

SABBATH THOUGHT 2022-02-26—NATIONS & BOUNDARIES

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

I'm sure that everyone has heard by now that Russia has invaded Ukraine. The talking heads on the news have analyzed and scrutinized every aspect of it and determined that Putin is a despot who is trying to restore the glory of the former USSR. But what "glory" would that be? Russia is almost twice the size of the USA but it is economically smaller than Italy or Canada. It seems almost incongruous that for all its land and resources, Russia is, in fact, poor.

Ukraine, on the other hand, is about the size of Texas with an economy less than a tenth that of Russia. Conquering Ukraine would not add much to the Russian economy. Ukraine was under the authoritarian thumb of the USSR after World War 2. Men like Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Chernenko, Gorbachev, repressed their economy after the war and subjected the citizens to a life of fear. Not only Ukraine, but also Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia (now Chechia and Slovakia), Hungary, Romania, etc. After the economic fall of the USSR in 1991, eastern European countries gained some form of independence from Russia, but many of their newly elected leaders continued to have ties to mother Russia because it assured them wealth and power. That has slowly been changing but many problems still exist today.

Today's Russia is dominated by Putin, who has been president for 19 of the last 31 years. Since the fall of the USSR in 1991, the Russian economy has remained completely stagnant. Putin has done nothing to improve the lives of the people. He uses his position of power to steal the wealth of the nation. I remember one time he flew on his private helicopter to a wilderness river area where he strutted around without a shirt to show off his physique. To maintain favor with the people, he creates the persona of a strong conqueror who will establish a new Russian empire. In reality he has done nothing.

All of this is happening under the watch of President Biden who seems to rely upon the NATO allies to determine a response. Of course, members of NATO consist mostly of European countries who are fearful of engaging in a war with Russia. And rightly so. Even 75 years after WW2, the idea of a war in Europe is anathema to them because they remember the utter devastation, suffering, and death.

The war in Ukraine could have significant impacts here in the USA, too. Inflation was already rising at a rate not seen since the 70s and economic sanctions against Russia will only make matters worse. This is especially true since the USA now imports oil from Russia to make up for the loss of national sources that were shut down by Biden.

The world has really never been without wars. There is always a despot ready to stomp on a smaller country so it can be absorbed for the purposes of empire-building and wealth. All of this has been going on since before the great flood. It is hard to imagine,

but there was a time when nations did not exist. It was not until after God established different languages at the Tower of Babel that national boundaries were formed:

GENESIS 11:6-9 And the LORD said, “Behold, the people *are* one and they all have one language. And this *is only the beginning of* what they will do— now nothing which they have imagined to do will be restrained from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they cannot understand one another’s speech.” 8 So **the LORD scattered them abroad from that place upon the face of all the earth.** And they quit building the city. 9 Therefore the name of it is called Babel, because the LORD confused the language of all the earth there. And from there **the LORD scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth.**

God did not just randomly scatter them from the Tower of Babel; He dispersed them to predetermined places where they gathered according to their new common languages:

DEUTERONOMY 32:7-8 Remember **the days of old [pre-flood]**; consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you. 8 When **the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance**, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel,

It was language that defined the people of the nations but God had determined the specific lands that they would inherit. In modern times, nations defined by specific languages have become somewhat muddled by older national identities. For example, the Jews live in various countries throughout the world. Those born as German citizens still are viewed, either personally or by true Germans, as Jews first and foremost. This applies almost universally. There are African Americans, French Canadians, etc. Today, nations are defined by both national identity and language. Which comes first is largely a matter of religious belief and commitment. This is true of the Jews but applies to Christians and Catholics and the other many religions of the world.

Culture, on the other hand, is really just an identity based upon a combination of religious beliefs and national traditions. Italians are dominated by Catholicism with all of its pro forma customs. Even for those who are not sincere believers, their country and society is underpinned by their long-held customs.

Interestingly, language and religion remain the identity of people even after they are conquered. Just look at the countries that were ruled by the ancient Romans or the modern case of the USSR—they retained their identities during their captivity and continued them after their independence. The same thing occurred with ancient Israel. How many times did God bring in a conquering army when they sinned? Language and religion always defined them regardless of who ruled over them.

So why did God establish the nations? It was because “nothing [*evil*] which they have imagined to do will be restrained from them” (Genesis 11:6)? But there was another reason that God separated the peoples:

ACTS 17:26-27 And He made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, having determined beforehand *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling; 27 **In order that they might seek the Lord**, if perhaps they might feel after Him and might find Him; though truly, He is not far from each one of us,

A united world is capable of doing great evil, but it is not a stretch to think that smaller nations might seek after the true God. One example was Nineveh who, at the preaching of Jonah, repented before God. The fact that their repentance was soon forgotten is why Nineveh no longer exists today. Verse 26 also says that national boundaries were established by God for “their appointed times.” God preserves nations that seek and obey Him. Those that reject Him, as history has shown us, come and go. National boundaries only exist for a period of time as determined by God for His purposes.

At this point, Ukraine, without God’s protection, and will likely fall to Russia if for no other reason than Putin cannot afford to fail. If Russia cannot defeat the tiny nation of Ukraine, they will become the laughing stock of the world and Putin cannot allow that to happen. His ego is too big so failure is not an option for him.

However, no nation without God lasts. God established appointed times for all nations to exist. This is true of every nation; however, there is one that is unique in all the world—Israel (the land of Canaan given to Abraham). Obviously, Israel has repeatedly and continuously disobeyed and has been conquered countless times. Still, the national boundaries have remained basically the same since the beginning. The reason for this is God’s promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan:

GENESIS 15:18-21 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “**I have given this land to your seed**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 The *land of the* Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, 21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

In spite of their disobedience, God has kept His promise to Abraham. The nation of Israel—the land of Canaan—is still here. There is also another reason that the national boundaries of Israel have never changed—God delivered His Word to the Jews for them to preserve:

ROMANS 3:1-2 **What then is the advantage of the Jew**, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. Primarily, in that **they were entrusted with the oracles of God**.

The national boundaries of Israel have remained essentially intact for the last three thousand years so that God’s Word can be preserved by the Jews. It would be next to impossible if the Jews were scattered throughout the world to safeguard the word of God. All other nations have an appointed time for their existence because they reject God:

PSALMS 2:1-3 **Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? 2**
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers **take counsel together**
against the LORD and against His Christ, saying, 3 “Let us break Their
bands asunder and cast away Their cords from us.”

This also applies to the nations inhabited by the ten tribes of Israel. As a chosen people, they have rejected God and murdered millions of babies through abortion. Their sins have reached into heaven above and God will bring the curses of Deuteronomy 32 upon us. How great is God’s wrath upon His chosen people who reject Him? Prophecy tells us that the national descendants of Abraham will fall to the greatest evil empire in the history of mankind in the last days. It will put to shame the past empires of Egypt, Assyrian, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome who ruled a small portion of the Euro-Asian continent. It will be a worldwide empire under the absolute rule and control of Satan.

So, there will be one more evil empire to rise up and then the end will come. But with the end comes a new beginning and a new empire—the kingdom of God. Power, holiness, righteousness, wisdom, kindness, mercy, compassion, peace, and love define God our Father who sits upon that throne. In that day:

REVELATION 21:4-5 And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and *there* shall not be any more death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall *there* be any more pain, because the former things have passed away.” 5 And **He Who sits on the throne** said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

National identity is established at birth. Each of us has some idea of our lineage but that will change because we will be born again. When we are finally born of spirit in God’s kingdom, our identity completely changes—we will have the name of God, not the name of a patriarch who lived in times past:

REVELATION 3:12 The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and **I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God**, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him* My new name.

Our identity will be the name of God. Our nation will be the city of our God. And we will be one nation, OF God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

Steven Greene

<https://sabbathreflections.org>