

D&C 87 Commentary

By Roald Peterson (26 Jan 2014)

War is one of the major signs and characteristics of the last days. While there have been wars ongoing throughout most of Earth's history, last days warfare will exceed previous ages in both scale and intensity. This section of the Doctrine and Covenants provides information on the purposes of the wars, some details on their unfolding, and their results. In it the Lord gives counsel on how his people can survive spiritually, if not temporally. Here are my comments on this essential last days scripture.

D&C 87	Commentary
Revelation and prophecy on war, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at or near Kirtland, Ohio, December 25, 1832. At this time disputes in the United States over slavery and South Carolina's nullification of federal tariffs were prevalent. Joseph Smith's history states that "appearances of troubles among the nations" were becoming "more visible" to the Prophet "than they had previously been since the Church began her journey out of the wilderness."	This section is known as the "Prophecy on War" and provides key information about a major sign of the last days. In Matthew 24 Jesus says, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars...For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...(v6-7). Like so many prophecies in the Bible, the Lord has amplified them with far greater detail through the prophet of the Restoration.
1 Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;	These are not thoughts of Joseph Smith, but rather "thus saith the Lord." The Lord announces a new era of warfare that will begin with the American Civil War. This prophecy was given in 1832, and the Civil War began in 1861, 29 years later. This period of time the Lord refers to as "shortly." While there had been wars throughout the world before the time of this revelation, Warfare was about to undergo significant changes. Future wars would far surpass history in their frequency, the number of nations involved, the number of people killed, their weaponry, and their brutality. One of the reasons the Civil War was particularly bloody was that weaponry had advanced beyond the methods military leaders used to fight wars. Standing in line and firing on command doesn't work well when the enemy has Gatling guns. From that war on, the world's nations have spent unbelievable resources to develop and employ weaponry, armies, and the science of war. The Lord also says these wars will bring death and misery to many.
2 And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place.	War will be poured out on all nations. There is no nation that will be spared in the last days. Use of the term "poured out" would indicate that the wars will happen as a flood of water overrunning the land and engulfing everything.
3 For behold, the Southern	This verse foretells of the division between the Northern and Southern

D&C 87	Commentary
<p>States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.</p>	<p>states, and the involvement of Great Britain in the Civil War. It then says that Great Britain will gather allies to fight against other coalitions of nations. This was the first world war, which began in 1914. It was called "the war to end war." In reality, it showed us a vision of what was to come: a. Of wars that cannot be stopped. Another point to notice is that wars will not only happen between nations and coalitions, but between factions within nations, of which the Civil War is a type. Again the Lord says war will be poured out on all nations.</p>
<p>4 And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.</p>	<p>While some slaves escaped and fought with the Union against the South, it is probably only a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. It says "after many days" which would seem a longer time than 29 years which the Lord called "shortly." Elder Joseph L. Wirthlin said, "I believe, ... that this referred to slaves all over the world." He then mentioned specifically the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union and its satellites and other parts of the world "where the rights and the privilege to worship God and to come to a knowledge that Jesus Christ is his Son is denied them" (Conf Rep, Oct. 1958, p. 32). The world is certainly filled with slaves – to governments, to religions, to companies, and to people. Even in the United States there are millions who are forced to support other millions who live in idleness, and those who are working are becoming angry. The slaves will be prepared for war when they rise up and attack their masters.</p>
<p>5 And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.</p>	<p>Remnants refers to the members of the house of Israel who are living among the Gentiles. It says they become exceedingly angry. And whatever they do against the Gentiles is sore. This prophecy is also found in Micah 5, 3 Nephi 16, 20, 21, and other places in the Scriptures. The Gentiles refers to the United States in particular, and the other gentile nations (Christian nations) in general. In 3 Nephi the Savior himself defines the remnants as the descendants of the Lamanites and Nephites. Today this would be American Indians as well as those who are of mixed European and Indian blood, e.g. Mexicans. This group is becoming quite numerous in the United States. In Europe the non-European peoples who are growing in number would be the Muslims, primarily from the Middle East. We should remember that Israelites were captives in many nations of the Middle East and their blood has been mixed throughout the people of that region. In the previous chapters mentioned we read it the remnants will tear in pieces their enemies and will not be able to be stopped.</p>
<p>6 And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the</p>	<p>The Lord reminds us that war is accompanied by bloodshed and famine and plague. But notice that nature is also involved with earthquakes and storms. This would be the Earth's natural response to all the horror the men are bringing about upon her face.</p> <p>This verse tells us that there is a purpose for all this warfare. All the</p>

