

# **PEACE ON EARTH?** ©

BY STEVEN LAMBERT, THD

One of the things I love about the Christmas Season is that for a few days and weeks at the close of every year virtually the entire world is confronted with the belief held by millions throughout time that two-thousand years ago a Baby was born in a lowly manger who was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel and the Savior of all Mankind. "You shall call His Name, Jesus," the angel of God instructed His human parents, which means Savior, for He would save the world from their sins. His Name would also be Immanuel, which means, God with us; and that He is! for all those who receive Him, are infused in their human spirit with His very Life, His Being, His Spirit, the Divine Nature.

There are some other aspects of the Christmas Season that still make it a very special time of the year, despite its annoyingly overt commercial exploitation. For one, it is by far the most protracted of all the holiday seasons, and with its proximity to the turn of the new year, it has become not just a *day* of celebration as with Easter and Thanksgiving, for example, but several *weeks* of celebration. Another aspect that distinguishes it from the others is the fact that it is the only holiday season that is celebrated to some degree in virtually every country of the world by at least some of its citizenry. Then, one of the most unique aspects of the Christmas Season is that it is celebrated with its own extensive and ever-expanding collage of season-related music playing almost ubiquitously in the background in both public and private venues for days and weeks as people throughout the world go about the events and traditions that have become a part of the landscape of the season.

As grating and even offensive as the super-commercialization of the Christmas Season increasingly becomes, in a sense, I can see that in the end, God being Sovereign as He is, it is He and His people who have the last laugh. What an irony it is that the season that has been set aside to celebrate the birth of the Savior of the world, is the most crucial, and in many cases, pivotal financial period for retail merchants great and small around the world. It is its commercial value that undergirds the global tradition of Christmas celebration and commemoration. Our sovereign God, even uses the root of all evil—the love of money—for His own purposes, commandeering each year even the secular system to dramatically proclaim to the whole Godless world that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die in their stead in order to redeem "whosoever will" from the sin that separated all humanity from Him. Throughout the days and weeks culminating each year, the message of redemption, reconciliation, and restoration is conveyed in word, song, and various art forms. The sovereignty of God is truly awesome and awe-inspiring.

Perhaps the most familiar refrain of the master-collage of Christmas-related narratives, poems, songs, melodies, tunes, and orchestral odes is that of "*Peace On Earth and goodwill to men.*"

What a pious-sounding adage and noble longing—*"Peace on earth and goodwill to men!"* Who in his right mind could be opposed to the prospect of goodwill among *all* men and greater peace in *any* segment of human relations than that which currently exists?

But, if "peace on earth and goodwill to men" was the primary purpose of the Christ-Child's birth two-thousand years ago as the Christmas carols proclaim, why has so little of it transpired on Earth since then?

This never-fulfilled proposition of peace on Earth has for ages been prime fodder for the naysayers and critics of the Gospel, who point out the very obvious fact that to this day wars and all manner of conflict among men have not only not *ceased*, but rather have *increased*. Indeed, the fact is that Man has never achieved peace anywhere, at any time on the Earth. There has never been a time in the history of the world when peace was ubiquitous on Earth, i.e., the absence of all conflict among nations or peoples. Rather, nations have *always* been at war, either against one another, or against themselves in the form of civil wars or internal conflicts.

The fact is, as annoying as the question of why peace on Earth has never existed in the history of mankind is to many Christians, it is nonetheless a valid and fair one. Why *hasn't* there been peace and goodwill in the affairs of men through the last two millennia? Is the prospect of peace on Earth really even a scriptural concept? Even more pertinent to our real lives, is it a viable possibility?

Well, to uncover the answer to those questions, we must separate the *holy* from the *profane*, the *true* from the *fictitious*, and the *mythical* from the *factual*. The short answer is: there is a genuine peace that is spoken of repeatedly in Scripture and is an underlying theme of the Gospel of Christ. But then there is also a fallacious and counterfeit peace the Godless seek that is a deception and false hope.

