

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1564



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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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A Time for Peace

The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed an agreement with the German Chancellor Adolf Hitler at the end of September 1938 and returned to England to explain that he had entered into an Anglo-German Naval Agreement which, he hoped, was symbolic “of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again”.

The First World War had ended in 1918, just 20 years before, and had been devastating. You can understand the Prime Minister’s fervent wish that no such hostilities would take place again. Later, outside 10 Downing Street, he made the now famous statement:

*My good friends, for the second time in our history, a British Prime Minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honour. **I believe it is peace for our time.** We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Go home and get a nice quiet sleep.*

The first British Prime Minister to use that phrase had been Benjamin Disraeli in 1878 but it is Mr Chamberlain’s speech that everyone now remembers, for he was seriously mistaken. Less than a year after the signing of that agreement Europe was again plunged into a world war. It was no time for peace. Sadly, it was a time for war.

A Time For...

Three thousand years before Mr. Chamberlain used that expression “peace for our time” a wise king had commented on the way that time controls our lives. He spoke about it as



though life was like a patchwork quilt of different experiences. Just as different fabrics of varying designs and colours are sewn together to make a quilt, so various experiences in life come together to form and shape a person’s lifetime. This is how Solomon saw life in all its complexity and variety:

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh...

In a carefully constructed and divinely inspired rehearsal of how things work out for different people Solomon concludes his analysis with these words:

*...A time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and **a time of peace** (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).*

War and Peace

For forty years Solomon reigned as God’s appointed King, ruling from Jerusalem over “the throne of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 29:23). His kingdom was God’s kingdom on earth, a kingdom which will be reinstated

when Jesus returns, as promised, to rule from Jerusalem: “the city of the great King” (Matthew 5:35). Solomon had a remarkably peaceful reign, consolidating the territorial expansion of his father King David and ruling wisely by making shrewd alliances and entering into commercial arrangements with other countries which were profitable for all concerned. He thus amassed a huge personal fortune and enriched the nation mightily. But at his death everything fell apart.

Solomon’s successor was as foolish as Solomon was wise. Civil war raged and the nation was torn apart. A powerful neighbouring country seized the opportunity to attack and plunder and the weakened nation could not defend itself. From then on the ‘time of peace’ was replaced by ‘a time of war’ and the pattern in Israel has been repeated the world over, then and now.

Nobody knows when the next war will break out somewhere in the world. Nobody knows when the next terrorist attack will take place, or where that might be. We live in an increasingly violent and uncertain world where the capability to wreak devastation can so easily fall into the hands of extremists who are willing to die for what they believe.

Who Knows?

This magazine would be called “Bad Tidings” if it contained just a review of the dangers and problems that confront us. We need to recognize them for what they are; otherwise we live in a fool’s paradise. But the Bible is full of good news from God and those who read it can be reassured that God both knows all that is happening and can control the outcome as part of His plan of salvation. For Solomon went on to say that God:

... has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

It is one of the things that distinguish humans from other animals that we have a sense of eternity in our hearts – a sense that there is something else, other than this mortal existence, a sense of another world or another dimension that we want to be part of, and rightly so. God is in heaven and we are on earth (Ecclesiastes 5:2) but God means to establish His heavenly kingdom on earth, which is why the Lord taught his disciples to pray:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6:10).

God knows when that Kingdom will be established, but we do not. The Scriptures tell us the reason and it is relevant to all, for God is waiting for us to accept His gracious invitation to be at peace with Him. Here’s the apostle Peter’s explanation:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Finding Peace

This issue of “Glad Tidings” examines what the Bible says about peace with God. This includes having peace of mind, finding a right relationship with God through the saving work of Jesus and understanding what God is about to do to transform our war-weary world into a peaceful place where righteousness and right-thinking will prevail.

Editor

Peace in our Lives

What are the kinds of things which destroy peace in our lives?

- ❖ *Family worries*
- ❖ *Money worries*
- ❖ *Worries about work*
- ❖ *Worries about our health*
- ❖ *Worries about the neighbours*
- ❖ *Worries about things in the world*
- ❖ *Worries about the future*
- ❖ *Worries about life after death.*

So, in the face of all that, what does the Bible say about peace in our lives?

