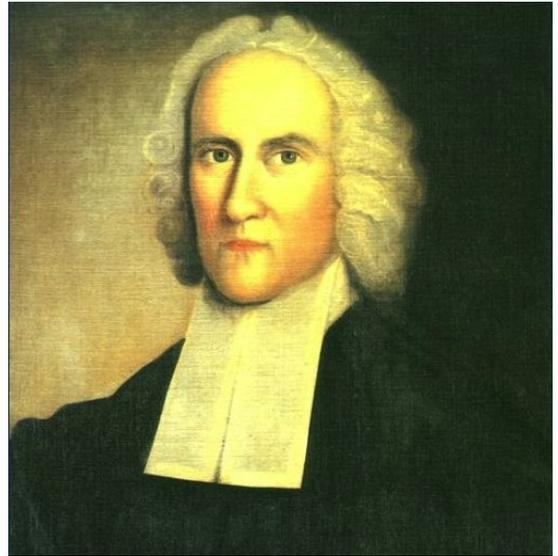


# The Great Awakening

Around the early 1730's, a religious revival swept across the 13 American colonies. As the colonies grew and life improved, some ministers became concerned that colonists were becoming too concerned with worldly matters and the pursuit of wealth. The most famous of these ministers was **Jonathan Edwards**. Edwards was a Calvinist minister in New England who felt his followers were losing touch with their Puritan heritage. He was displeased by growing sentiments that predestination was wrong and good works could bring a person to heaven. Edwards gave fiery sermons from his pulpit against these notions. "God was an angry judge, and humans were sinners!" he declared. In 1741, he delivered a sermon known as, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" which has since become a classic of early American literature. He spoke with such fury and conviction that people flocked from far away to hear his sermons. This religious revival helped to begin what eventually became known as the **Great Awakening**.



Edwards eventually met **George Whitfield**, a minister from Britain who was traveling the Thirteen Colonies on a revival tour in 1739–1740. Whitfield was a former actor and would shout the word of God, weep with sorrow, and tremble with passion as he delivered his sermons. His tour attracted thousands to hear him speak across the Colonies. He converted slaves and even a few Native Americans. Even religious skeptic Benjamin Franklin emptied his coin purse after hearing Whitfield speak in Philadelphia.

Soon much of America became divided. Followers of Whitfield and Edwards became known as New Light preachers, and they set up schools and churches throughout the colonies. Princeton University in New Jersey is an example of one such school. However, more traditional Old Light ministers refused to accept this new style of worship. Despite the conflict, one surprising result was greater religious toleration and acceptance. With so many new denominations, it was clear that no one religion would dominate any region.

As the American Revolution heated up, the Great Awakening started to fade. However, a **Second Great Awakening** began soon after the Revolutionary War and continued into the early 1800's. Unlike the First Great Awakening, this one reached even more non-church goers and brought millions of them into evangelical churches.

Although the Great Awakening was a reaction against the Enlightenment, it was also an important cause of the **American Revolution**. Prior to the Great Awakening, ministers represented an upper class of sorts. New Light or Awakening ministers were not always ordained, breaking down the respect for demanded by earlier ministers.

The new faiths that emerged were much more democratic in their approach. The overall message was one of greater equality. The Great Awakening was also a "national" occurrence. It was the first major event that all the colonies could share, helping to break down differences between them. There was no such episode in England, further highlighting differences between Americans and their cousins across the sea.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Great Awakening

**Directions:** *After reading the passage about the Great Awakening, answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

1. What inspired Jonathan Edwards to challenge his followers?
2. How would you describe Edwards' sermons?
3. What made George Whitfield's sermons so popular?
4. How did the Great Awakening encourage religious toleration in the Colonies?
5. What was a difference between the First Great Awakening and Second Great Awakening?
6. How did the Great Awakening help lead to the American Revolution?
7. How do you think Americans today would react to Edwards and Whitfield's sermons? Explain.

# The Great Awakening

**Directions:** After reading the passage about the Great Awakening, answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What inspired Jonathan Edwards to challenge his followers?

**Edwards felt his followers were losing touch with their Puritan heritage. He was displeased by growing sentiments that predestination was wrong and good works could bring a person to heaven.**

2. How would you describe Edwards' sermons?

**Edwards' sermons were fiery and threatening. He wanted his followers to be frightened of God and be strict followers of Calvinism.**

3. What made George Whitfield's sermons so popular?

**Whitfield's sermons were popular because he was a former actor who would shout his sermons as well as weep with sorrow and tremble with passion.**

4. How did the Great Awakening encourage religious toleration in the Colonies?

**The Great Awakening encouraged religious toleration because so many new denominations were created as ministers broke from the old ways. With so many religions out there, it was clear that there could not be one dominant state religion.**

5. What was a difference between the First Great Awakening and Second Great Awakening?

**The Second Great Awakening reached more non-churchgoers and brought millions of them into evangelical churches. The First Great Awakening had a larger effect on people who were already attending church.**

6. How did the Great Awakening help lead to the American Revolution?

**The Great Awakening helped lead to the Revolution because of its democratic nature and message of equality. The Great Awakening was also a "national" occurrence. It was the first major event that all the colonies could share, helping to break down differences between them.**

7. How do you think Americans today would react to Edwards and Whitfield's sermons? Explain.

**Open to student opinion as long as they explain their answer and show consideration of current religious ideas.**