

It would be good to have your Bibles open to John 14 page 1082 in the church copies.

I want to start elsewhere. There are two passages of the Bible that are frequently read around Christmas that reference 'peace'. One is

**Isaiah 9:6**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

A little understanding of Hebrew might help here. There are two tenses in Hebrew the Perfect tense meaning a complete action and a continuous tense which means the action is ongoing. So 'a boy is born' is a complete action a real event in history, here prophecied 600 years before it happened. The same applies to 'a son is given'. As John 3:16 says 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son'

The remaining verbs are continuous. The government **is** on his shoulders, He **is** being Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This resonates with the cry of the Wise men. "Where is he who is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him."

He is King.

He is eternally the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace. Most importantly he is that now.

The other Christmas passage I want to draw your attention is

**Luke 2:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

<sup>14</sup> *‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.’*

<sup>15</sup> *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’*

Two questions come to mind. What sort of peace is meant here and have you reacted to the message like the shepherds? Now I don’t think this is a call to go on a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, but have you investigated what have been told about the Lord Jesus Christ? So, be aware the Christmas story demands a response, you can’t just ignore it.

So what is this peace these two passages refer to? Clearly it is not the Miss World ideal “ I want world peace”

Google reckons there are between 56 and 59 active conflicts globally across more than 35 countries. Isaiah himself write in disturbing times of conflict that came right to his front door.

Jesus predicted this when he said *“You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>7</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.”* Matthew 24:6-13

Worse than that he predicted a tough time for his followers - *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. <sup>10</sup> At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup> and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup> Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup> but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

So is the message of Christmas just a dream, an mirage, a vague hope that can never be fulfilled? No it is not. We need to understand a different sort of peace.

**John 14:27**

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

So Jesus does not offer a solution to the UN ambitions for world peace or conflict free family life, he offers peace in your heart and mind and

spirit. The sort of peace that enabled Jesus to sleep in a small boat in a storm on Galilee. The phrase *Do not let your hearts be troubled* is a repeat of

**John 14:1** *'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.'*

The secret of this peace is in believing in Jesus.

Why? Because the root cause of our problems individually and globally is sin. By which I mean rebellion against God. Thinking my way is better, I can do what I like and no one can stop me. It is that which fuels family arguments, rows with the neighbours, Most of politics seems to demand 'my way is the right way'.

Jesus came to address the problem of sin by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. He died in my place, in your place to wipe away the stain of sin and remove the guilt of sin. But it does not end there, there is more. He rose again from the dead. In John 14:3 we read:

*v3 I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

Not only is sin dealt with but Jesus is here inviting you to spend an eternity of love, joy and peace with him. And there is more! Read on to v15

*v15 'If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth.*

Pentecost was a watershed moment for the church because the Holy Spirit came to empower the church

not to have a holiday but to obey the command to go and tell the Good News. So the good news of the peace Jesus brings is the past forgiven, the future secure and the Holy Spirit to be with you every step of the way.



La Jument Lighthouse, Ushant

This photograph was taken from a helicopter that had just delivered supplies to the Lighthouse Keepers. La Jument is well offshore in some of the most treacherous waters. The man at the door casually turns and closes the door, climbing the stairs while the sea rages around him. He is safe and at peace. We have Jesus, he is our rock and refuge, the secure place in troubled times. Turn to John 16:33 we read:

**John 16:33**

*'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'*

Have peace this morning, receive Jesus' salvation and the Holy Spirit will drive away fear and anxiety as we trust him that we are safe.

To quote Isaac Watts hymn

*Should all the hosts of death,  
And powers of hell unknown,  
Put their most dreadful forms  
Of rage and mischief on,  
I shall be safe, for Christ displays  
Superior power, and guardian grace.*

So our peace is based, not on our current circumstances, but on the presence of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

What is our response to this?

**Colossians 3:15**

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

The word here translated 'rule' means referee, umpire, judge at games, or arbitrator. In our worries and anxiety we need to let the Peace of Christ decide what is right and what is a waste of time and energy worrying about.

And 'hearts' is more than our emotions, it includes our thinking and our character. So we are to re-call the words of the angels "peace to those on whom his favour rests."

And the words of Jesus after the resurrection to his disciples. “*Peace be with you*”

And practice it , reminding ourselves and each others when stressed to practice the peace – allow the Peace of Jesus to referee our internal turmoil.

**Romans 5:1-2**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

You have peace with God, you have the certain hope of eternal life, you have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit now so relax, you are secure, enjoy the peace that you have. A peace that no person or circumstance can change.

So let us say to one another

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, ... and be thankful.*

And remember Jesus says to you

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Enjoy the peace of Christ!