



“Constitution Day 2026”

Revelation 8:1-7
September 13, 2026

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: [Psalm 127:1]

"1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it." [Psa 127:1 NASB95]

INTRODUCTION:

MAIN POINT: The Constitution did not separate politics from Christian morals. It separated the Christian religion from the control of a centralized government—precisely because the framers were churchmen of many denominations who would not let any one sect, or Congress, own their faith.

POINT: Ben Franklin was asked after the Constitutional Convention whether we had a republic or a monarchy his response was “a republic if you can keep it.” **Whether we can keep it may depend on our understanding and protection of the separation of church and state.**

The founder's of our Constitutional Republic...

I. ...feared a _____ church.

1. The Constitutional Convention on JUNE 28, 1787 nears _____ as 55 delegates contend.

2. Franklin moved for “prayers imploring _____.”

“prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning,”

3. He suggested that local _____ lead the delegates on a unified path to resolution through prayer.

POINT: This suggestion called into question which clergy from which denomination would become a map for American Christianity.

4. They tabled the request rather than vote to install an official minister over a _____ assembly.

POINT: The Constitution was not an attempt to separate politics from the moral and ethical standards of the Christian religion. It was an attempt to separate the Christian religion from the control of a centralized government.

POINT: What was initially a call to prayer for divine providence by a professed Deist became a daily practice for future legislative sessions.

II. ...worked for government and church functioning as two different _____ institutions.

1. Fifty-one delegates representing at least seven _____ out of fifty-five men.

Affiliation	Number
Episcopalian / Anglican	28
Presbyterian	8
Congregationalist	7
Lutheran	2
Dutch Reformed	2
Methodist	2
Roman Catholic	2
Unknown	1
Often listed as Deist in practice	3 (Franklin, Wilson, Williamson)

POINT: No consensus could be decided by the delegates paralyzed at the thought of crowning a royal church. It was an attempt to separate the Christian religion from the control of a centralized government. That is why Article VI bans a religious test for federal office, and why the First Amendment later forbids Congress to establish a religion.

2. John Witherspoon “Princeton President”

“There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire.” Two months later he signed the Declaration. When some colleagues said the country was not ready, he replied that it was “not only ripe for the measure, but in danger of rotting for the want of it.”

1. Witherspoon arrived from Scotland in 1768. — a critic of over-centralized church and state power.
2. John Adam’s called him “as high a Son of Liberty as any Man in America.”
3. Witherspoon served on more than 100 committees In the Continental and Confederation Congresses (1776–1782) he later voted for New Jersey’s ratification of the Constitution. He thus put his name on three of the four organic laws of the United States.
4. His May 1776 sermon *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men* treated colonial anger at the Crown as righteous, not sinful, and argued that civil and religious liberty rise and fall together:
5. British officers called his Presbyterian college in New Jersey a “seminary of sedition” but later Princeton presidents called it a seminary of statesmen.

3. Across his presidency the college produced, among others:

- 1 president (James Madison) and 1 vice president (Aaron Burr)
- 5 delegates to the Constitutional Convention
- 12 members of the Continental Congress
- roughly 28 U.S. senators and 49 representatives
- 3 Supreme Court justices
- a dozen governors and many state ratifiers and judges
- more than 100 pastors, plus a string of later college presidents who founded or led other schools

1. Nine of the 55 Convention delegates were Princeton alumni. _____ of those nine studied under Witherspoon:
2. Witherspoon’s political theology was not theocracy. He held that God authors liberty, that magistrates are limited by fundamental law and consent, and that _____ to tyranny can be a duty. He also held that the state should not dictate belief.
3. He wanted a virtuous public, not an established _____ church.

III. ...saw God’s _____ in uniting states but keeping separate church & state.

1. Benjamin Rush saw _____ law as a way of uniting diverse denominations.

- Signed the Declaration of Independence
- He recruited John Witherspoon from Scotland
- Rush spoke for ratification of the Constitution for Pennsylvania in Philadelphia
- He wanted government and church independent of each other.
- He agreed with Jefferson in regard to natural law — a government strong enough to maintain order and protect liberty, yet restrained enough to avoid tyranny.
- **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”**
- He agreed with James Madison’s view of natural law — hailed as “the father of the Constitution”
- **a government limited and balanced strong enough to maintain order and protect liberty, yet restrained enough to avoid tyranny.**
- He did not want a secular classroom. In *Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic*:
- **“The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.”**
- He would have opposed and hated government schools as an absolute violation of the separation of church & state

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2. **Benjamin Rush acknowledged the miraculous and necessary divine _____.**
He “as much believed the hand of God was employed in this work [of drafting the Constitution], as that God had divided the Red Sea to give passage to the children of Israel or had fulminated the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai.”

Later qualified: “I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as perfectly satisfied that the Union of the United States in its form and adoption is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament.”

3. **George Washington acknowledged divine providence as a _____ of nations.**
• “It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor.”
🌐 **POINT:** The first Congress asked the first President to call the people to thanksgiving for “the national [constitution] now lately instituted” and for “civil and religious liberty.” Acknowledgment of God is a national duty. An established church of the United States is not.

IV. ...saw Christian standards belonging with the family’s _____ and the states.

- 🌐 **POINT:** The federal Constitution refuses a national church. The states still spoke as Christian commonwealths—and they already knew the danger of one sect lording it over another.

1. Massachusetts Constitution, 1780, Article III

And every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law: and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law.

- 🌐 **POINT:** Equal protection of Christian denominations—not a godless public square.

2. Delaware Constitution, 1776, Article 22

Officeholders must profess:

“I, A. B., do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”

- 🌐 **POINT:** That is a state Trinitarian test. The federal Constitution, eleven years later, says no religious test for office under the United States. Two different levels, two different jobs.

3. New Jersey Constitution, 1776, Article XIX

“That there shall be no Establishment of any one religious Sect in this Province in Preference to another; and that no Protestant Inhabitant of this Colony shall be denied the Enjoyment of any civil Right merely on Account of his religious Principles; but that all Persons, professing a Belief in the Faith of any Protestant Sect, who shall demean themselves peaceably under the Government as hereby established, shall be capable of being elected into any Office of Profit or Trust...”

- 🌐 **POINT:** The unity was qualified. The denominational sects were real and largely Protestant but no one church denomination was to be nationalized. However, there was no 21st-century pluralism

Bridge: Article VI and the First Amendment of our Constitution do not exile Christian morals from politics. They exile Congress from becoming the national bishop.

V. ...separated the functions of the divine institutions of _____ and _____.

1. The men in Independence Hall represented different denominations with _____ differences.
2. They unified and tolerated differences of conscience in regard to Christian _____ accepting the “self-evident” truths of natural law as a governing standard for national government.
3. They avoided the potential prominence of establishing a _____ chaplaincy modeled after the abuses they suffered in the state churches left in Europe.
4. They established _____ and _____ to prohibit government overreach.
5. They began the practice of calling _____ to the acknowledgment of divine providence, obedience to God’s will, gratitude for His benefits, and humility to implore His protection and favor as a national duty.
6. They left Christian establishment, oaths, and education where they already were—in the states and with the people.
7. They still spoke of Providence (Rush), national _____ (Washington), and a _____ public (Witherspoon).

 **MAIN POINT:** The Constitution was not an attempt to separate politics from the moral and ethical standards of the Christian religion. It was an attempt to separate the Christian religion from the control of a centralized government.

VI. John Adams charge to the Massachusetts Militia, October 11, 1798:

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

 **CLOSING POINT:** A net cannot hold a whale. A constitution cannot restrain a people who do not yield to the authority of their God and Creator. Many of the framers were the offspring of refugees from the persecution of state controlled churches in Europe. The danger today is the same two errors they refused: a state church in Washington, or a public life and educational system void of the love of God, of Biblical morality, and what it means to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Keep the government off the altar. Do not take the altar out of the people.

"8 He has shown you, O man, what [is] good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?" [Mic 6:8 NKJV]

"1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." [1Ti 2:1-2 ESV]