- It was also a word of warning to the disciples that the same thing would happen when they went out to spread the good news. They needed to be ready for people to react in different ways

Open Hearts

- God will grow His fruit in those who have open hearts.
- Mark 4:9-13, 21-25
- These two short parables refer to what Jesus said between His telling of the parable of the sower and His explanation of it.

Open Hearts

- Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” implying there were some who didn’t have “ears to hear,” who wouldn’t listen to His message or understand it, those who were like the path, the rocky soil, or the thorns.
- The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables rather than just telling them plainly.

Open Hearts

- At first glance, Jesus' answer may seem unfair. It sounds like He was intentionally making the truth of the kingdom hard for "those on the outside" to understand.
- But Jesus was quoting Isaiah, when God called him to be a prophet. Reading it in that context, we see that God said Isaiah's message would harden the people's hearts, not bring them to repentance as God desired.

Open Hearts

- Just like the law, Isaiah's message was the message God wanted His people to hear, but sinful human hearts had a poor reaction to it.
- God told Isaiah they wouldn't listen until their cities lay ruined, until Jerusalem was destroyed, and they were sent into Exile. Only then would they repent. After the Exile, only a remnant of God's people would remain (Isaiah 6:9–13).

Open Hearts

- Jesus was saying that the people of His day were just like the people of Israel in the time of Isaiah. They had stubborn hearts, dull ears and closed eyes. He taught in parables to reveal the hearts of the people.
- The “secret” of the kingdom of God was that it didn’t fit their expectations. They were expecting a military leader to conquer Rome and bring independence back to Israel.

Open Hearts

- These parables taught exactly what the kingdom of God was really like, but if they didn't have ears to hear.
- To those who have open hearts, the parables of Jesus illustrate the truth about the kingdom of God.
- But to the hard-hearted, His parables are like riddles they don't understand.

Open Hearts

- They are prophetic warnings of judgment for those who don't follow Jesus, just like Isaiah's day. But as in the Old Testament, every time God offers a prophetic warning, He offers an opportunity to repent.
- This is why the next parable was about bringing the truth to light, and Jesus again said that only those who had "ears to hear" would hear it.

Open Hearts

- Jesus' ministry would expose the truth about people's hearts.
- As Jesus continued to teach and minister to people, those with open hearts would understand more and more, and the Fruit of the Spirit would grow and multiply in their lives.
- But those with stubborn hearts, like the scribes and Pharisees, would grow angrier and plot to kill Him.

Open Hearts

- This is what He meant by “more” in the next parable.
- More Fruit of the Spirit, more spiritual growth of the seed that was planted.
- It doesn't mean whoever has more money or power or status or any other worldly thing but whoever has the seed planted in the good soil – this will continue to grow.

Open Hearts

- Whoever doesn't have that seed planted – the path, the rocky soil, the thorns – won't grow spiritually, and even that seed will be taken away. The “measure” is the attitude with which we receive the message of God's Word.
- If we welcome the Gospel's being planted in our hearts and grow deep roots, He will grow His fruit in us, even to a hundredfold, which, symbolically, means more than we could have imagined.

Open Hearts

- This is the “secret” of the kingdom.
- It is about God’s rule over the whole world, starting in our hearts.
- Jesus came to proclaim this kingdom, and His parables explain exactly what kind of a kingdom it is. His teaching and His ministry also reveal who is on board with this kingdom and who is against it.

Kingdom Impact

- The kingdom will start small but grow to impact the whole world.
- Mark 4:26-34
- These two short parables both illustrate how the kingdom of God will start small like a seed but grow into fullness over time.

Kingdom Impact

- This is another way the kingdom of God was different from what the people expected.
- They thought the Messiah would come like a conquering hero on a war horse, defeat Rome in a decisive battle, and reestablish the throne of David.
- That God's kingdom would come suddenly, all at once.

