

Forgotten Peace

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Isaiah 11:1-9

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One of the familiar elements of the Christmas story is found in Luke chapter two; when the angels announced the birth of Jesus to some shepherds. The words have become familiar for some of us. These angels announced glory and they announced peace, specifically peace on earth.

Long before these angels made this announcement, God was speaking through His prophets about the same thing. *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.*¹ (Isaiah 9:6-7). So the announcement by these angels was something that had been foretold long before Christ was born.

What must have these shepherds thought when they heard “Peace on Earth”? I suspect they were thinking that the promised Messiah had come to reestablish Israel as the Nation of Glory it once was. That was the common thinking of the day; that Christ would come to remove the tyranny and oppression the people were feeling after years of occupation. But they had a misguided understanding of peace. They were thinking of a political peace.

Like these shepherds, we too have a limited understanding of the peace this Child in a manger would bring. For most, when we think of peace, our minds focus upon the absence of war. And yet, even if I do lay down my sword and you put down your rock, there is no true peace. Even though there is nothing in our hand, there is still much within our heart and upon our tongue that would destroy. There is still un-atoned sin that makes us an enemy with God. And there still remains the adversary who slings his arrows against us.

¹*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Is 9:6-7). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Through the Old Testament Prophets, God actually spoke about three kinds of peace this Messiah would bring. He indicates that this Child would bring peace between us and God. *Then you will say on that day, "I will give thanks to You, O Lord; for although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, And You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."*² (Isaiah 12:1-2). The Messiah would enable us to be at peace with our fellow man. *Then at last the jealousy between Israel and Judah will end. They will not be rivals anymore.*³ (Isaiah 11:13) And we see this coming true through the work of Peter. *Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.*⁴ (Acts 10:34-36). And Paul made this same proclamation in Ephesians (**Read 2:11 - 18**)

Now most of us realize that we have peace with God by the work of Jesus upon the cross. And even though we often struggle, most of us know that through Jesus we are supposed to be at peace with our fellow man. But it's the third peace that we often forget. That's because it is a coming peace; a future peace that will happen when God finally restores this world's glory and the adversary is finally defeated.

Read Isaiah 11:1-9. Did you know that there is a day coming when this promise will come true? It is the day God finally grants us freedom from the accuser; that devil who is out to destroy us. It is a day when sin is removed from people like you and me. It is a day when the war that rages inside of us will finally be won. And that promised peace will be fulfilled because of this Child who is the Prince of Peace.

Peace with God. Peace with our fellow man. Peace from the adversary. Three ways that Jesus makes peace. But there is a catch. Did you miss it? The angel's announced it, but most of us never stop to consider its meaning. The angels announce *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom*

²New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Is 12:1-2). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

He is pleased."⁵ This announced peace is for those who have pleased God. This peace is for people today who have called upon the name of Jesus as their Savior. But for those who have rejected His message or ignored it, Jesus does not bring peace, He brings judgment. For those whose sins are not covered by the blood of Christ; for those trusting in their own righteousness; for those who remain God's enemies, there is no peace to be found in Jesus. He reminds us that, "*For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds.*"⁶ (Matthew 16:27) Your heart will always be troubled. Your future will be one of pain and anguish. Unless, of course, you make peace with God through Christ the Son. The Child whose birth the angels proclaimed.

Now the good part. After the shepherds went into Bethlehem to see what the angels had announced, they "*told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished.*"⁷ (Luke 2:17-18) I believe those of us who know the peace these angels talked about have the same responsibility these shepherds had. We too have been commissioned by God to be the messengers of this peace. And to take this Good News out into the world and tell all who will listen and believe. We are the instruments through which this peace is proclaimed. Shout it from the highest hills. Proclaim it to the ends of the earth. Salvation, and its resulting peace, can be found in no other name but Jesus.

⁵*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Lk 2:14). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁶Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁷Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.