

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Luke 2:8–14 (NKJV)

⁸Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

¹⁰Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

¹¹For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

¹²And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

- *An angel introduced the proclamation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah, the Saviour of Mankind with these words, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.”*
- *The proclamation of Christ’s birth concludes with a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and singing, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*
- *What does it mean when the Scriptures describe the birth of Christ as “good tidings of great joy which will be to all people,” and “on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”?*
- *One of the Jews main objections against believing Jesus is the Messiah is that they believe when the Messiah came the Jews would be rescued from the hands of their enemies, the Kingdom of Israel would be established, and peace would come to all mankind.*
- *However, for the last two thousand years, until the recent twentieth century, the Jews have been scattered throughout the nations. For much of that time they have experienced great persecution. There has been no peace on earth. In fact, just as Jesus Himself predicted, as the time of His return draws near, wars and rumors of wars have increased. (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7).*

Acts 1:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- ***“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Even directly after Jesus’ resurrection, His disciples initially struggled with this rabbinic idea that the Messiah would immediately establish His kingdom and bring peace to the earth.***
- ***“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.” - Jesus’ response to His disciples is basically, “That is not your business, that is Your Father’s business.”***
- ***“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Jesus directed the disciples to the business to which they were called—to be witnesses of the Gospel to every nation, “on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”***
- ***So what does it mean, “on earth peace, goodwill toward men” if the world is still filled with sorrows, conflicts, wars, and injustice?***
- ***To interpret and apply biblical prophecy correctly we must understand that many prophecies have both a near and far fulfillment.***
- ***Many of the Old Testament prophecies predicting the coming of the Messiah appear to contradict one another. Some prophecies speak about a suffering Messiah, while others speak about a ruling Messiah who will subdue all His enemies.***
- ***Jewish scholars have struggled with these apparent Messianic contradictions by speculating that there may be two Messiahs. One Messiah would follow the pattern of Joseph who suffered, and the other Messiah would follow the pattern of David who reigned and subdued his enemies.***

- *The key to understanding these Messianic prophecies correctly is to recognize that there are not two Messiahs, but one Messiah who comes twice.*
- *The first time the Messiah appeared as the Son of Man, born of a virgin, who lived a perfect life, and suffered and died for our sins as the perfect sacrifice.*
- *The second time the Messiah will appear, not as the suffering Messiah, but as the ruling Messiah, the Conquering King, the Son of God, who will vanquish His enemies and establish His kingdom which will have no end.*
- *The proclamation of Christ's birth is described as "good tidings of great joy which will be to all people" and "goodwill toward men."*
- *If we correctly understand that Christ's birth was a message of good news to all people and reflected God's goodwill toward all men, we will understand how He fulfilled the first part of His mandate of "peace on earth" in spite of wars, violence, injustice, and the continuing persecution against His Church which in many ways is escalating.*
- *Jesus Christ's first appearance on the earth was not meant to vanquish and destroy all those who were lawbreakers and in rebellion against God. If He had, without going to the cross, we would have all have been condemned, both Jew and Gentile.*
- *The Jews mistakenly saw themselves as a righteous nation waiting for God to deliver them from their enemies, the ungodly and unrighteous Gentiles. However, in reality, they were just as ungodly and unrighteous. It was the Jews who demanded that Jesus, their Messiah, and King of the Jews be crucified although it was the Romans who actually complied and carried out their demands.*
- *If Jesus had come the first time to vanquish all evildoers and sinners, and establish His earthly kingdom of peace it would have resulted in the damnation and destruction of everyone—both Jews and Gentiles. Although it would have resulted in peace on earth, it definitely would not have been a message of "good tidings of great joy which will be to all people" and "goodwill toward men!"*

John 3:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

- *The good tidings of great joy to all people and God’s goodwill to men is found in the fact that “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”*
- *Jesus’ earthly ministry is marked by many wonderful and remarkable truths. One of the most wonderful truths is that He never condemned anyone and never said to anyone, “You have gone too far to be saved.”*

Matthew 4:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- *If one looks closely at Jesus’ earthly ministry it can be clearly seen that His message was always one of hope and a call to repentance, a turning away from sin, and a call to faith, a turning toward God.*

Luke 13:1–3 (NKJV)

¹There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

²And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?