❑ **Shalom**

The word in the Old Testament, still used as a greeting today amongst Jews worldwide, is “Shalom”. But “shalom” doesn’t simply mean “peace” – its basic meaning is “being complete, being whole”. That which is at peace is that which is whole; conversely, that which is whole is at peace. So when we suffer from any of the worries mentioned above, we are not whole, we are not complete, and our worries eat into our state of mind, our wellbeing, both our physical and mental health.

❑ **Eirene**

The New Testament word translated “peace” has a similar significance – the Greek word is “eirene” and is used of the weaving together of the structure of a piece of cloth or fabric – the weft and the warp. The strands of the fabric are interwoven so that they become one piece of cloth, which is very difficult to break down or tear apart – it is whole or complete.

State of Mind

So peace isn’t just an absence of war – it’s a state of mind, a sense of being whole; peace, or the absence of it, pervades every aspect of our lives. The question is: ‘How can we attain the peace and wholeness which these words imply?’

The nation of Israel had a special relationship with God. When making an agreement (or covenant) with them God said this:

I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land... (Leviticus 26:6).

And this is the condition on which God made that promise:

If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them (Leviticus 26:3).

Years later, David the Psalmist, the king of Israel, said:

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble (Psalm 119:165).

He was promising that if we rely on God’s law as our guide in life, nothing will disturb our lives or make us stumble.

Widespread Distress

It seems to be a sad truth that a vast majority of people now openly acknowledge that the Bible, which claims to be God’s Word, has no place in their lives and is not relevant to modern-day living. Yet that denial of

the Bible's relevance and efficacy has gone side-by-side with a present-day epidemic of stress and worry in all aspects of life – personal, national and international. These are things that pervade most levels of society. Can it be a coincidence? I think not!

The apostle Paul offered this reassurance when writing to believers in Philippi:

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

Research has shown that people with a Christian faith, founded on a belief in the Bible, do live calmer lives, and have a peaceful ambience in their lives and, in fact, generally tend to live longer than average. We find in the Bible such passages as these:

- ❖ *I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8).*
- ❖ *When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7).*
- ❖ *You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3).*
- ❖ Speaking metaphorically to Jerusalem, God makes this promise: *"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).*
- ❖ *These are the things you shall do: speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace (Zechariah 8:16).*

Peace with God

That message in Zechariah indicates that there's a social aspect to this too. If everyone were to follow this example, and speak God's truth to their neighbour, much of the disharmony amongst our near neighbours and between international entities would cease to exist. And if we lived out the principle in our own lives, we would experience that inner peace enjoyed by those who are at peace with God and with themselves. We would then be "whole" people.

Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice for our sins, but before his death and resurrection he gave his disciples this supreme gift:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

Real peace rests with Jesus, and we can enjoy it when we align our lives with him.

Try this!

I suggest that, as you read this, you sit down now and read Psalm 37 through, quietly and thoughtfully. I'm sure it will go a long way to bringing you peace in your life – follow where it leads you!

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass (Psalm 37:4–5).

Having a relationship with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ, both of whom care for you, is a sure way of achieving peace in your life.

Hamilton Wilson

No More War

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write these words more than 2500 years ago:

*He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore** (Isaiah 2:4).*

In our world of wars and rumours of wars the idea that no one would even understand the concept of violence seems like a dreamy comment from someone who does not live in the real world of the 21st century. Yet men have dreamed of the idea of real peace for all for millennia, even whilst recognising that it is most unlikely to happen.

The First World War poet, Wilfred Owen, was one such man. He knew his Bible well but in one of his most famous poems “Strange Meeting” he wrote of war and peace with a sad recognition that a world without war or violence was unlikely:

The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we
spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek
from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their
chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet
wells,
Even with truths that be too deep for taint.

It’s a hundred years since that war in which Owen fought and died. Sadly, he was killed just four days before its conclusion. It was a war which changed the world forever, which is why it has been featured in so many media programmes and other events, 100 years on.

