**Debbie Clark**

**2.23.2021 Jean Ribault, The French Huguenots & George Whitefield**

Lord, we thank You that the land of America is the American Church’s heritage, a gift of love from above. We receive it, Lord, with gladness and joy. Oh, that we will love it as You do, Avi, and that we will keep it in our hearts as a heritage from You, watching over it in righteousness.

Tonight we are going to talk about a people of God who were sent to this nation from 1562-1565. God's purpose and destiny for our nation stems from the sacrificial death of Jean Ribault and over 300 French Huguenots, the martyrs of Matanzas. The Lord calls this Holy Blood. Their death holds a redemptive gift for our nation.

On May 26, 2001, The Lord called our first Gathering of the Eagles to be at Jacksonville, Florida, near the actual location this massacre occurred. For this GOE, The Lord told Nita, "I am going to show you the power of the blood of the martyrs."  The destiny of our nation has been sealed in martyrs' blood and the word of their testimony.

**Rev. 12:11**

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Within this act, so to speak, the first spiritual seeds for this nation were planted, and a line was drawn in the sand for the fulfilling of God's ultimate destiny for this nation.

**Who were the Huguenots and how did they come to be in America?**

This was the time of the Reformation Era. Many in France were breaking away from the Catholic Church. The Huguenots were French Protestants, a people seeking to worship the Lord. Their persecution in France brought them to America looking for a place to worship the Lord in spirit and truth.

Under the leadership of the wealthy Admiral of France, Gaspard de Coligny, who was himself a Huguenot, the French Huguenots began to seek a way of escape, even extinction.

De Coligny found favor with the young King Charles IX and his mother Catherine de Medici and was able to work out a plan for the exploring of the New World and to eventually establish a colony there.

In 1562, de Coligny sent out a devout Huguenot, a fearless French naval officer by the name of Jean Ribault. They were dispatched to explore La Florida with three ships to find land that would be suitable for establishing a colony. They landed and set foot May 1, 1562 near Jacksonville at St. John’s Bluff (St. John’s River area) or the name they gave it, the River of May.

They set up a stone marker on the land in Florida claiming the land for France. Once they set up the marker, they prayed to dedicate this work to the Lord. They then traveled on down the coast for a while to further explore. It was decided that the French Huguenots would sail back to Florida and give a report to their patron to set up a French colony establishing a refuge for the French Huguenots in the New World.

*“However, upon his return to France, Ribault found himself on the losing end of a religious battle in France. Hoping to find refuge, he escaped to England only to find himself imprisoned in the Tower of London.*

*With Ribault imprisoned, it was decided that another Huguenot leader, Rene Laudonniere, would return to Florida in 1564 to establish the colony. Laudonniere was successful in establishing Fort Caroline near what is now St. Augustine, Florida in 1564. Upon his release from prison in 1565, Ribault led another expedition and set sail for Florida to join Laudonniere and to establish another colony.”*  <http://newhousefoundation.org/subpage.html> (Jean Ribault Made Covenant ©Gwen R. Thomas, 2003 [revised September, 2006, June 2009])

Laudonniere and his company, Huguenots plus Laudonniere included some who were not Huguenot, landed on June 30, 1564. Thanking God for giving them safe passage, the Huguenots offered up a prayer of thanksgiving. They began setting up their community naming it La Caroline after King Charles IX, the boy king.

These French pilgrims were met by friendly native Americans, the Timucuans, who shared their food with them and also taught them how to live off the land.

Problems arose when there was a shortage of food. Laudonniere was of the understanding that France would continue to send supplies by ships. Although the Huguenots were looking for a refuge to worship God, the expectations of France was they were to look for gold while they were there. They would, therefore, supply them with their needs, so they would have time to look for gold.

The need for food caused some of the French to raid Indian storehouses. This caused problems with the Native Americans. Sickness resulted from the hunger because their bodies were so weak and malnourished so in August 1565 they decided to load up the ships and return to France.

The three ships sat in the bay for two weeks while they waited for a breeze to come so they could put out to sea. At the end of those two weeks 3 ships appeared on the horizon, 3 French ships – it was Jean Ribbault. They were so excited.

De Coligny had sent Ribault with 3 ships and 600 Huguenots to Fort Caroline. He immediately took charge and command of the fort.

