

What does Christmas bring?

Christmas brings peace

Part 3

Intro: When I hear the phrase; “peace on earth,” my sarcasm comes out a bit. Peace is certainly not something that is experienced globally. In fact, a new report from the Institute of Economics and Peace revealed there are 59 active conflicts (wars) currently happening - involving more than 35 countries. This is the highest level since WW2! (1945). Peace on earth feels pretty elusive.

- And yet the Christmas story not only announces the birth of Jesus but also uses the phrase; “peace on earth.” Christmas is supposed to bring peace. Let’s revisit the story and see if this is even possible.

Luke 2:8-20 – Summarize the story of the shepherds – We all know that Jesus was born in a manger because there was no room at any Inn. BUT there were no announcements made at the manger – No public celebrations – nobody had any idea the world was about to change. No one but a bunch of shepherds watching sheep just outside of town - Share

Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” (NLT)

How is peace on earth even possible? How does the arrival of Jesus bring peace?

How does Christmas bring peace?

1. Jesus brings peace with God

Rom. 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.” (NLT)

Col. 1:20 “and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.” (NLT)

- Jesus came to remove the barrier of peace with God
 - As wonderful as the Christmas story is, the birth of Jesus is simply setting the stage of what is to come. There is going to be a violent collision someday of good and evil – light and darkness – the Creator Vs the created for the souls of humanity.
 - Jesus was born to die on a cross. There is a reason He is called the “lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”
 - **(Explain the Passover Lamb and its significance)**
 - Jesus fulfilled this practice. It was pointing to Him ever since the time of Moses. Jesus became the final Passover lamb. God’s judgment is permanently passed over.

HOW?

Col. 2:13-14 “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.” (NLT)

- No other religion can bring peace with God. They can bring rules – traditions – maybe some good ethical teaching – but no religion or religious leader solved the sin barrier that keeps us from connection with God.
- Jesus removed the barrier with His own life. The barrier of your sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus and they were all paid for with His shed blood on that Roman cross.
- His resurrection 3 days later was absolutely necessary as the proof that He was God in the flesh and that sin has truly been paid for. The resurrection is the proof the barriers have indeed been removed. Peace with God is possible.
- Peace with God has nothing to do with your behavior. It has nothing to do with us trying to be good enough for God...good enough to avoid judgment...good enough so I can make it into heaven. God is not going to weigh your good deeds against your bad ones.
- Peace with God and our eternity has nothing to do with us but everything to do with what Jesus did for us so we could have peace.

- Jesus came to give us a choice

John 1:12-13 “But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.” (NLT)

- Even though Jesus removed the barriers, we still have to make a choice. There is a spiritual birth that needs to happen when we accept and receive what Jesus did for us. This is more than simply a mental agreement. There must be belief and acceptance. These two things are different yet must be combined.
- **Illustrate:** Let me illustrate with a supplement I take called Creatine. (explain what it is and what it does). Some of you may believe this supplement is beneficial for you. You believe the research – YET, belief alone does not give you any health benefit whatsoever unless it is combined with acceptance / receiving it.
- So many people do the very same thing with Jesus. They believe yet do not accept – receive – take Him into their very lives. They never make the choice they simply stay stuck at the belief stage.
- This is why Jesus doesn't work for you. Stop saying you've tried Jesus when all you've ever done is simply believe Him. Belief alone does not require a choice. Receiving does!
- If you want peace with God today, you need to make a choice. There is a person who you not only need to believe in, but you must accept / receive into your life. You must take Him in. Will you?

Once we have peace with God, His peace influences other areas of our lives.

2. Jesus brings peace to our hearts

Col. 3:15 “And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace.” (NLT)

Phil. 4:7 “Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (NLT)

Who doesn’t need more internal peace? Here’s the great thing...once we have peace with God through Jesus, we can now experience peace in our hearts. God pours out His peace IN us. HOW?

- Stop pursuing false substitutes for internal peace
 - Why do I say this? Because apparently what we’re doing is NOT working.
 - According to the research, peace of mind and heart is in short supply. 20% of US adults have some form of anxiety disorder – 32% of teens have some type of anxiety disorder. Over 30% of all adults will experience an anxiety disorder some time in their lives. Anxiety is recognized as the #1 mental health issue in our culture.
 - What are false substitutes for internal peace?
 - Technology – our phones – social media – increases anxiety
 - Unrealistic expectations of ourselves– perfect Christmas – perfect presents for everyone – trying to make everyone happy – perfectionism in general
 - Achievement – when I achieve this I’ll feel better – I’ll work my way out of stress.
 - Destructive behaviors – alcohol – porn – retail therapy – numbing out doing nothing for days
 - Avoidance – feels good in the moment but actually increases anxiety

Col. 2:8-10 “Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers^[a] of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.^[b] ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ...”(NLT) How am I complete in Christ? This would include peace.

