

Will There Ever Be Peace Among Men?

(In preparation for the thoughts in this message please read the following text: Luke 2:8-20)

This past Wednesday (12/2/15) our nation was troubled by another act of terrorism. The murder of Americans on our own soil obviously indicates that radical Islamic terrorists are bringing their war against America to our homeland. This is not something new. In fact, unless Western nations lead by America move decisively to defeat this enemy these acts of war against our own people will only grow in number and intensity.

Lately in the news I have noticed a number of individuals sighting the fact that we are near World War III. In fact, some say we are already in World War III. The fact is, wars and rumors of war continue just as the Lord Jesus predicted. Sadly, in light of world conditions the hope of peace on earth seems to be nothing more than wishful thinking. Is there any real hope for the human race? Will there ever be peace on earth?

I would like to make several observations in this message from the famous words proclaimed to the shepherds by the heavenly host that appeared to them the night of our Savior's birth. In verses 13 and 14 of our text we read:

“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.”

Rightly understood these famous words that appear on many Christmas cards and many Christmas songs bring great hope to mankind. The first thing we need to understand about the message from heaven that holy night is its universal scope. The birth of Christ the Lord demonstrates God's goodwill toward men of *all* nations. The benevolent heart of Almighty God demonstrated his intention to extend grace, unmerited favor and goodwill, to all men by sending to us his only begotten Son. Remember, the words of the angels should not be lifted out of context. The reason for their exuberant praise lie in the fact that Mary brought forth her firstborn son and he was then lying in a Bethlehem manger. The gift that God gave the world that night is the crowning proof of his unconditional love for a fallen world and his willingness to provide the very thing needed for peace on earth.

With that said, there are two distinct elements to peace on earth. First, there is the matter of peace in the heart. Then there is the matter of peace among the nations. The first is immediate and available to all men right now. The second element is prophetic and awaits fulfillment at the second coming of Christ.

Let's dwell upon the first aspect of peace on earth for a few minutes. The angels proclaimed a blessing of peace that depends on one's relationship to Christ the Lord. Remember, the angel said to the shepherds, "*Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.*" Mankind needs a Savior in order to have peace with God. The good news we preach today is that all men can be reconciled to God. The sin that separates us from God and the enmity that exists between God and man because of sin can be removed by faith in Christ the Lord.

The Word of God declares that individual believers are justified by faith in Christ and consequently have peace with God. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 5:1).

Furthermore the Word of God teaches that it pleased the Father that in Christ the Lord all of the fullness of the Divine Nature would dwell in bodily form. That is to say, God came to earth in the person of Jesus the Christ. He came to make peace by the blood of his cross. He came to reconcile all things unto himself and now you who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled you to God (Cf. Col. 1:20-21). And now in Christ Jesus you who were far off are made near to God by the blood of Christ for he is our peace! He has reconciled us to God by the work of his cross (Cf. Eph. 2:13-17). God has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

As a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ I say to you—*“be reconciled to God!”* I am here declaring to you that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. How did he do so—by the work of the cross where Christ by the grace of God tasted your death and mine. At the cross God imputed all your sin to the account of Christ. Jesus proceeded to experience all the just and holy wrath of God against your sin and mine. Instead of imputing all of our guilt and sin upon us, God placed it upon his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And he died there for us. His great sacrifice once and for all removed the enmity between God and man. All of our sin that so offended the holiness of God has been dealt with! Christ has made peace with God for us through the blood of his cross!

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21). You may now enter into personal peace with God

through faith in his Son! Indeed, peace on earth begins in each heart as we receive Christ as our Savior. What glorious goodwill this is to all who believe. God's favor rests upon those who confess his Son as their Lord and Savior—and with all those God is well pleased!

May I ask you a question: do you have peace with God this Christmas season? Have you received the greatest gift of all? The greatest gift of all is Christ himself. And all those who have the Son have eternal life!

The second aspect of peace on earth looks to the future. The words of the angelic host may seem like an idle tale to many, but because Christ the Lord was born there will one day be peace on earth. However, the peace that I am speaking of will never be established by the current efforts of a humanistic world system. As you know, peace on earth was shattered long ago by the fall of the first man Adam. Soon the first murder on earth occurred when Cain slew his brother Abel. Since that time all the human effort to restore peace in the world has availed nothing. Evil lurks in the hearts of fallen men and fuels unrest and strife. And to make matters worse, Satan the god of this world system, drives men to hatred and murder. Fast forward to the end of 2015 and our world is on the brink of another World War.

The stressful conditions in our world will persist and finally give rise to the man of sin spoken of by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter two. The Bible clearly prophecies the rise of Satan's man of sin, the Anti-Christ, following the rapture of the church. Interestingly enough the anti-christ will establish a brief period of world peace. But when they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction will come upon the global community (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-6). This destruction will come as travail upon a woman with child and they shall not escape. Once again mankind's effort to establish a world order of peace without

acknowledging the true God and his Son will end in utter disaster. The sudden destruction spoken of in Scripture will quickly deteriorate into the time of great tribulation spoken of by the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels. Satan's pseudo-peace will veil his intention to murder and annihilate God's chosen people the Jews. He will move in great wrath against the Jews as the world plunges into utter chaos.

But the angels speak of "peace on earth" and "goodwill toward men." When will this peace be realized? When will the nations of the world beat their weapons into plowshares and learn war no more? When will Satan be bound and when will evil be restrained in such a way that the glories of peace and the bliss of rest encompass the entire world?

The Bible gives us the answer when it says: *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True . . . and his name is called the Word of God . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Cf. Rev. 19:11-13; Matt. 24:30). Then the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. Then the child that the angels celebrated that night so long ago will finally have the government upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting one who is the Father of eternity, and the Prince of Peace! In that day his rest will be glorious! In that day the Lord says they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy kingdom: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea! In that day peace will break forth all over this troubled world as the King ascends to his throne in the city of the great King—Jerusalem! Let us join the heavenly host today with a shout of expectation. Yes, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! Amen!