

The Missing Peace

- **Luke 2:13-14 (KJV)** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- We are in the season of the year when Christmas cards are circulated bearing the greeting, "Peace on Earth!" But with the world events we have seen played out in our newspapers over the last 16 months that seems like a cruel joke.
- It is estimated that in all the years of recorded human history less than 8 percent of that time can be described as years of peace. According to the Canadian Army Journal, since 3600 BC the world has known only 292 years of peace. During this period there have been 14,531 wars in which 3,640,000,000 people have been killed. The value of the destruction would pay for a gold belt around our planet 97 miles wide and 33 feet thick. Since 650 BC there have been nearly 1700 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. From 1500 BC until now more than 8,000 treaties of peace were signed meant to remain in force forever. But the average time they actually remained in force was only two years. Is it any wonder that many of us are skeptical about the latest peace negotiations?
- Even in Jesus' time, a philosopher named Epictetus wrote this about the Pax Romana, the Roman peace that supposedly existed in the Empire at the time and about which all the Caesars boasted: "While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief and envy. He cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns more than even for outward peace." Epictetus had it exactly right.
- Wars in history have raged over absolutely idiotic causes. In 1249, a soldier serving in the army of Bologna, Italy deserted to the city of Modena and took with him an old, broken bucket used to water horses. Bologna waived her right to the fugitive, but she insisted upon the return of the old bucket. Proud Modena refused and a war ensued that lasted for twenty-two years!
- For many years a large silver star adorned the top of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In the 1800's, the Roman Catholic Church, which still shares the building with the Greek Orthodox Church, decided to replace the star. But the Greek Orthodox Church refused. They were supported by Russia, and the Roman Catholics were supported by France. But it was Turkey who ruled over Palestine at that time. When she also sided with the Roman Catholics, Russia declared war on Turkey. Immediately France and England allied themselves with Turkey and launched the Crimean War, which lasted from 1853 to 1856. At the end of the war the star came down!
- Isn't it ironic that in the very birthplace of the Prince of Peace there has almost always been conflict and war? When TV cameras take the world to Bethlehem for this year's Christmas ceremonies, once again there will be hoards of armed soldiers watching over the crowds that gather to worship the Prince of Peace. The Arabs greet one another with "Salaam" and the Jews greet one another with "Shalom" – both meaning "peace" – but they go right on fighting!
- To be brutally honest, mankind has never known peace. No peace treaty that man has ever devised has been kept. And yet Luke's account of the Christmas story says something that seems to completely contradict the plain facts that we see all around us – "and on earth peace." How in the world can we reconcile the angels' announcement of peace with the hard evidence before our eyes?
- The answer is found in the next phrase of the angels' announcement – "good will toward men." This promise does not mean that because Jesus came there will be good will AMONG men (that depends too much on US!); it means that because Jesus came there will be good will TOWARD men – as far as GOD is concerned.
 - **Luke 2:14 (NIV)** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.
 - **Luke 2:14 (TEV)** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!
 - **Luke 2:14 (MSG)** Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.
- The truth is that on our own human beings do not get along with each other. Our courts are full of people who cannot get along. We fight and we bicker. We criticize each other. We tear each other down. On our own we have difficulty living in harmony and peace with one another. But into this squabbling war-torn world, God came personally to bring "peace on earth, good will TOWARD men."
- **Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, **The Prince of Peace**.
- **John 16:33 (KJV)** These things I have spoken unto you, that **in me** ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- Unless you have allowed the Prince of Peace to have control of your life, you have no peace! Human peace, between nations or between spouses, is manufactured and temporary. But with God in your life, you can have peace with others because you have peace with Him!

- **Isaiah 48:22 (KJV)** There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.
- If we have never dealt with our sins, the things we have done against God's law, then we cannot have peace because we are wicked in His sight.
- **Isaiah 32:17 (KJV)** And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.
- Only if we are righteous (definition: guiltless, blameless) will we have peace and assurance before God. The problem is that none of us are righteous, because God's standard is perfection!
- **Ephesians 2:13-14 (KJV)** But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;
- The good news is that God came through the wall that our sins had erected between us and Him. He entered this world as a sinless human being and gave His life for us so that we could have a relationship with Him.
- The TRUTH about us said that we were sinful, but God's MERCY said that He would do something about our condition. But here's what happened on Calvary ...
- **Psalms 85:10 (KJV)** Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- The Bible says that the only way to restore our relationship to God is through Jesus Christ. But in a world that embraces everything, that says "one religion is as good as another" or "one lifestyle is as good as another" that's very difficult for some to accept. When we say "There is only one way to God," they say, "If that is what you believe then Christmas message has made you the most narrow minded, bigoted people who have ever lived." How are we to answer that?
- You go to the doctor and he says, "You have diabetes. But, I have good news. You can take insulin. You'll probably have to take it the rest of your life. But it will permit you to live normally." You say to him, "I don't want to take insulin. Why can't I take two aspirin instead? Or penicillin? Why do I have to take insulin?" So he tries to explain to you that insulin is the only thing that helps. You say to him, "You are the most narrow minded, bigoted doctor I have ever seen." He is not being narrow minded or bigoted. He is telling you the truth!
- **Romans 5:1 (KJV)** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: