



What was the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation? Why did Lincoln deliver this message when he did? What were some of the issues Lincoln had to consider before issuing the Proclamation? What were some of the results?

The emancipation proclamation was a set of two executive orders given by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 and 1863. There were many purposes for the proclamation, including freeing the slaves, and punishing states that did not return to the union. Lincoln placed the rebellious states in a compromising position, return to the Union, keeping slaves, but being subject to Union laws; or remain rogue states, possibly being defeated and still loose slaves. The weakened position of the Confederacy did not allow for many options. The Union had the military, monetary and political resources required to impose its decisions upon the Confederacy. If one were to query Lincoln on the topic it is likely that he would have also eluded to a divine mandate for the proclamation. The proclamation was significant in that it was a public acknowledgment of the Union's intention to abolish slavery. There was also a standard set for the Union which made escaping to the north a more worthwhile endeavor for enslaved people. Lincoln issued the proclamation as a "necessary war measure" only. It had no impact on the slaves of any Union state, and angered people who accepted the purpose of the Civil War to be only for the completeness of the Union.

Lincoln carefully timed the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. The document had been drafted for many months before it was issued. Lincoln timed the proclamation to a time of great strength for the Union. Lincoln made the proclamation the evening after the Union won the battle at Antietam, while Union



strength was fresh on the minds of the Confederate leaders. His timing allowed for a harsh blow to the Confederacy as slaves escaped and joined the Union army.

The issues surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation were issues that effected the entire country. Lincoln had to weigh the reaction from the Union states, ensuring that the Proclamation would not send more states, including Maryland, to rebel. In addition, it made the war seem like it was about more than just the stability of the Union, the Union's idealized goal for the war.

One of the most notable results of the proclamation was the acceptance of slaves of rebelling states as being free. This allowed movements such as the Underground Railroad to thrive and provide a haven for escaped slaves in the northern United States, whereas previously, many escaped to Canada. Upon the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation to slaves in the south, many decided to flee to the Union. The proclamation eventually led to the creation of the thirteenth amendment, a permanent, Union-wide abolition of slavery. One of the negative impact of the Proclamation was many Union soldiers deserting their posts in protest of the changing direction of the objectives of the war. However, it also drew about 20,0000 new black soldiers in issuing the proclamation.

When issued, the Emancipation Proclamation brought with it uncertain promises of freedom and a lot of hostility from members of both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. Historically, it is a significant document which began the liberation of over four million southern slaves and set the tone for a country free



of slavery. There was resistance, but it is now recognized as one of Lincoln's greatest accomplishments.

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