D&C 87	Commentary
<p>fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations;</p>	<p>mourning, wrath, and indignation are God's way of chastening his children. He's trying to get our attention when we don't listen to his gentler invitations. In D&C 88 the Lord says, "And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people. For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds." (v88-90)</p> <p>Of particular note is that the Lord says there will be a full end of all nations. There are no exceptions listed. Many members of the church seem to think the United States will be spared. While it could be spared if the people will repent, the Scriptures and current events make it plain that they will not. However, after the America is cleansed, the New Jerusalem will be built and Zion will spread forth from that city to fill the land. Read about the destruction of America and the building of New Jerusalem in 3 Nephi 21.</p>
<p>7 That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies.</p>	<p>This should be a sobering verse for the members of the church. It tells us the other reason for the warfare across the earth. War comes as vengeance on the nations and peoples who persecute and kill the saints. It should be remembered that the members of the church were killed and driven from several states until they came to Utah. Even in Utah the federal government sought to persecute the church. As there was no place left to go, the Lord allowed the Civil War to take place which occupied the nation and drained its resources for the next several years, allowing the church to strengthen. Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of persecution, but simply a type of what was to come. The Lord allows persecution and killing of his saints. It helps purify the saints and justifies God's punishment of the ungodly. At what point God steps in is somewhat difficult to define. Other examples seem to teach that God will fight our battles for us if we are truly righteous and doing his work. It also appears that the less dedicated we are, the longer he takes to intervene in our behalf. It should be remembered that "saint" properly refers to someone who is sanctified or holy. Because of his love and generosity the Lord also allows the term to be applied to those who are earnestly striving to become sanctified. The extent we fall into one of these two definitions probably determines how quickly and to what extent the Lord will intervene in our behalf. But even then it should be remembered that part of our earthly mission may include martyrdom for the Lord's purposes.</p>
<p>8 Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.</p>	<p>If people are truly saints then they are holy, and where they stand is also holy. Temples are holy and it tends to rub off on people who regularly visit them. True saints also strive to make their homes holy places. The holy place also refers to the first room in Solomon's Temple, after one passes through the court of sacrifice and enters the building. Looking at Solomon's Temple as a representation of the spiritual path to</p>

D&C 87	Commentary
	<p>sainthood, or coming into the presence of Christ, standing in the holy place would represent having one's sins completely forgiven (like Enos) and experiencing the mighty change of heart. Sadly, most members of the church do not attain this because they don't know about it, or they don't believe they can do it, or they're just not seeking after it. But those who stand in the holy place (whose sins are forgiven and whose hearts are changed) merit extraordinary guidance and protection from the Lord. However, it should again be remembered that one's earthly mission may include martyrdom.</p>

Key Points

1. A new era of warfare will begin with the American Civil War.
2. The Lord uses the word "shortly" to describe a time period of 29 years.
3. War will be poured out upon all nations – no exceptions.
4. Coalitions of nations will fight each other.
5. After many days slave shall rise up and make war against their masters.
6. The remnants of Israel living among the Gentiles will attack them.
7. Saints will be persecuted and killed.
8. Two purposes for the war are mentioned: to chasten the inhabitants of the earth, and to avenge the persecution and murder of the saints.
9. The wars will be accompanied by famine, plague, earthquakes, and storms, and they will continue until they make a full end of all nations – no exceptions.
10. We are commanded to stand in holy places, and not be moved, until the coming of Christ.

Timeline

