

Lincoln's 1863 ...

Continued from Page 1

laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battlefield; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.


No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American People. I do therefore



invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

"It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness." - Spurgeon

The **Bible View**



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The True Origin of Thanksgiving

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The Atlantic crossing in the fall of 1620 had been an extremely difficult journey for the Pilgrims. For two months, 102 people were wedged into what was called the "tween decks" - the cargo space of the boat, which only had about five-and-a-half feet of headroom. No one was allowed above deck because of the terrible storms. This was no pleasure trip, but only one person died during the voyage.

The Pilgrims had comforted themselves by singing the Psalms, but this "noise" irritated one of the ship's paid crew mem-

Continued on Page 2

Lincoln's 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation

Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation is from the collection of Lincoln's papers in the Library of America Series, Vol. II, pp. 520-521

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained,

Continued on Page 4

The True Origin ...

Continued from Page 1

bers, He told the Pilgrims he was looking forward to throwing some of their corpses overboard after they succumbed to the illnesses that were routine on such voyages. But as it turned out, this crew member himself was the only person on the voyage to become sick and die. God providentially protected His people. A little-known fact about the Mayflower is that this ship normally carried a cargo of wine; and the wine spillage from previous voyages had soaked the beams, acting as a disinfectant to prevent the spread of disease.

During one terrible storm, the main beam of the mast cracked. Death was certain if this beam could not be repaired. At that moment, the whole Pilgrim adventure could very easily have ended on the bottom of the Atlantic. But, providentially, one of the Pilgrims had brought along a large iron screw for a printing press. That screw was used to repair the beam, saving the ship and all on board.

After 66 days at sea, land was sighted off what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts. That was not where the Pilgrims wanted to be. They had intended to establish their new colony in the northern parts of Virginia, but two factors interrupted their plans. The winds had blown them off course, but they also learned that some other Englishmen who wanted to settle in the same northern part of Vir-

ginia had bribed the crew to land them somewhere else.

Once again God was in charge, and the Pilgrims were right where God wanted them to be. Had they actually landed near the Hudson River, they would have most certainly been attacked by hostile Indians. Instead, there were no Indians on Cape Cod when the Pilgrims made landfall.

Many years before, some local Indians had captured a Frenchman on a fishing expedition in that region. Just as he was about to be killed, the Frenchman told the Indians that God would be angry with them, would destroy them all, and would replace them with another nation. The Indians boastfully told him that his God could never kill them. However, when the Pilgrims landed in that same region, the land had already been cleared and the fields had already been cultivated, but those Indians who had prepared the land had nearly all died of a plague a year or two earlier.

Despite this provision of safety from hostile Indians, the Pilgrims barely survived their first winter on the Cape. Only four families escaped without burying at least one family member, but God was still faithful. In the spring of 1621, He sent Squanto to them, an Indian who could speak their own language and who offered to teach them how to survive in this strange new land.

The Pilgrims thanked God for this wonderful helper, but they also shared with Squanto the most valu-

able treasure they had brought with them from England - the Gospel. Squanto died within a year or two after coming to the aid of the Pilgrims, but before his death he prayed that he might go to be with their God in Heaven.

Other Indians whom Squanto had introduced to the Pilgrims were also impressed with their God. During the summer of 1621, when it appeared the year's corn harvest would not survive a severe drought, the Pilgrims called for a day of fasting and prayer. By the end of the day, it was raining. The rain saved the corn, which miraculously sprang back to life. One of the Indians who observed this miracle remarked that their God must be a very great God because when the Indians pow-wowed for rain, it always rained so hard that the corn stalks were broken down. But they noticed that the Pilgrim's God had sent a very gentle rain that did not damage the corn harvest.

Even though the pilgrims hosted the first Thanksgiving dinner in America, the holiday itself actually has its origins almost 170 years later, after the Revolutionary War had been won and our American Constitution had been adopted. In 1789, Congress approved the Bill of Rights, the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution. Congress then "recommended a day of public thanks giving and prayer" to thank God for blessing America. President Washington declared November 26, 1789, as the first national day of prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Another 75 years later, after the Civil War ended, President Abraham Lincoln established the last Thursday in November as a day to acknowledge "the gracious gifts of the Most High God" bestowed upon America. Every president did the same until 1941 when Congress officially made Thanksgiving a national holiday.

Now that you know the complete story, on this Thanksgiving make sure that others learn it too. Let us all join with generations of Americans before us in giving thanks to God for blessing our country!

Verses on Thankfulness

- ☉ *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*
1 Thess. 5:18
- ☉ *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"* *Ephesians 5:20*
- ☉ *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."*
Colossians 3:17

Constant complaint is the poorest sort of pay for all the comforts we enjoy.