



## From every tribe and Nation Revelation 5:1-14

Flags - Poland, Scottish Royal Standard, Union Flag



What do flags do? Show our nationality. Where are we from? Whoever we are, God knows us and loves us.

*A Dutchman was explaining the red, white, and blue Netherlands flag to an American.*

*"Our flag is symbolic of our taxes. We get red when we talk about them, white when we get our tax bills, and blue after we pay them."*

*The American nodded. "It's the same in the USA only we see stars too!"*

Flags are part of life and have been for as long as anyone can remember - even in the Bible. But what do flags show? Here are three things for us this morning.

### 1. Flags show who we are

Where are we all from? Prob mostly from UK but some of you may hold another nationality or more than one nationality.

Different nationalities, some hold more than one nationality. But if we are Christians today, then we all hold at least dual nationality. I'm a British citizen and also a citizen of heaven.

*9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."* Isn't that just amazing? God has made us into a nation. One body, one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, one people, one nation - praise the Lord. So in whose kingdom are you part of today? If you're part of God's kingdom, then the Lord wants us to behave as though we are part of that kingdom.

But how proud are we of our spiritual nation - the nation that we're now part of for eternity? One of the things you find out when you go on holiday is what people from other countries think of the British. In parts of Spain they associate the British to drunken hooligans. "But that's not us!"

You're right it isn't, but the actions of some reflect on the whole. We are called to be people of obedience, people of integrity, people of the Spirit. Do people see Jesus in us? Do they see Him in His church? Do they see His power in the Spirit manifested in our lives? Do people associate us with the life changing power of God? Or do they see something else?

If we're honest - it sometimes is something else. One of the main problems with Christians in Britain today is that often we're just not credible because we don't have integrity. Yet having that integrity can change lives - Rhiannon's testimony.

We're citizens of heaven, let's ask God that obey His Spirit we cast off those things in our lives which dishonour Him and walk in the Spirit.

## 2. Flags are a banner that show authority

Here's the iconic picture "raising the flag over Iwo Jima"

Flags have always been used by armies as banners to show people which side you belonged to. Here's the colours of the Yorkshire Regiment. Standards, banners and colours are all still part of military life. The banner showed the authority under which the soldiers fought and the great battles they had won. The soldiers rallied to the banner and also planted the flag or banner when they won the battle and tried to capture the enemy's colours. It's thought that the Welsh flag originated as an army banner. The dragon was supposed to make the enemy feel afraid.

As we look in Exodus, we find the banner is an important idea. "Jehovah Nissi" The Lord is my banner. *Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Am'alek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Am'alek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 And Joshua defeated Am'alek and his people with the sword. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a reminder in a book and recite it in the hearing of Joshua: I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Am'alek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called it, The LORD is my banner . 16 He said, "A hand upon the banner of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Am'alek from generation to generation."*

As God's people, we are in a spiritual battle. We know that. If you look at Ephesians 6 you'll know all about that. The Lord is our banner. He's Jehovah Nissi. And because Jesus is the one who is now exalted and lifted up and all nations have been placed under His authority, He is our banner. He is Jehovah Nissi to us.

We're not just called to be people of integrity, but people who fight under a banner. And like Israel on that day of battle with Amalek, He is our banner and under that banner, we prevail, because the name of Jesus is our authority. So what are the implications of that: First of all we are called to battle - read Ephesians 6. Under the banner of Christ, we are people that prevail - but we have got to get up and put the armour on and rally around the standard.

*Who is on the Lord's side?*

*Who will serve the king?*

*Who will be His helpers*

*Other lives to bring?*

*Who will leave the world's side?*

*Who will face the foe?*

*Who is on the Lord's side?*

*Who for Him will go?*

*Round the standard ranging*

*By your grace divine.*

*We are on the Lord's side*

*Saviour, we are Thine.*

The battle we are called to is to rescue the lost. We battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. We are called to battle. The victory in Christ should be sure. But so often we shy away from the battle. What's the result? People don't get to hear the good news about Jesus. We rarely have the pleasure of seeing people come to Christ. We experience defeat in many areas of our own lives. But God wants us to be heroes and His Spirit is there to give us that power and as we trust we see miracles as He works in power.

Secondly, because our banner is a name, we should never hesitate to use the name when we like the soldiers of Iwo Jima fought to plant the flag of victory. The last two pictures show the flag as the symbol of authority. The name of Jesus is authority. And that name is the name of Jesus, because it's under that name that every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The battle is ours, the battle belongs to the Lord. Remember that when you have a tough time in work next week, when you want to share Jesus with someone, when you feel your life is a spiritual battle - remember the banner and claim its authority.

### 3. Flags signal our intentions

Another thing we use flags for is to signal our intentions. Before the days of radios or even signal lamps, ships communicated using flags. The Polish flag on its side tells others that the Pilot is on board. At sea a pilot is a special person who takes ships in and out of port, through waters that the people on the ship do not know. If the pilot was not on board, it may run aground or have an accident. As we go on our voyage though life, Jesus is actually present in our life by the Spirit. I've talked a good bit about the need to be people of integrity this morning - how we need to be like Jesus. How we are in a battle and we need to know His presence and power. And all that comes through the Holy Spirit. Are you listening to Him. Is He guiding and empowering you? Or is something else happening?

Today's the day to raise up the flag and say "Jesus, I be my pilot and guide me through the sea that is life. Holy Spirit, fill me and empower me to be the man or woman of God that you have called me to be.

And He'll do it. And you'll know the difference - and better still you'll be the difference as God uses you to work His purposes out.

The blue flag with the white square is the Blue Peter. Ships display it when they are about to leave port. It is flown to make sure that everyone who should be on the ship knows that it's ready, and to warn those in the harbour that it's leaving. The Bible is like the Blue Peter. It gives us a warning, that if we want to know Jesus, if we want to have eternal life, then we need to trust Jesus and get on board to go on the journey to the land God has given us and the place Jesus has prepared for us.

Do you know Jesus today? Then you are under notice from God that He wants you to get on board before it is too late. The clock's ticking today. Why aren't you on board?