

Primary Documents

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address- 1865

Original Document

1.) Fellow countrymen: At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

2.) On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it-- all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war-- seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

3.) One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves

Rephrased Document

1.) Fellow Americans: as I appear before you for the second time taking the oath of the presidential office, there is less reason for me to give you a long speech than the first time. However, I think it is right to let you know what direction we should take. For four years much has already been written about the Civil War. There is nothing new that I can add. As you all know, we are progressing satisfactorily towards victory.

2.) Four years ago, everyone was anxiously expecting a civil war. We tried to avoid it, yet while I was giving my first speech, there were those people who were seeking to destroy this country by dividing it in two. Some wanted to use war as a way to end our nation, while others wanted to use war as a way to preserve it. War eventually came.

3.) One out of eight people living in America are people of color, most of who live in the South. Those who wanted slavery were powerful people and fought to keep slavery.

constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

4.) Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered--that of neither has been answered fully.

5.) The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." 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? Fondly do we hope--fervently do we pray--that this mighty scourge of war may speedily

This fight was not needed because the government did not want to end slavery, but only limit where slavery could go.

4.) No one expected how big or how long the Civil War would last. No one expected that the reason for the war would cease to exist but that the conflict would continue. Both the North and the South read the same Bible, pray to the same God, and ask God to help them against the other. It may seem strange that anyone should dare to ask God such favors. But let us not judge others, lest we be judged in turn. God cannot answer both sets of prayers.

5.) God does things in his own way. There are things that are wrong in this world and slavery may be one of them. God may have allowed slavery to exist for many years, but He now wants it to end. He allowed both the North and the South to fight this terrible war, and brought woe to the people who started it. We hope and we pray that this war may end soon. Yet, if God wills it to continue until all our money is spent, and many lives are lost, so be it! For this is the will of God.

pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

6.) With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan--to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

6.) With hatred toward no one, charity towards everyone, and a belief in good, (as God lets us see good) we can go forward to finish the work that we started. We must heal the country's wounds, care for him [the soldiers] who have fought in battles, care for his widow and orphan, and do everything that we can do to achieve a lasting and fair peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Summary Of
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Abraham Lincoln's March 4, 1865 second inaugural speech was his favorite of all his orations. When victory in the Civil War was near, Lincoln did not speak of winning, but of loss, guilt, and sin. The speech is a defense of his idea of reconstruction, whereby he wanted to avoid harsh treatment of the defeated South. He mentioned the unmistakable evil of slavery. Unknown to him, John Wilkes Booth, who would kill Lincoln within five weeks, was in the audience. An observer commented later that the audience stood in profound silence. One could see moist eyes and even tearful faces.

Primary Documents
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address – 1865

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address Key Vocabulary Words:

1. expiration: end
2. contest: Civil War
3. impending: expecting
4. avert: avoid
5. depreciated: to express disapproval
6. perish: die
7. perpetuate: keep something going
8. magnitude: the size of something
9. bondsman: slave
10. malice: hatred

Primary Documents
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address- 1865

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address Multiple Choice Questions:

- 1.) An inaugural address is a speech made by a President on the occasion of:
 - a.) Leaving office
 - b.) Being elected
 - c.) Entering office
 - d.) Entering office for the first time
- 2.) What portion of the population was people of color:
 - a.) One-quarter
 - b.) One-eighth
 - c.) One-half
 - d.) One-third
- 3.) Who asked for God's help in the Civil War?
 - a.) The North only
 - b.) The South only
 - c.) The slaves
 - d.) Both the North and the South
- 4.) Lincoln prayed that a just peace will achieve all of the following except:
 - a.) Care for those who fought
 - b.) Malice toward none
 - c.) Bind the nation's wounds
 - d.) End slavery

Primary Documents
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address- 1865

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address Multiple Choice Questions:

- 1.) The Civil War was fought because:
 - a.) the United States wanted to end slavery
 - b.) slavery was spreading all over the country
 - c.) there were people who just wanted war

- 2.) The speech was focused on:
 - a.) the triumph of war
 - b.) the end of slavery
 - c.) the loss of life during the war

- 3.) Lincoln reminded his audience that
 - a.) both sides were wrong
 - b.) the war was near its end
 - c.) people should be treated equally

Primary Documents
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address- 1865

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address Open Ended Questions:

- 1.) What was Lincoln's concern about God's position on the Civil War?
- 2.) Is it possible to achieve "hatred toward none, and charity for all" after a long and bitter war? Explain.

