

CHURCH OF THE
G E T E R N A L

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14

December 13, 2004

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We have come once again to that time of year when we hear those most familiar words, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Leaders of the free world continually speak of this ideal of peace between nations. And yet, it seems whatever course these well meaning leaders take in this regard, peace continues to elude them.

As we examine the conditions in the world, between men and between nations, we find conflict, we find turmoil, and we find a world devoid of the peace which is so keenly desired. But why is that? Why does peace continually elude the nations of the world; with so much effort being put forth in the form of negotiations between nations, and with the religious leaders in much of the world speaking continually of peace? Why is the reality so far removed from the ideal?

This particular time of year (the time of Christmas—which is a time when many who do not understand its origins use this occasion to exchange gifts among themselves), the idea of peace seems to be even more prevalent in the minds of men. And yet, this season always seems to be one of the most chaotic, especially in the homes of many who participate in this annual event.

Of course, this quote from the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible states that there was "...a multitude of the 'heavenly' host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'" (Luke 2:13-14). This Scripture has long been the concept upon which this festival is purportedly kept, but historically, this event did not take place anywhere near December 25. And yet, so many of the practices of this festival are in direct conflict with the concept of peace, as is taught in the Holy Scriptures!

For a more complete understanding of what is wrong with the keeping of this festival, and why God reveals in His Holy Word we are not to participate in such activities, be sure to read our free booklet, "Don't Keep Christmas." The Biblical revelation of why God tells us to avoid such observances is thoroughly explained in the booklet. But what, then, is this heavenly host proclaiming to these shepherds, as they were tending their flocks on that very eventful, autumn night some two thousand years ago?

The Amplified Bible more correctly translates this Scripture (Luke 2:14), as follows: "Glory to God in the highest [heaven], and on earth peace among men with whom He is well-pleased—men of good will, of His favor."

The Living Bible quotes the Scripture in a similar fashion: "Glory to God in the highest heaven ... and peace on earth for all those pleasing him."

The Ryrie Study Bible notes that this phrase, "good will toward men," would more accurately be translated, "among men with whom He is pleased." Ryrie goes further to say that "The peace promised is not given universally to men who possess good will toward God but individually to men who are the recipients of His favor and grace."

Adam Clark's "Commentary on the holy bible" states, in reference to this passage which reads "Peace, good will toward men," that "Men are in a state of hostility with Heaven and with each other. The carnal mind is enmity against God. He who sins wars against his Maker. When men become reconciled to God, through the death of His Son, they love one another. They have peace with God, peace in their own consciences, and peace with their neighbors; good will dwells among them, speaks in them, and works by them."

In fact, while the world proclaims Christmas, a pagan holiday observed in defiance of Almighty God, as a time of peace, we have come to understand that the observance of this holiday brings with that observance hostility, and promotes concepts which are many times totally contrary to the way of peace.

Jesus Christ, the One Whom this holiday purports to honor in the name of peace, states in the book of Matthew, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36). At the time of Christ's First Coming, He did not bring universal peace to this world. One of the

purposes for His coming was to establish His Church, calling some out of this world to acquire and develop a different mindset. Christ predicted that this would cause conflict with those not called by God.

But how does one receive favor and grace from Almighty God? One must learn the way to peace! Notice, from the book of Isaiah: “Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:7-8).

And from the book of Jeremiah: “Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:13-14).

Ezekiel prophesies for the end-time: “Destruction comes; They will seek peace, but there shall be none” (Ezekiel 7:25). But why is this? God tells us that man does not know the way to peace. The reason is, of course, they reject the Way of God. This festival of Christmas is an example. While men keep these pagan festivals in direct rebellion to the command of God, they also refuse to keep His Festivals, which He requires. (For more information as to what Festivals to keep, please read our free booklet, “God’s Commanded Holy Days.”) They observe Sunday worship, but refuse to keep God’s Sabbath. They are selective as to which of God’s commands they will keep and how they will attempt to obey Him in their own selective ways.

David asks the question in Psalm 34: “Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:12-14).

David continues in Psalm 37: “For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:9-11). And, again, David states in Psalm 119:165: “Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.” As God’s law continues to come into David’s mind, he states: “LORD, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You” (Psalm 119:166-168).

Of course we see in these words why God referred to David as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). The Scripture tells us in Proverbs 14: “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). This way which the world has accepted and followed is Satan’s way and this is presently Satan’s world; but the ways of Satan must be rejected!

Such action, of course, requires God’s intervention, with the individual life as well as with this world. For the world to come in line with God’s Way He will have to intervene powerfully to end Satan’s hold on the earth. But the good news is that God intends to do just that! In fact, if He did not intervene at just the right time, all life would cease on the earth.

Note Christ’s words in Matthew 24: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

Christ did not come to this earth two thousand years ago to bring peace on the earth. He came in the flesh to live a perfect life for our example; He came to defeat the ruler of this world, Satan the devil; and He came to qualify as our Savior! But when He returns, He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and He will establish perfect rulership on the earth, which will embrace God’s Way of life, with perfect peace forevermore! (Compare Micah 4:3-5).

In Christian love,



J. Edwin Pope