

Peace

At this time of year many think about Christ's coming into this world, some 2000 years ago.

Many will sing of the appearance of the angels to the shepherds on the hills, as they watched over their flocks, and of the words the angels said: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord'... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"

The part of the angels' speech, "And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" is something that many feel sums up the attitude we should all have at Christmas. They feel that above all it should be a time of peace and of goodwill.



Often over Christmas there is much talk of peace. At this time warring groups will often agree ceasefires until Christmas is over and in certain conflicts, extra effort is made to agree a 'peace deal'. Politicians and church leaders will give speeches on the need for world peace.

Christ and Peace

Is this what the angels meant? Did the angels mean that the main aim of Christ's coming was to bring in a time of international peace? If so, they were wrong, as we can see from the history of the last two thousand years.

It shouldn't surprise us that the coming of Christ did not bring world peace, for He warned elsewhere, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I

did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matthew 10:34, 35). Though Christ does enable His followers to "seek peace with all men," one of the results of their faithfulness to Christ is that they can be rejected and persecuted!

True Peace

What we need to realise is that, yes Christ came into the world to make

peace. However, that peace was not chiefly between *man* and *man*, but between man and God. As the hymn puts it:

"Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

This was the peace which the angels were singing about - peace between "God and sinners". What made the angels sing was the knowledge that the birth of the Son of God was the first stage in the reconciling of God and sinners. It was the first stage because the actual work of reconciliation was done later on, by Christ, on the cross. The Bible says, "He made peace through

the blood of His cross". The meaning of "on earth, peace," is this: because of the birth and death of the Saviour, sinners are assured of forgiveness and peace with God when they turn from their sins and put their trust in Christ.

Peace For All Who Turn & Believe

Some people seem to think that the message is: "God has

*peace... between
man and God*

goodwill towards men, even if they continue to live just as they want to".

People love to be told that all will be well with them, no matter how they live. But this is not the message of God. Peace is promised, but only to those who turn from their sinful ways and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Path To Peace

We shall never appreciate the peace which Christ made through His cross until we realise we sin against God and need his forgiveness. All of us, without exception, have rebelled against God in some way. We have failed to keep the Ten Commandments as we should. We have not obeyed what God says in His word the Bible. We resist having

Christ as our Lord and Master. As a result, the Bible says we deserve punishment. Yet to such guilty rebels comes the wonderful good news that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Cor. 5:19).

The Christian message of salvation urges us, "Be reconciled to God". It says, "Turn from your rebellious ways, surrender to Christ, and receive the forgiveness and pardon which Christ obtained by His death on the cross".

Knowing Peace

When we have faith in Christ and receive forgiveness, we can say truly with Paul, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have PEACE WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ", and not only peace with God, but "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding".

It is the most wonderful thing when we know that our sins are forgiven and that we are at peace with God. We can face the future without fear, for we are sure that we have God's forgiveness and

love, which will carry us through all that we may face. The end of the world will eventually come, but even then we will not be afraid, because Christ will protect us and take us to heaven to be with Him for ever.

*Be reconciled to
God*

Do you have this peace which many have found is a reality and which Jesus Christ gives to all those who truly know Him?

"Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth:

Hark, the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King".