

Peace In God's Time

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For 6000 years the pages of the history of mankind have been soaked with blood. The weapons of war continue to grow in destructive power. And the wars themselves continue to exhibit often shocking, wanton violence and depravity. All efforts towards peace engineered by human beings have failed, and will fail. The only real hope for permanent peace among nations is Divine intervention, as long ago prophesied in the pages of the Bible. The good news is, peace will happen, in God's time.

On September 30, 1938 Neville Chamberlain, the Prime-Minister of Great Britain, returned to London from Germany with a piece of paper containing an agreement he had signed with the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. The agreement allowed Germany to dismember Czechoslovakia, taking over all the vital Czech border fortresses and 16,000 square miles of territory, leaving the country broken not only geographically, but also economically, politically and militarily, and leaving it defenseless.

In exchange for this sell-out of a key ally by Britain and France, Hitler had agreed not to start a war. It would have been a war which Germany almost certainly could not have won at the time had Britain and France stood firm. Chamberlain came back to England not in shame but in triumph, boasting that he had achieved "peace with honor," and that he believed his piece of paper was a guarantee of "peace in our time."

The majority of the British public and many in other parts of the world believed Chamberlain. They believed peace had been achieved. Only a relative few had the perception to see that the alleged "peace" was only a sham. When Winston Churchill stood up in the House of Commons and made the statement, "We have sustained a total, unmitigated defeat," he was met with a storm of protest.

Most people simply did not want to believe that the unconscionable betrayal of Czechoslovakia would not guarantee peace for at least a generation. Within less than a year after the delusional politicians of Britain and France had achieved what they called "peace in our time," Europe was plunged into what is widely believed to be the most destructive war in history by a German attack on Poland.

Beware when you hear politicians — and religious leaders — talking about peace. It may

mean something far different is about to happen.

We are warned about this in Scripture. In ancient Israel and Judah, the false prophets had convinced the nation that the warnings of God's true prophets were false, and that there would be peace, despite their sins, and the judgment God had proclaimed against them by his prophets. "Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, Saying, "You shall have peace," Whereas the sword reaches to the heart' " (Jeremiah 4:10). Not that God deceived the people directly, indeed he had sent prophet after prophet to warn them to repent lest they be punished (Nehemiah 9:26-30). But inasmuch as his instructions and words of warning were rejected, God allowed them to be deceived by false prophets – by their political and spiritual leaders (Jeremiah 8:8-11).

Today's world is in chaos. There is a profound lack of genuine peace in today's world, even for many on a personal level. Millions upon millions even in affluent societies lack a basic peace of mind. Vast numbers of people are unsettled, discontent, harboring fear and anxiety. People by the millions in many of our cities are afraid to go out at night, holing up in their homes and apartments behind barred gates and doors.

Several wars are being fought at this very moment in various places around the world. Terror attacks in many parts of the world are commonplace. The world is becoming more volatile and unstable it seems with every passing day – like a powder keg waiting for something to ignite it into a cauldron of violence and destruction.

Yet, in spite of all man's bungling, half-hearted efforts to make peace while preparing for war, peace is coming, following worldwide calamities that will bring an end to this age. One day, in the perhaps not too far distant future, the world will be at peace.

In this article I will discuss peace, the source of peace, the cause of peace and how you can have peace – even in the midst of a world filled with trouble, calamity, and anything but peace.

What is peace, anyway? My dictionary has several definitions. Peace is a state of mental or physical tranquility; the absence of war; public order, or freedom from riot or violence; it's a state of reconciliation; freedom from mental anxiety. The Bible speaks frequently of peace, and the Hebrew word for peace used in the Bible has a much fuller meaning than dictionaries give to the English word.

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, implies all the English word implies and more. *Shalom* implies safety, well-being, happiness, friendliness, health, prosperity, and peace of mind.

The peace that God will create in his Kingdom will be total, complete and all-encompassing. It

will be not only absence of war, but it will include a positive joy, health, satisfaction, prosperity. It will include complete physical, economic and spiritual well-being.

What is the source of that kind of peace? Your Bible has the answer. One of the names of God, our God, the true God, is the Eternal [God of] Peace (*Yahweh Shalom*– *Yahweh* is Peace) (Judges 6:23-24). He alone is the Source of genuine and lasting peace. If you want peace, fix your eyes on God, because he alone can give you real and permanent peace.

What causes peace? The Bible has a great deal to say about the specific details concerning what causes or creates peace. But they can all be summed up by saying that peace is caused by getting in harmony with that Source of peace which I mentioned earlier – the true and Eternal God. Getting in harmony with God is the primary theme of the Day of Atonement. In fact, as *Easton's Bible Dictionary* points out, the English word atonement means “at-one-ment, i.e., the state of being at one or being reconciled, so that atonement is reconciliation.”

The Feast of Atonement is one of the commanded annual festivals of God, and is a holy Sabbath and day of fasting (Leviticus 23:2, 26-32; Acts 27:9). Like all of God's Sabbaths, both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths, the Day of Atonement has deep spiritual meaning, as well as prophetic significance (Colossians 2:16-17; see “Were the Commandments ‘Nailed to the Cross’?”, *cogmessenger.org*).

The Feast of Atonement has particular significance with regard to being reconciled to God by forgiveness of sin through repentance and the redemption made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and, in addition, the putting away of Satan at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Putting Satan away will help pave the way for the whole world to be reconciled to God, to be at peace with God, and with one another.

When we personally are in complete harmony with God we will be at peace. And when the world as a whole is in complete harmony with God the world will be at peace. Let's look at some specific examples of how we can be reconciled to God and how that results in peace.

As the people of Israel, having been delivered from slavery in Egypt, and yet rebellious toward God, wandered in the wilderness, they were led into idolatry through the craftiness of Balaam, a prophet of Mesopotamia, who had been hired by the Moabites and Midianites to bring a curse on Israel (Numbers 25:1-13). *Baal-peor* means “Lord of the Opening,” and the worship of this false god involved licentious sex acts. Note Numbers 25:12-13, peace followed on the eradication of evil.

We should not misunderstand. We should not take this example as a license for us to attack or kill others in our place and time for their behavior. Phinehas was a priest, an officer of the nation under God's direct rule, and acting in fulfilling a divine command for which he was

responsible. He was not acting on his own authority. If he had not acted in the face of this wanton act of defiance toward God, God himself might have destroyed the whole nation (Numbers 25:11).

The lesson for us in examples like this is that we personally as Christians should not lust after evil things, commit idolatry, or sexual sins, etc. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

Notice that Phinehas' act eradicated evil and served as an atonement for the sins of Israel. He was zealous for God. If Phinehas had been complacent and lethargic instead of zealous, he would not have done what he did. Zeal is required for us to rid ourselves of evil. Without the right kind of zeal for God and his way peace is impossible (cf. Malachi 2:4-7).

The Hebrew word translated "atonement" in Numbers 25:13 and many other places is *kaphar*, which means to cover, or figuratively to expiate, or make an atonement. The idea is that atonement is possible when our sins are covered, or removed from God's sight. When evil is eradicated from our lives as individuals, or from our midst as a Church or a nation reconciliation to God and forgiveness from God is possible. Peace follows when sin is put away and forgiveness granted (Psalm 85:2-3, 8, 10).

"Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace" (Psalm 37:37). The ultimate reward of the "perfect" (KJV – could also be translated undefiled, or blameless) and "upright" (just) is peace. Those who repent and whose sins are cleansed, who then obey God, are rewarded with peace (cf. Psalm 37:27-29). However, in this world those who are just are often oppressed and persecuted, and peace may not come fully until the resurrection (John 16:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

The covenant with Phinehas and his descendants was a type of the covenant God offers us. The New Covenant in the Bible is called the Covenant of Peace. That covenant embodies on the one hand the forgiveness of sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and on the other hand righteousness through the writing of God's law in our hearts and minds by God through his Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; the same covenant). Everything we can do in seeking peace ties in in some way with these two cardinal points of the New Covenant.