Meanwhile in Spain, having learned from spies in France that there was now a French colony to be established, King Philip of Spain, who was furious that these protestant heretics, these Huguenots who challenged and defied the authority of the Church of Rome was an affront to the sovereignty of Spain. He commissioned Pedro Menendez de Aviles, a dedicated Catholic, a knight in the Order of Santiago to travel to Florida with the assignment to dislodge the French Huguenots and rid them from Spanish Florida and to establish a Spanish colony there. They left from Cadiz, Spain, on June 29, 1565, with 700 men and colonists landing in Florida on September 8, 1565.

The Spanish colonists set about creating a colony. Menendez, on the other hand, with the help of the Indians, sent scouts out to find Ft. Caroline. He started out with his men on Sept. 16, 1565. They were going to attack the fort in the midst of a raging storm.

Ribault, learning that Menendez was in the area, left with 300 of his men in their ships heading south to find the Spanish ships and destroy them before they found the Huguenots.

Because of this, when the Spanish arrived at Fort Caroline, it was defenseless. They killed the few in number sentinels and promptly entered the fort. Within an hour the Huguenot men, women, and children were massacred with the bodies of some infants being impaled on pikes stuck in the ground. Men were hanged with the inscription: “I do this, not as to Frenchmen, but as to Lutherans.” - in other words to Protestants. The account is believed that as many as 143 were killed or hanged at Fort Caroline. The rest of the women and children were spared. A few were able to escape.

There were two other massacres that followed this one.

Although Menendez was pleased with what took place at Fort Caroline, his main goal was to take out the Huguenot leader, Jean Ribault. He knew Ribault and 300 men had gone south in his ships where they had encountered this raging storm. These 3 ships were destroyed leaving Ribault and his men to swim to shore where they were stranded.

Local Indians informed Menendez on Sept. 27 about Ribault and his men being shipwrecked to the south. About 500 men in two groups headed to Ft. Caroline by foot. Menendez set out with 50 men to search them out to get rid of them. Sept. 29 Menendez and his men came upon the first group on the sand of Matanzas (which means “slaughters”).

Even with these two slaughters behind him, Menendez still was not satisfied, because Jean Ribault was still alive somewhere yet on the Florida coast. Again, quoting the Park Service:

***"Famished and weary, informed of their fort's capture, and tricked into believing the Spanish force to be much larger, the French surrendered. On September 29, they were ferried ten at a time across the inlet, fed, and led behind the dunes, where their hands were bound. About 200 feet down the beach, Menendez drew a line in the sand."***

***"Twelve days later, Menendez heard that the second group of 350 Frenchmen had likewise halted at the inlet. Again there was a parley - this time with Ribault himself, who saw the gruesome evidence of the first massacre. [The others had been run through with pike, dagger, and sword.] Ribault returned and told his men everything. He advised surrender, for he believed, it appeared that the Spaniards would show mercy. But during the night more than half of his men fled south. The next morning, October 12, Ribault and his remaining men handed their battle flags to Menendez.***

***As before, the Huguenots were brought in groups of ten across the water and again the white sands were darkened with blood. That day, 134 Frenchmen lost their lives; 16 were spared. Later, Menendez sought out those who had fled; most he took to Habana as prisoners."***

*Below is an account of Ribault’s death and martyrdom taken from  Fort Caroline and Its Leader by Charles E. Bennett (emphasis has been added):*

***"Solis de Meras, a Spaniard and an eyewitness to the scene, described the massacre in the following words:***

***‘The Adelantado [Menendez], taking Jean Ribault behind the sand hills, among the bushes where the others had their hands tied behind them, he said to these and all others as he had done before, that they had four leagues to go after night, and that he could not permit them to go unbound; and after they were all tied, he asked if they were Catholics or Lutherans, or if any of them desired to make confession.”[2]***

***“Undoubtedly Menendez was cruel and bigoted, but he was a product of his era. He hated Lutherans, Huguenots, and other members of the new religious sects and showed them no mercy” [3]***

***“Jean Ribault replied, "that all who were there were of the new religion," and he then began to repeat the psalm, "Domine! memento Mei"; and having finished, he said, "that from dust they came and to dust they must return, and that in twenty years, more or less, he must render his final account; and that the Adelantado might do with them as he chose." The Adelantado then ordered all to be killed, in the same order and at the same mark, as had been done to the others. He spared only the fifers, drummers and trumpeters, and four others who said that they were Catholics.***

***The man who actually killed Ribault first inquired of him whether the French commander did not expect his soldiers to obey orders, Ribault answered, "Yes." Then the Spaniard said, "I propose to obey the orders of my commander also. I am ordered to kill you." The Psalm that Ribault recited before the dagger was thrust into his body was the 132nd Psalm which begins “Lord, remember David"; but Ribault began it, according to an eyewitness, with ‘Lord, remember me.’”[4]***

***"History has justifiably recognized the greatness of Jean Ribault. He and his followers chose to die for principle rather than recant and abandon their religion."[***5] <http://newhousefoundation.org/subpage.html> (Jean Ribault Made Covenant ©Gwen R. Thomas, 2003 [revised September, 2006, June 2009])

**Why is the telling of this true story so important?**

Because just before Ribbault was martyred, he quoted Psalm 132. It was King David’s heart to establish a habitation for the Lord. In identifying himself with this Psalm, Ribault was identifying himself with the heart of David, to establish here, in this land, in this nation, a habitation for the Lord.

