

Prince of Peace

So its Christmas....the celebration of Jesus' Birth....at least for some. Everyone is celebrating something tonight- For many Christmas is a very much focused on a baby born 2000 years ago..... But for many others this is a great day to celebrate, to see our families, to exchange gifts, to eat too much and to enjoy the many traditions that are part of this time of year. You can have a great time at Christmas without much thought about this baby boy born in Bethlehem.

So what's the big deal? Why are we here? Why is it that we all come together to celebrate Christmas but for many this child is no big deal and Christmas has never been or for a long time hasn't had anything to do with Jesus?

We have been studying what God told us through the prophet Isaiah 700 **PHOTO** years before Jesus was born. He predicted that a child would be born. (human) a Son would be given (The gift of the second person of the trinity....Spirit)....that . new government or kingdom would be on His shoulders....and there would be 4 unique things about this human that would separate Him and identify him for us

Isaiah 9:2 (ESV) — 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) — 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, . He would be called.....Wonderful Counselor.....Mighty God.....Everlasting Father.....and Prince of Peace.

Prince of Peace. Odd....of all the things God could have told us about the Messiah.....Prince of Peace was in the final 4. Not prince of Love, prince of hope, not prince of joy, not prince of salvation, not even prince of eternal life. God through Isaiah said people will call Him the Prince of Peace. How could Jesus be the Prince of Peace?

Look at his mission..... There is a clear impression of Jesus as being very mild mannered, kind, caring, and a person who reconciles people to one another and to God. There is a certain sense in which that is true. He certainly came to reconcile us to God and one another.

Yet in another sense the mission of Jesus is one of division. He says that he came to set men at variance with one another. In some way, because of Jesus, even close family members will be at odds with one another

Luke 12:51–53 (ESV) — 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

This passage is not an endorsement from Jesus for the Christian use of violence, Jesus is using a metaphor here. He explains that he's not talking about a sword that kills, but a sword that causes division in relationships.

When I gave my life to Christ things began to change very quickly in my life. It had a huge impact on my family relationships. The heart of the conflict was that by following Jesus I had adopted a new Lord and Master. My view of the world began to change. My values changed. My priorities changed. My ambitions changed. There was a growing gap that developed between me and others

If we are going to follow Jesus and have Him truly be our Lord then there will be times when people who do not follow Him will not understand us. There will be times when they will be angry with us, hurt by us, argue with us. We must realize that when we follow Jesus we become citizens of His Kingdom. We become exiles in our own communities. We just don't exactly fit anymore. That misfit will divide us from others.

I remember growing up at church camp and having it drilled into my head that following Jesus will make you "hated by the world". The reality is however, and what Jesus taught, is that loving God and loving others will more likely put you at odds with the people closest to you.

Jesus said He didn't come to bring peace but rather would divide.....Isaiah said that the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace.....and then Paul tells us

Romans 12:18 (ESV) — 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Doesn't this drive you crazy? This is why many don't read the bible. Prince of Peace but not on a mission of peace? I've come to divide but you are my people so live at peace with everyone? I've come to have you stand against violence, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, gender issues, abortion, and dozens of other topics. The very thing that makes many close to you to turn away....often other believers.

But Jesus didn't come to bring a period of tranquility where everyone holds hands in a hippie circle and sings Kumbaya. He came to bring upheaval to the ways of this world. He came to flip tables. He came to disrupt a false version and teaching of tolerance and peace. He came to speak for the oppressed, to loosen their chains, to welcome the sojourner, and to make room for everyone who trusts Him to be welcome at the table

So when Isaiah said he would be called the Prince of Peace....what did they understand Him to mean? Surely.....peace was not the absence of conflict. The Prince of Peace got Himself Killed in the midst of great conflict.. So what is their definition of peace and why is He called the Prince of Peace and not the King of Peace? AND why is this description of Him in the top 4?

More importantly...How do I get this peace? Who is it for?

Luke 2:12–14 (ESV) — 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Christmas Cards say "Peace on Earth and Goodwill toward men" and that is how this verse is translated in the KJV. However, In Greek, the term is clear. This peace is for those who have reconciled or been reconnected.

