

Christ in Prophecy
Social Issues 10: Religious Freedom & COVID-19

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: The Bill of Rights in our Constitution guarantees several basic freedoms from encroachment by government. One of those is the free exercise of religion. That right has been trampled on by local and state governments during this COVID-19 pandemic. What are the implications of this for the future of religious freedom in our nation?

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. In the studio with me today are two of my staff members, Colonel Tim Moore who is our Associate Evangelist, and Nathan Jones who is our Internet Evangelist.

Our topic for discussion is religious freedom in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. But, before we get into that discussion, we want to supply some background information. As most of you are surely aware, this nation was founded on the basis of Judeo-Christian principles, and our founding fathers made it clear in their writings that the type of representative republic they had established could exist only on a foundation of morality supplied by religion.

For example, John Adams, our second president, had this to say: "We have no government armed in power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Tim Moore: In the 1950's, the Congress of the United States, under the urging of President Eisenhower, passed two resolutions to affirm our Christian heritage, actually to contrast with the Soviet Union at the time. The first took place in 1954 when the words, under God, were added to our pledge of allegiance. And the second happened two years later, in 1956 when, In God We Trust, was adopted as the official national motto of our nation.

Since in the 1960's, when this nation experienced a radical cultural revolution, our Christian heritage has been under attack, and our nation has been secularized to the point that it would be unthinkable for Congress to pass those two resolutions today.

Nathan Jones: From 1943 to 1953, Earl Warren served as Governor of California. And in 1954 he was nominated by President Eisenhower to become the 14th Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. In a "Time Magazine" interview conducted in February of 1954, shortly after his appointment, he made this observation about our Christian heritage: "I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses. I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it. And I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe

that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country.” Again, our nation has secularized so quickly in recent years that if a Supreme Court nominee were to make such a statement today, I have no doubt that he would be overwhelmingly rejected.

Dr. Reagan: During the Obama Administration, the President constantly referred to the motto of the United States as being e pluribus unum, meaning, out of many, one. He did this repeatedly in an obvious attempt to undermine the official motto, In God We Trust.

He did something else as well, that was equally sinister, but very subtle. President Obama never referred to the Bill of Rights guarantee of the free exercise of religion. Instead, he reworded it to say freedom of worship. Now, folks, that is a very serious rewording, because all that phrase guarantees is the freedom to worship God as you please in your church, synagogue, temple, or mosque.

The new surge of Progressivism in this country is based on a hatred of Christianity. If you don't believe that, then just type the word, Christianity, in Google and see the number of hate-filled articles that come up. Or type the name of a Christian leader like Franklin Graham.

Tim Moore: Speaking of Franklin Graham, his relief organization, called Samaritan's Purse, supplied free medical care to hundreds of virus victims at a field hospital he erected in Central Park in New York City. Yet, despite providing such extensive and loving care, free of charge, New York leaders were vocally hostile toward him and his ministry. For example, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman said, "It is a shame that the federal government has left New Yorkers with no other choice but to accept charity from bigots."

Nathan Jones: Well, folks, there is nothing that Liberal and Progressives love more than a crisis, right? Because they know it can always be utilized for the purpose of increasing the power of government at the expense of the individual liberties. A good example of this occurred in the current pandemic that can be found in the draconian rules handed down to churches by the ultra-liberal governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam. He mandated that no church could hold a gathering of more than 10 people. And he stated that violations would result in a penalty of up to a whole year in jail and a \$2,500 fine. Enforcing this mandate, police raided a church on Palm Sunday in the midst of their service and served a summons to its pastor. The church seated 293. And there were 16 people present, and they were all wearing masks, and all scattered across the auditorium in respect of the distancing rules.

Dr. Reagan: Even worse, in California, Governor Gavin Newsom, one of the most liberal governors in our nation, issued an outright ban on churches assembling during the virus crisis. When a church in Lodi, California, located south of Sacramento, proceeded to conduct services with 30 people present, the police entered the church during the service and told them that they were defying the governor's order. The church responded with a cease and desist letter sent to the city and argued they had a First Amendment right to gather and practice their religion.

Incredibly! Incredibly, a federal judge in Sacramento upheld the Governor's order on the basis that churches were not singled out because the same rule was applied to other organizations like movie theaters. Now, I say "incredibly," folks, listen to this, because there is no guarantee of freedom of entertainment in the Constitution, whereas there is a specific guarantee of the free exercise of religion. There is absolutely no justification for comparing a church to a movie theater.

