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December 2020 “REVIVAL IN SPITE OF”

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, the 2020 presidential election in the United States has still not reached a conclusion. What is being decided is whether an extremely liberal man opposed to the essence of God’s Word, or a conservative man who has shown favor toward Jesus, Christians, the Bible, and Israel will be our next president. Many Christians seem to think that if the liberal person is elected it will lead to religious liberties being all but eliminated and the ability to have revival will come to a grinding halt. But are their fears completely justified?

December is the month in which we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Up until His birth, He was the only human in history born with the life and nature of God. Then, at age 30, He became the only human in history (to that time) to experience what we call the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. For three-and-a-half years after that Baptism, He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, cast out devils, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, made the lame to walk, made whole those who were maimed, and raised the dead. It’s quite amazing to think how that little bundle of joy lying in the manger had within Him the potential to accomplish so much!

In the New Testament we can read about the ministry of Jesus, the Apostles and others. There were signs, wonder and miracles. The foundation for Christianity and Christian living was preached and documented. Revival broke out in numerous cities and churches were birthed. However, scripture reveals very little about the political conditions in existence at that time.

The Roman General Pompey invaded Israel and in 63 BC completed the invasion by conquering Jerusalem. In 40 BC, the Roman government established Herod the Great as the King of Israel. (There were several Herods who ruled in Israel: Herod the Great, Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip the Tetrarch, Herod Agrippa I, Herod Agrippa II). Herod the Great was an Idumean (an Edomite, a descendant of Esau) and was known as a maniacal, cruel tyrant. He is the Herod under whose rule Jesus was born and the one who had all the babies under age two murdered (Matthew 2:16).

Herod the Great was installed as King of Israel because he was willing to be something of a “puppet ruler” on behalf of Caesar. Each subsequent Herod had the same arrangement, and it brought all of them great wealth, in part due to the taxes imposed on the people by Rome. A brief reference to these taxes is mentioned in Luke 2:1 when it states that Caesar Augustus decreed that “all the world should be taxed.”

The taxes imposed by the Roman Caesars were quite numerous and very burdensome. For example, Caesar Augustus established a tax that could only be paid in grain. Between 200,000 and 400,000 tons of grain were sent to the city of Rome each year; the grain, in turn, was distributed freely to the citizens of the city as a type of welfare program to ensure they would continue to support Augustus. Within the Roman Empire, there were also produce taxes, custom taxes, occupational taxes, transit taxes, sales taxes, temple taxes, and much more.

The taxes were used to finance numerous building projects such as aqueducts, paved roadways, large amphitheaters, public baths and much more. Tax revenue was also used to “partner” with leaders (such as the Herods) in conquered territories to ensure relative peace within the Empire. All of this gave the outward impression of an extremely successful dynasty, as stated by many historians. However, under the surface of all this success was the constant realization that the Roman civilization was essentially a dictatorship, with swift, cruel punishment and even torturous death for those who rebelled. (An example of which is crucifixion, invented by the Persians and “perfected” by the Romans to be an excruciating manner of death.)

The military presence of Rome was pervasive. The empire had no police force, only a military that was one of the most highly trained and efficient armies in human history. The military enforced the law at all levels. The rebellious, destructive riots and violent public uprisings seen in the U.S. during the past year would have been met with swift action, the military using any force necessary – including lethal – to disperse the crowds.

Law enforcement did not entail lengthy trials and years of appeals. The city of Rome – having at one time a population near one million – had only one, relatively small prison. Criminals were dealt with expediently and punishment was very often severe. Though fines were common, beatings, whippings (with a flagrum), and other methods of inflicting great physical pain were used: eyes gouged out, ears cut off, tongues ripped out and more. Executions were horrific; we’ve all heard of crucifixion, but one of the other methods of executing the condemned was quite bizarre: the individual was bound, then sewn in a heavy sack with a rooster, monkey, dog and snake, then the sack was thrown into a river. Death did not come quick enough for the one inside the sack.

Herod the Great was known to cooperate with the Roman military. He “remodeled” the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to resemble Roman-Hellenistic architecture. Furthermore, he imposed on the Jewish priests a required sacrifice on behalf of the Roman Empire and the emperor. Throughout Judea, he had numerous fortresses and temples built to strengthen Rome’s grip on the region. To accomplish all this, he imposed additional taxes on the citizens of Judea, Samaria and beyond, resulting in most living in, or near, poverty.

Making things worse was the practice of “deifying” Roman emperors. The Caesars were often declared to be gods and the people were to honor them as such. In fact, it was considered a crime to say anything against the ruling emperor. The Jews absolutely despised this practice, yet their religious leaders displayed the height of hypocrisy (and violated the Law of Moses) in order to get Jesus crucified:

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. (John 19:15)

This was the world in which Jesus was born. These were the political conditions governing His life and the lives of the Apostles after Him throughout the entire New Testament. In fact, Christians weren’t allowed to have their own church buildings until Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the state religion of Rome in 313 AD; this why they had to meet in homes, caves, underground tunnels, by riversides, and other secluded locations (see Acts 16:11-15, Romans 3-5, Colossians 4:15 and Philemon 1:1-2).