Kingdom Impact

- But Jesus said His kingdom would start small, like a seed planted in the soil. Over time it would grow until the grain became ripe, and then it would be time for the harvest.
- In other parables, Jesus linked the “harvest” to the Day of Judgment, when the “grain” of the field would be cut down and the wheat would be separated from the tares (Matthew 13:24–30).

Kingdom Impact

- Jesus' describing His kingdom this way explains what scholars call “inaugurated eschatology,” or the “already/not yet” of the kingdom of God.
- Jesus will come one day as a conquering hero on a war horse to defeat Satan and establish His kingdom, but this won't happen until much later (Revelation 19:11–16).

Kingdom Impact

- When Jesus came the first time, in first-century Galilee, He only started (inaugurated) the kingdom as a small seed. This kingdom will continue to grow over time, through every generation of the Church, until He comes again.
- In the first of these two parables, Jesus said the seed grows on its own, whether the man sleeps or gets up. This means no matter what we as humans do or don't do, the kingdom of God will grow.

Kingdom Impact

- In other places, Scripture talks about the kingdom's being like a temple where each of us puts the "living stone" of our life's ministry work on top of the foundation of the apostles to build the Church (Ephesians 2:20).
- Paul said we need to be careful how we build (1 Corinthians 3:10–17). We work with God to build His Church, and we should take care in how we build.

Kingdom Impact

- The second of the two parables tells us that the seed may start small, but it will grow into the largest of all the plants, with branches big enough to provide shade, representing God's blessing to the world.
- What Jesus was doing at the time may have seemed small and insignificant, but it would grow to impact the entire world and bless every nation, just as God promised Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3).

