



# How Can We Have 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 – “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*).<sup>2</sup>

1. Do you think tolerance is the way of true peace? Why or why not?<sup>3</sup>

Whatever



2. Do you think universal peace is actually achievable in this world?

## Prince of Peace

- ❑ Roughly 700 years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke about the birth of a child who would be the Prince of Peace (*Isaiah 9:6-7*). This referred to the Messiah (Christ) – the coming king who would establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace.
- ❑ Jesus came as the promised Messiah and Prince of Peace (*Luke 1:31-33; 2:11-14*). In what ways did Jesus bring peace?

## Peace with God - the Beginning Point

- ❑ True peace is peace with God. However, humankind is hostile toward God.<sup>4</sup> Humankind has rebelled against God, and thus deserves God’s judgment. How can the Prince of Peace reconcile<sup>5</sup> 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...” (*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 5:20c-21*).<sup>6</sup>



<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Tolerance is needed to some extent. However, if true peace requires the presence of justice and righteousness, then true peace requires conformance to the rules of righteousness. Thus 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? True peace requires conformance to God’s laws (which many people cannot tolerate!).

<sup>4</sup> “hostile” – of or like an enemy; opposed to; unfriendly. It may sound extreme to say all humanity is naturally hostile toward God. However, mankind has failed to honor God as Creator and Lord. Mankind has rejected God, or rebelled against His righteous authority. All are affected. “For all have sinned [against God]” (Romans 3:23).

<sup>5</sup> “reconcile” – to bring together again; to change from enmity to friendship; to mend a broken relationship.

<sup>6</sup> 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. He took our sin and gave us his righteousness. Thus we could have peace with God.

📖 "...since we have been justified (made right with God) through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...we were reconciled to [God] through the death of his Son..." (*Romans 5:1, 10*).<sup>7</sup>

## Peace in a Hostile World

- ❑ True peace is realized through faith in the Prince of Peace. However, we 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*).<sup>8</sup>
  - ❑ The full realization of peace will not come until the Prince of Peace returns (at his second coming) to finally establish his kingdom of righteousness and peace.
3. Until then, what can believers do to experience more peace (*shālôm*) in everyday life?

## Peace Within

- ❑ If we have peace with God, we can have peace in our hearts because our sense of peace is not based on earthly conditions.
- 📖 "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*).
- 📖 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 4:6-7, NIV*).



## Peace with Others

- ❑ The greatest way to have peace among people is for people to have peace with God. Thus we must share with others "the good news of peace" in Christ (*Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:11-22*).
- 📖 "Let us (as believers)...make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (*Rom. 14:19*). "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..." (*Col. 3:15*).
- ❑ Of course, many do not receive the Prince of Peace (Jesus). However, if we have peace with God, we have a new capacity to live in peace with others (whether believer or not).
- 📖 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone"<sup>9</sup> (*Romans 12:18; cf. Hebrews 12:14*).
4. What attitudes are needed to live at peace with others? How can we do it?<sup>10</sup>

## Reflection/Application

- 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*.

<sup>7</sup> Those who receive the Prince of Peace (through faith) will receive the peace he brings – that is, peace with God.

<sup>8</sup> Peace is not passivity! As we take a stand for truth and righteousness, there will be conflict. Even the Prince of Peace brought division, because some receive him while others oppose him and his followers (see *Matt. 10:34-36*).

<sup>9</sup> The context of this verse is love, including doing good to our enemies, and overcoming evil with good (*Romans 12:9-21*). These instructions (and Jesus' instructions in *Matthew 5:38-47*) apply to our personal relationships but do not necessarily require pacifism at the state level. See "Christian Perspectives on War" in *Jay's Resources*.

<sup>10</sup> We need humility and self-giving love, modeled by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit and the love of God.