

Mankind's Last Best Hope

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In his "Second Annual Message" to Congress of December 1, 1862 President Abraham Lincoln proposed a plan for amendments to the Constitution to end slavery in the United States, with concessions he hoped would bring an end to the Civil War and reconcile the rebel states to the Union. In September of 1862 Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, as an executive order which changed the legal status of enslaved persons in states in rebellion against the United States as of January 1, 1863, giving any enslaved persons in those states the status of free men or women under United States law. The Emancipation Proclamation applied only to slaves living in the rebel states, or serving in any segment of the executive branch of the U.S. government. However, it encouraged or required six states to abolish slavery during the war, including three Confederate states which had largely come under control of the Union army, and three Union border states. It also freed slaves living in other rebel areas which had been occupied by the Union. The plan for the Constitutional amendments proposed in 1862 was never acted on.

The plan was different from the thirteenth Constitutional amendment Lincoln championed in 1864-65 to permanently and immediately end slavery in the United States. By late 1864 the defeat of the Confederacy by Union forces was eminent, negating any rationale for concessions in the ending of slavery for political reasons. The thirteenth amendment was passed by Congress in January 1865, about two and a half months before General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, which effectively ended the Civil War. The thirteenth amendment had been ratified by a sufficient number of states to become law by December 6, 1865.

In his "Second Annual Message," early in the Civil War, when things weren't going so well for the Union army (cf. *Battle Cry of Freedom*, James M. McPherson, pp. 560-561), Lincoln described the United States as "**the last, best hope of earth.**" William Lee Miller, a professor of ethics, who has taught at several universities, in his book "Lincoln's Virtues," states the following concerning the phrase "the last, best hope of earth":

The whole passage in which the phrase occurs, the graceful three-paragraph ending of this message, is a sober appeal to change our thinking and ourselves, to put aside the "dogmas of the quiet past" because they are "inadequate to the stormy present"; to "rise with the occasion" because "our case is new." This appeal to think and change is addressed, in a most direct, grave and portentous manner, to his fellow national leaders who, with him, cannot escape history, who, with him, must pass through this fiery trial, and who, with him, will be remembered in spite of themselves. "We know how to save the Union," Lincoln said, and the world knows we know. We have – Lincoln interjected for emphasis, "even we *here*" have -- the power and responsibility. It is then that the phrase "the last best hope of earth" occurs, as the profound description of that which *we here now* may by our actions "nobly save, or meanly lose." **The context for the phrase, in short, is Lincoln's appeal, and his warning, to the American leaders of the day not so to act as to "meanly lose" this precious human hope entrusted to them.** (*Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography*, William Lee Miller, Knopf, 2007, p. 464).

Abraham Lincoln throughout his life believed that slavery as it then existed in the United States was a moral evil. As a politician he had worked diligently to convince the public that slavery was a moral evil, and to prevent the spread of slavery to the new territories that were then being settled by people emigrating from points to the east. His efforts in this regard is the main reason he received the Republican nomination as their presidential candidate in 1860 and why he was elected President in that year.

He knew that many of the founding fathers of the nation, in spite of the fact that some of them were slave holders, also believed that slavery was a moral evil, and that slavery was a blatant contradiction to the premise as expressed in the American Declaration of Independence, "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" (cf. *Lincoln's Virtues*, Miller, p. 377 ff.; "The Founding Fathers and Slavery", wallbuilders.com).

Lincoln believed that the promise of individual liberty embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution could not be adequately realized, as long as slavery was tolerated in the nation. Lincoln credited a beneficent God with the unusual blessings bestowed upon the United States. While he also at the same time allowed for the premise that it was God's will that slavery be removed, and that the sufferings of the nation were Divine retribution for the nation's sins.

In his Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 3, 1863, establishing an annual national day of Thanksgiving, Lincoln stated:

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. **No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.** It has seemed to me fit and

proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, **with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience**, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

In his Second Inaugural Address Lincoln said:

If we shall suppose *that* American slavery is one of those offenses which in the providence of God must needs come but which having continued through His appointed time He now wills to remove and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him.

In ascribing to the United States the description “the last, best hope of earth,” providing its citizens change their thinking and behavior to reflect the ideals expressed in its founding documents, Lincoln, along with many other Americans, and people from around the world, saw in these ideals escape from the oppression commonly suffered under other forms of human government, and a model for other national governments to imitate.

The United States Constitution has been a notable model for governance around the world. Its international influence is found in similarities of phrasing and borrowed passages in other constitutions, as well as in the principles of the rule of law, separation of powers and recognition of individual rights. (“Constitution of the United States,” en.wikipedia.org, retrieved November 6, 2020).

But is the United States the “last, best hope of earth”? And if not, what is?

We may forget that the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century was a radical departure from a system of oppression that had been practiced routinely in most of the world up until that time. As pointed out in our article “[Proclaim Liberty](#),” published on our website cogmessenger.org, “In the whole of Europe during the Middle-Ages less than 10 percent of the population were freemen. ‘Serfdom is an institution that has always been commonplace for human society’” ([Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org), ‘Serfdom’).