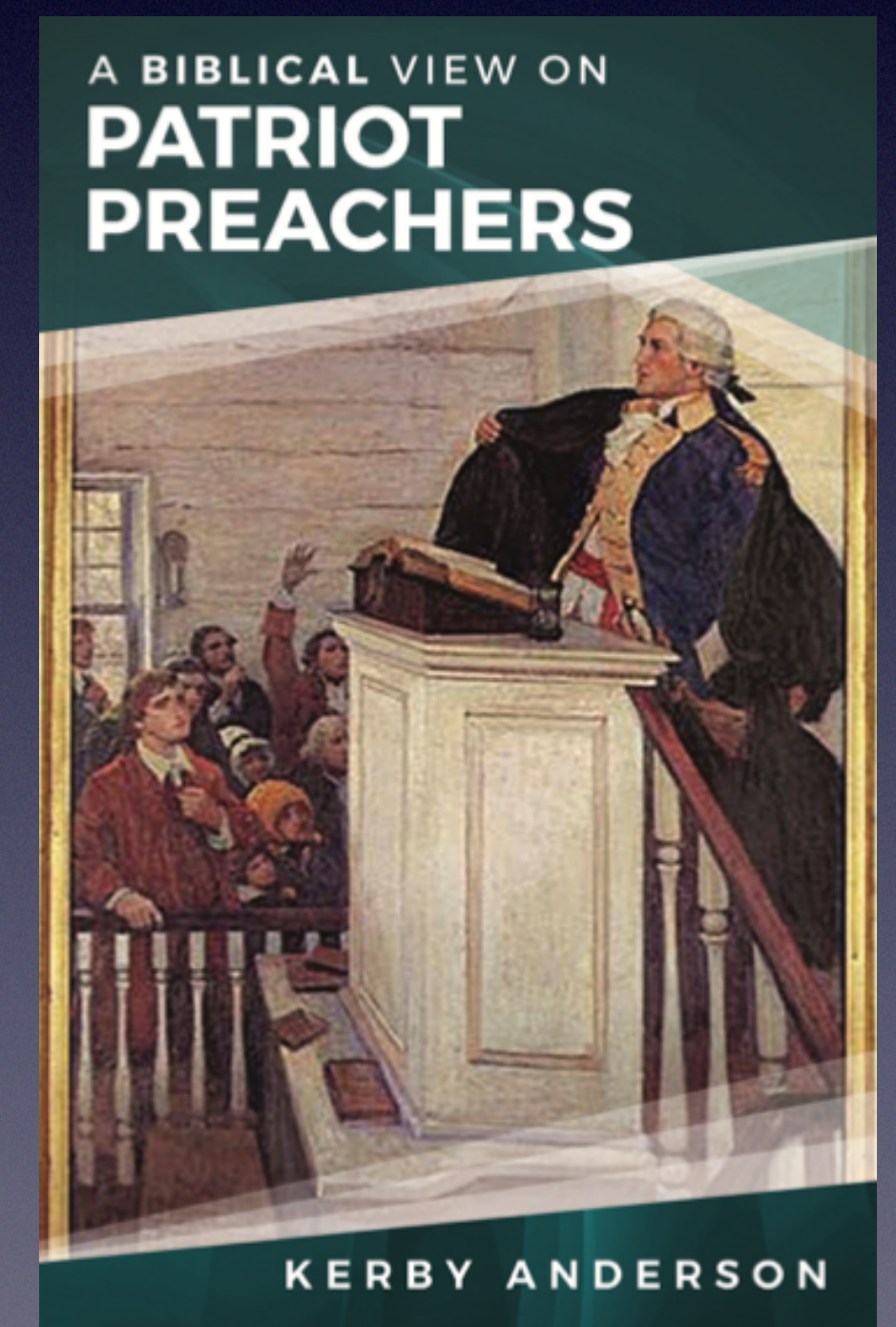
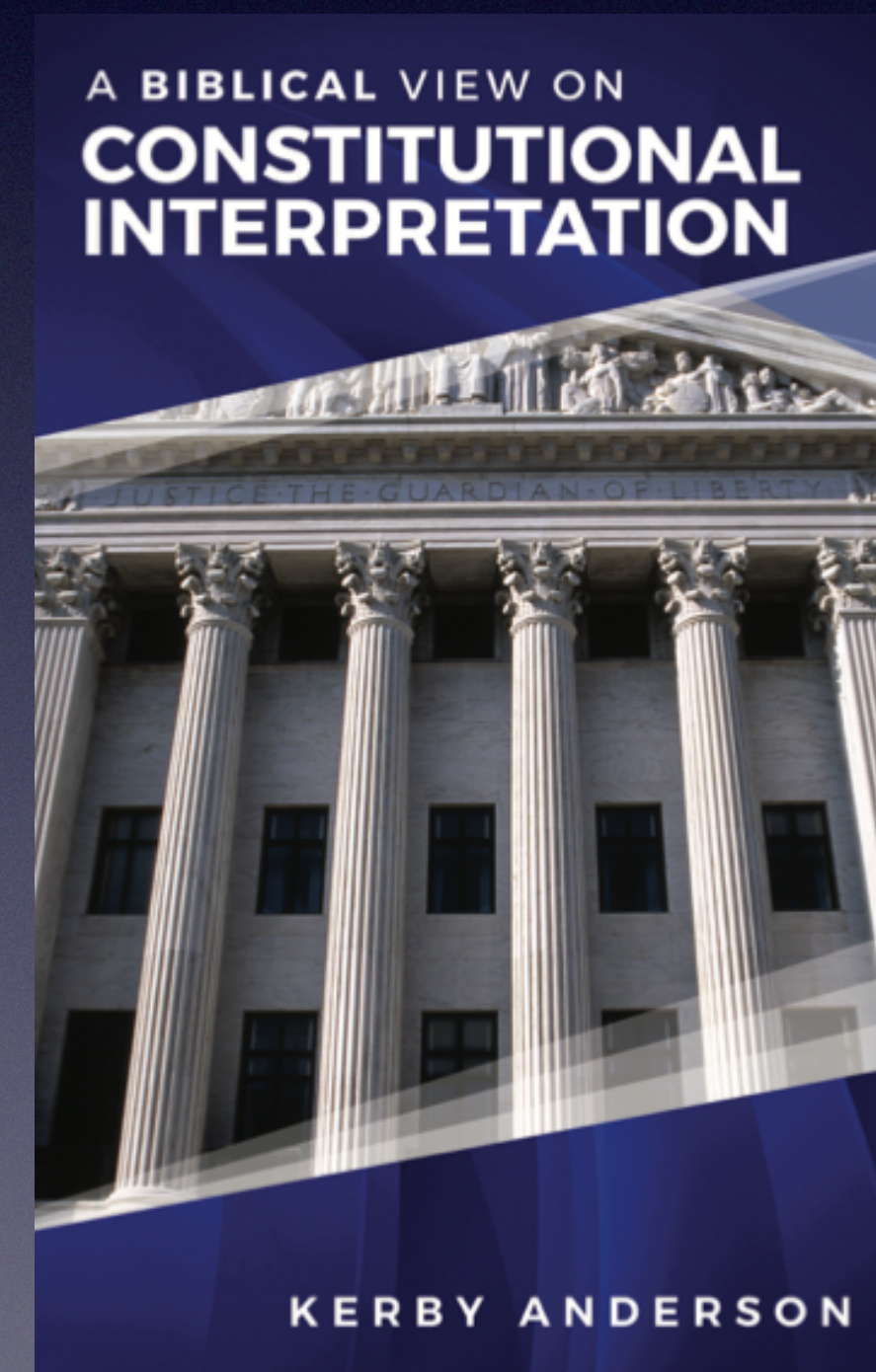
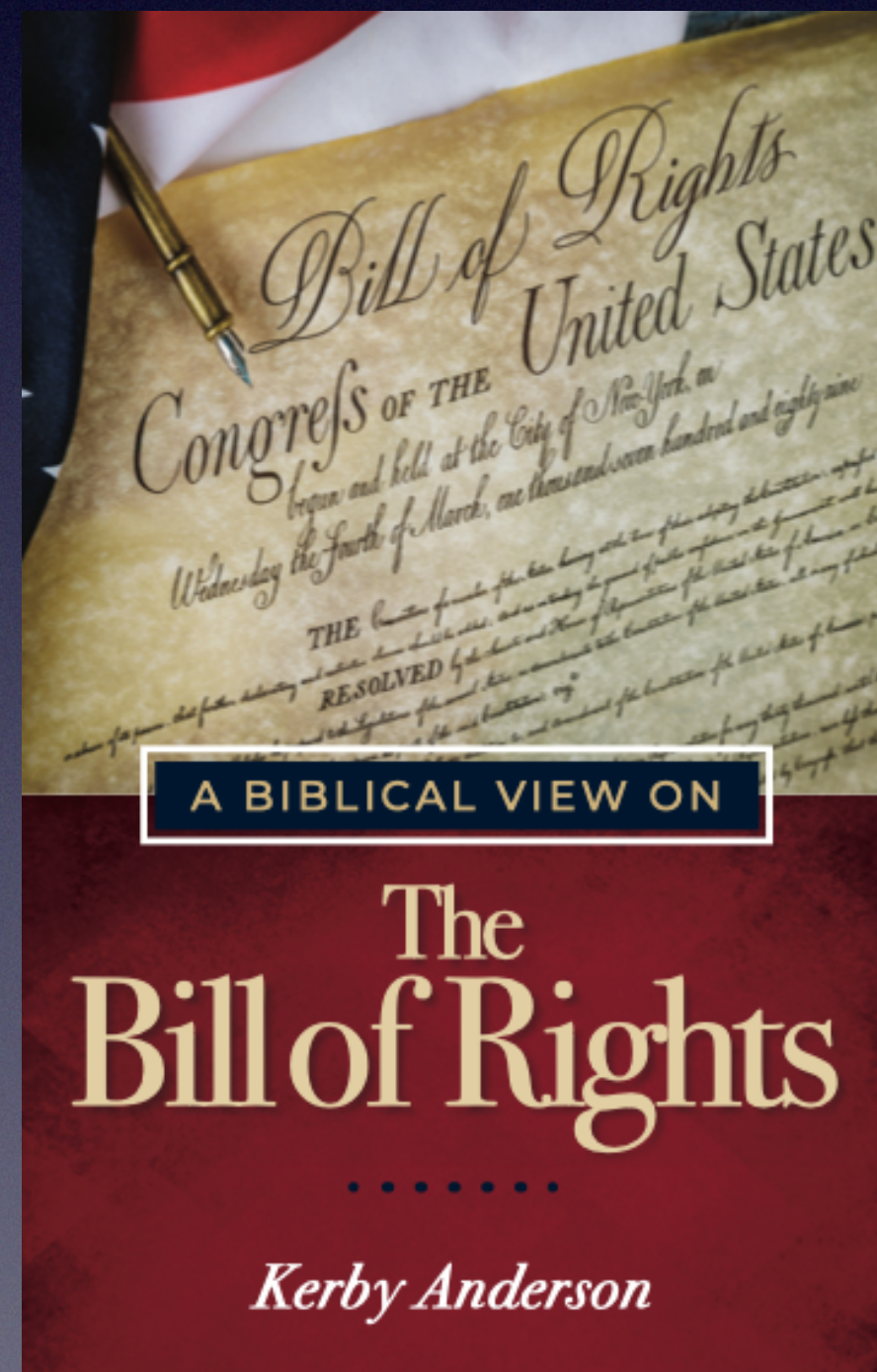
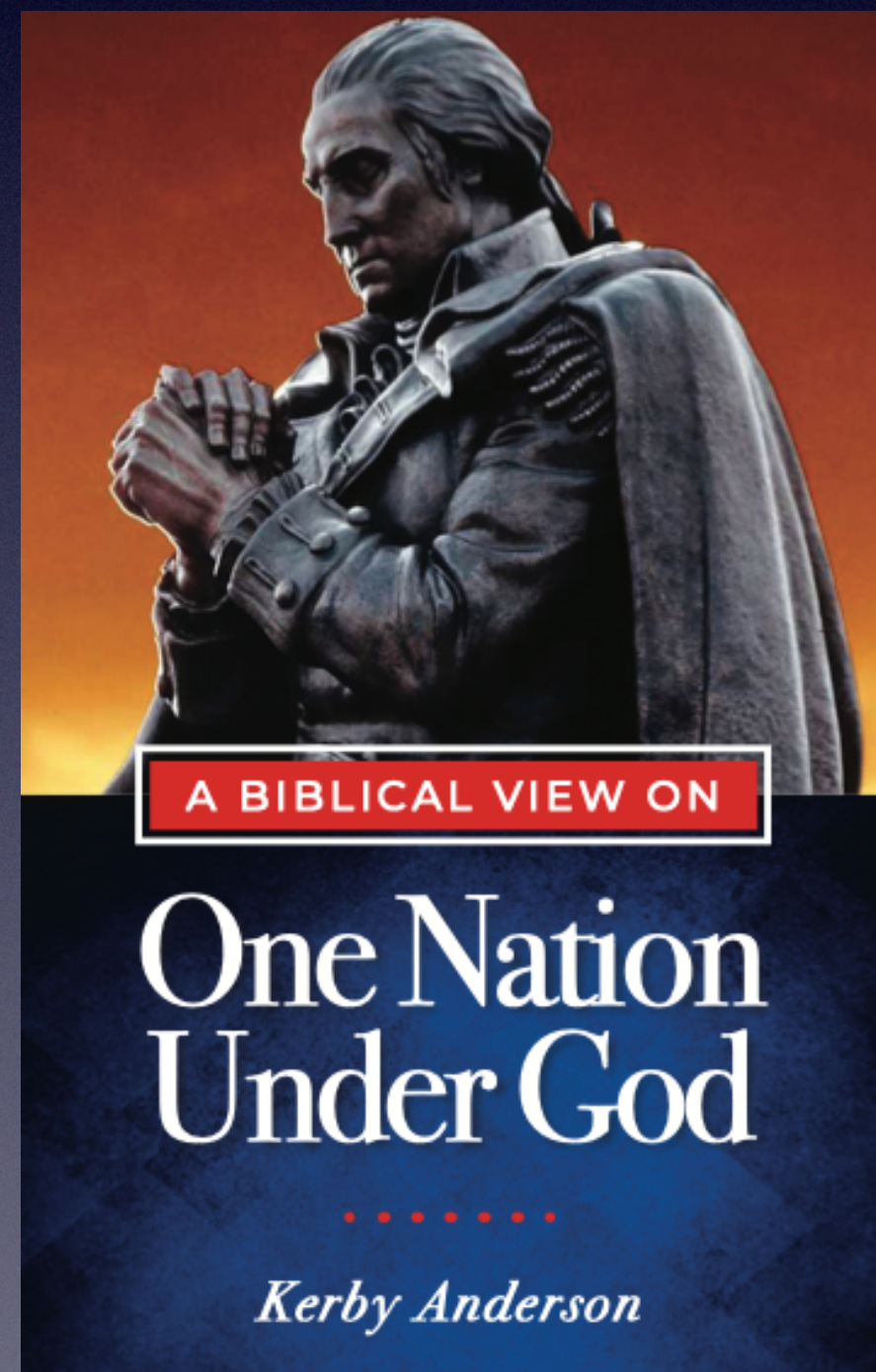
Kingdom Impact

- In the book of Acts, the Church exploded in growth and spread across the known world at the time, just as this parable describes.
- We are now 2,000-plus years past the early days of the Church's starting as a seed and exploding into growth throughout the known world. But we don't know when harvest time will come. We live in the "between" of the "already, not yet."

Kingdom Impact

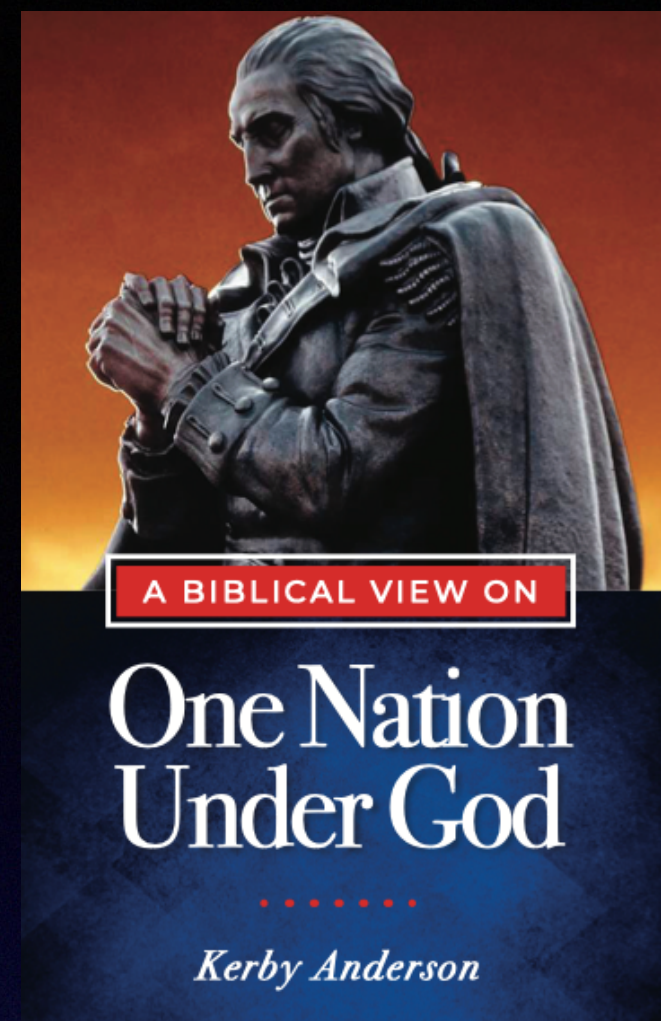
- The kingdom has come in the hearts of believers but not yet in its fullness, when Jesus will physically reign on the throne over the whole world.
- Our job in the meantime is to be Christ's ambassadors to the world, sharing His message with the broken world through our words and our actions (2 Corinthians 5:17–20).

