

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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### The Sermon: RIPENED IN INIQUITY

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Ether 1:31-34.

And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of his wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

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If ye will sin until ye are fully ripe, ye shall  
be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

There are two extremes into which people often fall when waiting for results. First is the extreme of impatience, of wanting the results at once without any waiting for fruition or for the working out of natural law. We don't harvest field corn in mid-July, or potatoes one week after they are planted on St. Patrick's day. We wait for the appointed time of harvest. The second extreme is supposing that because results are delayed, there will be no results. The fact that no wheat is to be seen on the first tender green shoots that push through the ground is no proof that there will never be any harvest. The growing and ripening process is slow, but it is inevitable that if allowed to grow, the wheat plant shall eventually produce wheat.

Good and evil desires, acts, thoughts, wishes, and purposes ripen -- sometimes comparatively quickly, sometimes after years or even centuries of time. Be not deceived: God is not mocked, but whatsoever a man soweth, that shall be also reap. Good always has within it the seeds of good, or the propensity for producing other and greater good. When good ripens, it always produces an increase, a fruitage of good, and the increase in kind is the final proof that good is good. The same is also true of evil. Evil has within it the seeds and the causes of its own destruction. Evil, when ripened, produces an increase of evil which indicates and

proves the nature of the seed.

Ripening brings both good and evil to a full expression of their essential qualities. When this full expression comes, then comes the harvest of the fruitage produced by each, and the judgment, or the separation of the wheat and tares. The good grain is gathered into the garner for preservation, use, and further fruitage; the tares are bound in bundles to be burned. Often it is impossible to be sure which is wheat and which is tares in the early stages of growth. Sometimes actions, attitudes, philosophies, and organizations seem to be good, but when allowed to grow and become fully ripe, they prove to be not good, but evil -- not wheat, but tares. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Individual men and women "ripen" as they grow to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual maturity. The good or evil which they have chosen to build into their lives sooner or later bears fruit, or finds expression in the multiplication and increase of either good or evil. Each one of us sooner or later receives in kind, according to the seeds he has chosen and planted. We reap the fruitage of the seeds we sow. We are judged according to the care we used in selecting, judging, and planting the seed which we allow to mature and become fully ripe for the harvest.

Institutions, philosophies, religions, and nations, as well as men, are judged by their fruits. The philosophy or religion which teaches that human souls may be reincarnated in lower animal forms that are considered too sacred to be used for food, brings the fruitage of men starving in the midst of the sacred animals who eat all the choicest food. In a culture where the worth of a man is judged by the number of progeny he leaves on earth to carry on the worship of their ancestors, the fruitage will always be an excess of population and a shortage of food.

Without taking time to go into minute details, we mention in passing that our nation is still reaping some of the evil fruits of the institution of slavery, even though it was abolished nearly a hundred years ago; that the seeds of World War II were planted in the harsh peace treaty that ended World War I; that capital's attitude towards labor in the early part of the century planted the seeds for the industrial strife which followed; that the policy of colonial exploitation and racial discrimination pursued by many of the "have" nations against the "have nots" in the recent past is now beginning to bear fruit in a period of ferment, unrest, and turmoil throughout a world where the more prolific dark-skinned races already outnumber the whites by more than two and a half to one.

Even religious systems and organizations are not immune from the laws of fruitage. Even though they have every appearance of good, they will be judged by their fruitage. If the fruits of any religious system or organization are ignorance, poverty, superstition, disease, hunger, stagnation, strife, contention, and moral or spiritual or political bondage, is the system good or bad? No matter how lofty the precepts or the philosophy, "by their fruits ye shall know them."

History has recorded the ripening of many nations in iniquity. Arnold Toynbee, the English historian, lists 26 civilizations that have existed since the recording of history began, and observes that sixteen of these twenty-six have disappeared completely, and that only one of the ten remaining shows much likelihood of survival! Nations and civilizations fall because they sow the seeds of their own destruction by their own collective evil choices, and when they are ripened in iniquity, they are harvested by the judgments of God. Wickedness always brings strife; and strife carried to the point of desperation always brings destruction.

Though history records the judgments

that have fallen on many nations, it now seems that the whole world is ripening -- both for good and for evil. One fruitage of our Western civilization with its Judeo-Christian religious background, has been an unprecedented increase in education, science, invention, medicine, production, wealth, culture, and prosperity. But accompanying this good fruitage there is also ripening the fruitage of evil -- war, broken homes, delinquent parents and their victimized children, the burden of debt, depression, poverty, hunger, fear, tensions between races and classes, and atomic warfare carried with the speed of sound through the stratosphere. The wheat and the tares are growing up together. The time of harvest draws near, the time of judgment when the true nature of all things will be revealed by their fruits.

This judgment is inevitable. Think not that it is not coming because it is delayed. Judgment will come when the ripening process is completed -- when men and nations and institutions are fully ripe, either in iniquity or in righteousness. When grain is fully ripe, it must be harvested at once, or it bursts from the stalk and falls to the ground. When the thistle is ripe, it takes only a gentle breeze to blow the seeds away. When fruit is fully ripe, it does not have to be clubbed from the tree; it drops of its own weight.

Growing plants cannot change their nature, or reverse the direction of their growth. Wheat must always produce wheat, and tares must always produce tares. But man can change. Evil men, by repentance, new birth, and a reversal of the direction of their lives can at least in some degree reverse the hastening processes of destruction, and begin to produce good fruit instead of bad -- a wholesome fruitage of grain instead of tares.

The Book of Mormon gives a special warning to the inhabitants of America. Because it is a choice land, God will not permit wickedness among its inhabitants to go either unchallenged or unrewarded; but his judgments will come only when the people are ripened in iniquity. When the workers of darkness and iniquity are fully ripe, then the fullness of God's wrath and justice shall come upon them in judgment.

God grant that it is not yet too late for the men and women, the churches, the institutions, the races, the classes, and the leaders of America to repent and begin to bring forth good fruit, that they may be fully ripened in righteousness, not in iniquity, that we may all escape the judgments of Almighty God.