The word “serf” comes from a Latin word which means slave. And serfdom is a form of bondage, or slavery, though serfs often had limited rights under the law not afforded to chattel slaves. The condition of serfs under the feudal system of Europe is described as “though not exactly that of slaves, was little removed from it” (“Serfs,” *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1949, vol. 24, p. 591). “By the end of the 17th century the serfs of Russia had become so impoverished, and had given up so many of their former rights, that their status scarcely differed from that of chattel slaves” (“Serfdom,” *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, 1979, vol. 21, p. 260). “As with slaves, serfs could be bought, sold, or traded, with some limitations: they generally could be sold only together with land (with the exception of the *kholops* in Russia and *villeins in gross* in England who could be traded like regular slaves), could be abused with no rights over their own bodies, could not leave the land they were bound to, and could marry only with their lord's permission” (“Serfdom,” en.wikipedia.org, retrieved November 6, 2020). Other forms of slavery were endemic in many parts of the world, as well, virtually throughout human history.

The United States and Great Britain took the lead in banning the international slave trade. “In 1778, with [Thomas] Jefferson's leadership, slave importation was banned in Virginia, one of the first jurisdictions worldwide to do so. Jefferson was a lifelong advocate of ending the Atlantic Slave Trade and as president led the effort to make it illegal, signing a law that passed Congress in 1807, shortly before Britain passed a similar law” (“Thomas Jefferson and slavery,” en.wikipedia.org, retrieved November 6, 2020). Unfortunately, Jefferson, like some of the other American colonists who abhorred slavery as unjust, was himself a slave holder. Eventually, he did free a few of his slaves. Others he lost control of through indebtedness (cf. “In Defense of Thomas Jefferson,” Mario Alexis Portella, americanthinker.com, June 25, 2020; “The Business of Slavery at Monticello,” monticello.org, retrieved November 9, 2020).

Banning the international slave trade was one thing. Putting an end to the institution of slavery itself was a much more intractable problem. Britain passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. And in the United States it took the Civil War and an amendment to the Constitution to officially bring an end to slavery. These measures served to free millions from a certain form of chattel slavery. They were accomplished through the determined efforts of men and women, such as Abraham Lincoln, and many others, against considerable obstacles and with great sacrifice. It was a significant achievement in the history of the world.

But they did not put an end to human slavery, as documented in our article, and many other sources. Human slavery remains a significant problem in the world today, including illegal human trafficking in the United States and many other countries. And national, ethnic and class hatred and strife are commonplace in today's world, much as they have been throughout history.

The path to slavery actually began with the first parents of mankind. Through the influence of Satan the Devil, they and their progeny became enslaved to their lusts and passions, enslaved to sin, and captives of Satan through his deceit and oppression (2 Timothy 2:26; Revelation 12:9).

Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

God actually gave the world hope, however, for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness from the very beginning, right after the enslavement of mankind under Satan's cruel wrath began. "So the Lord God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this.... I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel'" (Genesis 3:14-15).

We will see how this is to be fulfilled – in part – as we proceed. Meanwhile, the whole world has continued to be enslaved to sin, and virtually throughout history many have been in bondage to other humans.

Approximately 4000 years ago, God revealed himself to Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, and gave him promises that would be passed on to his descendants in due time. Among those promises were blessings of abundance in material goods, power over their enemies, and other national blessings.

Because of his obedience, God said to Abraham, "Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:17-18).

These blessings were to be passed on through Abraham's son Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob, or Israel.

After Abraham's death, God spoke to Isaac, "Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. **And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven**; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and **in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:3-5).

In his old age Isaac blessed his son Jacob. "Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:28-29).

"Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham'" (Genesis 28:1-4).

Awhile later God spoke to Jacob in a dream. "And behold, the Lord... said: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. **Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed**'" (Genesis 28:13-14).

But before these blessings were to come to pass, God told Abraham that his descendants would wander as strangers in lands not theirs for four hundred years, and eventually would become slaves.

"Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions'" (Genesis 15:13-14).

This did not mean that they would be afflicted or enslaved for four hundred years, but they would wander as strangers for four hundred years, and during a part of that time they would be enslaved and afflicted. As it turned out, the descendants of Abraham were strangers in Canaan and Egypt for a total of four hundred thirty years.

"Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years – on that very same day – it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:40-41).

For a period of time during that four hundred thirty years of sojourning the Israelites were enslaved. "So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage – in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor" (Exodus 1:13-14).

In due time God set his hand to deliver them. "And God spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord"' (Exodus 6:2-8).

By this time the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel had grown into a nation of several million, perhaps two or three million. God brought them into the land he had promised to give

them as an inheritance. And God told them they would be blessed with abundance **if they would keep the laws of his covenant** with them.

