

A president. Not messiah.

My first rock concert was Grand Funk Railroad in 1972. It was also the first time I witnessed the power of a persuasive public presence. The stage was quiet. Anticipation was high. Very calmly, Mark Farner, lead singer, walked out on stage. As he reached the center of the stage, the spotlight hit him. He turned to look at us, long blonde hair flowing past his waist, raised one bare arm, and clenched his fist high above his head. The experience was electric. The crowd went wild.

We love our independence. But something in us also yearns for a totally competent leader. We don't want a president who is just a manager or administrator. We want someone who will inspire us, lead us, and take us safely into an uncertain future—with victory. We hope to replicate the glories of our past history and carve new and greater glories. The longing for this kind of leader is really the longing for a messiah. But instead, in November, we will elect only a president.

Here is what our next president will be like. He or she will be a person of above-average intelligence, ability, and personal magnetism. The president-elect will take the oath of office intending to do his best. But he or she will be beholden to many supporters, contributors, and friends. These supporters will influence his decisions. The new president will present goals that line up with his convictions. Some of these goals will be met. Some will not be met. All will involve some amount of compromise.

The next president will have things from the past he would rather we not know about. He or she will have secret weaknesses and secret strengths. He or she will bring about national security successes we may never know about. He or she will also have public failures that everyone will know about. The new president will make some good decisions and some bad decisions. He or she will do the best he can do—but ultimately, the next president, being human, will be limited.



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Undoubtedly this new president will find himself praying for divine help. This person will get his feelings hurt, experience moments of triumph, times of discouragement, find friends in unusual places, and find betrayal by some he thought were friends. He or she will do petty things and noble things. The new president will be criticized by the press. He or she will long to make a positive contribution, as measured by the history books, but the full review of that will not be possible for years to come.

My heart goes out to the next president. Does yours? Too many Americans seem to think this person can be a messiah. One thing for sure—the next president will not be our messiah. We already have one. His name is Jesus.

Our next president will not be able to control natural disasters. He or she will not be able to prevent all terrorist attacks. The president will not be able to make our economy constantly adjust so that we all get rich and that no one will be poor. The president cannot cause people to make wise financial decisions. He or she cannot make children do their homework. The new president cannot make people stop smoking or over-eating. He or she cannot stop child abuse, spouse abuse, or racism.

What then should we expect from our new president? Well, here is what will be promised: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of

the United States." We should expect that our next president will be a person of resolve and faithfulness to this oath.

What does the Bible say? The Bible has a lot to say about governance. Almost everything said can be summed up by this phrase, "justice tempered with mercy." In other words, our next president, together with all our government, should seek to protect the innocent, punish the wrongdoers, and establish freedom for all our citizens under the rule of law.

Our president cannot be our messiah. Jesus Christ is our messiah. He is the only totally competent leader. He is the one to whom we should look for our daily bread, the purpose for our lives, and the ultimate protection we all need. Jesus is all these things and more. He forgives us our sins. He bestows beauty upon us. He fills us with his Spirit. He heals the effect of our sins, our sicknesses, and our sorrows. He makes us righteous before God. He teaches us, corrects us, and loves us. He guards us from evil. He creates our faith and completes our faith. He carries us in his arms. He remains faithful to us, even when we are faithless. He orders our days. He picks us up when we have fallen. He keeps the tormentor away. He brings us through death to the other side—safe and whole. He will raise us from the dead and give us an immortal body. He has provided a wonderful place for us in heaven, where we will reign with him over this universe forever.

The best choice a Christian can make concerning our next president is to pray for our new president. We will be electing a mere president, not a messiah. Our choice to pray is most important. Can you imagine what God might do in and through our next president, for our good and the good of this whole world, if 5 to 10 million of us pray for our president every single day?

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