Nathan Jones: Like the Governor of California, Mississippi Mayor Errick Simmons issued an order banning all church services, including drive-in services. The Greenville city police department enforced the order by ticketing church members with \$500 fines for attending a drive-in church service.

The Governor of New Jersey, Phil Murphy, he issued an order banning large gatherings. And under that order, 15 men were arrested for attending a synagogue service. When the governor was asked about his constitutional basis for the arrests, he replied, "That's above my pay grade. I wasn't thinking of the Bill of Rights when I issued the order."

Dr. Reagan: Oh, my. Tim let's turn to you for just a minute, you know some of the worst violations of religious freedom during this pandemic have occurred in your home state of Kentucky, where you served in the Kentucky Legislature for 13 years, so you should know a lot about this. Tell us about it.

Tim Moore: Well, it is very sad, Dave, because obviously I do still live in Kentucky at the time, and Kentucky is considered by some there to be part of the Bible Belt. A lot of states claim to be the buckle on the Bible Belt, but Kentucky still has a heritage that would harken toward a Christian foundation. And yet, our current governor, Andy Beshear, has discounted any respect for faith. As matter of fact he has made several proclamation and orders that would seem to trample on religious freedom. As a matter of fact, he said that you could not gather as a church. He said you could not hold worship services. The mayor of Louisville even said you couldn't have drive-in worship services.

Dr. Reagan: With people in their car!

Tim Moore: Of course, with people in the car. And we finally had federal judges who have pushed back on some of these draconian orders, but I observe that the governor does not have that constitutional authority in our Constitution or even by our laws.

I called his office personally and I talked to his legal counsel and said, "Where does the governor get the authority to make these orders, because a governor does not have that authority?" And they said, "Well, he is a lawyer. He understands the Constitution. And so, you can trust that whatever he dictates, and orders is constitutional." I said, "No, no, no I have actually sworn an oath to the Constitution on many occasions, both as a legislature, as a military officer, I know what the Constitution says." And their response was, "Oh." And I said, "And he doesn't have that authority. Cite the statue or the portion of the Constitution." And they said, "Well, sir, we don't really have any need to talk to you." Because obviously they could not. Those orders being given by these various governors, or by mayors, are not lawful.

And let me just say this as a military officer we were always told there is such a thing as an unlawful order. And when a person in a position of authority gives an unlawful order, the person who follows that unlawful order is just as liable as the person who gave the unlawful order.

Dr. Reagan: Tim, that was one of the principle of the Nuremberg War Crime Trials.

Tim Moore: It certainly was.

Dr. Reagan: All the Nazi officials said, "We were following orders." And we took the position if you are given an order that violates the fundamental law of nature, the law of God, you are obligated to disobey.

Tim Moore: Disobey that order, exactly right. Our governor had State Police going and recording the license plates of people gathered at church services.

Nathan Jones: Didn't they pour nails all over a church parking lot?

Tim Moore: Someone poured nails all over the church parking lot in the driveway entering to that church.

Nathan Jones: So, they couldn't go it.

Tim Moore: And so, the point is, I have many friends who are in police services and in the State Police even and I know they feel under great conviction. But I would urge anyone in a position of authority to push back on these unlawful orders that are being given by governors.

Dr. Reagan: In fact, that happened in California there were sheriffs who said, "We are not going to enforce these things."

Tim Moore: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: They are just a violation of our rights.

Tim Moore: Well, tragically in Kentucky our governor has even said that relative to some recent legislation to protect unborn life he said, "I have to veto any bills dealing with unborn life because I don't want to be divisive in this time of crisis." Well, folks, I can't think of anything more divisive than trampling on constitutional rights including our right to religious liberty which was guaranteed in the very first of the Bill of Rights.

Dr. Reagan: The mayor of Kansas City, Missouri probably went further than anybody. He said, "If you hold a church service we want the name, address, telephone number of every person who attends that service." That's what the Nazis did in Germany when they went to the synagogues and said, "We want the name, address and phone number of everybody coming to this synagogue."

Tim Moore: Exactly right.

Nathan Jones: What a time period where the president has to declare by executive order that churches are essential. Well, folks, we have given you a lot of evidence of how basic religious freedoms in our nation are under attack. We are going to pause for a moment for an announcement, and then we will return to discuss the implications of these infringements on our Bill of Rights' guarantee of the free exercise of religion.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our discussion of the erosion of religious freedom in our nation. Tim let's start with you. You are a former legislature, you served in the Kentucky State Legislature for 13 years, in fact up until just recently you were in the legislature. And I think that you can better than Nathan and me respond to the question of: Is religious freedom, Christianity in particular, under attack today in our nation?

Tim Moore: I would say it certainly is. And we've made evidence of that even in our first segment. But, folks, what you don't sometimes realize is even in a legislative body there are people who day in and day out are trying to undermine our religious liberties. I'll never forget one of the leaders of the Kentucky House of Representatives, matter of fact our Speaker Pro Tem who is no longer there one time during a discussion about a particular bill, hearing that Christians, including legislatures there making advocacy that day were very concerned about the encroachment on liberties. He got up and he made a speech when he said, "Christians! Christians! I'm tired of all these Christians." Well, folks that was true statement of his sense.

Dr. Reagan: He was a powerful man.

Tim Moore: Very, very powerful. And obviously the direction already in recent years has been to undermine our very liberties.

Dr. Reagan: And that was a Republican.

Tim Moore: No, that one was a Democrat.

Dr. Reagan: That was a Democrat, alright.

Tim Moore: That was a Democrat.

Dr. Reagan: Go ahead.

Tim Moore: Well, on and on, and we see this not only at the state level, at the national level. You are seeing recently where people are trying to undermine Christian parents' authority to instruct their own children. And there are people who are saying, "We need to take children out of the clutches of their parents, lest they infest them with these unhelpful doctrines like Christianity."

Dr. Reagan: Well, I think this is going to be a major thing on the part of the Progressives in the future, we got to do away with homeschooling; because they want those children from the time that they come out of the womb.

Tim Moore: Well, just recently the governor of Michigan and part of her crazy rant said that we need to outlaw homeschooling right now because we don't want parents actually instruction their own children, especially people of faith.

Nathan Jones: But she closed down the schools, so nobody is learning anything.

Tim Moore: Yeah, well that's another problem all together. No, we've seen this over, and over again at the legislative level but it comes down even to the local level. Here in Texas the mayor of Houston at one point just a few years ago said that she wanted every pastor to turn in a script of their sermon so they could determine in advance if it would be offensive to people involved in the sexual revolution.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, she was a lesbian.

Tim Moore: Well, of course. But she was also a Democrat and yet, she was trying to use the power of her office to squelch any kind of speech that would be unwanted by the government.

Dr. Reagan: And the pastors of Houston, including pastor from all over Texas stood up to her and said, "You'll do that over our dead bodies." And she backed off.

Tim Moore: And she backed off. But you know what is sad?

Dr. Reagan: We need to stand up more often.

Tim Moore: We do. But a lot of people don't. I'll give you an example.

Dr. Reagan: Tell, about that story you told me the other day about.

Tim Moore: Even here in Texas, I have an airline pilot friend who arrived on a flight. Got off the airplane.

Dr. Reagan: A domestic flight.

Tim Moore: A domestic flight. And he's a pilot. And he was met by a police officer who said, "Did you fill out your form yet?" He said, "No, I didn't fill out any form." He said, "Well, you need to go talk to that officer over there." There is a very large, very imposing officer said, "Here sign this form." He said, "What is this form?" "Well, it gives us the authority to come into your home anytime we want if we determine that you have been exposed to the COVID virus. And he said, "I'm not signing that form." He said, "Well, you have to sign before you can leave this building."

Dr. Reagan: So, he is giving up a constitutional right.

Tim Moore: Giving up a constitutional right. So, my friend pulled out a letter that he has as a pilot that says I am an essential worker, and I don't have to sign anything. But he said, "Just as an American." This gentleman is a former Air Force pilot as well, he said, "I've been through advanced interrogation training, this is a classic technique of interrogation for you to get me to sign a form." As a matter of fact, the police officer said, "I'll tell you what, you don't have to fill it out, we'll fill it out for you. You just sign the blank form."

Dr. Reagan: Sign a blank form?

