

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD... All the people of the land will be required to give this special offering to the prince in Israel. It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths—at all the appointed festivals of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the Israelites... The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their property. He is to give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that not one of my people will be separated from their property."

(Ezekiel 45: 9, 16, 17; 46:18)

Princes and Presidents

The above passages from Ezekiel come from the prophet's vision of the restored temple, when the Glory of the Lord returns to Jerusalem and its rebuilt Temple and the exiled people return to the land. In the entire vision, found in chapters 40 through 48, God describes a kind of "reboot" of the Covenant with Him that had been nullified by the corruption of the nation at all levels. The people had abandoned the worship of God for idols to the point of human sacrifice. The priesthood (except for the sons of Zadok) did at best little to nothing to stop the cultic abominations and, at worst, joined in and supervised them. Meanwhile, the nobility, princes and kings of the nation took their cues not from the Covenant, but from the despotic kings of Israel's neighbors, seizing land for themselves and their descendants from the tribes of Israel who received the land grants from God upon entering the Promised Land.

The return to the land, then, was more than just God saying, *Okay, you've been punished enough – now watch it!* The entire process was the Lord's treatment regimen to bring His covenant people back to Him so that they could be the people of God that Israel was originally designed to be. The planting of the descendants of Jacob in the Promised Land was more than just God keeping His promises to their grandfather (and God's friend), Abraham. Israel was to live under God's covenant and blessing and be a sign to the nations surrounding them that Yahweh was *truly* God, and not the idols the neighbors had been worshipping for generations. As the nations saw God's hand at work and realized the truth of the Lord, He ultimately wanted them to abandon their false gods and worship Him, and His Messiah would take care of making atonement for the sins of the entire world. When the *reverse* happened, and Israel instead received the same disease of idolatry, God had to root out the infection and restore Israel – first in the spiritual, then in the physical – to where she was before the disease took hold. Let's be honest; it would have been far easier for God to just spare a handful of righteous people who managed to stay immune to the infection, destroy everyone else and start over again, but God *never* says "Oops." He keeps His covenants and His promises for the sake of His great Name and His love for the people of His covenant and works instead to bring them back to where He wants them to be.

So, when the exiles returned, God would re-set everything – the distribution of the land to the twelve tribes, the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple inside it, making the entire city a kind of Holy District (check the measurements in the vision and convert “cubits” to miles or kilometers or whatever you prefer to measure with). He set in place the Levitical priests as He wanted them for the service of the Temple; the sons of Zadok who remained faithful to the Lord would take over the High Priesthood, handling the actual sacrifices and entering the Holy of Holies for atonement, while the remainder would be given other duties in the Temple. And, in the passages above, He would also set the proper functions and boundaries of the nobility of Israel. They would have their place of honor, but they would operate under the Covenant the same as everyone else, and not as despots. The people would present their offerings and the best of the land to the prince, but the prince would, in turn, give it back to the people to present to the Lord during the assigned feasts and sacrifices. Notice also, the term used by God is “prince” and not “king,” for God Himself would be King over the nation once more. While the princely line would not be halted, because it was also a covenant before God (and God still keeps his covenants and promises), the prince would be limited in his functions and would not take from the people for himself any longer. Like the priesthood, God would be the prince’s portion.

America is not Israel, as I have said before. But like Israel, she is under her own covenant with the Lord, made by the Founders. Upon taking the oath of office as the first President under the current Constitution, George Washington and others of the Founders attended Divine Services at St. Paul’s Episcopal Chapel in New York City (which still stands today) where – acting as the representatives of the people – the government entered into covenant that God would be the God of the nation. While she is not specifically named in the prophecies of the End Times, some see America’s presence as the “great eagle” in Revelation 12:14, whose wings are a protector of the restored nation of Israel. Others see her mission as facilitating the spread of the Gospel through the entire world.

The actual land area of the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) is many times that of even ancient Israel at its height. And there are many areas of the nation, much of it in the western half of the continent and the wilderness of Alaska, still largely uninhabited. (Take a look at a nighttime photo of the United States from orbit sometime, and check where the dark patches are.) But is *land* the great inheritance of the people of this nation?

America was founded on the idea of *freedom*. The first freedom was that of practicing one’s faith without interference from the government; from what I like to call this *prime freedom* sprang most of the others (free speech, free press, free assembly, etc.). It is the ability to live one’s life under what Thomas Jefferson called the natural, *inalienable rights* given by God – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – that is the inheritance of all Americans, whether they are born here or choose to leave the country of their birth and become citizens. Taking their cues from Scripture, Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, *et al*, created a national government that was meant to be limited in power and scope; when the Constitution was approved in 1781, it was created for a people who could mostly govern themselves. The individual states had their own governments, and the federal level was meant to regulate commerce, conduct foreign policy and national defense and interpret the laws; other than that, it was to stay out of the people’s way and let them live out their lives in the hard-won freedom they enjoyed.

But like any freedom or blessing, there are those that are, shall we say, rubbed the wrong way by it. This particular system of government is meant to secure those liberties that are the inheritance of the Lord. Either out of malice and outright hatred toward the system (and the One who provided it), or in well-meaning attempts to correct what was seen as an injustice, people began to chip away at the freedoms provided by Divine inspiration. If you track the history of the Republic since 1781, you find several alterations to the Constitution, some of which worked well, some... not so much. Some restrictions on freedoms are not even found in Constitutional Amendments, but in Federal regulations that have multiplied as has the bureaucracy, with the result being limits on everything from the creation of business to when and where Christmas displays can be placed (if at all, depending on the party in power). Feeding this growth is the power of taxation, which pays for all government operations both necessary and unnecessary. This has led in recent years to dark yet persistent whispers of a “shadow government” (sometimes referred to as the *deep state*) operating just below the surface of that visible to the people and engaged in further practices that many would be shocked to learn of if they were open to the public.

All of which means that Presidents, lawmakers and those hired by the same to enforce the laws they create have been engaged, whether knowingly or not, in a campaign to relieve us of the inheritance that God helped our forefathers to win, namely our freedoms. We teach our children the basic operation of government as we understand it, but our understanding has been altered over the years to the point where the man-made institution of government replaces God, who gave us the inalienable rights evident in nature. We are taught to depend on the state for our rights and that we must serve the state, not that the state serves us. Our success as a nation has made us superficial in our thinking; we no longer look deeply into the heart of issues and other matters. If modern Americans were to be transported back to the time of the approval of the Constitution, and left to work out our lives almost entirely on our own brains and talents, most of us would not know what to do with such freedom. We would starve, beg for the rest of our days, or demand to be returned to countries where the state is almighty.

Even the election of Donald Trump, whatever you may think of him, is seen from only the surface of reprieve of sorts from God. To you who say Trump was sent by God in response to the cries of God’s people for a reprieve – okay, he’s here... now what? Even if believers rally the people again and vote him in for a second term, that’s it as far as Trump is able to go under the Constitution. (A President is limited to two terms under the 22nd Amendment, remember?) What happens next? Elect someone like him? How do we find such a person? What’s more, how do we keep from being deceived into voting for someone who appears to follow the leading of the Lord on the surface, but whose heart is far from Him in reality, which *has* happened before? And even if the Lord provides a person much like King David, someone after His own heart, the venom coursing through our political system today forces that person to rule by “executive order,” something that can be easily undone by that person’s successor.

The more I look into this, the more I find that we as modern Americans know very little about how this God-inspired system is supposed to work. We have forgotten how the Hand of God worked in our nation’s history and very few of us could be bothered into crucifying our own flesh long enough to

seek Him for answers. And remember, it is from the electorate that we derive our leaders; *We the People* are supposed to be the source of political power in this system. So, if our people are taught error about how legislators and chief executives are supposed to act, guess what happens when some of them decide to enter politics?

We desperately need a spiritual Great Awakening in this nation, but it must go deep into our souls until it is the tap root of every aspect of our lives – including how we live under what God has given us. The people of this nation must re-learn the circumstances of our history as a people, and how God brought us to where we are now. This includes the good points and the bad, not flinching from our mistakes but learning from them and taking inspiration not only from our successes, but the unseen Hand behind them. It is God Himself Who must reign over the hearts of the people once more, from the person who resides in the White House to those engaged in the humblest of jobs.

And it is the Church that must step up and take the lead. Our prime mission is to preach the Gospel and to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus. Part of that mission, however, includes being witnesses to truth of the Lord's work (John 18:37) – not teaching believers to rely on earthly politics, as far too many churches are doing, but to recognize that God is sovereign in that realm as well. If the schools will not teach about His work in the history of the nation, then the Church must take on that job as well, so people can hold on to the freedoms He bestowed upon the nation, and not continue to believe falsehoods and half-truths about our history.

For those of you who believe that Donald Trump is acting in the role of a King Cyrus, who permitted the Jewish people in exile to return to Israel and rebuild the nation and the Temple, we must remember that while Cyrus set the process in motion, it was King Darius under which it was finished. In between the two was a period where the enemies of the Jews persuaded those in authority to halt the work by using half-truths and outright lies as their argument. And even after the rebuilding was completed, the people still were easily diverted from the Law of the Lord; for proof, read in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah how the people (the nobles in particular) permitted violations of the Sabbath, the enemies of God to have actual living space in the rooms of the Temple, and marrying women from the surrounding nations, which God clearly forbade.

I honestly do not know how much real time we have left before the return of the Lord; though I believe we are in the Last Days prophesied in Scripture, we still do not know the day or the hour in which the Lord Jesus returns. If President Trump is a type of Cyrus, then the work for our nation does not end with him; in fact, it has just barely begun. Thomas Paine, writing in *The American Crisis* (1777), said that *"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it."* We who are believers must redouble our efforts and continue to appeal to Heaven for the Great Awakening, testifying to the truth in all areas, not just the governmental. Even if our Savior returns tomorrow, it is good for us to be found at work for His Kingdom. Let us stop hitting the "snooze" button, become fully awake and get to work.

"Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; on the

third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”
(Hosea 6:1-3)

For the Glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ
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