America's Godly Heritage



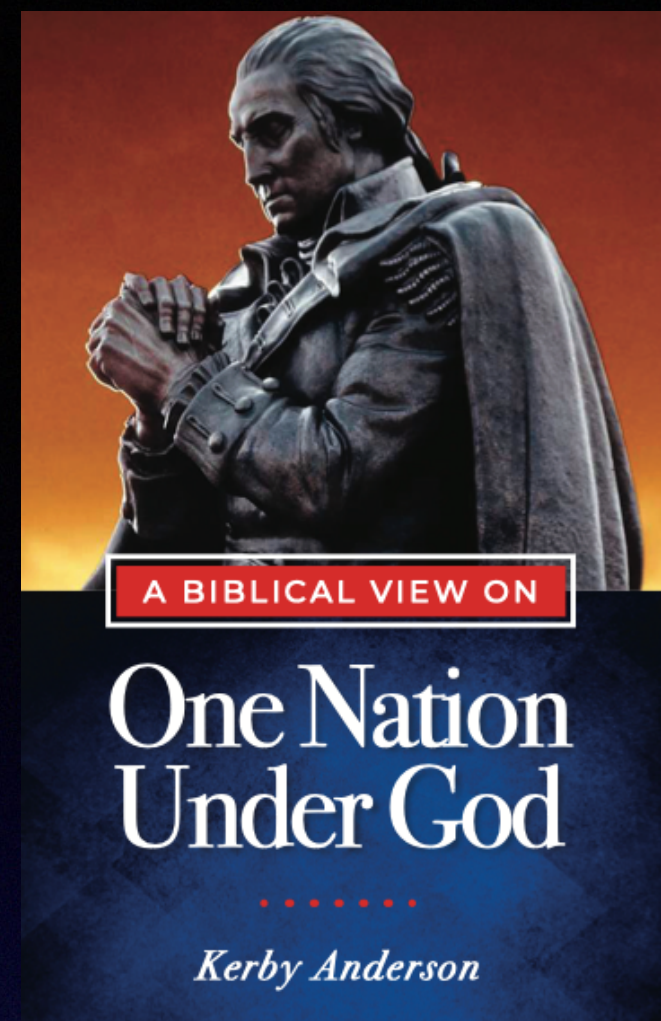
One Nation Under God

- “Christopher Columbus was motivated by his Christian faith to sail to the New World.”
- “The Pilgrims clearly stated that they came to the New World to glorify God and to advance the Christian faith.”
- “The Puritans created Bible-based commonwealths in order to practice a representative government that was modeled on their church covenants.”