Tim Moore: Sign the blank form, I'll fill it all out for you. And my friend said, "I'm not signing a blank form that's what they would have you do in a communist interrogation." And finally, the police officer said, "Well, fine, then just get out of here." But you know what? My friend watched every other person getting off that airplane signed away their rights.

Dr. Reagan: Their constitutional right.

Tim Moore: Giving a document saying that the police had the authority to come into their home anytime they want because of the fear of the coronavirus. Folks, this is not just a threat in some foreign land, this is a threat right here in America, and people are willingly giving up their rights just because of ignorance, as much anything.

Nathan Jones: Well, that makes me wonder, because as the coronavirus crisis happened churches willingly wanted to help, we wanted to participate. We were willing to close our churches down. We were willing to do social distancing, wearing the mask all that because we want to help combat the virus crisis. Now that the crisis is abating do you see that churches can still do more to help, or are we getting to the point now that we are now giving up our religious liberty?

Tim Moore: I think we are giving up religious liberty. Our governor in Kentucky who has been so very divisive on this issues, and really gone far beyond his authority that is given to him by constitution or statue. Recently released a press statement where he touted the largest church organization in Kentucky; the Kentucky Baptist Convention, which I'm technically part of, and they were touting, "Oh, the governor is working with us so well." Folks, he is not working with us in a way that is positive and helpful in terms of respecting our religious liberties. And so, I think it is very dangerous for churches to get in bed with the government in this regard. Churches need to be pushing back and saying, "We will pray for you. We obviously know what scripture says about honoring those in authority over us. We are going to pray for all of our leaders. As a matter of fact, we will pray for those who are non-believing even more fervently because we want the Lord to impact their hearts. But we are not going to yield, we are not going to bow the knee to Caesar, we have to obey God."

Dr. Reagan: Let me read you a series of statements and I want to get your response to these. Philosopher Bertrand Russell, "Neither a man, nor a crowd, nor a nation can be trusted to act humanly or to think sanely under the influence of great fear." Text message to me received just a week ago from an unknown person, "This pandemic has shown that most Americans are so

afraid of dying, that they are willing to quit living.” Ben Franklin, “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty, nor safety.” Thomas Jefferson, “He who gives his freedom for safety gets none of them.” Syndicated columnist Mychal Massey, “The fact that we are all going to die escape the masses, out of fear that they are going to die.” Mychal Massey again, this is a black columnist, “We have been confronted with municipal tyranny that has not been witnessed since the days of the Jim Crow South.” Speaking of course when civil liberties of negroes were ignored and denied.

Tim Moore: I think we forget our own heritage as Christians especially in even in this country. We think we you know we study history, but we forget lessons that have been handed down to us. Samuel Rutherford he was a pastor in England, he wrote a book called, “Lex, Rex” which stated very unequivocally that the law should be king, and that the king himself does not trump the laws that are on the books, and the statues that have been legally passed forward. And of course, this was very offensive to the king at the time who wanted to be a tyrant in England.

Dr. Reagan: To say the least.

Tim Moore: Yes, so he was going to put to death this pastor; he was called home by the Lord before they could execute him. But this was treasonous talk to think that even a king would be subject to the law. And yet today, we have these who are in authority who are saying, “Well, my order trumps the law.” You know folks, governors don’t have the authority to make laws, and yet, oftentimes if you read in the paper even police who say, “Well, we are just doing what the law says.” No, you are doing what a governor ordered, which is not the same as a law that passed through a legislative body and was enacted according to our own constitutional authority. And so, these governors are already trying to trump the laws that are on the books.

Nathan Jones: Wasn’t it Rahm Emanuel, the former mayor of Chicago said, “To never let a crisis go to waste.” And it seems they are using that to take control.

Tim Moore: Not only Rahm Emanuel, Hillary Clinton advised right now that they should take advantage of this crisis to foist progressive and liberal policies, socialistic polices on America.

Dr. Reagan: You know it seems to me like that we could have handled this whole pandemic in a different way.

Nathan Jones: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: And that is for example focusing on those who are ill, focusing on those the elderly, and those in nursing homes.

Tim Moore: The at risk population.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, taking good care of them. And telling everybody else to just appeal to their common sense, to wear a mask, to engage in social distancing. To not take unnecessary risk and that sort of thing. But it was like, no, you are too stupid. We are going to tell you what to do and we are going to close down America. You know, Tim, I believe, I believe with all my heart that the economic result of this is going to be worse than the pandemic itself.

