

# The Hope of Universal Peace

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*

**—Luke 2:14** **SUCH WAS THE SONG OF** the angels as heard by the Bethlehem shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth. Never has there been any greater song ever sung within the hearing of human ears. Like music, its words have wafted down to comfort mankind through more than twenty centuries of sorrows. Still it bears its note of highest triumph in spite of wars, threats of wars, the overturn of dynasties, kingdoms, and nations, and the many other grave social, political, and economic problems that face humanity at the present time.

There is solace and reason in the angels’ message, such as should appeal to every right-thinking mind. It naturally provokes the question, “Why should there not be peace on earth?” Surely man should prefer peace and life to suffering and death. There is peace in heaven where the holy angels dwell. About the throne of the Almighty there is perpetual calm. Why should not a similar condition exist on this earth? Is it because God does not want peace on

this planet, and because he takes satisfaction in seeing strife and bloodshed among various groups of the human race? Certainly this is not so, especially since the Bible assures us that God is love, and that he is all-wise in the carrying out of his benevolent purposes and plans.

## **HIS BIRTH DID NOT BRING PEACE**

Another question that presents itself is this: Why did not the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, bring the promised peace on earth, and good will toward men? We know it did not do this and, in fact, much of the world knew nothing about the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, until a long time after his First Advent. To be sure, a good many heard of Jesus, the miracle worker in Israel, during his brief ministry there, but at most they simply took him for another prophet, if they seriously considered his mission at all. The world could not well fit him into its affairs. Yet Jesus gave a law that applied to society, home life, public administration, and to the individual, which, if men had followed, would have revolutionized the social order, destroyed pride and selfishness, and exalted love in men's hearts. Indeed, where love dwells, peace must necessarily exist, for no man deliberately fights with one whom he truly loves.

However, at the First Advent of Jesus, the time had not come for the application of such principles. Many events must take place, and numerous trials endured, before the world would learn lessons essential to its future happiness. The birth of Jesus was but one step in the divine program. Other steps were that he was to grow up to manhood's estate,

preach the Gospel, perform miracles, die on Calvary as the world's great ransom offering for sin, be raised from the dead, and ascend into heaven. He was then to be made "Head over all things to the church, Which is his body." (Eph. 1:22,23) Ultimately, as a glorious spiritual being of the highest order, he would return at his Second Advent, overthrow the kingdoms of this world in a great Time of Trouble, and then establish his own righteous reign of peace throughout all lands.

Speaking of this last mentioned event, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and 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, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."—Isa. 9:6,7

## **THE WORLD'S GREAT NEED**

One of the greatest needs of mankind today is worldwide peace. History records that for thousands of years the restless tide of war has surged around the world, breaking on the coasts of every sea and resounding far and wide wherever human beings dwell. There were some short, quieter periods during which the spirit of pious men were founding a reformation, or in which intellectual power or love of learning and art precipitated a Renaissance—but only to be followed by more and greater wars.

The history of all Europe is mainly a record of bloodshed, both before and after the Reformation. Following the Seven Years' War in Europe came the

Napoleonic campaigns which cost England alone two million lives—to say nothing of later conflicts. The United States has certainly not escaped the evils of war either. After the American Revolution and her Mexican conflict came the devastating Civil War between the North and the South. Then in Europe, in 1870, the nations there again indulged their desire for combat, which settled nothing. Then, in almost continual succession, followed the Boer War, Spanish-American War, Balkan Wars, First and Second World Wars, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

## **WORLD WAR I & II, AND THEIR AFTERMATH**

What did the world gain by the two World Wars, the most devastating of all conflicts during the past hundred years? Did they furnish any solution to the problems facing the countries involved? Did they make conditions easier and better for the common people? Did they provide permanent employment for people who need work, thus making happy homes and creating real, dependable prosperity? Did they make the world safer, and provide greater confidence in governments and assurance to the people for the future? Did either of the World Wars do any of these things, or did they cause general and increased suffering which is still being felt throughout the earth? The answer is obvious.

The aftermath of both World Wars has been tragic—increased poverty, unemployment, discontent, discouragement, political jealousy and unrest, internal revolution of every kind, terrorism, and fear of what will come next. Despite the lessening

of the proliferation of armaments among the superpowers of the world, these countries still maintain huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons of a variety of sizes and purposes, and the fear of small rogue nations obtaining such weapons grows each day.

The United Nations, formed nearly seventy years ago, has shown that it is impotent to prevent war. Many now realize that world peace today lies outside the province of any leader or group of statesmen. One fundamental reason why nations do not have peace is because they do not want it enough. When they desire it sufficiently to cry out in all sincerity to God to send it to them, then peace will come. However, that will not be until after the last great struggle, which the Scriptures call Armageddon, when the power of selfish nations shall fall not to rise again. Concerning this final struggle, the Psalmist David prophesied, “Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.” Then, speaking of the peace to follow, he said, “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”—Ps. 46:8,9

## **RELATIVE WORLD PEACE IN 2014**

Beginning in 2007, the Institute for Economics and Peace, a global nonprofit research organization, with the assistance of various worldwide panels and think tanks, developed the Global Peace Index (“GPI”). The GPI is an attempt to measure the relative position of nations’ peacefulness, and currently ranks 162 countries. Criteria used in determining the ranking include internal factors

such as violence and crime within the country, as well as measurements associated with a nation's external relations, such as military expenditures and activity in wars and international conflicts.

