



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 *shālôm* and the Greek *eirēnē*. *Shālôm* has the general meaning of completeness, wholeness, wellness, harmony, security or fulfillment.¹ The New Testament uses the word *eirēnē* similarly.
- ❑ Peace is a controversial subject because of the different theories for achieving peace. However, most 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 righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness 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 the prophets. For example...
 - 📖 “So do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O 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’ (*Jeremiah 30:10, NIV*).
 - We may not share ancient Israel’s physical situation, but we can share their hope for peace. Do you desire peace? Do you desire *shālôm*?
- ❑ 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, an angel appeared to a young woman named Mary. Read Luke 1:26-35.⁴ Jesus is the Messiah (Christ). Jesus 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).

1. Considering the great importance of the Messiah’s birth, why do you think it was first announced to shepherds?⁶



¹ Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), II-931. Of course, wholeness and harmony involve the absence of division and hostility, but the meaning of *shālôm* is broader.

² This is why absolute “tolerance” does not work, because it tolerates evil. Of course, someone must define justice and righteousness. 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 In this passage, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the Messianic hope. He is born of a virgin (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 7:14); and he is the promised Son of David – the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:5-16; and many prophecies).

⁵ The Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem (the town of David) was also 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.

⁶ Shepherds were common people, not elite people. The good news of Jesus is for “all the people” (2:10).

2. The good news is for “all the people” (2:10), but what about peace? Do “all the people” receive peace? If not, who receives it? (2:14).

- ❑ Peace is given to “men (and women) 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.

📖 “...since we have been justified (made right with God) through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).⁷

Way of Peace

- ❑ True peace is peace with God. However, humankind is hostile toward God.⁸ Humankind has rebelled against God, and thus deserves God’s judgment. How can the Prince of Peace reconcile⁹ sinful humans to a holy and righteous God?



📖 “...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5, NIV).

📖 “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 20c-21, NIV).

📖 “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Ro. 5:10)

Realization of Peace

- ❑ True peace is realized through faith in the Prince of Peace. However, all of us still live in a world of 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).¹⁰
- ❑ 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?

📖 “You [LORD] will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal (Isaiah 26:3-4).

📖 “...the mind controlled by the [indwelling Holy] Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

📖 “...make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19).

📖 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:15).

Reflection

- Do you desire peace (*shālôm*)? Do you know the Prince of Peace? Have you received him?
- As a Christian, are you experiencing peace in your daily life? This week, reflect on these verses: Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:12-15; Ephesians 4:2-6; Hebrews 12:7-11; Galatians 5:22.

⁷ Those who receive the Prince of Peace will receive the peace he brings. They will have peace with God.

⁸ “hostile” – of or like an enemy; opposed to; 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).

⁹ “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.

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