Tim Moore: In Kentucky we are now nation leading. We had very, very, low unemployment three months ago.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Tim Moore: Just like that rest of the nation. As of the last report about week ago, Kentucky has over 33% unemployment.

Nathan Jones: Thirty-three!

Dr. Reagan: This is Depression Era.

Tim Moore: That is greater than Depression Era. And yet, there are people who are still deluded. We had somebody respond on a social media post regarding our governor again, Governor Randy Beshear saying, "Govern me Daddy." And that was not a skeptical post; that was an adult human being saying, "I just want someone else to tell me what to do."

Dr. Reagan: Just have the government tell me what to do.

Tim Moore: "And to take care of me because..."

Dr. Reagan: And boy, there are people who would love to do that.

Tim Moore: And certainly, they would.

Nathan Jones: Well, Tim what do churches do? Take for instance the governor of Illinois is saying that the year 2020 that we might not open any churches. When it gets to that point how is the church to respond? Are they to obey the governor, or are they just to open up?

Tim Moore: I think that churches and individual, let's go to an individual Christian. I think individual Christians need to demonstrate a great love for our fellow human beings. And so, we need to take care not to put them at risk. So, I'm often asked, "Should we wear a mask?" Well, if you go in a place where there are at risk people, wear a mask. If you think there is any chance that you would expose them. I would never wear a mask to protect me, but it is kind of like a doctor in an operating room, they are not wearing masks to protect themselves, they are wearing a mask to protect their patient. So, as Christians we should take every reasonable measure to protect those around us. But as a church we have a responsibility to give people the opportunity to come together and worship God. And in a time of great calamity that's when that encouragement, that fellowship is most important. Again, using some measures that are commonsensical but obviously never ceasing to worship.

Dr. Reagan: I mean the church can have at every entrance they can have a place where you can put alcohol on your hand, you can wear a mask, you can have social distancing, but you can still meet.

Tim Moore: You can still meet. And that is exactly what the writer of Hebrews says, especially in the last days.

Dr. Reagan: And I think when you consider the fact our Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion, that some churches need to stand up and take a stand and say, "We are going to meet."

Tim Moore: They certainly do.

Nathan Jones: This is hard on the pastors.

Dr. Reagan: We will honor, but we are going to meet.

Tim Moore: Well, it was churches, and it was pastors who were fomenting the push back against some of the tyrannical dictates of the king of England, leading up to our own revolution. A lot of people forget that Christians and people who are very fervent in their desire to worship freely in this country were the ones who said, "Enough."

Dr. Reagan: That's who came here, people looking for religious freedom.

Tim Moore: Exactly right, the pilgrims.

Dr. Reagan: And our Constitution guarantees it. And we need to stand for that guarantee, or it will disappear.

Tim Moore: Right.

Dr. Reagan: In fact, what will happen is that we will have as Obama used to put it, freedom of worship, which means the only religious freedom we'll have is to worship God as we please inside our church building. But boy, you step outside you don't have a right to say anything about God, or about Christianity, or anything else.

Tim Moore: That's exactly what the Chinese claim that they offer their people.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yeah.

Tim Moore: Is freedom of worship. But in churches that the government controls, in places that the government dictates, under conditions that the government allows. We don't want to go there, and yet we have governors and mayors already in this nation who are following a Chinese Communist Party model for America. That should shock and concern us all.

Dr. Reagan: Well, it certainly concerns me, and that is why we did this particular program. I'm sure this program is going to be upsetting to some people. And some people are going to say, well, you are meddling in politics. Well, there is a time when you speak out. We have it with the Old Testament prophets speaking out constantly when kings got out of line, and whatever. We have it with John the Baptist who had his head cut off because he told the king you did not have a right to marry the person you married. So, I think we should speak out.

Closing

Tim Moore: As we bring this program to a close, I hope all of you will keep your eyes on Jesus. He is the one, and the only hope for our nation. A vital part of that is to spend some time in prayer each day for our nation and for its leaders, particularly those who don't respect religious liberty. Pray that they will understand the importance of religious liberty and will commit themselves to defending it. Until next week, the Lord willing, this is Tim Moore speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."