

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: JESUS, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

Scripture: I John 2:1-2; John 12:32

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

It is God's purpose to save all men. For this purpose he sent his Only Begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believed on him might be saved -- that the opportunity for escape from death and the grace might be open to all men, and that all men who would take this opportunity might be restored to his presence.

It is Satan's purpose to destroy all men. It was he who brought about the temptation and first sin in the hope that this fall, and the banishment from God's presence which the fall brought about, might become the universal lot of the human race and frustrate the purpose of God. As the Book of Mormon says, "He seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."

Which of these two personalities or powers will win this battle for human souls? What will be the final score in this game of life and death? One estimate that I have read is that some one hundred fifty billion people have lived on earth since the beginning of historic times. One concept of the number to be saved is the universalist concept, which says that God is too merciful to destroy even one of the souls he has created; therefore, in due time, every single soul will be saved. The Calvinistic doctrine is that God created some souls expressly for salvation, and some expressly for damnation; that it is impossible to change the nature of such souls, or to alter their fate. So far as I know, predestinarians make no attempt to estimate the number of saved and lost, but believe that God has inexorably fixed that number for all time.

Then there is a third philosophy which teaches that the great majority of

men will be lost; that salvation will be limited to a very few. One sect I know goes so far as to say that the saved ones of earth will be one hundred forty-four thousand -- not one more or one less -- basing their belief on a misinterpretation of Revelation 7:4, and completely ignoring verse nine in the same chapter which gives a description of "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who had come out of great tribulation and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and who served God day and night in his temple.

Which of these philosophies is right? A little mental arithmetic will show that if only a hundred and forty-four thousand out of a hundred and fifty billion are to be saved, the score gives Satan more than a million souls for every one credited to God, the Omnipotent ruler of the universe, and to his Son, Jesus Christ, who came to be the Savior of the world, and to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world -- who was lifted up that all men might be drawn unto him. I think you will agree that that would be a pretty sorry score for one who is supposed to be omnipotent, almighty, and ruler of heaven and earth, the one who shall eventually bind Satan with chains and cast him into the lake of fire and the bottomless pit.

How about the people who are living on earth today -- at this moment? There are about two and a half million of them, and only 585 million of them, or roughly one in four, are even nominally Christian. Is the score going to be three to one in favor of the devil, for this generation of the souls of men?

The question resolves itself down to this. How many men did Christ die to save? And what is his plan for salvation for those who never knew him in this life? The basis of almost all of our evangelism at home, and our foreign missions abroad, has been the belief that unless men accepted Christ as Savior, they were lost. Therefore all the heathen nations who died in ignorance of Christ were hopelessly and irretrievably lost. We contributed to foreign mission funds in the hope that we could save at least some of the heathen from an ever-burning hell of fiery torment.

Let us analyze this idea for a moment. Who placed the heathen nations where they are? Paul declared on Mars Hill that "God ... hath made of one blood all nations of man for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation...." (Acts 17:26) God is responsible for their location, and for the time of their birth. Who is responsible for their lack of the gospel of Christ? Christian people, who have that light, but fail to take it to the benighted nations of earth. Now, does it seem reasonable to suppose that a just, kind, loving, merciful, impartial God, could in fairness and justice condemn all the heathen to a never-ending hell of torment, while he and all the Christians who failed to take the gospel to them basked eternally in heavenly bliss and self-complacency? Do you think that the kind of love which was manifested in Christ Jesus would be satisfied with one in a million, or even one in four?

The third and fourth chapters of Peter's first epistle furnish the basis for a belief which is expressed in many of the old creeds, but which people of today have tended to laugh off and disbelieve. Peter says that after his death on the cross Christ went in the spirit to preach to the spirits in prison. The creeds say "He descended into hell." There is only one way that men can be sa-

ved, through belief in and obedience to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men may be saved. The only way the heathen nations can be saved then, since they never had opportunity to hear Christ preached while in the flesh, is to have Christ preached to them in the spirit world, that they may believe on him, accept him, and obey him, and be saved in the day of judgment. There will be an opportunity granted sometime, somewhere, to every man who ever lived on the earth, to hear of Christ, to believe in and accept him, and to be saved. There is probation after death for those worthy souls who never had opportunity to know Christ here.

We need a word of caution here, however. In another sense there is no probation after death. If you have heard the gospel of Christ in this life, and felt the witness of his Spirit -- then rejected him, you have had your chance. And if one who had no chance in this life accepts him in the spirit world, that acceptance may save him from the second death, but it cannot change the record of his life; and every man is to be judged, and rewarded according to his works done in the flesh. No one will have opportunity to live his life over again, to increase his good works done in the flesh, even though his sins may be forgiven. Acceptance of Christ cancels the debt of sin, and restores men to eternal life. But cancelling your debts gives you no money in the bank. Cancelling your sin gives you no reward. That reward is dependent upon the works done in the flesh, and the record of those works is closed and unchangeable at death.

God is not going to save only a small fraction of his creation, but most of them. Jesus is not the savior of a hundred and forty-four thousand, but the Savior of the world, the son of an Eternal Father of love, of mercy, of justice -- a God of power who shall some day destroy evil and put all things under his feet.