

Luke 2:14 Christmas Peace! Christmas Day December 25, 2017

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God our Father's grace and peace have come to us through the blessed Christ-child of Bethlehem. Amen

We hear the angels speaking to the shepherds of God's peace to us in Luke 2:14

These are Your words heavenly Father to give us peace. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Friends of God, through Christ,

God's angels had a wonderful message of peace! They no doubt used Jewish language with the shepherds. Their word for peace was "Shalom", which meant: good health, wholeness of life, and a sense of well-being and security. How they must have longed for the peace that the angels described. If we were to survey people in our country what they wished for Christmas, they would say "peace on earth". People try to be more kind and peaceful during the Christmas season. But how long does that peace last before there is anger between people or war between nations? From the way the world is, you would think that most people never heard the angels' message to the shepherds. And there are times in our lives when we do not feel peace. Is that because we have missed the angels' message too? How can we make the good will of the Christmas season last all year? We need:

Christmas Peace

First, Christmas peace begins with God. The angels said, "*Glory to God in the highest.*" Why were the angels of heaven praising God at Jesus' birth? They saw how God was faithful to His promises. It had been 1,000's of years since God's first promise to Adam and Eve to send a descendent to stop the devil. Over all those years the angels watched as the devil had his way over so many people and nations creating the havoc of war and misery in people's lives. Now, by God's promise, the baby who would be king had been born to fight the devil. They sang, Glory to God who in love sent His Son.

Heaven was filled with glory, that is, with praise, joy, and excitement by the angels over what God had done! Through His Son, God would establish true lasting peace. How do people make peace on earth? Some enemies like in Ireland just got tired of fighting and gave up and so they made a peace agreement. Others win peace by thoroughly defeating the enemy until they have no fight left in them. How did Jesus bring peace to the world? He knew that the problem between God and us was sin. Through Adam's sin and all sins that followed, it made all people by nature hostile to God and God saw all people as His enemies.

Jesus did not appear on earth in heavenly glory, power, and majesty to destroy all that is evil. That would have meant the destruction of all sinners, too. He didn't call down from heaven to the devil and the sinful world, and say, "Drop your weapons of sin and death and surrender! The devil would never give up his rebellion without a fight. He would not give up one weary soul that he was leading to hell.

Second, God's Son provided our only way for peace. Jesus' birth was the beginning of the end of the devil and the power of sin. That is why Jesus became one of us; so that He might meet our enemies and defeat them. Jesus' actions are the opposite of how someone wins a victory in war. In war the enemy suffers so many casualties, they surrender. In the world, the enemy dies to make peace.

But it is not so with Jesus. Through His innocent death for all sin, Jesus turned aside the anger of God. God saw Jesus representing us and was satisfied that the source of His anger, our sin, was completely taken away. The Apostle Paul wrote the Colossians, "*God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*" (Colossians 1:19-20) Jesus took our place as a human being and received the full anger of God for sin while on the cross. With His sacrifice, He established peace

between God and the people of the world. We know Jesus' sacrifice was acceptable because God raised Him from death and gave Him a glorified human body that would fit perfectly in the glory of heaven! In heaven there is no sin, no devil, and no fighting. Only God and perfect beings live there in perfect peace.

For how many people did God establish this peace through His Son? The NIV 84 translation leaves the question open for interpretation. *"On earth, peace to men on whom His favor rests."* (v.14) Is God's favor limited to a certain number of people in the world? Does God see that certain people have more good will toward Him than others? The Bible says "No" to both of those ideas! Christ died for all. He won peace with God for all people just as we read from the book of Colossians earlier that God reconciled all things to Himself. Also, earlier in Luke the angel told the shepherd, *"I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people. Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ, the Lord."* (v.10-11)

The question is not if God's peace in Christ is available. It is won for all! But who is going benefit from what Jesus won? John wrote of Jesus, *"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:11-12) Faith is not our efforts to make God peaceful with us. Faith only receives the peace that Christ has won by His coming into this world. *"Since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:1) What does it mean to be reconciled with God? Instead of being seen as enemies, we are the friends and family of God! There were times in the past when leaders of two warring countries made peace by uniting their families. The king's son of one country married the king's daughter of the other country.

Paul used the illustration of marriage between Christ and the Christian Church of all true believers. This is another way that God described how He had established peace through His Son. We can be certain that by faith in Christ we have "on earth [God's] peace", His good will toward us! Instead of fighting against us as His enemies, God is now defending us from evil and guarding us from danger when we are attacked by the devil and world. Yet, even as Christians we still have many tough times in life. We still live by faith in the promises that God is at peace with us, because often we don't feel it. But, the message of the angels on that first Christmas tells us to focus not on ourselves but on that little baby placed in a manger on Christmas as God's guarantee that He is at peace with us.

Heaven will be a place of perfect peace and well-being. There is no devil or sin can harm anyone there. Who will be in that perfect peace in heaven? Jesus and the heavenly host who sang God's praises on Christmas Eve will be there. The shepherds who went to worship Jesus and believed – they will be there; and anyone else who believes in Jesus as their Savior will be there! This is why all heaven rejoiced on the night of Jesus' birth. This is why we still rejoice in the Lord today! We believe God's promise in Jesus, God's peace remains with us! Jesus has brought peace to our hearts through His forgiveness. God's favor belongs to us for our good! May that joyful news of Christ's birth overflow in our lives like it did for the angels so that we may celebrate the true Christmas peace not just at Christmas, but always! Amen. And now, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.