

FAITH IN AMERICA – PART 1

Hebrews 11:8-16 • 8 July 3, 2022

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A. INTRODUCTION

Being strangers on a journey to a better country by faith

A brief history of the relationship between church and state

American ideals: freedom, common sense, and revival

- The First Great Awakening: 1730 - 1740
- The Second Great Awakening: 1800 - 1840
- The Third Great Awakening: 1850 - 1900
- The Fourth Great Awakening: 1950 -1970

(a Sunday seminar video series on SCC Downloads page)

John Winthrop and the Puritan's "city upon a hill" ideal - 1630

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

— Matthew 5:14-16

B. THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING - preceded the American Revolution

Cultural issues

- Division in the colonies
- Engaging the Enlightenment

Key people: Jonathon Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield

Impact: Huge meetings and small group discipling

- New denominations – "no creed but the Bible"
- Outreach to neglected groups

The spirit of liberty, moralism, and potential at the founding

Church adherence in 1770's was 40% to 50%. By 1790 it was 5% to 10%. Fragmentation and secularization had set in.

- 1791 – 1st Amendment to the US Constitution: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"*.

C. THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING - began in 1800

Cultural issues

- Movement west – need for new churches
- Thomas Paine, "The Age of Reason" 1794
- Abolition movement led by Christians

Impact: Prayer meetings, camp meetings, traveling preachers

- Christian colleges and publishing
- Volunteer societies and missions
- By 1870 church attendance was back up to 35% to 40%.

D. WE ARE CALLED TO BE AMBASSADORS IN THE WORLD

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

— 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

Abraham ...was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. — Hebrews 11:10

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. — Hebrews 11:13

They were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. — Hebrews 11:16

For further reading: A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada by Mark A Noll