

Peace

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We hear news daily of war. Conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East persist. There is increasing hostility throughout the world. Domestically, political divisions deepen. There is much unrest in our lives. Yet, the holiday season is considered a time of peace and joy.

Christmas tends to bring out the best in people. For a couple of weeks in December, the world is reminded of the need for peace. Then, as the New Year arrives, the world goes back to life as usual. If we want to break the cycle of division, we must deepen our understanding of Jesus and how we can experience the peace He offers.

The birth of Jesus reminds the world of peace. At His birth, the heavenly host celebrated, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14). Did this declaration bring a cessation to the problems of the world? Not at all. No sooner was this announcement made that Herod was ordering the mass murder of newborn children!

So, what did the peace of Jesus mean for the world? Is the peace of Jesus mere wishful thinking? After all, Jesus’ life ended in a violent act of injustice. Can Jesus offer peace to our world? We must consider the peace of Jesus in more detail.

The Peace of Jesus

1). The need for peace. Peace was as needed at the time Jesus was born as it is needed today. There is a cosmic battle that has been ongoing for many years (Ezek. 28:11-19; Gen. 6:1-4; Eph. 6:11-12). The devil and his army have been waging war against God and His council. The devil seeks to defeat God by harming us. He takes us to his side by enticing us to sin against God. When we choose to sin, we become the enemy of God (Rom. 5:10).

Enemies of God are enemies of good. As sinners, we become antagonistic towards righteousness, justice, purity, mercy, and humility. Such hostility only brings pain, animosity, and brokenness to our lives and relationships. These consequences only grow exponentially throughout society and the broader world.

Within the world, there is no true peace. Whatever semblance of peace is gained in the world is only achieved through might. When someone stronger arises, war ensues. Peace is lost. Unless and until we come to know Jesus, we will never have peace with God or man.

2). How peace was provided. The peace of Jesus is largely misunderstood. While the world celebrates the birth of Jesus, most fail to realize that peace was provided by His death.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church, he explained how peace was made through the death of Jesus. God was able to reconcile a hostile world through Jesus. By Jesus’ death, the debt of our sins was paid.

“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility” (Eph. 2:12-16).

3). Peace by believing. God has provided the world peace through Jesus. However, we must believe in Jesus to be reconciled to God and receive peace. Faith requires we entrust our lives to Jesus by obeying Him. Remember, the angels declared “peace among those whom He is pleased.” God does not offer peace by default. God offers peace through faith. Faith pleases God (Heb. 11:6).

In Romans chapter five, Paul wrote, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). Faith brings closeness to the family of God and empowers us to endure the hardships of life. By faithfully relying on God, His peace will guard and save us (Phil. 4:7, 9).

4). Ministers of reconciliation. As believers in Jesus, we are to become ministers of reconciliation. We are to be working to persuade the enemies of God to be reconciled to Him through Jesus. After explaining how God offered peace to the world through the cross of Jesus, Paul wrote, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

As diplomats of the kingdom, we are to wisely appeal to our enemies with the Gospel. The peace of God came through tremendous sacrifice. Jesus died and was raised to make peace possible. The Gospel compels us to surrender by love (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Appealing to our enemies with love demonstrates sincerity. The power of a changed life is greatly persuasive in peace talks.

What’s the Point?

If we want peace in our lives, we will have to do more than be nice during the holidays. Nice is not enough. We need our sins forgiven. We need to be reconciled to our God. We need to be reconciled to the people of God. We need to preach peace. All of this requires faith. Through faith in what God did for us through the cross of Jesus, we can receive peace that surpasses comprehension.