

38.5 John Quincy Adams

Greetings Patriots, This is Perry Greene with GNA. We think about our Presidents in February with “Presidents’ Day.” Immediately we consider Washington and Lincoln and the roles they played in American history. February was a critical month for one of my favorite presidents, John Quincy Adams. Bill Federer has an excellent article on John Quincy Adams in his post, “American Minute.” I have cited his source in our notes.¹

On February 21, 1848, former President John Quincy Adams served as a congressional representative. He suffered a stroke at his desk in the House chamber. He died two days later without regaining consciousness. His colleagues referred to him as “Old Man Eloquent” for his impassioned speeches against slavery. He had his stroke after delivering such a speech opposing the expansion of slavery into newly acquired western states. His family conducted his funeral on February 26, 1848. The young congressman Abraham Lincoln was one of his pallbearers.

John Quincy Adams had many attributes. He was a strong abolitionist who wanted slavery to end in America. Adams seems to have been a humble man. He is the only President (so far) in our history to serve in the House of Representatives after his presidency. Of course, many of our presidents have served in congress and the senate before becoming President. Still, only John Quincy Adams has served after.

I think he was able to “lower” himself to be a Representative after his presidency is because he devoted his life entirely to the service of his country. It looks as though he saw his life of service to his country as a ministry from God.

You can read Federer’s list of each position John Quincy Adams filled in his service to America. I just want to point out a few. Please consider his ages in the list:

- At age 11, he accompanied his father as part of the diplomatic team to France and the Netherlands, 1778;
- At 17, he **assisted** his father's diplomatic role in England, 1784;
- **U.S. Senator** from Massachusetts, 1803-1808;
- He negotiated the **Treaty of Ghent**, which favorably ended the **War of 1812** (Britain intended to retain the territory around the Great Lakes);
- **U.S. Secretary of State**, under President Monroe, 1817-1825, where he negotiated the **Adams-Onis Treaty**, obtaining Florida from Spain;
- He was the **6th President of the United States**, 1825-1829
- **U.S. Congressman** from Massachusetts, 1831-1848

Don’t you wish we had political leaders who had America’s interests in mind? There are a few, but it is very few from my perspective. Most politicians seem to want what is best for them and advance their agendas or positions. John Q. Adams appears to have been one of the rare leaders who selflessly served America.

He spoke out against slavery at every opportunity. He earned the moniker, “The Hell-hound of Slavery” for his stance. When asked why he never seemed discouraged or depressed over championing the unpopular fight against slavery, John Quincy Adams replied:

¹ Federer, Bill. "Tangled Up." *John Quincy Adams: Anti-Slavery Champion, His Lifetime of Public Service, Guided by Bible*, edited by Bill Federer, American Minute, 17 Feb. 2022, americanminute.com/blogs/todays-american-minute/john-quincy-adams-anti-slavery-champion-his-lifetime-of-public-service-guided-by-the-bible-american-minute-with-bill-federer. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.

Duty is ours; results are God's.²

Adams saw a connection of America and God. On July 4, 1837, in “An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport at Their Request on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence,” John Quincy Adams stated:

Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Savior of the World, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day? Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the Progress of the Gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth. That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity and gave to the world the first irrevocable pledge of the fulfillment of the prophecies announced directly from Heaven at the birth of the Savior and predicted by the greatest of the Hebrew prophets 600 years before.³

One of the major influences that shaped the views and actions of John Quincy Adams was the Bible. Consider the import of scripture to him, beginning with the quote from his diary, September 26, 1810:

"I have made it a practice for several years to read the Bible through in the course of every year. I usually devote to this reading the first hour after I rise every morning ... I have this morning commenced it anew ... this time with Ostervald's French translation."

“... I have repeatedly read in the original Greek, in the Latin, in the Geneva Protestant, in Sacy's Catholic French translations, in Luther's German translation, in the common English Protestant, and in the Douay Catholic translations. I take any one of them for my standard of faith” (12.24.1814). He even stated in another place that he perused the German Bible! Do you think he took the Bible lightly?

I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you, Search the Scriptures! The Bible is the book of all others, to be read at all ages, and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice or thrice through, and then laid aside, but to be read in small portions of one or two chapters every day, and never to be intermitted, unless by some overruling necessity.⁴

In what light soever we regard the Bible, whether with reference to revelation, to history, or to morality, it is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue.⁵

Is there any question to the value he saw in the scriptures? The Bible mattered to him. He didn't read it to get ideas for sermons. He wasn't a preacher. He read the Bible to get ideas on living in every arena of life. He translated the Bible into his conduct in the American government.

Before we close, let's consider two passages on the importance of scripture, “God's Owner's Manual,” for us. I think these would fit John Quincy Adams' mindset.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV):

¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

² Federer, William J. *American Quotations*, 2013. Amerisearch, Inc., 2013, p. 951.

³ Ibid., p. 948.

⁴ Ibid., p. 952.

⁵ Ibid.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV):

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Keep The Light of *Service According to Scripture* Burning!