³I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

- *Jesus’ message was always clear, “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Although His words were sometimes strong, they were always motivated by a deep love and desire to see all people saved.*

Matthew 23:25–26 (NKJV)

²⁵“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

²⁶Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

- *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” - Sometimes Jesus’ words and message sounded harsh, especially to those who live hypocritical lives. However, His message is never one of condemnation, but always a call to repentance and salvation.*

- *For one to correctly understand why the tone and words Jesus spoke were sometimes strong and harsh was because some of those whom He addressed were in imminent danger of eternal damnation. In the same way, a mother would scream across the room to her child who was unwittingly about to put his hand on a hot stovetop.*

Matthew 12:20 (NKJV)

²⁰A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;

- *For those attentive to Jesus' words, for those whose lives had been broken by sin or crushed by the injustice they had experienced, His words were gentle and tender.*
- *The fruit of Jesus' ministry was that people from all walks of life and all nations responded to the Gospel, the Good News, and were saved.*

Acts 6:7 (NKJV)

⁷Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

- *“A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” – Amazingly and wonderfully, a great many of the Pharisees and priests whom Jesus had rebuked strongly came to faith in Him and were saved.*

John 12:46–48 (NKJV)

⁴⁶I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

⁴⁷And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

⁴⁸He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

- *The Good News of great joy and goodwill to men is that Jesus, the Light of the World, came to this world so filled with darkness, death, and misery to bring light and salvation to all those willing to put their faith in Him.*
- *“for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” – Jesus' earthly ministry and message was not one of condemnation, but of salvation.*

- **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” – *However, Jesus’ message contains a stern warning for those who reject His invitation of salvation. In His second appearance, He will not come as a Lamb, He will come as the Lion of Judah who will judge all unrighteousness.***
- ***It is important for us to understand the Gospel message that God has entrusted to us. The good news is that Jesus died and rose from the dead so we can be saved, and He will return again to establish His everlasting Kingdom of peace.***

Luke 9:54–56 (NKJV)

⁵⁴And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?”

⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

⁵⁶For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.

- ***When a Samaritan village would not receive Jesus, the disciples sought permission to call down judgment from Heaven and have God’s fire of condemnation consume the entire village.***
- ***The disciples still didn’t understand the glad tidings, nor God’s goodwill toward men, nor that Jesus came to save men’s lives and not destroy them.***
- ***Sometimes Christians “do not know what manner of spirit you are of” and instead of sharing the message of salvation of God’s love, we speak words out of anger, frustration, and self-righteousness.***
- ***We should warn people about the destructive results of sin and also of God’s coming judgment, but with a loving heart. Let them know that God loves them and wants to save them from both the devastating effects of sin and eternal damnation.***

Luke 19:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

- *The Great Commission that Jesus gave to His Church is to seek and to save the lost and to bring them to a place where they can experience the fullness of Christ's salvation for their spirit, soul, and body.*

Matthew 27:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?”

¹⁴But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

- *Jesus' silence as He stood before Pilate can be clearly understood by the fact that His earthly appearance the first time, as the Son of Man, was not motivated by a desire to bring vengeance to those who had rebelled against God. His message was an expression of God's goodwill toward all men as He willingly died for all mankind.*
- *Many false accusations had been raised against Jesus. He could have easily defended Himself and declared His righteousness. Had He done so, it would have resulted in the condemnation of all mankind. So instead, He kept silent.*
- *One of the most descriptive prophecies in the Old Testament regarding Jesus' silence as He stood before Pilate is found in Isaiah 53:7. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”*
- *Jesus kept silent before Pilate so He could be the Lamb of God who would die for our sins and reveal God's goodwill toward all men.*
- *We can plainly see that Jesus' entrance onto the stage of human history through His virgin birth to be the Saviour of all mankind is the perfect example of God's goodwill toward men. But how can we understand “peace on earth” when anything but peace and tranquility has permeated this world for the last two thousand years?*
- *Once again, to understand the Messianic prophecy of “peace on earth” we must understand its near and far fulfillment.*

