



Peace



Meaning of Peace

“Peace” is often defined as the absence of war or hostility. However, the biblical meaning of peace is broader. In the Bible, the main words used for peace are the Hebrew word *shālôm* and the Greek word *eirēnē*. *Shālôm* has the general meaning of completeness, wholeness, wellness, harmony, and security.¹ The New Testament uses the word *eirēnē* in a similar way.

In our world today, people may argue about the different theories for achieving peace, but most people agree that true peace requires the presence of justice, which implies the recognition of righteousness.² As the psalmist said, “righteousness and peace kiss each other” (*Psalms 85:10*).

📖 “The fruit of [the LORD’s] righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.” (*Isaiah 32:17, NIV*)³

Hope for Peace

In Lesson 1, we talked about “hope.” In the Old Testament period, peace was central to Israel’s hope. This hope was based on God’s revelation through his prophets. For example, Jeremiah wrote:

📖 “So do not be afraid, Jacob⁴ my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid.” (*Jer. 30:10, NIV*)

Isaiah spoke about the birth of a child who would be the “Prince of Peace.” Read *Isaiah 9:6-7*. This refers to the Messiah, the coming king who would establish righteousness and peace.

Advent of the Prince of Peace

Roughly 700 years after Isaiah’s prophecy, God sent an angel “to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David” (*Luke 1:27*). Mary was startled, but the angel told her...

📖 “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (*Luke 1:30-33, NIV*)

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messianic hope. He was born of a virgin (*Luke 1:34-35; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23*). He is the promised Son of David (*2 Samuel 7:5-16*). He is the Messiah (Christ). He is the Prince of Peace.

Read *Luke 2:1-14*. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in a very humble setting.⁵ An angel announced his birth to shepherds living in the fields nearby (*2:8-12*).



¹ Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), II-931.

² This is why absolute ‘tolerance’ does not work, because it tolerates evil. Of course, ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ must be defined by someone. Who is better qualified than the Creator and Ruler of the universe? If true peace requires the presence of justice and righteousness, then true peace requires conformance to God’s rules of righteousness.

³ The context is Isaiah’s description of the kingdom of God. He writes, ‘See, a king will reign in righteousness, and rulers will rule with justice’ (*32:1*). Isaiah looked forward to the coming Messiah.

⁴ ‘Jacob’ is another name for the people of Israel. Jacob (renamed Israel) was the father of the nation (*Genesis 35:10*).

⁵ The Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem (the town of David) was a fulfillment of prophecy (*Micah 5:2*). A ‘manger’ is a feeding trough for animals, implying that Jesus was born in a building, room, or cave in which animals were kept.

1. The good news of the Messiah's coming is for "all the people" (2:10), but what about peace? To whom does God give peace? (2:14)

Peace is given "to those on whom [God's] favor rests" (2:14). This refers to those who respond to the good news according to God's grace. True peace is *peace with God*, received through faith.⁶

Way of Peace

True peace is peace with God, but humankind is hostile toward God.⁷ A holy God cannot simply overlook sin. We all deserve God's righteous judgment. But God has provided the Way of Peace.

2. Considering the following verses, how can the Prince of Peace reconcile⁸ sinful humans to a holy and righteous God?



- 📖 *Speaking of the Messiah (Jesus), Isaiah wrote, "...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)
- 📖 *Paul wrote, "...Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* (2 Corinthians 5:20-21, NIV)

Realization of Peace

True peace is realized through faith in the Prince of Peace. However, all of us still live in a world of trouble, conflict, hostility and war. In fact, Christians may face even greater conflict in some ways as we enter the "war" against the spiritual forces that oppose God (Ephesians 6:10-18).⁹ But the full realization of peace will come when the Prince of Peace returns (at his second advent).

3. Until then, what can believers do to experience more peace (*shālôm*) in everyday life? Consider the following verses.

- 📖 "You will keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal." (Isa. 26:3-4)
- 📖 "...the mind governed by the [indwelling Holy] Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6, NIV)
- 📖 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..." (Colossians 3:15)
- 📖 "...make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19)

Reflection & Application

- Do you desire peace (*shālôm*)? Do you know the Prince of Peace? Do you need to trust in him?
- Brothers & sisters, are you experiencing peace in your daily lives? This week, reflect on: Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:12-15; Ephesians 4:2-6; Hebrews 12:7-11; and Galatians 5:22.

⁶ Those who receive the Prince of Peace as Lord & Savior will receive the *peace with God* that he provides (Rom. 5:1).

⁷ 'hostile' – opposed to; of or belonging to an enemy; unfriendly. It may sound extreme to say all humanity is naturally hostile toward God. However, humankind has failed to honor God as Creator and Lord. Humankind has rejected God, or rebelled against his righteous authority. All are affected. 'For all have sinned [against God]' (Romans 3:23).

⁸ 'reconcile' – to bring together again; to change from enmity to friendship; to mend a broken relationship. Though we deserve God's judgment, Jesus took our sins upon himself and died in our place, so that we could be reconciled to God.

⁹ Peace is not passivity! As we stand up for truth and righteousness, there will be conflict. Even the Prince of Peace brought division (Matt. 10:34). However, if possible, we should attempt to live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18).