### **Man-centered Rather Than Christ-centered Peace**

A primary reason that the "peace and goodwill" that the world and the false religions of the world seek is a counterfeit is that it is Man-centered, and Man is wholly incapable of achieving peace on his own. Proof of that is inherent in the fact that—he never has! Since the very beginning of the Creation of Man in the Garden of Eden there has never been a time of prevailing peace upon the Earth. Man's very first generation of progeny—Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel—engaged in the first deadly conflict recorded, wherein Cain murdered Abel.

The fact is that the permeation of Mankind and the entire Creation with the corruption of Satan's nature of sin—rebellion against God and His righteousness—brought forth a state of incessant conflict of every possible kind upon the earth that continuing yet today, and will remain until the millennial reign of Christ and His Eternal Bride. Though the idea of utopian peace is a wonderful thought, it is nevertheless a vain, humanistic, and unscriptural philosophy, in this age. That is the reality that every Christian needs

not only to understand, but also thoroughly embrace. To think or imagine otherwise is futile, fruitless, and a false hope.

True peace, on the other hand, is not at all Man-centered, but rather Christ-centered. Christ Jesus Himself is the only true source of genuine peace and it emanates only from Him, "*For **HE HIMSELF IS** our peace*" (Eph. 2:14), the Spirit testifies in the Word of God. True peace is a **PERSON**, not a philosophy or principle.

It is Christ Jesus who is the Child who would be born unto us and the Son who would be given unto us, who is the "***PRINCE** of peace*" (Is. 9:6). It is Christ Jesus who Melchizedek, the king of Salem, which translated means the "***KING** of peace*" (Heb. 7:2), typified.

It is Jesus who is the "***LORD** of peace*" who alone, because He is Lord over all, can "*continually grant you peace in every circumstance*" (2 Thes. 3:16).

It is "*the peace **OF CHRIST***"—the peace that emanates from Christ Jesus—that we are to let "*rule [hold sway, act as an arbiter] in (our) hearts, to which (we) are called in one body*" (Col. 3:15).

Jesus Christ is Himself Peace, because true peace is a part of and emanates from God, which is corroborated, for one thing, by the fact that the salutation of twelve of the thirteen Pauline Epistles includes the benediction "*peace **FROM GOD***" (the exception, First Thessalonians, he simply invokes "peace" to them without explicit reference to its emanation from God). It is the "*peace **OF GOD***," the peace Jesus gives unto us, which is unlike the "peace" the world gives (Jn. 14:27), "*which surpasses all comprehension, (and which) shall guard your hearts and your minds **IN CHRIST JESUS***" (Plp. 4:7).

Paul informs us, "***GOD** is not a God of confusion (disorder) but **OF PEACE***" (1 Cor. 14:33). His valedictory to the Romans included the blessing "*Now may the **GOD OF PEACE** be with you all. Amen.*" (Rom. 15:33), plus the assurance that "*the **GOD OF PEACE** will soon crush Satan under your feet*" (16:20).

The Apostle promised the Philippians that if they practiced "*The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,*" then "*the **GOD OF PEACE** shall be with you*" (Plp. 4:9).

He also revealed it is, thank God, "*the **GOD OF PEACE***" who sanctifies us (1 Thes. 5:23). Thank God, by the way, it is as the God of **peace** rather than the God of **wrath**, which He is as well, that He makes us holy, lest we all be consumed.

We are told in Hebrews it is "*the **GOD OF PEACE**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep in the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord*" who equips us "*in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ*" (Heb. 13:20,21).

## The Fallacious Peace of Humanism

Moreover, the secular idea of peace is fallacious primarily because it is based on the vain humanistic philosophies of men, or humanism. Simply defined, humanism is the exaltation, at the minimum, or the deification, at the maximum, of man. It is a man-centered philosophy that for all intents and purposes ignores or, at the least, minimizes the sovereignty of God, and instead vaunts man to a place of supreme veneration. Indeed, humanism can also be accurately defined as the worship or veneration of man.

We live in an age of humanism. A popular song of the sixties promulgating New Age astrological doctrine called it "the Age of Aquarius." Anti-Scriptural humanistic doctrines are pandemic in our world. Mankind gropes and longs, almost pathetically now, for an ever-elusive, idyllic, universal, utopian "peace" and utter tranquility, in which what it considers evil is no more and all semblance of conflict is non-existent. Volumes and volumes of expressions of the false hope of world peace have been written in the annals of human history, especially since the Mass Communication Age began with the invention of the printing press, and now in the computerized Technology or Information Age.

Indeed, a primary contributor to the notion that Christ came to bring peace upon the Earth is the melodious and highly inspirational Christmas carols charged with lyrical jubilation concerning "peace on Earth," to which I alluded at the outset, that are sung ad infinitum during every Christmas Season all over the world. Just a few examples are:

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King;  
**Peace on earth**, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled." (*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*)

O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And **peace to men on earth.** (*O Little Town Of Bethlehem*)

It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold.  
**"Peace on the earth, good will to men,**  
From heaven's all-gracious King  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing." (*It Came Upon The Midnight Clear*)

The lyrics of such Christmas standards, because of the time they were written, were based upon the King James Version of Luke 2:14, which renders the doxology of the angel of the Lord as, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.*" However, that is **not** the correct translation of the text, which fact is corroborated by most every English translation published since the KJV. The correct translation is as

Marshall's Literal English Translation of the Nestle's Greek Text [The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English, 1982] renders it: "*Glory in (the) highest places to God and on earth **peace among men of goodwill.***" The New American Standard Version as well captures the true import of the text: "*Glory to God in the highest, and **on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.***"

Thus, we have here a glaring example of how the mistranslation of a passage has resulted in a "doctrine of men" that is in truth antithetical to Scripture. For you see, the testimony of the angel of the Lord was not that with the birth of the Christ-Child peace would prevail upon the Earth and Divine goodwill would inure to all men. Rather, the angel was proclaiming that people with whom God was pleased and whose hearts had been infused with goodwill from God—that is, "*as many as received Him*" (Jn. 1:12), the Christ who had been born—to these persons living upon the Earth would peace with **God** inure, not universally to all of mankind on the Earth. Neither was this peace proclaimed by God's Word peace between men and nations, but rather peace between *believing* men and God. The message was that with the birth of the Christ, reconciliation with God had come for all men (humans), which reconciliation would produce *internal* peace within all humans who accepted Him as their Savior and Lord. In other words, it is to *redeemed* humanity that peace would inure, not *all* humanity.

### **Peace Not the Purpose of the First Coming of Christ**

Indeed, the unequivocal truth that inherently is so difficult for the majority of Christians to comprehend, and accept even if they *do* comprehend it, is that **Jesus in His first bodily visitation upon the Earth did not come to bring peace to the Earth.** Nowhere does the Word of God teach that He did! In fact, it conveys the exact opposite—that the purpose of His first coming was to bring conflict or war!

Jesus Himself explicitly and unequivocally declared, "*Do not think that I came to bring **PEACE ON THE EARTH; I did NOT come to bring peace, but a sword** [a symbol of conflict, war]!" (Mat. 10:34). He is telling us here to not even **think** that the reason for His first visitation was to bring peace on the Earth. Yet, that is the very thing that the majority of professing Christians think. But, as already discussed, the reality is that there has never been a time of total *peace on the Earth*, neither since the birth of the "First Adam" nor the "Second Adam," Christ Jesus, and there never will be peace on the Earth until after the **Second** Advent, or Coming, of Christ!*

Jesus did not come to bring peace to unregenerate, evil-willed men in this corrupted cosmos, but war and more war, until it is irrefutably established that true peace will only come when the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace is manifest in the hearts of men and on the Earth. He is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind, and there is none other!