It was not merely the scale of it with up to 21 million soldiers and civilians being killed and maimed (depending on which statistics are used). Neither was it the gigantic industrial scale on which countries organised and prosecuted the war. It was, rather, the loss of innocence on the extent of what one human can and will do to another in given circumstances.

Moral Compass

I believe this to be an event in which the moral compass of the world, for it was a world war, changed forever. When 20,000 men can be killed in ten minutes even civilians have to understand the horrific and continuing nature of what man develops. The legion of caring and heroic stories that accompanied the slaughter barely begin to balance the depth of violence that individuals and countries will perpetrate in the name of patriotism or even in the name of God – a God who commands us not to kill but to “love our enemies”.

This war was only “outdone” by the extension of it in the Second World War and the mechanised killing of 6 million Jews in the holocaust. If these are the lengths to which men will go to show their hatred of one another, what chance is there for real peace, never mind an absence of war in our world

today? Russia marshalled its enormous forces to invade its neighbour Ukraine and repossess the Crimea. We read daily of wars in Africa, Afghanistan and Syria to name but three on-going conflicts.

Some people argue that there are benefits to war: improved medical practices, better social care following conflicts and better education systems. Others passionately believe in the causes for which they fight. One young man from Accrington had inscribed on his gravestone in France:

The French are a grand nation, worth dying for.

Others looked for adventure and enlisted under age, paying the ultimate price at the ages of 14 and 15. There are people, religious people, who believe there is a concept of a “just war” and who would cite the holocaust as an example. Radicalised teenagers



head for Syria or Iraq intent upon pursuing their personal jihad and appear to relish dying as a martyr for what they see as a just cause.

New World

Most people who try to love and serve God according to His precepts given in both the Old and New Testaments would not think like that. The commandment not to kill is very clear, as is Jesus’ teaching about loving our neighbour as ourselves and his instruction that we must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. (Matt 5:44). The Sermon on the Mount in the rest of Matthew chapters 5 and 6 demonstrates the philosophy of a life without sin and violence.

That is the lifestyle that Jesus will restore to the earth at his return. He shows a need for righteousness; people who want to develop a pure heart and show mercy to others; those who have compassion for the poor, the sick and those who are ill-treated by society. Isaiah shows God’s world as one where the bear will eat straw like the ox and the wolf and the lamb will sit together with small children (Isaiah 11:6-8). Psalm 72 speaks of this new world:

Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor (Psalm 72:1–4).

The Psalm continues:

In his days the righteous shall flourish,



A mural painted by Verity Norris depicts the scene of Isaiah 11:6-8.

and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more (Psalm 72:7).

The whole of this psalm is a description of a world without war. It is not a pipe dream. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for sin and his resurrection are God's guarantee that peace – real peace in our world, here on our planet – will happen, that it will be real and that it will last. The last two

chapters of the Book of Revelation describe a world where those who love violence and evil are utterly and permanently excluded and where people will have a real, personal and visible relationship with God and his Son in a world which will be at peace.

Almost the last verse of the Bible reads:

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20).

Jesus is coming to implement God's peace plan. It won't fail like those of the politicians from WW1 or since, who have consistently failed to achieve a real and lasting political peace, never mind personal peace. Only God and the Lord Jesus can achieve that. Would you like to be there enjoying that peace?

Cynthia Miles

Be at Peace with God!

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:4–9).



All Our Problems Solved

How we dread these words spoken by an unknown voice: 'I'm sorry, but there is a problem.' It could be our online order, our credit card, or little Johnny at school. Our heart sinks immediately.

There was once a famous line spoken in a laconic drawl that ran 'Houston, we have a problem!' It could have marked the end of an Apollo mission, and it set the NASA space team racing for a solution that would save the lives of the astronauts in their powerless capsule. Life is full of such problems, and just as we seem to have emerged from the last one, another springs upon us.

Of course, there are people who enjoy solving problems. You see them on the bus with their crosswords or Sudoku in front of them. You even pay them to dismantle your precious laptop to find out why it has stopped working. But for most of us problems are an intrusion into the serenity of our lives, and we wish they would go away.

Self-Inflicted?

