



“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord”

Psalm 33:12

A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

On July 4, 2012, the United States of America will be celebrating 236 years as a sovereign nation. Independence Day will soon be here, with all of its associated celebrations, and it is a good time to consider why the United States has been so richly blessed throughout its existence. More importantly, it is a good time to ask if the blessings will be continued for succeeding generations.

John Adams, a founding father and second president of the United States, wrote the following words to his wife, Abigail, immediately after the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776:

[This day] will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.

Adams's prediction came true but it seems that the holiday is more about relaxation, fun, and food, than by "solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty." Before you read more, please ask yourself, "What does America's Independence Day mean to me?"

Why has America been so blessed?

The Bible and the Book of Mormon indicate that God reserved the land of America as a "Promised Land" that was given to the descendants of Joseph (referenced in scripture as the Seed of Joseph, one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel). Genesis 49:22-26 says that Joseph's descendants, who are indigenous people of the Americas, known as Native Americans, would receive special blessings. The Book of Mormon corroborates the Bible and provides the history of Joseph's descendants in the Americas. We read in 1 Nephi 2:20 that if they would keep God's commandments they would prosper and be given a land choice above all others. Ether 2:7 says that the Lord God preserved the

blessed land for a righteous people and Ether 10:28 says there never could be a people more blessed than they were.

Do the promises made to Joseph extend to all people of the Americas?

The Book of Mormon history tells us that the descendants of Joseph did not continue to follow God's commandments and that righteousness ceased. In 1 Nephi 13:12-16 it says that God's Spirit came down and inspired men from Gentile nations (Christopher Columbus and others) to sail to America where they discovered the descendants of Joseph in the Promised Land. God's Spirit was upon them and they humbled themselves before Him and worked to obtain the land for their inheritance. God's wrath was upon the descendants of Joseph, and they were scattered and enslaved by the Gentile nations. It is clearly stated in 2 Nephi 1:5-6 that the Land promised to the Seed of Joseph by God was also promised to those who should be led out of other countries by His hand.

Are there any conditions required to receive God's promises?

Yes! The words of 2 Nephi 1:7-10 clearly warn all inhabitants of the Land that they must remain righteous and obey God's commandments or be brought down into captivity.

What does the future hold for America?

We cannot say for sure. What we do know is that, as certainly as God has promised prosperity if we serve Him, 3 Nephi 16:13-16 says destruction is certain for the nation unless the people repent and return to God. We know there are millions of Christians, as well as non-Christians, who believe in God's divine blessings upon our nation and acknowledge His providential care through good and bad times: periods of unparalleled prosperity, wars, economic problems, racial discord, social unrest, and natural disasters. The United States remains the most prosperous and generous nation on the earth—but it is troubled and changing: morality is declining; the national debt is escalating; social problems are increasing; and we are drifting further and further away from our Christian roots, the ideals of our founding fathers, and the examples of good character and hard work. Our nation needs to understand that America is only great because of His blessings. If ever there was a time to heed the counsel of the following verse, this is the time: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

How will you celebrate Independence Day this year?

Will a part of your day *"be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty"*? May God help us, The Church of Jesus Christ, to be witnesses to our friends and family of God's care for our nation.

May God bless you and may God bless America!

This is the tenth of a series of messages to *The Church*. For more understanding of what we believe please visit our web site to obtain resource and contact information:
www.thechurchofjesuschrist.com.