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

But if they would not obey, God told them the blessings would be taken away. God warned Israel, "I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will **punish you seven times more** for your sins" (Leviticus 26:17-18).

A "time" in Bible prophecy is a year. A prophetic year is 360 days, or 12 months of 30 days each (compare Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6,14). "A time, times and half a time" is three and a half years, or 1260 days, or 42 months of 30 days per month.

Before they were brought into the "promised land," after God brought them out of slavery in Egypt, Israel was punished for forty years, **a year for each day** they spied out the land, because they had repeatedly rebelled against him in the wilderness, and refused to enter the land when he told them to. "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for **each day you shall bear your guilt one year**, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection" (Numbers 14:34).

On the same **principle of a day for a year**, as they were warned, Israel was to be rejected for seven times, or **seven times 360, or 2520 years** for their continuing disobedience, after

they had entered the land of promise. **The bulk of the physical blessings of the covenant with Abraham for his descendants were to be delayed until near the time of the end of this age.** The northern ten tribes of ancient Israel, including the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, were defeated and carried into captivity in stages over a period of about twenty years by the Assyrians, their capital falling around 721 B.C. (Many sources place the date of the fall of Samaria in 722. Herman Hoeh, in a revised analysis, places it at 718. Floyd Nolen Jones places it in his analysis at 721, cf. *Unger's Bible Handbook*, Merrill F. Unger, Moody, 1966, pp. 233-234; *Compendium of World History*, vol. I, Herman L. Hoeh, 1962, pp. 300-301; *The Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to Basics*, Floyd Nolen Jones, Master Books, 2019, pp. 167-168).

"Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

.....

"And **they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers**, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. So **they left all the commandments of the Lord their God**, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone" (II Kings 17:5-8, 15-18).

Jacob, or Israel, before his death had blessed the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. "He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a **multitude of nations** ["family of nations," Bible in Basic English version]. So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!"' And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Genesis 48:19-20).

In Genesis 49 are enumerated blessings for the end times for the descendants of the tribes of Israel. While all the tribes were to be blessed **in the end times**, the blessings on the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, **were to be greater** in measure than those of any of the other tribes. "Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers" (Genesis 48:22). To the sons of Joseph were the **birthright blessings of the firstborn**. "The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting

hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers" (Genesis 49:26; cf. Genesis 35:22; 46:8; 48:5; 49:3-4; I Chronicles 5:1).

From a historical perspective, the peoples of the descendants of Joseph remained more or less together during the period of their wandering. But they would separate at the end time as each of the tribes fulfilled its destiny under the birthright promises to Israel and his descendants. Ephraim was to become a powerful globe straddling company of nations. And Manasseh was to follow and become a powerful nation in it's own right.

2520 years after the exile of the ancient nation of Israel, with its ten tribes, including Ephraim and Manasseh, about the year 1800, Britain emerged as the world's dominant nation, eventually ruling over a quarter of the earth's surface, and undisputed mistress of the world's oceans for more than a hundred years. The British Empire, which became a company, or "family," of nations, was the greatest empire in world history. Following on the heels of Britain, the United States, predominantly Anglo-Saxon and related peoples, emerged as the world's richest and most powerful nation by the mid-twentieth century.

For more information on what happened to the "lost tribes of Israel" after their exile, you can refer to, among others, such sources as [*The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*](#), Herbert W. Armstrong; *The 'Lost' Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*, Steven M. Collins; *The Story of Celto-Saxon Israel*, W. H. Bennett.

Now, Britain and her sister nations, and the United States, are in decline, and beset by a host of problems that will lead inevitably to further decline. Eventually, both nations, who despite God's blessings have continued in the path of rebellion against God's laws, will be defeated by their enemies, and will endure another captivity. It is a time referred to in Scripture as "Jacob's trouble." "Alas! For that day is great, So that **none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble**, But he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7). It is also called the "great tribulation." "For then there will be **great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be**" (Matthew 24:21). There cannot be two periods of tribulation greater than any other. These Scriptures are referring to the same period of tribulation.

How long it will be before all these things fully come to pass we don't know. But when they do come to pass, as they surely will, it's not the end of hope. The best days for mankind, and the earth, are yet ahead.

"And unless those days were shortened, **no flesh would be saved**; but for the elect's sake **those days will be shortened**" (Matthew 24:22).

Jesus Christ is going to intervene to save mankind from destruction. Satan's work of oppression and slavery is coming to an end. "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that He might destroy the works of the devil**" (I John 3:8).

"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (Romans 16:20).

Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, **He led captivity captive**, And gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8). When Christ returns, the captives will be freed. No longer will human beings be enslaved to sin.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32).

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1-6).

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, "You will be made free"?' Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed'" (John 8:31-36).

The **last, best hope of mankind** is not the United States, despite its expressed ideals, despite all of its blessings from on High. When we look at what has happened and is happening in this nation, we can be thankful for that. The last, best hope for mankind is something far greater, and more permanent! **It is the Kingdom of God under our Savior, Jesus Christ.**

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