The angels are proclaiming peace on earth. The correct reading is "peace among those of good will". The peace that the angels are proclaiming.....the peace associated with the arrival of Jesus.....is not for everyone.

It is for those of good will.....those with whom God is pleased.....those who will choose to surrender to and embrace the gift of grace God offers through Jesus. The peace that Jesus offers is not peace among men.....it is not a life free from conflict or war.....it is not a peace that comes from being beat into submission..... Christmas cards imply that the message of Jesus is that we would have world peace

But God is very clear in Scripture....Jesus came, at least the first time, not to establish world peace or to bring peace into human relationships. In fact Jesus told us the opposite....Because of Him human relationships will be messed up. Families will be at odds with one another and you will hear of wars and rumors of war So what is the Peace God is talking about and why is Jesus called the prince of peace?

The peace that Jesus brings to earth....is peace with God.

Please don't miss this....The Peace you and I are really seeking.....is Peace with God.....we were born in conflict with God....it causes an internal anxiety.... The Gift of Christmas is that the battle you are having with God....doesn't have to continue....the internal worry fest that you are living...can stop

Jesus came so that you and I could be reconciled to God and finally fill that void in us that is crying out to be at peace. And the message of Christmas that most don't understand is this...**Until people have peace with God, they will never achieve peace with one another**

You see we think of peace as the absence of conflict. But peace in Hebrew....Shalom means so much more. It has nothing really to do with battles, wars or world conflict.

Shalom is all about God. Shalom is a term that Jewish people use to greet one another and to say goodbye to one another. Shalom carries with it a sense of being in the center of all that God has for you. Of being in a perfect relationship with Him, full of all the blessings he has for us, and contentment with who He created us to be.

It speaks of completeness, fullness, or a type of wholeness that encourages you to give back — to generously re-pay something in some way. True biblical shalom refers to an inward sense of completeness or wholeness.

Although it can describe the absence of war, a majority of biblical references refer to an inner completeness and tranquility. In Israel today, when you greet someone or say goodbye, you say, Shalom. You are literally saying, "may you be full of God's well-being"

In the biblical Hebrew understanding of shalom, there is a point at which you have so much shalom that it spills out from you, and is repaid or rendered to others. And so, as you make others peaceful and inwardly complete, that makes you a peacemaker. Shalom eventually will lead to peace with others but the primary intent is to be united with God in peace

In Romans Paul discusses the difference between the peace of God and peace with God. Peace with God comes only from accepting Jesus as your Savior. There is no middle ground. You are either at Peace with God or you are not. Those who are not at peace with God will find themselves troubled, fearful, anxious, and full of worry. Paul describes it in Romans 5

Romans 5:1 (ESV) — 1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For those who love and trust Jesus not only do they have peace with God....but they are promised that they have access to the peace OF God. Interesting that this promise comes on the back end of a command not to worry. It is almost as if God knew that worry is a barometer in any situation of our faith in God.

Philippians 4:5-7 (ESV) — The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus came on an earthly mission to bring us peace with God knowing that it would cause often a lack of peace among men. In fact to have peace with God always brings conflict to those who are not at peace with Him

When Isaiah told us that this child would be called Prince of Peace. He was telling us that Jesus would be the Prince of Shalom The Prince of everything being right with God, being in the fullness of His presence and His blessings .

Jesus was surrounded with conflict.....everywhere He went people were stirred up against Him.....His mission was to bring the peace of God to those who would choose to have peace with God. That peace.....he not only brought, he left for us as a gift.

You want to know what gift Jesus left under the tree at Christmas?

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

Jesus brings us a peace at Christmas that is peace with God....peace in Him. Look at how He describes it....

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Note that He says....IN Me. The peace with God comes through Jesus Himself. Also note that He says you may have it....He doesn't guarantee it.....many will reject Him and never find peace. But for those who do....HE promises peace in the midst of the trouble of this world.

Also we don't create the peace in our soul.....God does

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV) — 3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Not only does Jesus bring us the gift of peace with God.....as we trust in Him and keep our mind focused on Him....HE keeps us there....in Shalom

There is a piece of art that I like ART PHOTO IT is simply called Peace.... It depicts heavy storms....lightning....flood waters crashing over rocks....and yet in the center.....is a calm and quiet bird resting in the protection of the clefts ART PHOTO 2....seemingly oblivious to the storms around them. That is how I picture the peace of God.

So why is the Messiah called a Prince of Peace? If the gift of Christmas is Peace with God.....why didn't Isaiah call Him the King of Peace? Once again we have to understand what the original audience thought of when they heard the Word Prince.....

To them a Prince was one who carried potential. One who was guaranteed to be King but was not yet fully established in that Role. To be the prince of something was to usher it in, to lead people to it, and to embrace the promise of it.

Jesus came the first time and said....Don't think that I have come to bring peace...no not peace but rather division. However His message was also a promise of peace to come The Kingdom or Government that will be on His shoulders...will one day be one of total peace. It will come after Jesus returns to set things right.

What sort of king is this? He is a peaceful king, one who comes in peace and one who establishes peace, not by a brutal squashing of all defiance, but by means of a transparent vulnerability which makes defiance pointless. Somehow through him will come the reconciliation between God and man that will then make possible reconciliation between man and man Thus Jesus carrying that full potential....will be called on His first mission to Earth....the Prince of Peace

I spent many Christmas Eve's of my life not thinking about Jesus at all. It is one of the greatest regrets I have. You see, I desperately needed to know the Prince of Peace. I needed above everything else in my life to be at peace. To have an internal sense of contentment and well-being. I needed Shalom.

I was exhausted trying to juggle everything and somehow control my future. I had to realize that I wasn't God but really needed God. It was hard to admit that I was weak and needed help- even worse that the solution involved Jesus, church and those Christians I had been making fun of.

But it was so clear that the people that I saw who had peace.....the peace that I desperately wanted.....had found peace with God. They still struggled in relationships.....they still had to fight for their marriages.....they still had strained friendships.....they still we in conflict at times with others..... Things in their lives were not always peaceful....but inside them you could tell that they were for the most part at peace with it.

Not in denial...Not some sense of False Christian hope..but really at peace...knowing God was in control and they didn't have to try to be Him I didn't realize it.....but what I wanted was Shalom. I didn't need all of my circumstances to somehow magically align to perfection....I just needed to know deep inside that I was at peace with God. Once I embraced that God really had control of everything and that I had never really been able to control anything....I began to grow in my trust of Him.

I didn't will it to happen, but once I embraced Jesus and kept my focus on Him- I found the peace I was looking for. God's promise is true. He will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on Him Today I walk in the peace that I once only dreamed of. I had to grow into it. It didn't happen immediately. But now that I have spent a lot of time alone with God. I am at peace with God and have received the Peace of God.

I still have moments of great anxiety, but I know now that those are feelings from the past, and I know that there is some area of my life where I am still trying to step in front of God and take His place. Once I confess that sin, my anxiety lessens and His peace returns.

God knew that we would all be separated from Him. That our mind was never meant to process and operate separate from His Spirit. He knew that without Him we would be wound up in worry and anxiety. He knew that we were not qualified to be Him. So when He inspired and wrote to us through Isaiah, He said this unique God-child would be called four things no other human would ever be called....

Wonderful counselor.....Mighty God.....Everlasting Father.....and I believe he saved the best for last.....Prince of Peace. Jesus is our gift for Christmas God himself stepped into His creation to reestablish peace with Him. He knew that we could not on our own restore peace with Him. He Said He would have to do it for us. Jesus left a gift for each of us.....My Peace...I give to you. That is why this baby born on Christmas night is so important. Not because He brings world peace....but because of Him.....In Him....you finally have Peace with God and receive the Peace of God. He will be called Isaiah said.....Prince of Peace. That is how you will know Him.

My Peace I give to you. Shalom. May you be full of God's blessing this Christmas. Let's pray.