

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: PEACE SHALL BE TAKEN FROM THE EARTH

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 1:5 f,g; 6.

I the Lord can not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven; and he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received, for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts. And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth, I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh, for I am no respecter of persons, and willeth that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh, the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the Devil shall have power over his own dominion; and also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world.

They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people
slightly, saying, Peace, Peace; when there is no peace.

The question uppermost in every heart these days is "Shall we have peace or war?" We have lived so long in a state of stress and emergency and imminent danger that we hesitate to voice that question out loud; we even push it into the back of our minds and refuse to think about it. But it is still there, hanging like a great storm cloud over every plan we formulate and every decision we make.

For many years the world has been crying "Peace, peace." The first half of the twentieth century saw the formation of the Hague International Tribunal, the League of Nations, several treaties for limitation of armaments and the reduction of navies, the Kellogg-Briand pact of 1929 in which 62 major powers renounced war, and last of all, the United Nations in 1945. None of these have stopped war.

It was in November of 1831 that Joseph Smith proclaimed the word of the Lord: "The hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth." How much peace have we had in the past hundred years? In 1830 and 1831 the Poles revolted against Russia. In 1846 the United States went to war with Mexico. In 1848-49 there were revolts in Ireland, in all the Hapsburg dominions, and in Italy. In 1853 Turkey and Russia began the Crimean war, which England entered in 1854. In 1857 a mutiny in India killed a hundred thousand people. In 1861 our own Civil War began. In 1863 there was a second Polish revolution.

1870 saw the start of the Franco-Prussian war. Twenty thousand died in a revolt of Red Republicans in France in 1871. Russia and Turkey went to war again in 1877. In 1885 there was war in the Sudan, in which General Gordon and several thousand whites were massacred. The Chinese-Japanese war began in 1894, and the Cuban Revolution in 1895. Ethiopia defeated Italy in 1896, giving the excuse for Mussolini's aggression in 1934. The Turks and Greeks fought in 1897. The Spanish-American war began in 1898 and the Boer war in 1899. The next two years saw the Philippine insurrection under Aguinaldo and the Boxer uprising in China. The Russo-Japanese war began in 1904; a war between Italy and Turkey in 1911, and a Mexican Revolution in the same year. 1912 to 1914 saw almost constant war in the Balkan states, culminating in the incident which precipitated World War I. In 1918 came the Russian Revolution; in 1927 a civil war in China; in 1932 a Japanese-Chinese war, in 1934, Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. In 1935 there was a small but bloody war between Bolivia and Paraguay. The three year Spanish Civil war began in 1936. World War II began in 1939. Since that was closed there has been fighting almost continuously in some part of the world -- Indo-China, Dutch East Indies, Korea, Argentina, Israel, Egypt, Africa, etc.

There has not been a decade since 1830 which has not seen war somewhere in the world. Kingdoms and empires have fallen by the score. Hardly a nation on

earth remains today with the same government it had a hundred years ago. We are not at peace now. In spite of a technical truce, the United States is still at war with the Communists in North Korea and Manchuria. Seventeen nations with a population of 740 million people are behind the iron curtain, living in constant fear. A cold war involves practically every nation on the globe. Peace has been taken from the earth.

Another fact is so obvious that it should scarcely need mention. A hundred years ago wars could be started by two angry emperors, kings, or prime ministers, and fought by a relatively small number of paid soldiers. Tomorrow's wars will involve every citizen, the infant and the aged, men and women, rich and poor, the soldier and the college professor, the farmer and the city worker. They will result in the annihilation of both conqueror and conquered. Today's means of mass communication, which might be used to spread peace and world-wide understanding, are used rather as means of spreading propaganda designed to make men hate and fear each other. We have lived to see the fulfillment of a prophecy made in 1901 by a young man named Winston Churchill, who said: "Democracy is more vindictive than Cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings."

It is not hard to find the reason why peace has been taken from the earth. The reason was suggested in the previous sermon in this series: "Every man walketh in his own way." In that sermon we pointed out that man was made to be God-centered; that man fell when he substituted a self-centeredness and self-will for God-centeredness; and that with most of the two and a half billion people in the world centered in themselves instead of in God, it is inevitable that these two and a half billion "centers" of the universe should clash with each other. Man is bound to be arrayed against man; nation against nation; religious, social, racial and geographical groups against each other. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," says Isaiah. Why? Because the wicked are centered in themselves, not in God. There can be peace only to God-centered men, men of humility and good will.

We believe that Joseph Smith spoke the word of the Lord when he declared that

"Peace shall be taken from the earth." We have seen that prophecy fulfilled so far. But God's prophetic warnings and promises are always conditional. He gave this warning in order that men might heed the warning -- if they would -- and avert the calamities which would inevitably follow the ways they were then pursuing. Other revelations received through this nineteenth century prophet command us to "renounce war and proclaim peace," to "lift up a standard of peace," to "make a proclamation of peace unto the ends of the earth." We hope for peace; we pray for peace; we urge men to the repentance that alone can bring peace. But we are not so foolish as to believe that God will give peace to a race of men walking in their own ways, centered in themselves, more concerned about pleasure, sensual gratification, greed, lust, pride, ambition, and preferential power than about establishing God's ways in God's kingdom.

Whether the future brings peace or war, the situation is not hopeless. Men may still repent and turn to God as the center of their desires, affections, and actions. Men may still repent, and enter into covenant relationship with God, becoming citizens of his kingdom. This involves more than simply joining a church, because church membership is no guarantee against pride and self-centeredness. True repentance involves a complete abnegation of self, a consuming humility, and a willingness to listen for the voice of God as it speaks to earnest, God-seeking men directly by his Spirit, or as it comes through his prophets, servants, and apostles, both ancient and modern.

Unless men repent, even the little peace that remains to us will soon be taken from the earth, and the whole world involved in conflict -- nation against nation, and man against his neighbor. That is the day when the Devil shall have power over his own dominion, over those who have chosen to serve him, and who have stubbornly refused to serve God. But there is an opposite side to this dark picture, a ray of hope for the righteous. "The Lord shall also have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst." When the wicked are gathered into the kingdom of the Devil, the righteous will also be gathered and saved in the kingdom of King Immanuel as he returns to reign over those who have owned him as King, and centered their wills in his.