

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory (Isaiah 9:6)		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	34		Gary L.W. Johnson
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THE PRINCE OF PEACE

You will often hear people quote the Bible to support their particular position on some civil or political issue. Christianity has suffered a great deal from this type of abuse; and perhaps on no subject more than the subject of “peace.” The common understanding of this term centers around two points: (1) men desire peace in a world full of hostility, that is, people want to see war and bloodshed abolished; and (2) men want peace of mind, a subjective disposition of calm and well-being. The trouble (very literally) is that sinful man can never possess peace, either outwardly or inwardly. He may convince himself in one way or another that he is at peace and has peace of mind, but apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is a Satanic delusion. Our understanding of peace is basically Greek. The Greek understanding of peace (*eirēnē*), was primarily negative, the mere absence of turbulence or conflict. The Hebraic sense is rooted in the word *shalom*. When the Jewish writers used the word *eirēnē*, they impregnated it with *shalom*, which understood peace more in a positive sense; not merely the absence of strife but the additional element of well-being, harmony and totality. The Pauline sense is even more emphatic. Peace is the result of a restored relationship where the wrath of God has been dealt with in Christ (cf. Romans 5:1ff), *eirēnē* is found over 90 times in the New Testament, almost half (43 times) of these in the letters of Paul. It is, therefore, an important concept in Paul’s thinking, as our text will go on to show. Paul’s language has its roots in the Old Testament, with a particular reference to Isaiah 9:6. The context of the passage from Isaiah must not be ignored. Beginning in 9:1, the prophet’s words describe darkness and gloom all about! It is a time of great distress. All around the prophet were clouds of darkness. “He heard,” says Spurgeon, “prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot – one place where the clear shining came down from heaven.”¹ Isaiah calls this “a great light.” The darkness of sin can only be dispelled by light, and light is the gift of God (Genesis 1:3). “It cannot be produced from a human heart which itself is in darkness. The whole work of Christ and all the blessings which He brings may be characterized by the one word *light*.”² In Isaiah 7:14 (cited in Matthew 1:23), the virgin-born son called “Immanuel” is announced. Now the child who brings light and rejoicing (9:3) is introduced in greater detail.

- I. **THE NAMES OF THE IMMANUEL CHILD.** The word “child” appears first in the Hebrew text, for all the weight and emphasis fall upon it – and it is *for us* that He is to be born. The Child is worthy to bear these names. They are accurate descriptions and designations of His being and character. In the Bible, the name indicates the character, essence or nature of a person or object. As Young correctly points out, “When, therefore, it is stated that he shall be called, we are to understand that the following names are descriptive of the Child and deserve to be borne by Him.”⁴ The translation of the KJV gives the impression that there are five names, but actually there are four (as rendered in the NIV). These are double-membered names.

- A. **Wonderful Counselor** (Hebrew *Pele Yoetz*). The word “wonderful” is not an adjective but a noun, so literally this expression is “Wonder-Counselor.” As a *Counselor*, He is a *Wonder*. There is none like Him. The word *pele* is used in Exodus 15:11 and Psalm 77:15 to describe the acts of God. In Judges 13:18, the Angel reveals the fact that He is deity by stating: “Why do you ask my name? It is Wonderful.” This, as Hengstenberg observes, “means my whole nature is wonderful, of unfathomable depth, and cannot therefore be expressed by any human name.”⁵ Such counseling is only given by God (cf. Psalm 16:7; 32:8, and especially Isaiah 28:29). To designate this child with such a title is to make the clearest affirmation that He is deity.”⁶
- B. **Mighty God** (Hebrew *‘El Gibbor*). In prose, the word *‘El* usually appears with other words, such as *‘El Shaddai*, *‘El ‘Elyon*. Liberal scholars have argued that *‘El Gibbor* does not refer to deity, since *‘El* in the plural (*Elohim*) may have reference to men (as in Psalm 82:1, 6). But *‘El*, especially in Isaiah, is always used in reference to God alone (cf. 10:21). Furthermore, it is used as a personal name (Isaiah 31:3, cf. also Jeremiah 32:18 and Deuteronomy 10:17). The Gospels repeatedly stress the power of Christ (Matthew 28:18). Jesus declares that He has overcome the world (John 16:33); we may be of good cheer because our Savior is the “mighty God.”
- C. **The Everlasting Father** (Hebrew *Abshi ‘ad*). “The word *‘ad*,” says Young, signifies perpetuity or duration. It may have the sense of eternity, as when Isaiah speaks of the ‘high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. . .’ (57:15).”⁷ This again signifies that character of the Child. Elsewhere we read of God described as Father (Isaiah 63:16; Psalm 103:13). Why is the Son called the Father? It is in relation to His people. He is a King who cares for His subjects the way a father cares for his children (cf. Isaiah 22:21; 2 Kings 13:14; Psalm 68:5). The quality of this fatherhood is defined by the word eternity. Again, this can only have reference to deity.⁸ “The name means that the Messiah is eternal and paternal in relation to His people.”⁹
- D. **The Prince of Peace** (Hebrew *Sar Shalom*). This stands purposely at the end and is very emphatic. He establishes Peace. Inasmuch as the peace to be made is eternal, it becomes obvious that more than a temporary cessation of earthly hostilities is in view here. The *cause* of all strife and misery must be addressed, namely, human sin. Peace can only be established when sin is addressed – this first and foremost – has reference to the enmity which existed between God and humanity. The Prince of Peace must make peace by dealing with sin – and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus did do (cf. Romans 5:1).