After telling us not to think that He came to bring peace on the Earth, Jesus categorically stated, "*I did not come to bring peace, but a **sword.***" Luke's version of Jesus' statement is: "*Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on the earth? I tell you, no, but rather **DIVISION***" (Luke 12:51). Not only do professing Christians—against Jesus' explicit admonition not to—suppose that an inherent purpose of His first coming

was to bring peace upon the Earth between peoples and nations, but they also presume, totally erroneously, that Jesus' coming should automatically produce peace in all forms and levels of interpersonal relationships, especially familial relationships, and are quite bewildered if that does not take place. However, that presumption is false, foundationless, and humanistic. Indeed, the rest of Jesus' statement makes it clear that Jesus will also be the "rock of offense," that is to say, source of division, among relatives as well:

*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. (Mat. 10:34)*

### **True Peace Is Of The Holy Spirit, Not The Human Spirit**

True peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), an attribute of the Divine Nature, and emanates from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is manifest in and through only one breed of person on planet Earth—those who have been regenerated and infused with the Divine Nature, which is the Holy Spirit. It cannot be manufactured or merely simulated. Nor can it be legislated. True peace is a matter of the heart, which is the reason that until the Kingdom Rule of Christ is effected upon the Earth among people, races, and nations, peace will not exist in the world.

True peace is a peace that comes from God and is resident within the regenerate heart of the redeemed. It transcends all comprehension and circumstances, and is contingent upon neither. God Himself is the God of Peace. True peace emanates from Him. True peace among humans is the result of having peace *with* God. The peace *of* God emanates to humans who have peace *with* God.

Indeed, Christ Himself is the very essence of true unity and peace. Any so-called unity and peace not established upon the foundation-rock of Christ is a Godless, humanistic, and totally counterfeit unity and peace. Utopian peace void of all conflict simply is not going to occur "*until the perfect comes,*" and it is impractical to expect that it will.

What men call "peace" is in reality nothing more than a **truce**—an agreement not to be in conflict, and invariably it is an instrument of gain and self-interest for one or more parties who have in some way overpowered or vanquished another party or parties. At the most, what is effected is a "peace treaty," wherein the vanquished (subjects) agree to the terms of surrender and subsequent governance by the victors (subjugators). True *peace*, however, is not a mere *truce*.

In Amos 3:3 the inviolable Divine principle is stated that two cannot walk together except by agreement. When two entities are walking together it is by agreement, whether the two parties be marriage partners, criminal conspirators, or demons with humans. In Christ what causes us to walk together, to be at peace with one another, is not a humanly contrived truce or peace treaty founded on the overpowering or predomination of one believer over another, but rather on the premise that the same Holy Spirit lives within each of us and motivates us from within to holy attitudes and behavior. The Holy Spirit is always in agreement with Himself as well as with the Father and the Son. We may not always agree on the mundane matters of life or even non-essential elements of the Walk with Christ, but the fruit of the Spirit nevertheless compels us to *"be at peace with"* (Mk. 9:50; Rom. 12:18) and *"live in harmony with"* (Plp. 4:2) others.

Satan is the master-deceiver. Everything he does he does for the purpose of trying to extend his kingdom and maintain his rule upon the Earth. And, his chief weapon is deception, his lies; Jesus called him "the father of lies." One of his primary lies is the vain prospect and false hope of "world peace," which he purports through his agents will be achieved through humanistic pacifism. Yet, he himself is by no means any pacifist, but rather he is the master-insurgent, who is maniacally and eternally bent on total world domination with the ultimate goal of establishing himself as sovereign over the cosmos. Indeed it was this master-motive of making himself to be like God that he actually and literally *"said in (his) heart"* that precipitated his violent expulsion from heaven:

*I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.  
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds:  
I will **MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH GOD.**" (Is. 14:13,14; NAS)*

This is the reason believers are commanded to *"resist him, firm in your faith!"* (1 Pet. 5:9); and, *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* (Jas. 4:7). But, this resistance that we are commanded to employ against the devil is not passive or defensive "resistance" of running away or doing whatever is necessary to avoid any semblance of conflict or confrontation, as some suppose and propose, for that will never work, because Satan is the classic playground bully, who will continue to harass and harangue and aggress against you until you finally plant your feet firmly, stand your ground, and face him head on in whatever means of offensive resistance is necessary to put an end to his bullying. When you do, like the playground bully, he will turn tail and run in fear from **you**, because he really is a complete **COWARD** at heart, internally terrorized with fear and trepidation, which is why he employs his tactics of terrorism and intimidation in the first place.

