



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

***America's New Birth of Freedom:
Documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library***

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Was the war God's punishment for slavery?

Thomas F. Schwartz, Ph.D., Illinois State Historian: This is an astounding idea—that perhaps the war between the states was God's punishment on both the North and South for allowing the evil of slavery to exist. Even more astonishing is that in 1865 in his Second Inaugural Address, as the Union victory is becoming obvious, instead of congratulating the North he seems to be blaming them equally for the war. Listen:

Lincoln: Fondly do we hope ... fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with 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."

"Second Inaugural Address," March 4, 1865, from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* 8:333.

Video courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.