

JESUS, THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
 Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
 of Latter Day Saints
 Independence, Missouri

All Rights Reserved

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:13-19

But now is Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.....

His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Many centuries before his birth in the flesh, Jesus Christ was hailed by the prophet Isaiah as the Prince of Peace. It is impossible to understand the full implications of this title -- the Prince of Peace -- unless we have some concept of the full meaning of the word "peace," or "Shalom" in Hebrew. To Isaiah and other Old Testament writers, "peace" meant not only freedom from outward conflict, but completeness, soundness; physical, mental, and spiritual health; well-being; prosperity. That is why Isaiah, after saying that the Messiah shall be called "Prince of Peace" goes on to say, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Under the reign or rule of the Prince of Peace, every man shall find full fruition within himself -- completeness, soundness, health, life, prosperity -- as well as freedom from war, or freedom from the aggression of enemies.

What kind of peace did Jesus come to bring? He did not come that men might be forever relieved of the necessity of taking sides, making choices, dividing themselves from evil, and even fighting against it with force when necessary. He came that men might know which side to choose; that men might know they had an invincible champion with whom they could stand; that men might know that even though they lost father, or mother, or wife, or child, or houses, or lands, or even all the riches of the kingdoms of this world, they could still be complete, whole, sound, healthy, and prosperous as long as they had him -- his life, his Spirit, his peace.

Under the idyllic conditions of the Garden of Eden, man had perfect peace. He was at peace with God; he had full fellowship and communion with God. He was at peace with himself, for he had no sin and no guilt, no reproaches of conscience. There were no restraints, no tensions, no hatreds or resentments between man and wife. There was no enmity between man and beast, or between man and Nature. All Nature worked in harmony with man's needs, and for his blessing. Dressing and tending the garden was a pleasurable duty, not a burdensome task.

The first sin, and the fall of man, destroyed all this peace. It brought division between man and God; for man could no longer feel at ease in God's presence. In his sinful state, he could no longer tolerate the perfect glory and righteousness of God. He became carnal, sensual, devilish -- an enemy to God.

Because of his guilt, man became an enemy to himself. He was still created in the image of God -- a little lower than the angels, but warring within him and struggling against this God-like nature was the sinful nature which the fall had released and

brought about. Man was divided, and at war with himself. He was no longer sound, or whole, or healthy.

The fall of man brought another consequence. When man failed to keep God at the center of things, and to obey his commandments, he set himself up as the center of the universe, and decided to obey his own desires rather than the commands of God. As long as all men can give complete and unswerving allegiance to one omnipotent God, they are united in that allegiance. But when each man sets up himself and his own selfish desires as the final authority of what is right and wrong, immediately there comes division; for then there are multitudes of individual points, all claiming to be the center of the universe, and each one contending against all the others to establish his own will and way. It was exactly this kind of division between Cain and Abel which brought about the first murder, and which has been the cause of all the wars and commotions and inhumanities of man to man ever since.

The fall also brought about an enmity between man and Nature. When man in his innocence worked in harmony with Nature, she blessed him with everything needful for a perfect existence. When sinful man tried to use the resources and the powers of Nature for selfish gratification, without regard for the rights and needs of his fellow man, Nature rebelled; for Nature is made for peace, not for division. Ever since, man has had to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, competing with thorns and briars for the sustenance of the good earth. Even the beasts, who once were at peace with each other and with man, became his enemies.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to bring peace in all these aspects -- to restore to man his completeness, his soundness, his health, well-being, and prosperity. By his sacrifice of himself, his resurrection, redemption, and atonement, he reconciled man to God; he made possible the forgiveness of man's sin and man's restoration to the presence of God. By that same redemption, he cancelled man's sin, removed man's guilt, and made it possible for man to resolve the strife and division between himself and his own conscience -- between himself as he is, and what he knows he ought to be,

The redemption of Jesus opened the door to his kingdom, where men may dwell in righteousness, in justice, in love and truth and mercy, recognizing God as the center of the universe. Once men give up their self-centeredness, their selfishness, and willingly treat each other as the equal sons of the universal heavenly Father whose sons have the same rights, the same needs, the same prerogatives before God insofar as they recognize and obey his laws, the enmity between man and man disappears. When groups of men, races of men, nations of men likewise recognize God as supreme, and Jesus Christ as King and Ruler, Redeemer and Savior, they cease to strive against each other, and settle their differences by referring them to the perfect goodness, the perfect righteousness, the perfect will of God.

Likewise, when man ceases to fight against Nature and against Nature's God, he will find the curse removed from the good earth; and man's intelligence will find it once again easy and pleasurable to use the facilities and resources of earth for the satisfaction of every human need.

Jesus did not come simply to stop war. He came to remove the basic causes of division between man and God, between man and himself, between man and his brother man, between man and Nature. "He is our peace," said Paul to the Ephesians, breaking down the walls of division between Jew and Gentile, between all races and colors and conditions of men, reconciling men to God, making them fellow citizens of the kingdom of God, sons of God, and brothers of each other. Let us continue to work and pray that this Prince of Peace may soon come again to set up his kingdom, where nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" where "the wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."