

GOD ANOINTED JESUS

Last year, on the first day of January, certain Republican representatives to the United States Congress filed a lawsuit demanding that a federal judge declare that Vice-president Mike Pence had “exclusive authority and sole discretion” to decide which electoral votes to count. President Donald Trump told his Vice-president, “I don’t want to see ‘Pence Opposes Gohmert Suit’ as a headline this morning.” Pence told the president that he did oppose it. Trump replied, “If it gives you the power, why would you oppose it?” Pence said that he did not believe the constitution gave him such a power. Trump replied, “You’re too honest,” he chided. “Hundreds of thousands are gonna hate your guts... People are gonna think you’re stupid.” Five days later, on the sixth day of January, a joint session of the Congress of the United States of America met at the United States Capitol to count electoral votes, and formally to declare Joseph Biden as winner of the presidential election. Vice-president Mike Pence was prepared to certify the result, as he was constitutionally bound to do. President Donald Trump, for his part, refused to concede defeat, claiming that Biden was elected by fraud. He called on Pence to refuse to certify the results, and he incited a mob of his followers to march on the Capitol to disrupt the proceedings. The angry mob clashed with Capitol police, and more than two-thousand people unlawfully entered the building. Some vandalized and some looted. Outside, some erected a gallows and called for the hanging of Mike Pence, the vice-president. Pence later said of Trump and his followers: “I don’t want to pretend about those moments. His words were reckless. They endangered my family, and they endangered everyone at the Capitol. In that moment, he decided to be part of the problem.” Trump and many of the rioters are Christians, and they believed that it was God’s will for them to make Trump president by force. God has entrusted lawful authorities with the use of force, which they must use lawfully. The kingdom of God, however, is advanced, not by physical power, but by the spiritual power of the Lord Jesus Christ working through His body, the church.

The Scriptures state that God created the heavens and the earth, and, when He did, “the earth was without form, and void,” which is to say, it was unformed and unfilled.” (Genesis 1:1, 2) The Scriptures further state, “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Genesis 1:2, 3) Here the Scriptures make known, albeit obliquely, that there are three divine Persons: God, His Word, and His Spirit. God, by the instrument of His Word, and by the power for His Spirit, created the world, and then He formed it and filled it.

The Scriptures say, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) Yet, man by his sin ruined the world. God gave Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman, a special command: He forbade them eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent led the woman to eat, and she led her husband to do the same. When they sinned against God, they lost their innocence. Their natures changed from righteous to depraved, and every one of their descendants, which is to say, all of mankind, comes into the world with the same depraved nature. Saint Paul wrote, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:17) The Scriptures say, “GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)

God created the world good, but man made it evil. Men did great evil, and God gave them a commensurate punishment. In the days of Noah, God destroyed the world with a flood, sparing only Noah and his household. Later, at Babel, mankind refused God’s command to fill the earth, and they determined to make great, not the name of the Lord, but their own names. So, the Lord confused their languages, thereby causing their dispersion. From this dispersion arose the various nations.

From among all the men of the world, God chose one by which He would make a nation to be His own special, to be His Covenant people called by His name. He called Abraham and made him this promise:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1–3)

The Lord would make of Abraham a great nation, and give them a land in which to dwell. Later, the Lord made a covenant to fulfill this promise. (Genesis 15)

After the Exodus, the Lord at Mount Sinai made a covenant with Israel, the descendants of Abraham. He said to them, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5, 6) The Lord gave Israel His law, which they were bound to keep as their covenantal obligation.

When Israel were ready to enter into the promised land to conquer the heathen nations, Moses reminded them of His covenant promises, and their covenant obligations. He said:

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deuteronomy 4:5–8)

The law of God was not only for the good of the nation of Israel; it was to be for the good of all nations. Israel was to be a model nation, one which the other nations would admire and seek to emulate. The Lord told the people that they should not emulate the heathen nations, and follow after their gods, because, He said, “Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” (Deuteronomy 7:6)

Israel were to be the Lord’s favored people, and an example for the nations. They were sinners like all other men, however, and they failed to keep covenant with God. They rebelled against God, and they, who were to lead the nations in truth, followed them in lies. Because of the sins of Israel, the nations did not praise the Lord; they blasphemed Him. Through Isaiah the prophet, the Lord said, “My name continually every day is blasphemed.” (Isaiah 52:5; compare Romans 2:24)

In the days of the divided monarchy of Israel, the people of God rebelled against the Lord. The Lord said of them, “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.” (Isaiah 1:4) The people sinned against God, and against each other. They worshiped idols (Isaiah 1:19–31; 2:6–22; 65:3; 66:17) They mistreated each other; they oppressed each other; they mistreated orphans and widows. (Isaiah 1:17) They murdered each other. (Isaiah 1:15, 21) Victims could not turn to the civil magistrates for justice because those authorities themselves were corrupt. The Lord said, “Thy princes are

rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.” (Isaiah 1:23) To all their sins they added hypocrisy. They were rebellious in their hearts, and sinful in their actions, but they continued their religious rituals, as if those rituals would keep them right with God. The Lord repudiated their rituals, because the people were impenitent. (Isaiah 1:11–14) The Lord had already punished them for their sins, and, if the Lord had not in his grace preserved a small remnant, then Israel would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah: desolate. (Isaiah 1:9) The Lord threatened further punishment, should the people continue in their rebellion. He said, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” (Isaiah 10:5, 6) The Lord would send the army of Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel, and to carry the people away into exile. If Israel would serve the gods of the nations, then they would serve those nations.

The Lord is severe, but He is also merciful. He judges, but He also restores. He threatened to punish sinful Israel for their sins, but He also promised to liberate them from their sins. He would liberate, not only the nation of Israel, but every nation from their sins. He said:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:1–9)

The Lord’s servant, His chosen people Israel, were to be an example to the nations, and to bring about their conversion. They were to be a guide to the nations, but themselves were blind. They were to enlighten the nations, but were themselves in darkness. They were to bring peace to the nations, but were in perpetual strife with each other. They were to bring the nations to obey the Lord, but were always in rebellion against Him. The people of Israel did not heed the Lord’s threats. So, the Lord did punish wicked Israel by the army of Assyria. When the people of the southern kingdom of Judah continued in their rebellion, the Lord sent the army of Baylon to conquer them, and to carry them away into exile. Israel failed their mission. God is the Lord, however; the great I AM. He is the one who is independent of all things, and upon whom all things depend. He would not allow His people, or any people to continue in idolatry and unrighteousness. What sinful men failed to do, God Himself would do. He would bring about a new era in which all the nations serve Him, and serve Him only.

When John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River, Jesus came to him to be baptized by him. John, knowing the piety of Jesus, said that Jesus should rather baptize him. Jesus replied that John should baptize Him because God had commanded men to be baptized by him, and Jesus was obedient to God in all

things. So John, in deference to Jesus, did baptize Him. When Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened up to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting upon Him, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17) John later gave the following public testimony concerning what he saw and heard:

I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. (John 1:32–34)

The Son of God graciously came into the world to save it. (John 12:47) He graciously laid aside His rights and privileges as the Son of God, and became incarnate, so that He might live and die as a man, and for man. Though he was always without sin, He was humbly baptized as a man, and by His baptism received the Holy Spirit so that He would have the spiritual power that He as a man needed to complete His mission. By the power of the Spirit, Jesus healed many people to the glory of God. Saint Matthew identified Jesus as the servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke. (Matthew 12:15–21) He, Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, is the one truly faithful servant of the Lord. He is the lamb of God that the Father chose before the foundation of the world to save the world. (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8) He is the obedient servant with whom God is well pleased. He is the one upon whom God put His Spirit. He is the one who is bringing justice to the nations. He is the one that does not glorify Himself, but rather glorifies His Father in heaven. (John 7:18; 8:50, 54) He is the one who is gentle with broken men, and who makes them whole. He is the one who entrusted Himself to God, believing that He would by God bring justice to the nations, which long for righteous rule. He has given His Son as the mediator of a new covenant, sealed by His blood, and this covenant extends beyond the nation of Israel to every nation on earth. He removes spiritual blindness of the people of the world, and liberates them from sin. He is the one true God, and He will not allow men to give to other gods the praise they owe to Him.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, God in a vision showed one Cornelius, a Gentile, and one who worshiped God, that he should send men to Joppa to bring Saint Peter to his home to receive instruction from him. Cornelius did as he was told, and sent for the apostle. When the men arrived at Saint Peter’s home, the Spirit directed him to go with the men. Ordinarily, Saint Peter would not have visited the home of a Gentile, because to do so would be ritually defiling, but God in a vision had shown the apostle that He had removed restrictions on food. So, Peter gladly went. When he arrived at Cornelius’s home, and Cornelius and his family and friends were assembled, Saint Peter said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. (Acts 10:34, 35) Then he told them the gospel of Jesus Christ: God by the Lord Jesus Christ is making peace between Himself and mankind, and between all nations of mankind. When John baptized Jesus, God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit gave Him great power. With that power Jesus went about doing good to everyone He encountered, healing them and delivering them from the oppression of the devil. For His good works evil men put Him to death. These things Cornelius and his household already knew. What they did not know is that Jesus rose from the dead, and appeared alive to the apostles, commanding them to testify to this to all the world, and to proclaim to the world that God has ordained Jesus to judge all mankind concerning sin and righteousness. Jesus is the One, Saint Peter said, to whom all the prophets bore witness that whoever believes in Him shall have His sins forgiven. When Saint Peter's audience heard these things, the Holy Spirit came upon them all. The Jewish Christians that had accompanied Saint Peter were astonished that God gave the Holy Spirit to Gentiles as He gave to Jews, making no distinction. As they had received the Holy Spirit, Saint Peter ordered them all to

be baptized. They had received the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit, those things that baptism signifies, and so they had a right to the sign.

When Zerubbabel led the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after the exile, God by Zechariah the prophet assured him that the work would be completed, because it would be rebuilt, the Lord said, “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.” (Zechariah 4:6) After the exile, God caused the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt. After the death and resurrection of Christ, He would build His church, the true temple, and He would do it, not by human power, but by the power of His Spirit. God by His Son and Spirit is bringing all men to confess Him as God and to give Him the praise that is due to Him. God by His Word and His Spirit created the world, and by His Word and Spirit He is recreating it, making all things new, and putting all things right.

Let us understand that men by their sin have ruined the world. Let us recognize that men by themselves cannot save the world. Let us put our trust, not in men, but in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen.