

PEACE is for Christians

By

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Speaking at a shrine of his own faith, Buddha's Universal Church in San Francisco, UN Secretary General, U Thant stated that we should "try to be better Buddhists, better Christians, better Moslems, better Hindus, better Jews: That way we can hope that we may be able to achieve a better and a peaceful world." Since this speech in June the war in Viet Nam has been intensified and full scale war has broken out between India and Pakistan, with fighting going on in other hot spots including disturbances in our own country.

Such times as ours are described in Like 21:25-26 "And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." The daily news is enough to shake one to his toes. In the meantime we talk of peace. The presses pour out a stream of "peace of mind" books, which someone has called "How-to-be-happy-though-miserable-books." It would be nice to be able to buy peace of mind for \$3.50 or to obtain it through promises from the President, Pope, or the United Nations. We know, of course, that in spite of the talk about peace the world plunges further into war and individuals grow more tense and anxious.

What, then, did the angel mean by "Peace on earth?" And what did Jesus mean when He said, "My peace I give unto you?" And how could Paul write, "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus?" (Phil 4:7). The answer is that **CHRIST PROMISED PEACE ONLY TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN AND FOLLOW HIM**, and that peace does not exclude a conflict with this present world.

GOD'S DESIGN IS ONE OF PEACE

Consider the plan of God in creation. Man was located in a garden, a "paradise", where he could dwell in fellowship with God. Up until the time of Adam's sin there was no conflict; none between man and God, none between man and man, none between man and nature (there was no "sweat of the brow" until after the sin, Gen. 3:19), and none between man and beasts. As the Creator designed it all creation was at peace under His sovereignty.

Jesus is an example of peace-in-conflicts. In spite of all the injustice of His day, He did not try to overthrow those in power. He led no marches and joined no revolutions, although there were strong revolutionary forces in Jerusalem, dedicated to the overthrow of the oppressing Romans. Instead of inciting multitudes to demonstrations, Christ calmed them and sent them home. He made Peter put up the sword. The change which

Jesus championed was the change of heart, the conversion of the individual. The peace he proclaimed was a private matter which a person enjoyed IN SPITE of the world's upheaval. "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Notice how many times He says "I", "Me" and "My". The peace and rest is something to find only as it comes from and through Christ. "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

Paul is another example of peace. He was made the object of continual persecution, oppression and was thrown into conflict daily, yet he had peace. Although he was treated unjustly by the officials, both religious and political, he refused to stir up an insurrection. "They found me purified in the temple," he claimed, "with no crowd, nor yet with tumult" (Acts 24:18). He wrote, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy and peace..." (Gal. 5:22). "The peace of Christ rule in your heart," (Col. 3:15). "Peace be to the brethren..." (Eph. 6:33). "Justified by faith we have peace with God..." (Rom. 5:1). "God has called us in peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ..." (Rom. 15:13).

The prophecies picture the New Creation as one wherein God's original purpose is again restored, so that there is absolutely nothing present to cause conflict and distress. The "lion shall lie down with the lamb" and "war shall be no more." God's desire is that man should have peace.

GOD IS THE GIVER OF PEACE

Despite this obvious desire for peace, all attempts to maintain peace in this world have failed. If God were to exercise such power and control over humanity so as to make conflict impossible, He would be destroying the human will and mind, thus defeating His own purpose to have man in His own image. This God will not do. On the other hand, Satan is quite ready to exercise such control. Revelation (Chapter 13) pictures Satan as operating through anti-Christian men to create a world government where all are under his iron-clad control. It is just this kind of control that the advocates of world government claim will bring about peace. Religious leaders are urging this one-world control in order that at long last there might be "peace on earth". But this kind of peace is Satan's counterfeit, not the genuine article God promised. While it eventually will be tried, according to prophecy and present plans now in progress in most nations, it will never work. Humanity will never find genuine peace by outside force, and such control will result in more frustration, disturbance and constant rebellion against the pressure necessary to "keep the peace."

The peace and contentment God offers does NOT depend on our power to bend things to our control. True peace is a peace which God gives, in spite of outer conflicts. It comes only through one's faith in and obedience to God, because it is God-given, and not constructed by man's ingenuity. In fact a great deal of the frustration and disturbance man suffers today is due to his effort to force his own way. "But I say walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the

Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that you may not do the things that you would” (Gal. 5:16-17). One hopes to gain peace by changing circumstances to fit his own design. Then when peace doesn’t come, he blames the circumstances — “If it were not for...” But all the time the conflict is in himself, that he has not accepted the roll God prescribes and is not walking according to the Spirit.

Hence the believer is not to be shaken by world events. If it is God who gives him his peace, the world has no power to take it away. Besides this, the Christian expects turmoil in this world. “In the world you have tribulation...” (John 16:33). Such turmoil, Paul writes, is the work of Satan. “And then shall be revealed the lawless one...whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...” (2 Thess. 2:8-9). Obviously we cannot be at peace with the whole world, when it is in the grip of satanic lawlessness. But we can be at peace with God in the midst of the conflict. “I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12-13).

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FIND PEACE

First one must seek it from its source. “Come unto me”, said Jesus. Since God gives the peace, one must find it by the One whom God sent to make peace. Romans 5:1 say that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” and 5:10 explains that we are “reconciled to God through the death of His Son.” All the human race is estranged from God because of sin, and is burdened under the condemnation of God and the dread of the judgment for the “wages of sin is death.” Christ, substituting Himself in judgment for the sinner, died under the just penalty for sin, thus “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20). “Come unto me” is an invitation to believe in and accept this means of peace with God. “Take my yoke” tells us that we share in His death and resurrection as we believe in and are buried by baptism into that death. It is only then that we can know our sins are forgiven and that we have peace with God.

“And learn of me”. Know His purpose. Read the Word so that you come to know what pleases the Father. Learn it first hand by doing it. “And ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Paul wrote, “Set your mind on the things that are above” (Col. 3:2). If our goal is set on things of this rebellious world, how shall we please God who plans to destroy this world and create a new one? And how shall we be prepared for the new world where all is given from God in purity and holiness unless we learn to trust Him now?

Peace will never come to the God-forsaking world. The angel’s message of “peace on earth” is qualified. It is “peace among men in whom He is well pleased” (Luke 2:14). Jesus said, “Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). For those who continue as rebels against God, there is no peace. All their efforts for a peaceful world will fail and “when they are saying, ‘peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1 Thess. 5:3).

But to all who believe in and submit to Christ, there is the “peace of God which passes all understanding.” This kind of peace will not appeal to the world, for the world has made its peace with Satan, with paganism, with all the false religions which are in opposition to God. This we see in many so-called peace organizations, who parade under the name of Christ, but which are led by and supported by pagans and atheists.

The peace of God will not even appear to the world to be peace at all, for “man looks upon the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart.” The world measure’s a man by the amount of the world’s acclaim he receives, by his size, his possessions his power and his security. But God measures a man by his Godliness. To weigh one’s peace by the world’s standard is to invite frustration. The church which builds with the world’s tools (hootenannies, psychology, and prestige) can give no peace. “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4), thus to be at peace with the world is to be at sword’s point with God (John 15:9).

Therefore, peace is for Christians. Christ offers it to all, on an individual basis. When one comes to Christ, learns of Him and takes His yoke, he becomes a Christian, and obtains the peace God promises.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Rom.15:13, John 16:33).

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