With this prayer, Jean Ribault dedicated in martyr’s blood this nation to our Lord. As I said at the beginning our first GOE was in Jacksonville to honor the blood of those French Huguenot martyrs. The Lord Himself said the first GOE had to be held there to honor them. He told Nita revival will come to this nation to honor the blood of the martyrs. They paved the way for you and for me to have a free nation to worship the Lord that He can govern and usher His Presence into.

**George Whitefield**

From her article ***THE FIRST GREAT GLOBAL AWAKENING OF THE 1700’s*** Nita tells us of The Moravian Revival and their hundred year prayer meeting. She tells us that it was upon the blood of the martyrs that this revival was born. She said:

***So great was this awakening that the prayer meeting that had begun just a few nights before lasted for over one hundred years and spread to many nations upon the earth before it was over…The Moravian revival swept through the world effecting people in all classes of society, from the poorest to the richest and the highest of the ranks of society. Nations such as America, England, India, Scotland, Africa, Western Europe and many other lands were ultimately set ablaze from the fire bands of this revival.*** (***THE FIRST GREAT GLOBAL AWAKENING OF THE 1700’s*** October 8, 2001 by Nita LaFond Johnson)

**Why are we looking at this?**

Because The Great Awakening period happened just prior to the American Revolution, and because Nita tells us that one of these firebrands was George Whitefield. There were others but we want to focus on Whitefield because of the impact he had on the American colonies to prepare this nation for the upcoming American Revolution.

The Lord had used George Whitefield greatly in England. Whitefield had thrown himself into God’s almighty hands. “*Whitefield called it Joy – joy unspeakable – joy that’s full of, big with glory.”* (John Pollock George Whitefield and the Great Awakening p. 18-19) Everywhere Whitefield went revival broke out.

Whitefield believed he was called to America. He left England to go to the colonies. Meanwhile, over in America, hope and excitement was birthed into the colonists that Whitefield would come to America as they read in the newspapers from England of Whitefield’s open air meetings and how God was moving mightily in them. They saw in Whitefield the hope of revival fires to spread throughout the colonies.

Whitefield was already feeling America was his home. He was in the colonies for a short time, and began a house of mercy, an orphanage, in Georgia. He returned to England to get approval for the orphanage and to get land from the trustees of the colony. He preached in England till he returned to America. But Whitefield was anxious to get back to America. He left for Philadelphia on August 15 for *“he dared to trust that his preaching might help create one nation under God – thirteen colonies united with each other.”* (Russel T. Hitt. Heroic Continental Christians. P. 171, 198)

Many early reformers were carrying the message of New Birth in the colonies. The Light was falling in the denominations and in the geographical areas among the Presbyterians, the Dutch Reformed Church. It was falling in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, even among the Native Americans. But the Lord had called Whitefield to tie it all together.

Wherever Whitefield went revival fell and storms of holy lightning followed. He preached a simple message but the Holy Spirit produced much fruit. Streets would be full, shops would close because everyone was going to hear him preach. One of these men was Benjamin Franklin. Ben remained an agnostic but he was a friend to Whitefield, highly respecting him. He was amazed at the carrying power of Whitefield’s voice. Interested in science, Franklin walked to find how far away he could hear Whitefield’s voice. The space to fill 30,000 people, and they all could hear him.

Franklin wrote of him, *“It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants…From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.”* (David Manuel, Peter Marshall. the Light and the Glory. p. 248) Franklin was constantly amazed by Whitefield. Even giving more in his offerings than planned for no matter where he went, Whitefield raised money for the orphanage in Georgia.

People were discovering that Jesus had died for their sins. They were experiencing new birth. Whitefield’s heart responded to the people of Boston, even as theirs did to him. They were greatly touched by the Word preached and responded in their giving to his “dear orphans.”

*“The Lord, through the preaching of this covenanted man, was uniting the thirteen colonies – on a level so deep that few people even realized at first what was happening. But wherever Whitefield went, he was preaching the same Gospel. The same Holy Spirit was quickening his message in people’s hearts, and Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Quakers, Moravians – all were accepting the same Christ in the same way. In so doing, as Pollock points out, Whitefield ‘was the first man to cut across denominational barriers. He rejected the solution of earlier reformers, who encouraged followers to drop previous loyalties and form a purer sect – and thus increase the barriers that divide.’*

*They were beginning to discover a basic truth which would be a major foundation stone of God’s new nation, and which by 1776 would be declared self-evident: that is the eyes of their Creator, all men were of equal value. By the sovereign act of Almighty God, and through the obedience of a few dedicated men, the Body of Christ was forming in America.*

*Through the almost universal, almost simultaneous experience of the Great Awakening, we began to become aware of ourselves as a nation, a body of believers which had a national identity as a people chosen by God for a specific purpose: to be not just ‘a city set upon a hill,’ but a veritable citadel of Light in a darkened world.”* (David Manuel, Peter Marshall. the Light and the Glory. p. 251)

“Thus by a divine lightning storm, the land had been awakened again. Only now it was not just a sprinkling of settlers around Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay; now the land was a giant…Far from there being a prolonged lull after the sunburst of Light, the watchword of this period was action. Whitefield and the others would ride and ride, and preach till their lungs practically gave out. (All together, Whitefield preached more than 18,000 sermons between 1736 and 1770.) (David Manuel, Peter Marshall. the Light and the Glory. p. 252)

Whitefield had preached to 80% of all the colonies. It was God giving superhuman energy to Whitefield for he was on assignment to spread God’s Light as far and as quickly as he could because the time of the Revolution was at hand. The nation needed what God had imparted to see her through the next big trial as the nation entered into The Revolution and the birthing of America. The colonies were no longer separate but also united together through God.

*“In 1770, his health now broken and his breathing tormented by asthma attacks, he drove himself as never before. He reached Boston on his last visit, on August 15, five months after British troops had fired on a mob of civilians, killing five, in what would come to be known as the Boston Massacre. Never had the crowds been larger, nor ‘the word received with greater eagerness than now. All opposition seems, as it were, for a while to cease…*

*The next month found him up in New Hampshire…but when the time came he could barely breathe…glancing heavenward, he added, ‘Lord Jesus, I am weary* ***in*** *Thy work but not* ***of*** *it. If I have not finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, and seal Thy truth, and come home and die! And the Lord granted his request….He had such a sense of the incomparable excellencies of Christ that he could never say enough of Him. On and on he went, into the second hour, seeming to look right into heaven: …he felt the pleasures of heaven in his raptured soul, which made his countenance shine like the unclouded sun…*

*That night he was put to bed in the Parsons’ home… and had a fitful sleep…George Whitfield died, just as the first rays of the sun caught the waters of the bay below.* ***The new day would soon break across the nation. His dream had come true: America was a nation now-one nation under God.”***(David Manuel, Peter Marshall. ***The Light and the Glory.*** p. 252-253)

***Before Whitefield, there was no unifying inter-colonial person or event. Indeed, before Whitefield, it is doubtful any name other than royalty was known equally from Boston to Charleston, But by 1750 virtually every American loved an d admired Whitefield and saw him as their champion.”*** (***If You Can Keep It****.* Eric Metaxas. Viking Penguin Books. ©2016)

***Whitfield’s contribution to the First Great Awakening was enormous.***

***More than any other person he, by his incessant travels, helped***

***make the Awakening a national event. It was the first time the***

***scattered colonists of various denominational and theological***

***persuasions had participated together in a single event.***

***Denominational walls were broken down and, for the first time,***

***they began to see themselves as a single people with one Divine***

***destiny—“one nation under God,” as Whitfield had prayed.***

***The preaching of Whitefield, Edwards, Frelinghuysen, the Tennents,***

***and others thus paved the way for nationhood. This is why Harvard***

***professor, William Perry, said, “The Declaration of Independence***

***of 1776 was a result of the evangelical preaching of the evangelists***

***of the Great Awakening.”***

[“Encouragement for the Last Days”: GEORGE WHITEFIELD BLAZES ACROSS AMERICA - THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING](https://greatawakening.blogspot.com/2011/09/george-whitefields-impact-on-america.html)

**(**[Rexford "Rex" Louth](https://www.amazon.com/Rexford-Rex-Louth/e/B00JCB9Z5O/ref%3Ddp_byline_cont_book_1) **From Chapter 5 of *GOD SHED HIS GRACE ON THEE)***