

He is Our Peace

HE IS OUR PEACE
Ephesians 2:14
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I. WE LIVE IN A DAY WHEN THERE IS A DESPERATE NEED FOR PEACE

1. The World is a World of Violence

- From 1900 - 1941 there were 24 international and civil wars.
Between 1945 - 1980 there were 130.
Today there are 40 wars of various magnitudes.
- War and defense use up close to 1/3 of governmental budgets around the world.
 - = The U.S. between 1983-1987 spent 1,600 crores rupees for military purposes. This equals 3.200 rs. for every person on earth. It spent 9 times as much on military as on fighting hunger.
 - = The world in 1986 spent Rs 600 crore crore (6 with 12 zeros after it) for military purposes. This is Rs. 1,200 per person on earth. It spent as much on military as the total income of poorest 1/2 of world. Two times as much as on food, and 5 times as much as on housing. 2,300 times as much as on working for peace.
 - = One half a day's military expenditure could reduce malaria significantly around the world. The money spent on one tank would build 1,000 classrooms serving 30,000 children who will now never receive an education. The cost of one airplane would build 40,000 village pharmacies. The money spent in military in one month would feed, cloth and educate every poor person on earth for one year.

2. The World is a World of Need.

- The population explosion puts heavy demands on human resources.

In:	1930	there were	2 billion	people,
	1960		3	
	1975		4	
	1986		5.	

- = India adds over 15 million people a year to its population.

- There is a growing inequity between rich and poor nations, and between the rich and poor within each nation.

- = In Brazil the top 1 % of the population earns as much money as the bottom 50%.

- Undernourishment is expanding. One third of the world is undernourished, yet one third throws food away.

- The growing urbanization adds problems to human life.

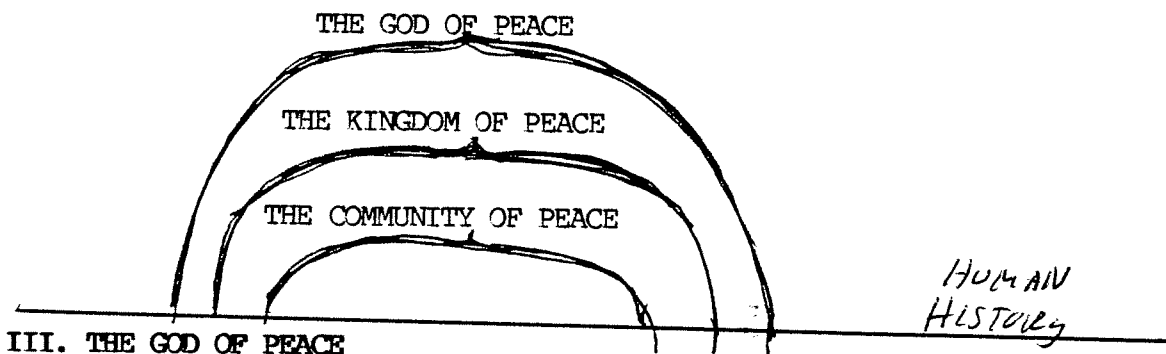
- = by 2000 A.D. Bombay will have 16.8 million people and be the 8th largest city in the world. Calcutta with 16.4 million will be the 9th largest.

3. But the Church has Resources David Barrett estimates that 1/3 of the world is Christ, yet it has 2/3 of the world's wealth.

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II. WHY DOES THERE SEEM TO BE NO SOLUTION TO THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS?

1. We Become Like the Gods in Whom We Put Our Trust.
Carlyle notes that we become like our heroes, and our gods.
2. Many Put Their Hope for Peace in a Strong Military Defense.
There is the god of military might.
 - The U.S. has 9,500 nuclear warheads. Russia about same.
 - = these can kill all people on earth about 40 times.
 - = but weapons in the long run only promote violence, not peace.
 - Marxism puts its faith in power and revolution.
 - Capitalism puts its faith in development and wealth.
 - None of these deal with the root problem, namely sin.
3. Others Put Their Hope in International Peace Treaties
 - Some look to the United Nations for peace. But it has only helped slow down some of the conflicts.
4. Paul in Ephesians Calls us to Put Our Trust in the God of Peace: in the Kingdom of Peace that He Establishes; and the Church which is to be a Community of Peace.