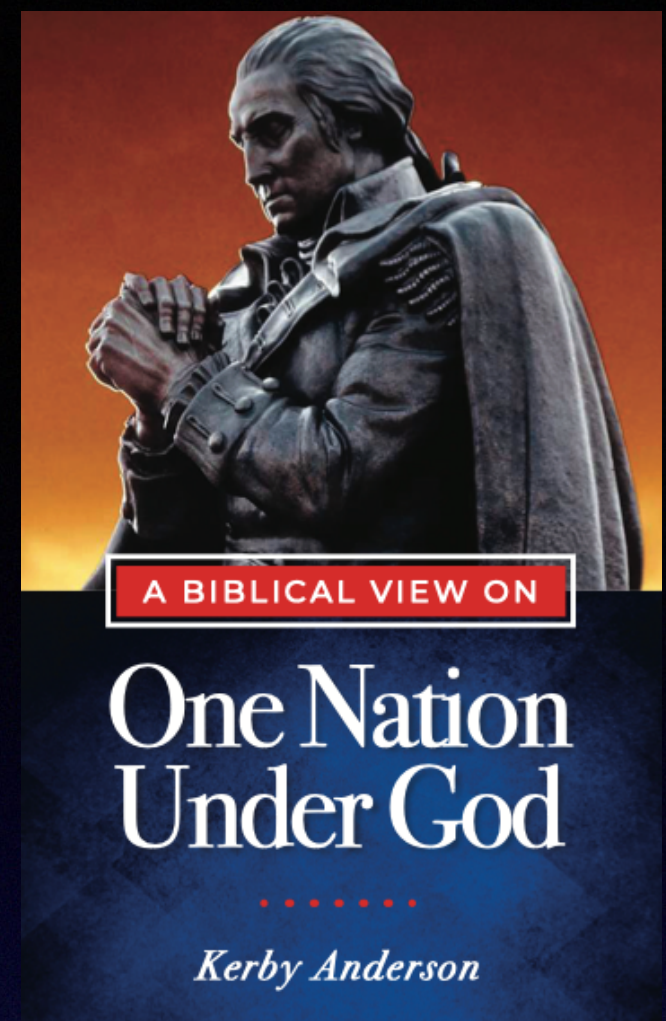


One Nation Under God

- This nation was founded as a sanctuary for religious dissidents.”
- “The education of the settlers and founders of America was uniquely Christian and Bible-based.”
- “A religious revival was the key factor in uniting the separate pre-Revolutionary War colonies.



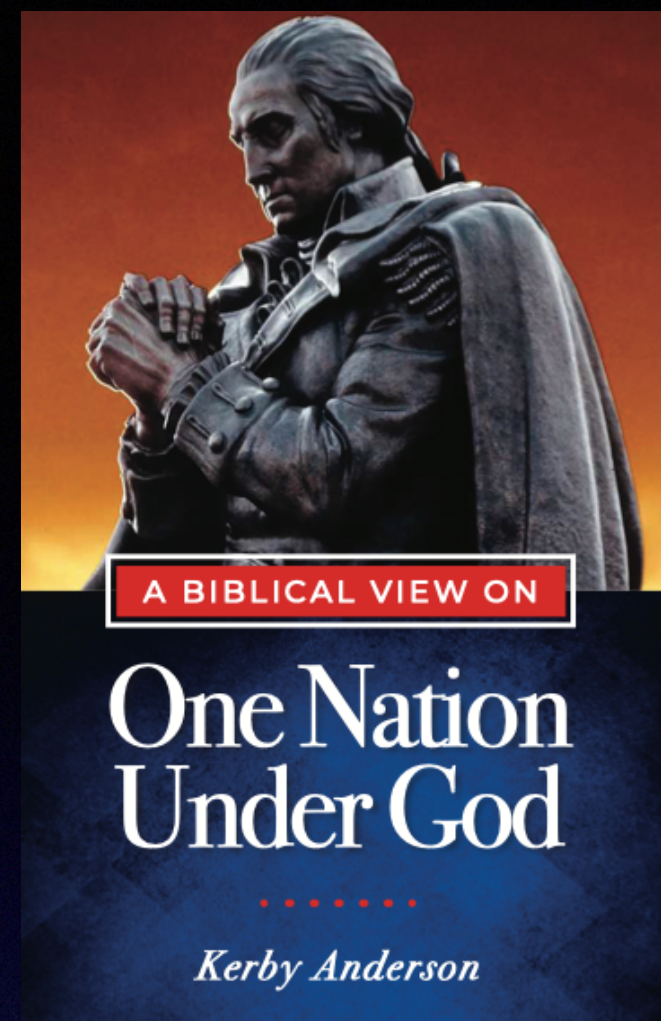
One Nation Under God



- “Many of the clergy in the American colonies, members of the Black Regiment, preached liberty.”
- “Biblical Christianity was the driving force behind the key leaders of the American Revolution.”
- “Christianity played a significant role in the development of our nation’s birth certificate, the *Declaration of Independence*.”

One Nation Under God

- “The Biblical understanding of the sinfulness of man was the guiding principle behind the United States Constitution.”
- G.K. Chesterton once said that “America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence.”



Resources