What are some specific things you can do to seek peace?

Pray regularly, daily, to the true God, who alone can give us lasting peace (Psalm 55:16-18). When the nation of Judah was facing captivity in a foreign land because of their collective sins, God commanded the Jews to pray for the place where they were being taken captive (Jeremiah 29:7).

As Christians, we ought to pray for the peace of our own country where we are strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). Pray for all men, those in authority, etc. (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6-8).

It's in prayer that we offer or ask to be applied the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover or atone for our sins. It's through this sacrifice that peace with God is made possible (Hebrews 4:16; 5:1; 10:19-23; 13:20-21). Note that God is called the God of peace in connection with his covenant and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Also, note that God can make us perfect (or complete) in his sight, and as we read earlier, the final reward of the perfect, or blameless, and upright is peace (Psalm 37:37).

Through prayer and Bible study and fasting we can draw near to God (Matthew 11:28-30).

What else can you do to have peace? You can obey God. You won't have lasting peace until you learn to obey God. Israel was promised peace if they would obey (Leviticus 26:3, 6; cf. Proverbs 3:1-2; Psalm 119:165).

Another specific thing we can do to have peace is to make peace – not only with God but with other people (Matthew 5:9). Note that it is the quality of peacemaking which especially stamps the mark of character inherited from God on a person. As we learn to make peace in the proper way we become more like God and reflect his character as sons.

During his earthy ministry, the disciples of Jesus sometimes exhibited jealousy and covetousness (Mark 9:33-35, 50). Jealousy, envy, the desire to “lord it over others,” and similar behaviors destroy peace among brethren, and eventually destroy the brethren. Salt purifies and preserves and is thus used as a symbol of the qualities of character which purify and preserve the individual and society. A vital key to living at peace with others is humility. We must learn to serve one another in humility, and put away envy, pride, and arrogance (Proverbs 13:10).

Being a peacemaker, however, does not mean compromising the truth. Never be willing to compromise the truth for a sham or temporary peace in this world (Jude 1:3; Revelation 13:7-8; 20:4).

Is the world ever going to have peace? No, not as long as human leaders walking contrary to God's way are in charge (Isaiah 59:8). No, the world will not have peace – not until Jesus Christ intervenes and establishes his world ruling government.

But the true God is not now ruling the world. Instead the spirit of God's chief adversary permeates the world's societies. Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Revelation 12:9). Satan does not have peace and does not know peace (Luke 11:24; Job 2:2).

Satan is called *Beelzebub* (Matthew 12:24-26). This name *Beelzeboul*, as it is in the original Greek, meaning lord of dung, is a Jewish parody of the name *Beelzebub* (or *Baal-zebub*, lord of flies). The name *Beelzebub* has a dual implication. It was a name for the counterfeit healing god of the ancient world (as flies are known to be a cause of disease, hence the healing god was called "lord of flies"). A more esoteric meaning of this name *Beelzebub* is "the restless lord" who was cast out of heaven. Who, lacking peace, walks to and fro in the earth seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is the chief warmonger of the world. He is the chief instigator of evil and destruction. World peace will not be possible until the enemies of peace are destroyed, beginning with Satan (2 Kings 11:16-21). The coronation of Joash is a historical type of the advent of Jesus Christ as king of kings (Revelation 19:16). When the rightful king was placed on the throne and the usurper removed, the result was "quiet," or peace. And so it shall be at the time of Christ's coming when he shall become King over the whole world, and Satan will be removed (Revelation 20:1-3).

When the present evil rulers – chiefly Satan and his demons – are put away, God's Kingdom shall be established (Zechariah 6:13). Government and religion shall be one and the aim of both will be peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He shall rule as both king and high priest after the order of Melchizedek (King of Righteousness; cf. Hebrews 7:2, 11-17), ruling from Jerusalem which means the city of peace. His Kingdom shall be fruitful forever, and of his peace, finally, there shall be no end.

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