So the resistance we are to engage in against the schemes and devices of the devil is **OFFENSIVE** resistance, not weak, Casper Milquetoast passivity. Jesus declared, *"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by FORCE"* (Mat. 11:12).

And, all this, it must be understood, is true whether the application is our personal lives in our struggles against the wiles of the enemy of our souls, or national matters on the international front. War is nasty. War is ugly. War is unpleasant. War inevitably bears grave consequences. "War is hell!" But, wars must be fought to protect and defend our national sovereignty against the aggression or threat of aggression posed by maniacal rogue despots bent on world domination or hegemony of any magnitude. The line must be held at all costs. "*Give NO PLACE to the devil.*" **NONE!** For, given the proverbial inch, tyrannists will take the proverbial mile. Aggression and intimidation by terrorism must be **CRUSHED** the moment it raises its dastardly head! That's the only way to deal with it successfully.

The Spirit made it clear through the Apostle Paul that there is a "**WARFARE**" (1 Cor. 10:4) that believers are, have always been, and need to continue waging until Jesus returns. But, it is a warfare in which we have been given special spiritual weapons that we must employ to offensively resist the devil and his schemes, and to pull down his strongholds. He also tells us that the **WAR** in which we are engaged is "*against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph 6:12; RSV), and not against mere flesh and blood, or human, foes.

Jesus said, "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force*" (Mk. 11:12, KJV). Indeed, the Christian walk is no cakewalk, and it certainly is not for wimps! Like it or not, when someone becomes born again, he/she is drafted into the army of God, and it is either become a warrior, put on the armor of God, pick up the weapons of our warfare, join the battle, and begin to fight, or be defeated by the foe. It's just that simple!

Nevertheless, many believers, unfortunately just do not get it—that we are indeed engaged in a fierce battle—a constant, never-ending struggle against the "*wiles* (lit., strategic battle plans) *of the devil*" (Eph 6:11; RSV). Pretending it doesn't exist will not make it go away. Pacifism will not make it go away. It's either conquer or be conquered; overpower or be overpowered—"*not by might, not by power, but My Spirit, sayeth the Lord!*" (Zech. 4:6).

So therefore, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as Spirit-filled believers in Christ, who is the Word of God and was the Word of God made flesh during His first visitation to the Earth, let us resolve to believe **who He really is**—not merely the Child born in the meekness of a manger, but the Person, Prince, and God of Peace—the One from whom true peace emanates. And, let us cast off the bonds and bondages that the vain philosophies of men place upon us, in particular those of a false, humanistic peace and pacifism foisted upon us at this wonderful time of the year. Let us walk instead in true peace and freedom of the Spirit, realizing that doing so requires constant vigilance and spiritual warfare against the devices and schemes of the enemy of our souls. For, if we abide in God's Word and His Word abides in us, then we shall **know THE TRUTH**, and the Truth that we **know** shall set us and keep us **FREE**—free from the throes of all bondage, affliction, and oppression the enemy of our souls sends our way in an attempt to bind us! For truly, "***He whom the Son sets free, is FREE INDEED!***"



[**Note:** This article is adapted from the book, **CHARISMATIC CAPTIVATION, Authoritarian Abuse & Psychological Enslavement in Neo-Pentecostal Churches**, by Steven Lambert, ThD. The book exposes the widespread problem of authoritarian abuse in Neo-Pentecostal church-groups, and explains how it became infused into the very fabric, foundation, and functions of the Neo-Pentecostal church arising out of a false movement known as the Discipleship/Shepherding Movement (1970-77). References to "Discipleship" or "Shepherding" (and variables) doctrines, teachings, proponents and participants, and so forth, allude to those pertinences that arose out of that movement.]

Dr. Steven Lambert is a Bible scholar, prophetic teacher, ordained minister, Christian counselor, and holds several earned theological degrees. He also serves as the Director of Concinnity Network International, a fellowship of Fivefold Ministers relating and colaboring for common purposes. Dr. Lambert is the author of an ever-increasing number of books, booklets, courses, and teaching materials. He is also consulted by the media concerning Christian cults and spiritual abuse.

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