In attempting to gauge relative peacefulness, the GPI researches the extent to which countries are involved in ongoing domestic and foreign conflicts. Various indicators broadly assess what is thought to be the criteria for relative safety and security in society. Low crime rates, minimal incidences of terrorist acts and violent demonstrations, harmonious relations with neighboring countries, a stable political scene, and a small proportion of the population being internally displaced are all equated with peacefulness.

Each year the updated index is released at major world venues, including the United Nations. For the year 2014, the GPI indicates that Iceland is the most peaceful nation, followed by Denmark, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland, Finland, Canada, Japan, Belgium, and Norway. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the country ranked as least peaceful in 2014, at number 162, is Syria, preceded by Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, and North Korea. The United States ranks at what most would consider a very disappointing level—number 101 out of 162—and the other two major world superpowers, China and Russia, rank 108 and 152, respectively.

Irrespective of how one might interpret these statistics, it is clearly evident that the “new millennium,” now fourteen years old, has done little, if anything, to increase the prospects of worldwide

peace. The Prophet Jeremiah, with respect to the nation of Israel, penned these words, which just as aptly describe conditions today throughout the world: "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!"—Jer. 8:15

## **THE BIBLE MESSAGE**

The hope-inspiring theme of the Bible is a true message of peace. In fact, the Bible is the one dependable authority which holds out a hope of universal peace for mankind. That such peace for the human family was the original intention of the Creator is clearly indicated by the peaceful environment in which God placed our first parents. In Eden there was no strife, nor was there any curse upon man. The curse came later, after sin had entered. Then the Lord said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; . . . Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—Gen. 3:17-19

It was not long after Adam's fall that strife arose in the earth. The first murder gave evidence to the power of rage and jealousy that had entered the human heart. As man multiplied there came wars. We read about them in the days of Abraham. In due course of time came the establishment of powerful Gentile kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. All came into being by means of wars. This was foreseen by the Prophet Daniel, who saw in vision four huge beasts rise up out of the sea.—Dan. 7

These four beasts represented the aforesaid four world empires that were to hold sway over humanity for many centuries. Although allowed to do so by God, he nevertheless viewed them as “beastly,” as they miserably failed to bring peace to mankind. The sea from which these symbolic beasts arose pictured strife, conflict, and war. All this is true to the facts of history, for it has been chiefly by means of wars that all empires have come into being and have been extended. “Might makes right” has been one of the maxims of the world, and this has been selfishly carried out in spite of the fact that it has continually spelled sadness and bloodshed among the human race.

## **OTHER HUMAN NEEDS**

It is not merely a cessation of warfare that the weary world needs. Another great desire is rest and peace from the economic struggle that millions have to endure in order to exist. With the majority of mankind, life is a battle from the cradle to the grave. This is due, in part, to the unequal advantages accruing to some because of the fact that a few selfishly wield power over their fellows. It is also true, on an even larger scale, with respect to nations. There are a few wealthy nations, but most others are either only emerging from poverty, or struggling in their efforts to do so. The earth is amply productive for all. However, its products are cornered and controlled so as to provide an abundance for a few, but little for millions of others. This unequal condition will cease to exist with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. We are assured by God’s inspired prophet, who wrote,



“They shall build houses, and inhabit them [not rent houses from others]; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], saith the LORD.”—Isa. 65:21-25

The world also needs rest from sickness, suffering and death. All this will come when the Prince of Peace begins his glorious reign. The revelator speaks symbolically of the “tree of life,” and that its leaves will be for “the healing of the nations.” (Rev. 22:2) He also says that there will be “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain,” when God’s plan of the ages is fully consummated. (chap. 21:4) Indeed, for the sorrow-stricken world of the present time, only the Bible holds out a glorious and harmonious vision of the coming of universal peace. That is why the angels sang their joyful anthem on the night of Jesus’ birth.

## **A GLORIOUS FUTURE**

Let us imagine for a moment what a fulfillment of the prophecies contained in the Bible will mean for the world. “It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD’S house . . . shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion [the ruling heavenly phase of the kingdom] shall go forth the law, and

the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [the earthly phase of the kingdom]. . . . And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—Isa. 2:2-4

Indeed, when men cease to “learn war” they will cease to make war. When they cease to hate they will learn to love. When they cease to follow the ways of evil they will learn to follow the righteous ways of God. When they become appalled with their own failures along the line of all fallen human endeavor, they will seek divine assistance. Man’s extremity will be God’s opportunity. Then love will become the universal law, and hate will go down in defeat before it. Mankind will learn to think sanely, justly, kindly, purely and unselfishly, and, by the help of God, they shall rise up to a nobler realm of human existence. To accomplish this will be the stupendous task of Christ’s universal kingdom. Because God and Christ will be at the helm, we know it cannot fail!

All who have faith in the divine Word of truth, and who are living in expectation of that great age of life and peace, can now lift up their heads and rejoice. All the signs of fulfilled prophecy today indicate that the glorious Messianic era is nigh at hand. When thus established, God will fulfill to men the wondrous hope of universal peace on earth, even as he has promised time and again in the Holy Scriptures. ■

---

*“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”*

*—Lamentations 3:26*