- How do I have peace through Jesus?
 - We have peace through His presence
Matt. 28:20 – Jesus said He would never leave us. He will never abandon us. His presence is with us as we live this life. We’re never alone.
 - We have peace through His character
Knowing God’s merciful, compassionate, loving character allows us to experience emotional safety. Our hearts can rest because the God we trust is good. We do not

have to fear God in our failures / imperfections / flaws / We know that He loves us no matter what.

- We have peace through surrender

Often, anxiety comes from trying to control. Peace comes from releasing these things to God. I Peter 5:7 – Tells us to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us. We can surrender our fear and anxiety up to Him for Him to carry.

- We have peace through identity

Jesus gives us a secure identity – We are adopted – loved – accepted – forgiven – gifted – called – When the world attacks our identity and tells us we are worthless, we find our true selves...our true worth in Jesus.

- We have peace through forgiveness

Guilt, shame, regret all fuel anxiety, but we are completely forgiven through Jesus and His work on the cross. He will never remember our sin – our past – our shame. We never have to fear God bringing up our past mistakes ever again.

- We have peace through His promises

God has given us His promises to give us hope and encouragement as we walk through this broken world. God's word is filled with so many promises to give us hope and peace in this life.

- We have peace through perspective

Jesus reorients our lives and gives us an eternal perspective. We know there is more than the worries and cares of this life. We have an eternity to look forward to. Someday, the best part of our existence is coming. It's not this life...it's the one to come. Jesus said He is going to prepare a place for us.

- We have peace through transformation

As we walk with Jesus in this life He changes us – He transforms us into His image – into His character. Part of being transformed is experiencing more peace and less fear and anxiety. Our experience with Jesus in this life literally transforms us.

This is how Jesus brings peace to our lives right now. BUT...there is still more

3. Jesus brings peace with each other

2 Cor. 13:11 "Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

Matt. 5:9 "God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God." (NLT)

- How does Jesus bring peace to my relationships? Often what the reality is for most people is relational conflict. We certainly see this on the world stage. There is conflict everywhere globally. Even world history demonstrates this. Human beings have a nasty habit of not getting along. How does Jesus bring relational peace?
 - Jesus changes how you see people
Instead of seeing people as threats, you see them as made in the image of God like you. You see them as works in progress. You see them as loved by God. You see

their wounds – their pain – you see the reasons they act the way they do. You begin to see people through God's eyes. This simply gives you more grace for others.

- Jesus heals your inner wounds

Our unhealed pain causes us to react negatively to others. Our wounds create a distorted lens by which we see others. Jesus heals our wounds – our past – our guilt and shame and allows us to love people better by healing us first. Once these wounds no longer taint our perspective, we respond to others differently.

- Jesus grows us in humility instead of ego

Jesus shows us how to listen, admit wrong, serve, let go of winning the argument, empowers us with humility instead of pride. Our pride is one of the greatest relational barriers there is. Jesus helps us see the value of humility and how it brings healing to our relationships.

- Jesus empowers forgiveness

He doesn't just tell us to forgive, He empowers us to live it. Without forgiveness, we can never be relationally free. Many people are prisoners to their own bitterness and unforgiving hearts. This bitterness destroys people. Jesus empowers us to do the impossible...forgive those who have wounded us.

- Jesus gives you strength to love difficult people

Let's face it, some people are simply hard to love, yet Jesus empowers us to be able to love unconditionally. This is what sets us apart is this ability to love like Jesus. You simply cannot manufacture this type of love. Jesus literally pours His love into your life. It's an outflow of our connection with Him.

- Jesus calms our reactions

Staying connected to Jesus help us not snap – assume the worst in others – spiral into fear – fight for control – a peaceful heart leads to peaceful interactions with others. I don't know about you but I have needed Jesus to calm my reactions many times. I'm kind of a passionate guy. Without Him...I can do lots of damage.

- Jesus builds community

This life with Jesus is to be experienced in community. This community is called the church. We love and encourage each other to follow Jesus and pick each other up when we fail. We strive to live in unity and harmony with each other. The church is supposed to be an environment of love and peace.

Do you see why Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. Do you see how He can bring peace on earth? Earth will never have peace without Jesus. True peace will never be the result of a political process. Until Jesus invades the human heart there will never be real peace.

Do you have the peace that only Jesus brings? Let me return to my illustration about believing and accepting/ receiving. Remember my Creatine? For some of you is it time to move from believing to receiving? This is the same struggle the religious leaders had during Jesus' day.

John 5:39-40 “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.” (NLT) They refused to accept the person! They just couldn’t receive Jesus and the life He wanted to give them. How about you?

Prayer time: