

TRUTH & RIGHT

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LIBERTY IN CHRIST

On July 4th we celebrate the 246th anniversary of the birth of this nation. In the beginning of this nation, a Declaration of Independence was written and signed by those we call the "Founding Fathers." This document stated that God granted to men "certain unalienable rights," among which are "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Therefore, every July 4th, we pause to celebrate the anniversary of the day we declared our freedom or liberty from England. While celebrating freedom is terrific, have we considered that God granted liberty to men long before this nation ever existed? When we read the Bible, we find the word "liberty" used 27 times and the word "free" 59 times. The truth is that God has granted us liberty! He is the author of liberty or freedom. II Corinthians 3:17 states, "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" Liberty is a wonderful gift that God has given us. Therefore, even if men enslave us, a Christian is truly free (1n. 8:36). Christians

are free from sin and Satan, which is absolute freedom. How can we obtain true liberty or freedom? The Bible tells us how. **God's Word Brings Liberty.** David made this clear when he said, "*I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts*" (Ps. 119:45). David understood the relationship between God's word and freedom. Isaiah and Jeremiah also used God's word to "*proclaim liberty*" to the people (Isa. 61:1; Jer. 34:8). Incidentally, Isaiah 61:1 was a prophecy concerning Jesus (Lk. 4:18-21). Therefore, not only was Isaiah using God's word to "*proclaim liberty*," but so was Christ when He spoke! James called God's will "*the perfect law of liberty*" (Jas. 1:25). Can there be a better description of God's word than this? God's word brings liberty! By following the word of God, one can be free from sin and Satan (Rom. 6:16-18). **Christ Brings Liberty.** We cannot separate the work of Christ and the work accomplished in His word. Christ came to bring spiritual liberty to men, which is

revealed in the written word. He said, *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (Jn. 8:36). Our Lord sacrificed Himself so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin. His death on the cross and shed blood provided the means by which all men can be saved (free) from sin. It is for this reason that when those in Rome *"obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered..."*, they became *"free from sin"* (Rom. 6:18, 22).

Distinctions Between Spiritual Liberty And Spiritual Bondage.

There is a vast difference between liberty and bondage in the physical realm, but many do not recognize liberty in the spiritual realm. This fact is apparent when we look and see so many who are struggling in sin daily. Many love being in sin and do not wish to change. These people do not recognize the difference between spiritual liberty and spiritual bondage! Why would one wish to be in oppression and bondage when he could be free? This seems like an obvious choice, yet, multitudes are enslaved in sin. Why? One reason why people refuse to leave the slavery of sin for freedom in Christ is that they have been deceived! Peter warned of false teachers who *"promise them (the beguiled, v. 14, 18) liberty, (while) they themselves are the servants of corruption."* Therefore, while people are fooled into believing one thing, the truth is exactly the opposite! They might think they are free, but they are actually in bondage. *"For of whom a man is*

overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Pet. 2:19). Men may think they are "free" when they: use drugs, drink alcohol, commit fornication, use God's name in vain, worship God when/how they please, etc. The truth is that such people are in bondage. They are in bondage to sin, and Satan, who has fooled them into thinking that their actions result from "freedom," while serving God and worshipping Him *"in spirit and in truth"* is bondage. Of course, the exact opposite is true! May we open our eyes and see how Satan has us fooled. Spiritually speaking, this type of reasoning that considers sin as "freedom" and God's will as "bondage" is precisely 180 degrees out of alignment! *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"* (Isa. 5:20). Sadly, this is where many people are today! **Conclusion.** As we pray, it is right and proper to thank God for freedom in this country. It is also fun to shoot off fireworks, etc., in celebration of our nation's founding. Yet, let us never forget nor take for granted the true freedom offered to men through Christ, as is revealed in the Bible. This spiritual freedom can be experienced in any place on earth, at any time of year, by any person (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Are you free from sin (Mk. 16:16)? – Jarrod Jacobs. **First Things First!** Once during His time here on earth, Jesus said, *"Let the dead bury their own dead"* (Matt. 8:22). There have been many people who

have tried and failed to explain the meaning of this phrase correctly. The truth is, in order to better understand the phrase, we need to look at it in its proper scriptural context of Matthew 8:18-22. *"And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead"* (Matt. 8:19-22). **What the Issue Is Not.** The issue Jesus is confronting is not burying the dead in and of itself. People have buried their dead for thousands of years without a reprimand from God. Abraham requested of the children of Heth, *"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight"* (Gen. 23:4). Likewise, Joseph asked of Pharaoh, *"Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again"* (Gen. 50:5). Therefore, Jesus' words are not a condemnation of burial. It must be something else. What is it? **What The Issue Is.** When one reads the context of the Matthew and Luke accounts, one finds that they are talking about "following the Lord" (Matt. 8:19; Lk. 9:57). Notice, when Jesus said, *"Let the dead bury their own dead"* he was responding to the man's statement, *"Suffer me first to go and bury my father."* "Suffer me, first" simply means "allow me, first" (NASB). He

things he wanted to get done before he started following Jesus. This included waiting until his father was dead to follow Jesus! It wasn't that the funeral was starting shortly! Instead, he was saying I will follow you after my father dies. To this request, Jesus told him "follow me and let the dead bury their dead." When one follows the Lord, he cannot let anything get in the way. Sadly, when faced with the choice of doing something for the family or going to worship the Lord, some won't choose the Lord. That's the issue in Matthew 8 and Luke 9. Jesus is not being heartless and saying, "don't bury your father," as if the funeral was starting in a few minutes! Jesus was demanding this man get his priorities straight because his soul was at stake! Isn't this the reminder we all need? Where are your priorities? Are we focused on the Lord first? Is He second or third on our list? If so, why? Jesus said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33). Do we realize just how important it is to get this right? – Ethan Jennings

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



1st Jerusalem Evidence of Quake From

Archaeologists excavating in Jerusalem, near the Temple Mount and a First-Temple-era wall unearthed evidence of an 8th century BC earthquake. The earliest floor of the southernmost room of a building bore evidence of destruction, but not by fire, and was dated to a time period when no known conquest of Jerusalem occurred. Stones from an upper part of the northern walls had collapsed, shattering a row of vessels that had been along the wall beneath. The excavation directors from the Israel Antiquities Authority, Dr. Joe Uziel and Ortal Chalaf, believe this corresponds to the great earthquake which occurred in the days of [King Uzziah](#), and is mentioned in Amos 1:1 and Zech. 14:5. Archaeological evidence for “Uzziah’s earthquake” has been found at other sites in Israel, including at Hazor and Tell es-Safi/Gath, but this is the first time archaeologists have identified evidence of this earthquake in Jerusalem. A similar 8th-century destruction layer was noted in a collapsed building 100 meters south of the current dig, which was excavated by Yigal Shiloh in the 1970’s, but it was not associated with Uzziah’s earthquake at that time. The multi-year coronavirus pandemic is now firmly branded as a benchmark in modern memory. Likewise, in the first verse of the Book of Amos, the 8th century BCE biblical prophet referred to “two years before the earthquake” as an anchor to the events he was about to relate. Two centuries later, the prophet Zechariah again referred to this destructive earthquake period, so deeply was it ingrained in the collective psyche. Now, for the first time, a team of Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologists in Jerusalem’s City of David report that they have found unprecedented concrete evidence of this 8th century BCE earthquake in the ancient capital. In an upcoming research paper, the archaeologists chart, for example, that in one particular 8th century BCE structure the destruction layer did not show signs of fire, yet other factors suggested the building had been damaged in a traumatic event, apparently in an earthquake. “This was most notable on the earliest floor of the southernmost room,” they write. “In this room, a row of smashed vessels was uncovered along its northern wall, above which fallen stones had been found. It appears that these stones were the upper part of the walls of the room, which had collapsed, destroying the vessels which had been set along the wall.” Until now, the earliest destruction layer of Jerusalem comes from the Babylonian conquest of 586 BCE. For archaeologists, an earlier historical anchor — if proven through hard, securely dated evidence — serves as an important stratigraphical benchmark for scientific excavations in Jerusalem.