III. THE GOD OF PEACE

Introduction: In the coming sessions we will look at each of these three levels of God's activity aimed at bringing about peace and justice on earth.

- We will look at Ephesians 1 in which Paul speaks about the God of Peace.
1. God Created a Good World: Gen 1:4, 11, 13, 18, 21, 25, 31.
 - Gen: 2: "God blessed what he did and made it holy." (righteous, justice, orderly.
 - God's intent was a good world. Therefore we as His people should be angry at the suffering, disorder, injustice, oppression, and violence we see around us.
 - 1.1 Sin brought disorder and violence. Divisions between male and female (Gen. 2:15), brother and brother (Gen. 4:8), race and race (Gen. 6:5-7). The root of human problems is sin. Until we deal with sin and the greed for power and gain it generates we will not have peace. Marxism and Liberation Theology do not have adequate understanding of sin and its effects on humans and their structures.

- 1.2 God called his people to repent and turn to righteousness and peace. Jer. 22:3-5; Ezek. 45:9-12; Is. 48:18; Is. 52:7; Naham 1:15.
 - 1.3 Israel disobeyed God and the result was violence: Ezek. 8:16-17; Micah 2:13; Habakkuk 1:3-4, 2:6-19; Jer. 6:14, 8:15.
 - 1.4 But God renewed his promise of peace by proclaiming the coming of His Kingdom to the earth. This Kingdom is to be a present reality and an eschatological hope. Is. 54:10, Mal. 3:7.
 - Christ's central message was the Kingdom of God coming on earth.
 - This central message is the key to the understanding of the book of Ephesians:
2. God's Final and Supreme Method for Bringing Peace was not a Program. It was the Incarnation: HE BECAME OUR PEACE IN JESUS CHRIST.
- 2.1 Christ's coming was promised to be one of peace: Is. 9:6-7, 49:8-13, 57:14-19, 2:1-4. That promise is still with us and provides us hope in a hopeless world. God has not forgotten us.
 - 2.2 The promised was fulfilled in the coming of Christ.
 - in his birth: Luke 2:14. He came as poor and vulnerable.
 - in his overcoming of the temptations: Luke 4:1-13.
 - = to depend on economic wealth - bread (1-4).
 - = to depend on political power (5).
 - = to depend on religious signs and miracles (9).
 - in his life: Matt 12:15, John 8:59, Luke 23:33-34, Luke 9:51-56, John 18:11, Luke 22:35-38.
 - in the inauguration of his kingdom: Luke 4:18-19.
 - = for the economically and socially disinherited.
 - = for the politically oppressed.
 - = for the physically and mentally ill.
 - = for the spiritually lost.
 - in the heart of his teaching: Luke 6:20-36.
 - the center of our message is Jesus. He our example.
3. The Early Church Followed the God of Peace
- 3.1 In Acts: Acts 10:36, 15:33, etc.
 - 3.2 In Paul's Message: Rom. 5:1, 10:15, 16:30, Gal. 5:22, Eph. 2:14, 6:15, Phil. 4:7, Heb. 13:20.
4. Later the Church Turned to Depend on Human Might
5. But the Final Return of the King of Peace is Yet to Come.
- Our answer to the world is not a program but a person - the person of Jesus Christ who came to the world as our savior.

IV. GOD'S KINGDOM IS A KINGDOM OF PEACE

Introduction:

- saw yesterday that we become like the gods we serve. As Christians
OUR GOD IS A GOD OF PEACE - Eph. 1.
- today we will look at Eph. 2:14-15. **"He has made both Jews and Gentiles one new humanity in himself."**

1. The Kingdom of God was the Central Focus of Jesus' Message.

- He spoke of it 102 times, of the church 2 times.
- His teaching was designed to show humans how they can enter the Kingdom, Matt. 5:20, 7:21.
- His mighty works showed that the Kingdom has come, Matt. 12:28.
- His parables illustrate truths of the Kingdom, Matt. 13:11.
- He taught his disciples to pray "Thy Kingdom come." Matt. 6:10.
- On eve of His death, assured disciples they would share in fellowship of the Kingdom. Luke 22:22-30.
- Promised to return and bring the Kingdom. Matt 25:31, 34.

2. What is the Kingdom of God? First let us look at what it is not.

2.1 It is not the church.

- if we equate it with the church, we believe only our own church has those who will be saved. The result is denominational wars.
- the church will pass, but the kingdom is eternal. The church is relative, the Kingdom is absolute. The church is imperfect, but the Kingdom is perfect.
- the Kingdom is greater than the church for God is at work in all of human history.

2.2 It is not identified with any earthly kingdom.

- it is not identified with the U.S. or U.S.S.R. or any other human kingdom, for these are all affected by sin.

2.3 It is not **only** a future hope.

- Too often we see it only as heaven. This renders the Kingdom meaningless for people and their problems today.
- the Kingdom of God began on earth with Christ's coming and will find its full expression in his return.

2.4 It is not **just** personal salvation and inner peace.

- If we limit it to this, the Kingdom has no relevance to the structural evils of our day. It is then only an hope for the future with no answer to the corporate problems we face.

3. What then is the Kingdom?

3.1 It is a present reality (Rom. 14:17, Luke 17:20-21); and a future inheritance (Matt 25:34), to be celebrated with great glory (Matt. 13:41-43). It stands in contrast to kingdoms of world. It is God's rule breaking into history.

3.2 It is a personal salvation (Rom. 14:17, John 3:3), and a social transformation (Rev. 11:15).

3.3 It is the rule of Christ in our lives and in the world.

- a) the authority and sovereignty of a legitimate king. The rule of God: wherever he is in charge.
- b) a citizenry that he rules.
- c) a realm that he rules.

4. How Does God Bring About His Kingdom?

4.1 He called ordinary people such as Peter to be His disciples.

- an ordinary fisherman.
- an outspoken man quick to act. Ready to walk on the water; quick to speak on the mount of transfiguration; first to proclaim Christ's messiahship; rebuked Jesus for talking of his death.
- one who denied Christ in time of trial. Slept in the garden when asked to pray; denied Christ at the trial; forgiven and restored by Jesus after the resurrection.
- one called to be the first missionary to the Gentiles - Cornelius.

4.2 He called others like Mary Magdalene, prostitute; and Nicodemus, a respected lawyer; and Matthew, a hated tax collector.

4.3 He calls us and makes us citizens (Eph. 2:19) and members of the royal family - princes (Eph. 2:19).

Illustration: THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER. The story is that when the king died, evil courtiers kidnapped the prince and put a substitute in his place, hoping to rule through this puppet. The prince managed to escape, and came to the palace in rags, claiming to be the prince. At first no one believed him, but gradually the cooks and then the noblemen began to realize that he was indeed the true prince because he walked, talked and acted like a king, and he knew what a king should know. They detected the fraud and crowned the true prince king.

How did he come to think and act as a king? Go back to when he was a baby. The king said, "You are my son. I must train you to be like a king. So when other children were playing, the king had the prince working hard. He had to study, and learn to use the sword, and know about his ancestors and their battles. He had to learn how to handle state finances and deal with politics. All this time the king was molding his son to be the King.

So God is molding us through the experiences he lets come our way, to make us princes in his household, and heirs to the king.

V. OUR CHURCH IS TO BE A COMMUNITY OF PEACE

1. God's Intention for the Church is that it be a Community of Peace - of Shalom.

1.1 **Shalome** in the Bible Stands for Peace in the most Comprehensive Sense. It is not simply the absence of violence.

- For the Greeks, peace meant inner tranquility.
- For the **advaita** Hinduism, peace is withdraw from the world.
- For the Hebrews **shalome** is not simply the absence of violence, it is a whole concept of peace tied to the idea of salvation. It covers human welfare, health, and well-being in both spiritual and material aspects. It describes a condition when salvation flourished according to the social order determined by God in his covenant with his people. It is total wellbeing:
 - * physical: health and wholeness
 - * economic: common welfare, provision and prosperity
 - * social: equality, dignity, harmony and peace, mutual caring and serving, love and hospitality.
 - * political: justice and righteousness. Protection of the marginals: the poor, weak, widow, orphan, stranger in the land.
 - * education: wisdom and maturity
 - * spiritual: faith and a right relationship with God
 - * personal: inner tranquility, peace, joy
 - * ecologically: caretaking of nature, not exploitation that is destructive of nature. Anti-pollution. Anti-wasteful.
 - * future: promise of salvation
- it resists all our tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness and misery.
- it resists western privatization and personalization of salvation has robbed us of much of the meaning of 'salvation' and 'gospel'. It originally has a corporate sense as well individual, and a public sense as well as private. See Acts
- it is rooted in the covenant between God and his people. It creates a covenant community.

1.2 Paul Calls This Covenant Community God's Mystery Now Being Revealed, Ephesians 2.

- We were alienated from God, Eph. 2:1-3; but God has saved us, Eph 2:3-10
- We were at war with one another, Eph. 2:11-12; but now we are made one new body, Eph. 2:13-22. There is reconciliation, Eph. 2:13; and the wall of enmity has been broken down, Eph. 2:14.
- We are a new humanity "IN CHRIST" (repeated often). We are new people through Christ. Not our power but his.
 - = not a human universalism. That only brings war and destruction. A new Babel.
 - = not one culture, but a dynamic multicultural form in which people are united in common community and relationship.
 - = people who were insurmountably hostile and divided (religious, social, economic, political, cultural) now a shalom community.

1.3 What is the nature of this Upside-down Community?

- The church is to be a new community with new values, Matt. 5-7.
 - = reconciliation and forgiveness: because we were reconciled. Matt. 6:14-15, Gal. 5:20 Eph 4:31, Rom 1:29, 13:13, I Cor. 3:3, Col 3:8,
 - = mutual submission. Submit to one another Eph. 5:21.
 - = leader as servant: Luke 19:10, Mark 10:45, Luke 22:20.
 - = seeking the unity. Eph. 4:, I Cor. 12:23, Rom. 16:17-18, Gal 5:15, John 17:21-23. - a witness to world.
 - = seeking peace: 'peace' was the characteristic greeting of early Christians
 - = at peace with ourselves: Fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace. Eph. 3:15. "Let peace of God keep your hearts."
 - = loving one another: "See how they love one another"
 - = love of enemy. Matt. 5:43-48, Luke 6:26-27, 10:16, Matt. 10:40, Acts 9:5; I Cor. 8:12
 - = returning good for evil Matt 5:44. Retribution is Gods. Luke 9:24.

2. How Does Jesus Build Such a Community?

3. Paul Says that Now He has Adopted Us Gentiles and Made Us Part of One Family with the Jews who are His Children.

3.1 Illustration: A poor boy who had lost his parents made a living in New York shining shoes. He made a beautiful shoeshine box which was his pride and joy. He had the best spot near a big bank. One steady customer was a banker.

One day the banker did not show up. After a week he reappeared, very sad. The boy asked, and the man said his only son had run away to have fun in the world. Then the man asked the shoeshine boy if he would like to come home with him for dinner. The boy was washed and dressed in the runaway son's clothes. He was amazed at the food, and at the richness of the home. Then the banker asked him if he wanted to be the banker's son. The only condition was to throw away the shoeshine box, because if he were to be the banker's son, his pauper past would have to be forgotten. Finally, with tears in his eyes, the boy threw the box in the fire and became the banker's son.

Later the wayward son returned, and wanted to send the adopted son away, but the banker said that now he had two sons, and the two would need to become one family.

So it is with us. We as Gentiles are the adopted children, and are now part of the family of God.

We who have a long history of being Christians often treat newcomers as adopted sons, claiming to be true sons ourselves. We need to accept new sons into our common family. The barriers of caste, race, culture and sex need to be broken down in our new family.

3.2 We are to be a new community that shows the world love, peace, justice and harmony, and that transforms the world through identification, ministering to human needs and proclaiming the Gospel.

4. Does it really work?

- Illustration of Pedda Danvada, A.P. When the high caste people persecuted the newly converted harijan Christians and refused to let them draw water at the village well outside of town, the Christians prayed, raised money and got a government loan. Twice they tried to dig their own well and failed. Finally they dug in the village and struck water. Then they invited their persecutors, the high castes, to come and draw water at the well the Christians had dug in the middle of the village.

5. How can we as a church change the world through nonviolent revolution?

5.1 Through ministry to a world in need.

- to the poor and marginal: widows, orphans, untouchable, sick, needy, etc.

5.2 Through speaking out against evil, and exposing it to the light.

Evil hates exposure. Example, Christ and the moneychangers in the temple.

- the theology of the cross is our answer to violence.

= example of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

= example: when the high caste people beat the harijan Christians in A.P. Christian brothers in public offices forced the government to investigate the case.

5.3 Through forgiving others and seeking reconciliation. This is our only hope of breaking the cycle of hatred and vengeance.