

“ON EARTH PEACE”

Luke 2:8-14

Intro: Of all the accounts in Scripture of incidents that were related to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, none is more well-known than this account in the first twenty verses of Luke 2. And in this section of Scripture, the best-known from memory is in verses 8 through 14. Perhaps this is because so many of us as children were given verses 8 through 14 to commit to memory. I imagine that most of you who attended Sunday School as a child were asked to memorize these verses. No one would dispute the fact that they are truly wonderful verses. This is not to minimize the importance of anything that is found in any of the other three Gospels, nor of the importance of any other part of Luke 1 and 2. But it is to recognize the familiarity of this passage.

Chapter 2 of Luke is the only passage which actually records the birth of the Lord Jesus. (Read verses 6 and 7.) That alone makes it very significant.

It is also an unusual passage because it tells us about shepherds and about angels. We would have thought that the birth of Jesus Christ would have been declared to the leaders of the Empire, or surely to the leaders of Israel, but instead angels announced it to shepherds who are not even named. But we should not be surprised about this because it is entirely in keeping with the humiliation of our Lord Who came to die to save sinners from their sins. And there is also the added emphasis that those shepherds were among the elect of God because the angel who appeared to them said,

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring **you** good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For **unto you** is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign **unto you**; **Ye** shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger (Luke 2:10-12).

So these shepherds had a vital personal interest in the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah.

And the fact that the elect are very prominent in this passage is to be seen in many versions of the Greek text where the definite article “the” comes before the word “people.” It was to those chosen of God for salvation that this news would be “good tidings of great joy.”

But our text tells us that after the angel of the Lord had finished delivering his message to the shepherds, that suddenly, and completely unexpected, “a multitude of the heavenly host” appeared “praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14).

In these days when there seems to be a fascination with angels among many people, it is to be regretted that people are not paying attention to what the Bible has to say about angels, because in the Bible you have the truth regarding angels.

I doubt if most people even know the meaning of the word, *angel*. *An angel is a messenger. There are good angels, and there are bad angels.* Or we can say that there are *the elect angels*, and there are *fallen angels*, or demons. The Devil is the chief of the fallen angels. Gabriel and Michael are two of the elect angels. In the OT “the angel of the Lord” is usually a preincarnate appearance of our Lord, but in Luke 9 it probably refers to the angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of Jesus according to the flesh, and it would seem that he was the angel who also appeared to set Joseph’s mind at rest when he discovered that Mary was expecting a child before they were married.

Today I want to direct your attention especially to verse 14, and so let me point out some details about this verse that are important for all of us to recognize.

You all can see that there are three parts to this fourteenth verse:

- 1) “Glory to God in the highest,
- 2) “And on earth peace,
- 3) “Good will toward men.”

You will also notice that there is an “and” before the second statement, but there is not an “and” before the third statement. *This has led expositors to say that there are two main statements in this verse:*

- 1) “Glory to God in the highest,
- 2) “And on earth peace.”

And that the third statement actually belongs to the second statement, and helps to explain the meaning of that second statement. That is, that peace on the earth is God’s good will toward men.

Some have suggested that the last statement should read, “toward men of

good will,” but the strongest authority is for the verse as it stands in the KJV. Besides, how would you explain “men of good will.” It would make the “will” man’s will, when the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as a baby was God’s will, not man’s. And, as God’s will, it would reasonably follow from the opening statement of the verse, “Glory to God in the highest,” that is, *in the highest heaven!*

Now let me point out another very important feature of this verse, especially in the first two statements, but supported by the third statement. You will notice that the first statement has to do with God in heaven: “Glory to God in the highest”; the second statement has to do with men on the earth: “And on earth peace, good will to men.”

Therefore, we must conclude from the message that God gave to the angels to declare to the shepherds, and for us to understand, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth to do what He was appointed by the Father to do, was pre-eminently for the glory of God. That detail about the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, far surpasses every other consideration. And you see this repeatedly in what the Lord had to say about His coming. He came to do the Father’s will. He was sent by the Father to do what He did. He was amazed when Judas came with the soldiers to arrest Him, and Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant in an effort to defend Him. But this is what He said to Peter:

Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? (John 18:11).

The Lord’s main object throughout His earthly life and ministry, even when He was only twelve years old, was to do the will of His Father in heaven.

And so we can write “to God be the glory” over:

- 1) The birth of Christ.
- 2) The works, the miracles, of Christ.
- 3) The teachings of Christ.
- 4) The death of Christ.
- 5) The resurrection of Christ.
- 6) The ascension of Christ.
- 7) His present ministry in heaven,
- 8) And ultimately His coming again.

As that angelic choir sang in the presence of those shepherds it was all, “Glory to God in the highest.”

But there was a second point, and it was also important, but definitely secondary in comparison with the first: It was this: “And on earth peace, good will to men.”

Now let me ask you a question: “Does it amaze you that out of all of the blessings that you and I have received through Christ our Savior, “peace” should be the blessing that the angels mentioned as Blessing #1?”

Christ was born to be a Savior, Christ the Lord. He in a special way was born to die, to die for sinners. And by His death, atoning for the sins of all whom the Father had given to Him,

I. HE OBTAINED PEACE FOR US WITH GOD.

The Apostle Paul stated this very clearly in his letter to the church at Rome, and most of you will remember his words:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1).

“On earth peace” – “Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And we can have this peace right now, here “on earth.” That is what the angels were saying. “On earth peace.”

What does this mean? Well, Paul went on in that same fifth chapter of Romans to tell us what it means to have peace with God. Let me read to you what he wrote:

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [the reconciliation] (Rom. 5:8-11).

To have peace with God means that we have been cleared of all the charges which were against us because of our sins. It means that we are no longer enemies of God, but we have been reconciled to God by Christ’s death on the Cross. Now we are saved by His life, and in place of the old enmity, not “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom

we have NOW,” here on earth, “received the reconciliation.”

Now we love God. Now we, too, want to live to please Him and to glorify Him for this wonderful salvation He has given us. We are the objects, the recipients, of His good will. We love Him because He first loved us. We have chosen Him but only because He first chose us. We have sought Him, only because He first sought us. And now He delights in us because we are His in Christ. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is why Isaiah could speak of the Messiah, Christ, our Lord, as “the Prince of peace” in Isaiah 9:6:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, **The Prince of Peace.**

“Prince” means that He is the Captain, the Ruler, the Lord, the Keeper of our “peace with God.” And so for those who are trusting Christ, our “peace with God” is not something that we can have today, but lose tomorrow. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is our Peace, it will be ours forever!

Two verses I love, and I often use them when I sign my name, are Hebrews 13:20-21 where God is called “the God of peace.” Listen as I read those verses to you because they emphasize, too, how and why we can have peace with God right now here “upon earth”:

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

I think I am right in saying that most of the people in the world don’t have the slightest idea as to why Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary about two thousand years ago in a stable in Bethlehem. It was so that all who would believe in Him would have peace with God because He died to put away their sins.

But before I close, I want to point out to you that there is another aspect of this peace that we need to know about when we read those words, “on

earth peace.” It is what is Scripture is called,

II. “THE PEACE OF GOD.”

Paul spoke about this peace in Philippians 4:6-7. Listen to what the Holy Spirit directed him to write:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

What does it mean to have peace in this world, in the kind of a world in which we live? Does it mean that when you become a Christian, all of your troubles come to an end? We know that is not the case. Besides, Paul called it a peace “which passeth all understanding.” That means that we can have peace when there is no earthly reason why we should have peace. We have our troubles just like anyone else. We have our sorrows, and our disappointments. We have hopes that somehow are never realized. Then what does it mean to have peace?

The Greek word for peace is εἰρήνη. Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, defines its use in this verse in this way: “The tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is” (p.182).

We can say that having the peace of God in our hearts is believing Romans 8:28. Let me read it to you as it appears in the NASB:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Since God is God, we know that He is sovereign over all things, and that, as Psalm 37:23, 24 tell us, our very steps are ordered by Him. No nation or group of nations, no individual, no circumstance, no trial, is greater than our God is. And He even uses what we call “bad things” for His glory and for our good. Remember our text, “on earth peace.”

My mind often goes back to my days at Dallas Seminary, and especially to the ministry of Dr. Chafer. He not only taught us good theology, but he taught us to love the hymns of the church. He explained hymns to us so that we would sing with understanding. One of the hymns I learned from

him is #590 in our Trinity Hymnal, and I would like for you to turn to that hymn with me now.

Dr. Chafer pointed out that the first part of every verse was a question, except for the last verse. Then he showed us that the second part of every verse was the answer. And so he would have a sing the first part of the verse softly and soberly, and then sing the last part with more volume, and triumphantly. Then he would have us pull out all of the stops like we were playing an organ, and sing the last verse with great joy!

This verse helps us to understand that whatever our circumstances, in the Lord we can have perfect peace. (Read the hymn.)

One thing that Thayer mentioned in defining “peace” in his Lexicon, was this: That this peace that we have been talking about is unique to the Christian faith. The world doesn’t have anything that even comes close to it, nor do the other religions of the world have anything like the peace of God, or peace with God. But we have it, we have it now with God, and we have His peace as we face every day that we live.

Isaiah said long ago, but it is still true:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isa. 26:3-4).

Concl: Do you have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:?”

Are you trusting Him, and only Him, to make things right between you and God. Don’t believe those who try to make you think there is no such thing as sin. It was because of sin that Jesus Christ was born into this world. It was necessary for Him to come because no one else could settle the problem of our sins with God. But He did. And the only way we can have peace with God is through putting our faith in Christ and what He did when He died for sin and sinners on the Cross. Make sure that He is your Savior before you leave this place today.

But for those of us who have peace with God, are we enjoying that inner peace with God? Are we worrying about anything instead of trusting the Lord to meet our needs? Take that problem, that burden, that need, perhaps that sin, and cast all of your care upon Him. Trust Him to give you a contented heart by flooding your soul with His peace. He alone is

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our sufficiency, and so we need to live each day trusting Him. His peace is truly a peace “which passeth all understanding.”

What a message we have for a world of people who have lost their way, and who are getting farther and farther away every day they live. The message of our Lord Jesus Christ means:

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will toward men.