Ephesians 6:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

- *The Gospel of Jesus Christ is described not only as the gospel of peace, but a gospel we carry with us everywhere we go since it something we are to put on our feet.*

Romans 10:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

- “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” *The peace we are to bring to this earth is through our individual lives as we touch one person at a time with the life of Jesus in each believer.*

Romans 14:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- *The Kingdom of God is not founded through man’s efforts or by changing governing authorities or civil laws. God’s Kingdom is established in the realm of the spirit as the life of Christ is manifested in our hearts through righteousness, peace, and joy through the Holy Spirit.*

John 18:36-37 (NKJV)

³⁶Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

³⁷Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

- *Pilate understood that a kingdom is imposed on people and peace is only realized through force, for example, when a Roman legion conquered a region and imposed law and order. That was Pilate’s definition of peace.*
- *However, when the Bible speaks about God’s Kingdom and about peace, it means something more than just the absence of war or an external organization. God’s peace refers to something which begins deep within the hearts of men and women.*

Luke 17:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

- “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’” - *The Pharisees were expecting God to set up an external visible kingdom. What they failed to realize was that before that could occur, Christ would establish His kingdom in the hearts of each one of His followers, a kingdom of peace. Peace with God always precedes peace with other people.*
- *Know God, know peace. No God, no peace.*
- “For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” – *This passage can be translated from the Greek in two different ways. One can mean, “the kingdom of God is within you” and the other is “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”*
- *For the unbelieving Pharisees, Jesus was referring to Himself as the Kingdom of God, which they were failing to behold, comprehend, or accept.*
- *However, for those who were willing to put their faith in Jesus Christ through the new birth, the kingdom of God would be within them, accompanied by the righteousness, peace, and joy that come from God.*
- *The Jews failed to recognize that the Messianic Kingdom Jesus was establishing would begin in the hearts of His disciples. The peace of God which would impact the world would emanate from within.*
- *Peace is not just the absence of war, conflict, or turmoil, but a serenity, a security, and even a sense of deep contentment and satisfaction.*

Colossians 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

- “having made peace through the blood of His cross” - *True peace always begins by receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and having our sins washed away by His sacrificial blood.*

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- *Often, the first thing that a person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ says is, “I feel such a peace. I feel like a great burden has been taken from me.” And, indeed, it has!*
- *Without first experiencing God’s peace and knowing we are now in right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, we are incapable of truly experiencing or appreciating either God’s love or joy.*
- *When a person is in turmoil, God’s love and joy seem both incomprehensible and meaningless.*

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” – *Peace is always a product of faith.*
- *The more we trust in Christ, the great the peace we will experience.*

Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

³⁹He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

- “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” – *One of the greatest sources of peace is surrendering fully to the will of God and trusting Him completely to guide and direct our life.*
- *When believers base their peace on favorable circumstances, instead of God’s faithfulness, it leads to unstable lives filled with uncertainty.*

1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV)

³³For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

- *The Greek word for “confusion” means “disorder, the state of being confused.”*
- *God always leads us with peace.*

Romans 8:6 (NKJV)

⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

- *“to be spiritually minded is life and peace” - When we experience turmoil, fear, or confusion, it is because we are carnally minded and have taken our eyes off of Christ and have stopped trusting in His faithfulness.*

Philippians 4:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- *“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” - When we choose to trust God we experience a peace that to the world is beyond comprehension. During times when others are in turmoil, His peace keeps watch over our hearts and minds.*

Colossians 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

- *The Greek word translated as “rule” means to “act as a judge or an umpire; to control, to govern.”*
- *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” – The verb in this sentence is in the imperative mood, which means it is a request or even a command.*
- *So, Colossians 3:15 challenges us to submit to the peace of God to rule and govern our lives.*

- *Sometimes believers are led by their fears, apprehensions, selfish desires, lusts, or any number of carnal ways of thinking or evaluating things. Here, Paul exhorts us to be governed by the peace of God which will produce contentment and thankfulness.*
- *How do we allow the peace of God to rule and flourish in our lives?*

2 Thessalonians 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

- *Since Jesus is the Lord of peace, for us to receive the peace of God requires us to remain close to Him.*
- *A baby becomes anxious once the presence of his or her parents is not felt. We too need to always carry with us the presence of God through prayer, meditating on His word, and continually making a melody of thanksgiving in our hearts.*
- *One way that the peace of God governs our hearts is that the moment we begin to feel anxious or a lack of peace it means we have become distracted and have taken our focus off Christ.*
- *When my focus is on Jesus I am filled with a wonderful calm, but once I stop abiding in His presence I can quickly become irritable.*
- *The wonderful think about Jesus is that He gives us peace “always in every way,” so no matter what circumstance we face or how we may feel at a particular moment He is there to impart His peace to us.*

John 16:33 (NKJV)

³³These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

- *In the midst of uncertainty, hardship, and even tribulation, Jesus is there to give us an overcoming peace that does not fade.*

Romans 16:20 (NKJV)

²⁰And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

- *The peace that God gives is a sure peace, because we know that the victory is assured. Christ overcame the world and shortly Satan's earthly kingdom will also be crushed and come to a complete end.*

John 20:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

- *As the disciples were secretly gathered together in fear of the Jews, the Romans, and the future, the resurrected Saviour, Jesus Christ, appeared to them and imparted to them exactly what they needed—His peace.*

John 14:27 (NKJV)

²⁷Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

- *Christ's peace, unlike the peace that the world gives, is a peace that gives life and a sure hope.*

Ephesians 4:3 (NKJV)

³endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- *The truth is that every born again believer is united in Christ but here Apostle Paul exhorts us to be concerned with the quality of that unity.*
- *People can be married, and in a true sense they are united together, but it does not mean that the quality of their relationship is necessarily good.*
- *Our unity and relationship with one another is to be knitted together "in the bond of peace."*
- *The sinews, or those things that bind us together, should not be a forced obligation, but a true unity and reflect care for one another.*

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NKJV)

¹¹Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Mark 9:50 (NKJV)

⁵⁰Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

Romans 14:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

- *The theme of peace among believers is repeated over and over in the New Testament, “live in peace,” “have peace with one another,” “let us pursue the things which make for peace.”*

John 13:34–35 (NKJV)

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- *Since Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and His Kingdom is one of peace and love, our witness that we are legitimately Jesus’ disciples can only be seen when we have love for one another and are united in peace.*

Matthew 10:34 (NKJV)

³⁴“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

- *It is interesting that Jesus who is the Prince of Peace, and came to bring us peace would say that He did not come to bring peace on the earth, but a sword.*
- *Jesus came to bring a true peace and a lasting peace—a peace that will begin in our hearts and will culminate in the manifestation of His eternal Kingdom.*
- *Sometimes there are things in our hearts that give us a false sense of comfort and peace. Christ has come with the sword of His Word to expose those things and to remove them, so that He can impart to us His true peace.*
- *Sometimes the process can be difficult, uncomfortable, and even painful. However, if we yield to Him, the results will be glorious and His peace, joy, and love will flood our souls continually.*

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (NKJV)

³For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

- *The peace the world offers is both an illusion and transient, and will ultimately result in eternal disaster.*

2 Thessalonians 1:6–10 (NKJV)

⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

⁷and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

- *The day will come and is soon approaching when Jesus will return the second time. This time He will come as the Lion of Judah, and the King of Kings. He will establish His eternal kingdom and His peace will rule on the earth.*
- *At that time “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.” (Matthew 13:41). We will then witness the complete fulfillment of every Messianic prophecy.*