In spite of all the hardships, restrictions, governmental intrusions, laws opposed to God's Word and the dominion of a highly pagan, militaristic government, Jesus went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, preaching the Kingdom of God and the gospel of salvation. Untold thousands received healings and miracles, and even the dead were raised. Even with the strong arm of Rome constantly hanging overhead, Jesus accomplished *everything* the Father sent Him to do:

¹These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ²As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. ³And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. ⁴I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. (John 17:1-4)

Furthermore, the disciples continued Jesus' work for decades as recorded in the New Testament. In fact, ten days after His ascension to Heaven, a massive revival broke out in Jerusalem with about 3,000 people getting saved...*in one day!* Then, just a few days later, another 5,000 accepted Jesus as Savior. But revival didn't stop in Jerusalem. For over 50 years, the power of the gospel preached and demonstrated resulted in massive numbers of people throughout the entire Middle East being healed, delivered, born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. Innumerable cities, including Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and even Rome itself heard the Name of Jesus preached and experienced sweeping moves of the power of God. In all likelihood, millions of people were birthed into the Kingdom during this time, *in spite of persecution from Rome and the Herods!*

What happened then can happen now, regardless of who is President of the United States. The birth of Jesus was not controlled by a godless government. The works performed and the message preached by Jesus were never stopped by any lawyer, judge, congress or legislation. No court can stop the anointing of God and the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Christians have, if you will, a dual existence. We live in specific countries on Earth but are also citizens of the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:19). Every nation on this planet has experienced transitions in its form of government, including the United States. However, the Kingdom of God will never change, never have amendments added to its constitution (the Bible), never seen a change in leadership, never be overrun by invading armies, and will never govern outside the standards of absolute righteousness and holiness.

²⁶And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, ²⁷To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ²⁹And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. ³⁰And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. ³¹And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. ³²He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ³³And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:26-33)

The problem so many Christians seem to have today is a belief that they need the cooperation of a government in order to have a move of God. Then, if judges, legislators, congress, a president, or the Supreme Court impose restrictions on religious freedoms, those Christians appear to become overwhelmed with fear, anxiety, and hopelessness when it comes to the spread of the gospel and revival. Such emotions expose a genuine lack of trust in God and faith in His Word.

If Christians spent as much time pressing into God as they do complaining about leaders in government, posting their anger on social media, and filling their hearts with the ranting rhetoric of the liberal news media, we would already be seeing sweeping revival. Jesus didn't come to Earth to change governments; He came to Earth to change the hearts of people. Changed people change governments.

Consider what Jesus said in Acts just before He ascended back to Heaven:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

What Jesus *didn't* say is that we would receive power and be witnesses unto Him throughout the world *if* the governments of the world agreed with and supported our witness. Yes, it is extremely helpful if we have a government that is supportive to the preaching of the gospel, but it is not a prerequisite. Jesus and the disciples after Him left us an example of how we can have revival during a time of persecution, restriction of freedom, and governance by ungodly leaders. Just as those in the New Testament left us a legacy, may we carry our own legacy into eternity:

They went forth and preached the gospel in Tulsa, Dayton, Immokalee, Denver, New York, Dallas, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Toronto, Belfast, Amsterdam, Dublin, and the uttermost parts of the world, the Lord working with and confirming His Word with signs following. And the number of those who believed was as the grains of sand upon the seashore and as the stars in the sky.

May God's presence and peace fill your life,

Jim

P.S. – Below, I am including a special prophecy from the Lord given just before Christmas a few years ago. Also, this month I am offering a CD of a special Christmas sermon titled, *Unalterable Christmas Truth*. You may order a copy using the form on the next page.

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THE ABUNDANT SPIRITUAL LIFE

I've come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. But there are so few who understand what abundant life means. You see, religion has taught you to look at abundant life from the natural perspective; but My Son was speaking from the spiritual perspective. You see, man can do a lot of things to have an abundant life in the natural. Man can perform a lot of things to produce an abundant life in the natural. The life I speak of, and the life He told you of, is an

abundant life from a spiritual perspective. So few of My children have really understood what it means to have an abundant spiritual life.

The birth of My Son was only the beginning. I would put forth this challenge to you this day: Let Me take you into the place of abundant life. For you see, if you're born again, you have My life; but you need to understand what it is like to have My life abundantly. I say to you this day, make a determination in yourself that from this day forward you are going to pursue the abundant spiritual life that My Son spoke of. I say to you this day, look at this day as a new beginning for you; as a new start; as a fresh start. Begin to look at your life in Me completely differently; different than you have in the past. In fact, I would say to you, start looking at your life as though you don't understand what it means to have abundant spiritual life. From that starting point, start diligently seeking to understand the abundant spiritual life.

Think of it as though you don't know as much as you think you do. Start pursuing Me with everything that is in you and let Me show you what it means to live the abundant spiritual life. I will take you there if you let Me. I am your Father and I want you to know everything about what I have given to you; about the life that I have released into you. So follow Me, make this day a new day. Make this day a new beginning for you and follow Me, and I will take you into the abundant spiritual life.

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Please send me a CD of the sermon, *Unalterable Christmas Truth*.

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