Some of our troubles are plainly our own fault. We forget to lock the car, or oversleep, or go out without a coat and get chilled. But others are due to the evil human heart. Think of muggings, civil wars or even World Wars. Pride, greed or the desire for revenge start off a chain of events that ends in misery and death. The Apostle James puts it neatly:

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and



cannot obtain. You fight and war (James 4:1–2).

Jesus adds:

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (Matthew 15:19).

So far, no one has been able to tame the human heart. Time after time it ruins our life. And we have to admit it is not always the other people. Very often we have allowed our feelings to run away with us, and brought misery and reproach upon ourselves.

But other problems hit us that seem to be entirely random. We might be diagnosed with cancer, involved in a car crash, or have the house washed away in a storm and there appears to be no logic behind such events. Nobody caused them. Yet they can be dreadfully painful to bear. So, what is the answer to problems? Will this cycle go on forever? It might seem that the book of Job is right when it says:

Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7).

God's Solution

The good news is that God has a great plan that will one day bring all human troubles to an end. But there is an entry requirement. If we want to enjoy that happy time ahead, we need to do something about it now. Once, Jesus' disciples asked him about a tragedy that had recently occurred in Galilee. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, had cruelly slaughtered some of their fellow countrymen while they were offering sacrifices to God.

It seemed unjust that people going about a good deed like that should be struck dead. Was the answer, they implied, that these men must have been very wicked underneath, and so were made to suffer? No, Jesus says, they were no worse than anyone else. He added a similar case of his own – a tower in Jerusalem had recently collapsed, killing eighteen people – then he asked:

Do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5).

The important point is his last line. Jesus explained that everyone in Jerusalem was a sinner. For the men who were killed accidentally it was too late to repent of their sins. They had perished. If we are sensible, Jesus is saying, we will seek forgiveness and reconciliation with God now, while we have the opportunity, and then we shall not perish, but be saved from eternal death by our faith in God.

Solving Sin

The fact is that all our problems arise, one way or another, from human sin. Adam started it all off when he decided to defy God and eat the forbidden fruit.

He brought death into the world. We die, partly because we are descended from Adam, but also because of our own sins. We each have a record of anger and lying and lust and all the other things God hates. Adam brought a curse upon the world, and for thousands of years men have suffered the problems that followed: pain, disasters, wars, and tears that fall like rain. Such problems might have gone on forever, but for God's great plan.

God sent His Son – the Lord Jesus – who for the first time was able to tame the human heart. He was without sin. He rose from the tomb to glory and immortality, because he did not deserve to die. And his victory over sin will bring an end to the curse for all those who believe in him. In the Kingdom of God, war and famine, crime and tsunamis will cease forever. The nations of the earth will rejoice in Jesus' beneficent reign. Here are two quotations to tell us that we can become God's children and experience the joy and freedom from all problems:

“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God ... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:18–21).

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

David M Pearce

No More Death

Most of us have been affected by death at some time. My wife suffered from cancer for six years, and sadly died a few years ago. Thank the Lord I am now happily married again, but you never forget, do you?

This special edition of “*Glad Tidings*” is all about Peace so it seems appropriate to consider the greatest enemy of all: one from which nobody can escape. Throughout history there has been no escape from death. We cannot live forever as things stand.

Death Sentence

The first death sentence was passed by God on the first man Adam, after his sin in the Garden of Eden. But the more you think about it, you might decide that death is not really such a bad thing! It means that evil people do not live forever. True, it also means that good people die as well – but you can’t have it both ways. You really wouldn’t want the Hitler’s of this life to be around still, wreaking havoc on Jews and gypsies, would you?

Our limited life span also means that whoever we are, we have to make the best use of our time here, and as the Bible says, to “*number our days*” (Psalm 90:12).

What Is Death?

Death is the opposite of life. The first man was created by God. He was perfectly formed, but was not breathing for he was lifeless.

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).



At death the exact opposite happens. Our breath comes out of us for the last time, and the body becomes lifeless. The dead body returns to the earth, and reverts to the same dust from which Adam was made. The Bible explains that death is a sleep. Just as we didn’t know that we were asleep last night in bed, so the dead do not know they are dead:

For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks? (Psalm 6:5).

For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevertheless will they have a share In anything done under the sun (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6).

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Death is Death!

From these and many other Scriptures it is perfectly obvious that our

thoughts, our emotions, and in fact our whole life is concluded when we die. Of course, it might be great to think that life resumes immediately on death – but that is not what the Bible teaches. Death is the end of our existence until Jesus returns, and then the dead will be raised (see Daniel 12:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14). The Lord Jesus is to judge those who have known sufficient about him in their lifetime, and will give them a place in his Kingdom if they are counted worthy (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Is There an After-Life?

Yes, of course there is.

- ❖ Abraham was promised that he and his family would own the land that he was looking at, forever (Genesis 13:15) – but for now he's dead. He is asleep in death, waiting for the resurrection.
- ❖ David was told by God that he would see his Son (Jesus) reigning on his throne for ever (2 Samuel 7:16) – but David too is dead.

None of this is any problem to God. He made Adam out of the dust of the ground, He raised Jesus out of the garden tomb, so surely He will keep His word and raise Abraham and David to life again.

When Jesus was here on earth he performed many miracles. All of them proved that he had God's power, and therefore the miracles were a foretaste of the coming Kingdom. They were a sort of visual aid to demonstrate and expand the Lord's teaching. During his ministry Jesus raised three people to life:

- ❖ *Jairus' daughter in Capernaum – who had only just died (Luke 8:40-56)*
- ❖ *The widow of Nain's son who was being carried to his funeral (Luke 7:11-17)*
- ❖ *Lazarus of Bethany – who had been dead for four days (John 11:1-45)*

The Lord was demonstrating his ability to raise the dead, whether they had only fallen asleep in the last hour, the last day, or four days ago. And he has that same ability or power today.

Safely Asleep

Just as we didn't know that we were asleep in bed at 2 or 3am this morning, so we didn't know that we had been asleep for 4 or 7 hours. In the same way Abraham, David, and other believers who died several thousand years ago don't know that they are dead.

Long ago a man named Job had complete confidence in God. Even though things were troubling him, he fully believed that the Lord God would raise him from the dead when he wrote these words:

And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God... (Job 19:26).

Job's sleep has been a long one, for he lived about 4,000 years ago. But he died in faith. He believed in the resurrection, and one day soon, Job, Abraham, David and our loved ones will be brought out of their graves. Jesus will be here, and at long last there will be no more death. That means real peace!

David Simpson

Peace With God

Everyone's life is a constant battle. We know how we ought to behave but we don't always follow our consciences and so find ourselves full of regret:

- ❖ "If only I'd been more considerate, then it wouldn't have happened, would it?" or
- ❖ "I do wish now that I hadn't said that to her. It clearly upset her and I feel bad about the whole business!"

Yet there are times when we just choose to "move on" and forget what we've said or done so badly. But then of course we're simply overriding our conscience and ignoring what we ought to be doing to put things right.

Nobody's Perfect!

Mistakes of this sort are what the Bible calls "Sin". I know it's an old-fashioned word but that doesn't mean that sin itself is out of date. It's as up to date as anything! There isn't anyone free from this plague of wrong-doing. The apostle Paul once summed up the human problem thus:

There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God (Romans 3:10–11).

But for those who are distressed by this situation there is hope. Our very nature is one that has fallen from what God intended it to be. Whether we like it or not, we are stricken with sin, disease and death — and we can't of ourselves do anything about it! Yet the loving God of whom we can learn in the Bible has shown us how we can be



changed. The apostle John provides this explanation:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

Propitiation

It's a big word I know and one we rarely use but its meaning is straightforward enough. Those who worshipped idols in Biblical times used to make sacrifices to their idols to get them on their side so they would provide good harvests, healthy flocks and herds and all the good things of life.

However, the loving God of heaven has Himself made the greatest of all possible sacrifices to get us on His side. He gave His Son to save mankind from sin. This was how God provided us with a covering or propitiation for our sins, but it comes with a condition:

*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, **that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).***

Yes, there is the condition. Forgiveness comes to “*whoever believes!*”! That means we have to trust God and take Him at His word. There is a Bible word for this quality too: we must have faith. Please don’t shrink from this word, thinking it’s only in the Bible. It’s part of our everyday lives. For instance, we ask a tradesman to do a job for us at home and because he has been recommended to us, we trust him to do the job properly. Expressed in Bible language: ‘We have faith in him!’

Right with God

And here’s another big word for you to ponder over – “justification” and you’ll see why I’ve mentioned it in a moment! If a prisoner in the dock has been charged with some wrongdoing but then is pronounced “Not guilty!” he is cleared of all charges against him and is free to go. In Biblical terminology he would then be ‘justified’ or ‘declared righteous’. There is an Old Testament character of whom this is said:

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3, quoting Genesis 15:6).

Wouldn’t we all like to be in that position: being counted righteous or just in God’s sight, because He has cleared us of all wrong-doing for Christ’s sake? Well, we can be. Here’s one of the most reassuring passages in the Bible:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1–2).

If – and it’s a big “if” – we trust God implicitly because of what the Lord Jesus has achieved for us through his sacrificial death, God will look upon us as righteous, cleared of all charges of wrongdoing and so we will have peace with Him. You can see how the apostle Paul marvelled at all that God is willing to do for us, unworthy as we all are.

The Fight of Faith

When we have made our peace with God the battle of life will continue and it will be a continuous struggle, as the apostle so clearly tells us (Romans 7:15-21). We will still commit sins but they can now be confessed and forgiven by the man or woman who trusts God implicitly. In that way our lives can be cleansed (1 John 1:9) and this privilege can be exercised day after day, by the mercy of God.

What a joy this is – to be at one with the Creator of the world. The prayer of Jesus himself will be answered for you and me, if we are faithful:

... That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me (John 17:21).

Trevor Pritchard

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A World at Peace

*For lo, the days are hastening on
By Prophet bards foretold
When with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And all the world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.*

This verse is part of a Christmas carol and Christmas is a time when most people are full of good wishes and nice feelings. But wouldn't it be wonderful if this carol came true; literally true? Wouldn't it be amazingly wonderful to live in a world which is genuinely at peace! Men and women at peace with one another the whole world over! And people at peace within their own hearts and minds and, most importantly, at peace with God himself! Is this just a pipe dream? Is it really a fanciful, idealistic notion which will never happen? It is not!

God's Great Plan

What we should really understand is that God is involved and will ultimately make it happen. He has already intervened in human affairs several times in order to move on His plan and to engage with us – so that we willingly become involved in working towards establishing His peace on the earth.

There was a major step forward 2000 years ago when God sent his Son into the world to make the clearest statement yet that He wishes all mankind to join Him in this master project to bring “peace on earth”.

In order to have peace we need strong and righteous government and that is what Jesus Christ will provide –



remember he lived as a wandering preacher, died on the cross and rose again from the dead to ascend to glory in heaven. He is now about to return. He is alive for ever so there will be no concerns about succession. He is currently recruiting men and women to support him in the new world order which he will establish when he returns. Look at these promises:

❖ The angel to Mary:

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:30-33).

❖ The words of Isaiah:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6–7).

❖ **The prophet Zechariah:**

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.’
“Thus says the Lord: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain.’
“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets’”
(Zechariah 8:2–5).*

Great Promises

There are many more Bible passages which describe the new age of peace, but for now here’s a summary of what we’ve learned:

- ✓ It is God’s plan to bring peace on earth
- ✓ He has appointed Jesus Christ as his King who will rule from Jerusalem – the city of peace.
- ✓ Jesus will establish a new world order in which ordinary men and women, old and young, live in peace and confidence side by side.
- ✓ What is really important is that you and I should see ourselves as being part of this wonderful project. We

could be part of it. That is the Good News, the Gospel’s message for today.

Look again at these words of Jesus:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9).

‘Blessed’ means, ‘O the bliss of ...’ or ‘How happy are ...’. God and the Lord Jesus Christ have given us the secret of finding true happiness in building a relationship with them – being at peace with them. We in our turn join in their plan for the world’s peace by sharing what we have learned with others. Thus the angel’s message at the birth of Jesus will be fulfilled and there will be:

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!
(Luke 2:14).*

Peace with God is something which we can have now, but it will be gloriously fulfilled throughout all the world when Jesus comes again to rule as King over God’s Kingdom.

David Nightingale



A War to End All Wars

The United States entered into the First World War hostilities in April 1917 when President Woodrow Wilson asked the American Congress for a declaration of war.

President Wilson was good at moulding public opinion with his rhetoric and he appears to have coined such optimistic phrases as “*a war to make the world safe for democracy*” and “*a war to end all wars*”. In fact the latter phrase was already in public use, thanks to the British author H G Wells who wrote a series of newspaper articles in 1914 which were later published as a book with that title and it became a widely used catchphrase.

Pacifist Hopes

H G Wells was a pacifist but he clearly hoped that a war of this size might end war forever. The First World War was one in which each side fought on a scale hitherto unseen. All the resources of the countries involved were deployed – military, industrial and human. An estimated 10 million soldiers were killed, and another 10 million civilians, as modern weapons and technologies were used. The brutal horrors of the trenches were reported in news stories, photographs and even film, in a way people had never before seen or experienced. Wells wrote this optimistic assessment, which turned out to be totally wrong:

“This is now a war for peace. It aims straight at disarmament. It aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing for ever. Every soldier who fights against Germany now is a crusader

against war. This, the greatest of all wars, is not just another war—it is the last war!”

How we all wish that he had been right and that thereafter the world had come to its senses, disarmed and concentrated its energies on peaceful pursuits that would have made the world a better place for everyone. But it wasn't to be. Even at the Paris Peace Conference which settled the war, British field marshal Archibald Wavell is said to have dismissed the solutions drafted there by saying, “*After ‘the war to end war’ they seem to have been pretty successful in Paris at making a ‘Peace to End Peace’*”. David Fromkin wrote a book with that very title in 1989 in which he traced today's problems in the Middle East to the way in which the Ottoman Empire was carved up and allocated at the Paris Peace Conference. He suggested that all the present rivalries and animosities originate from that somewhat arbitrary process. But they have a much earlier origin.

Bible Perspective

The Biblical narrative takes us right back to the time when the infant nation of Israel first entered the land that God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their inheritance. In order to occupy it, the Israelis (as we now know them) had first to conquer the land from the people that were already there and thereafter there was often fighting and skirmishing with the nations around Israel. Some of those nations came from a branch of Abraham's extended family, but they seldom behaved as relatives.

Instead there developed an animosity and hatred that has continued right down to today. For, after Bible times the nation of Israel ceased to exist and the Jews were dispersed throughout the world until it pleased God to return them to their ancient homeland as He had promised:

As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day (Ezekiel 34:12).

God also foretold through his prophets that the restored Jewish nation would be surrounded by enemies, and that again there would be nations that resented the partitioning of the land and the re-creation of the nation of Israel. The same prophet who predicted the miracle of a Jewish return to the land also explained why God will judge those nations who oppose His purpose:

*I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. **“Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end (Ezekiel 35:4–5).***

Another Conflict

There is to be another war in the Middle East and again it will be a world war, but there will be some bizarre happenings. Consider this scenario. God is about to send His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven to earth, for he is to reign from Jerusalem over all nations when God’s Kingdom is re-established here.

The Coming King is the greatest man who ever lived. He was the best and kindest person you could ever meet. He went about doing good and because he was empowered by God he could feed the hungry, heal the sick, raise the dead and save people from their sins. Wouldn’t you want someone like that to rule the world? Wouldn’t we all welcome a righteous and benevolent head of state with the power to solve all human problems and make the world a wonderful place in which to live forever?

Yet the Bible predicts that when Jesus comes he will be opposed by people who are unwilling to surrender their power and they will wage war against him. Here’s an extract from the prophecy:

Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision... (Psalm 2:1–4).

Read the whole Psalm and you will see that this attempted attack will fail utterly, for God is determined to set His Son “on My holy hill of Zion” (2:6).

Jesus will reign from Jerusalem as God has promised and the world will be remade so that God’s glory will fill the earth. But here is the great news. That war, to try to oust Jesus from Jerusalem, will be the war we have all been hoping for: a war to end wars! For King Jesus is rightly named “the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Tecwyn Morgan

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