Taken together, the four names given to this child are an extension of the name *Immanuel*. He does only what God can do because of who He is, “God-with-us.” At this time of the year when our minds are so easily distracted by the season (!), let us heed the words of the Puritan Thomas Manton on this passage: “To increase our reverence, and that the ignominy of his cross may not obscure his glory, nor lessen his respect in our hearts, but that we may have high and honourable thoughts of our humbled Lord in his lowest estate. Let us give much thought to Isaiah 9:6, 7, and why so? . . . When we are meditating only upon his humiliation, the natural atheism which is in our hearts is apt to turn those thoughts into a snare, and our respects to the majesty of Christ are abated. Therefore we ought again and again to consider his divine nature, and that glorious estate wherein he was from the beginning, so to balance our thoughts of his humiliation.”¹⁰ It is with this background that we now turn our attention to Ephesians 2:14-18.

- II. THE SOURCE OF PEACE: THE PEACE-MAKER** (Eph. 2:14). “For he himself is our peace.” The Greek text puts the pronoun HE in the emphatic position. The conjunction connects the verse with what has just preceded it (v. 13). **Peace** has the article (*ē eirēnē*). The article used with the predicate noun presents the predicate as something well-known, or as that which alone merits the designation; i.e., the only thing to be considered. Christ is **The Peace**. He is the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He promises **His Peace** to His own (John 14:27; 16:33). Angels sang at His birth, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** among men with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14). Our peace with God comes at His expense (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:1ff). Because of Jesus Christ, God is “The God of Peace” (Romans 15:33, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Hebrews 13:20, 21).
- III. THE WORK OF THE PEACE-MAKER** (Eph. 2:15-16). There was an obstacle to peace. First and foremost, it was man’s enmity and hostility to God and God’s judicial wrath against sinners. This had to be dealt with first. Also, the purpose of God entailed uniting Jew and Gentile as one in the Body of Christ, the Church; this necessitated removing another obstacle.
- IV. THE MEANS BY WHICH CHRIST WROUGHT PEACE.** *Through the Cross* (Gk. *dia tou staurou*, lit. by means of the cross). The cross reconciles man to God and man to man. Christ has *put to death* (Gk. *apokteinas*, aorist participle, used to express means) *their hostility*. This is done by the death of Christ in His physical body, and He unites Jew and Gentile in *one body*, which is the Church. The price of peace, both with God and between men, was the blood of Christ.
- V. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PEACE-MAKER** (Eph. 2:17). This does not primarily refer to the preaching of Christ during His earthly life, but to His cross-work. When the work of reconciliation was accomplished, then the “good news” was proclaimed. The message of peace is preached because of the death of the Peace-maker, who made peace by means of His death, and His death slew the enmity of Jew and Gentile. The expression *to you who were far away* is directed to Gentiles, and *to those who were near* is addressed to Jews (cf. Isaiah 57:19). It is only by the cross and after the cross that such a message can be preached.
- VI. THE RESULT OF PEACE** (Eph. 2:18). Through Christ Jesus, men have peace with God and peace with each other. But specifically, Jew and Gentile in Christ have *access* (Gk. *prosagōgēn*, approach, lit. an introduction, cf. Romans 5:2). We have the freedom to approach God (cf. Hebrews 4:16, 10:22). In light of the preceding verses (2:1ff), this is astounding. It is by Christ, *in one spirit unto the Father*. Note again the Trinitarian emphasis (comp. Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Likewise, in the opening of the fifth chapter of Romans, the apostle writes, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” It is possible that he is implicitly answering a question that might have arisen from the conclusion of the preceding chapter. It would have been a natural thing for a doubter, or questioner, to ask in objecting to the faith way of salvation, “Is this method safe? Will it enable us to hold out to the end? After all, faith is a very tenuous thing. Can it stand up when the trials of life come to us?” In setting forth what we have, Paul mentions peace, which was obtained in the past; access, which is our present possession; and hope, which stretches out into the future (cf. Col. 3:4). The expression “peace with God” in Romans 5 is not to be confused with “the peace of God” (Phil. 4:6-7). “The idea here,” writes Boice, “is not that we are

upset and therefore need to become trusting and more tranquil, but rather that we have been at war with God and He with us, because of our sin, and that peace has nevertheless been provided for us by God – if we have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ.”¹¹

CONCLUSION: How are men ever to know peace? Apart from Jesus Christ there is no peace, nor will this world ever know peace outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote, “There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked” (48:22 and 57:21). The peace that Christ brings is not by His example or teachings, but by His atoning death. The reconciliation that He effects is by means of His shed blood. Unless men have been stained with His blood and washed whiter than snow, they will continue to stain themselves with the blood of other men. All the efforts of the world to bring about peace outside of Christ are doomed to complete failure. All seeking after peace apart from Christ is an illusion. He is our peace.

ENDNOTES

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *A Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of Our Lord: The Messiah* (rpt. Baker, 1979), p. 107.

² E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-18* (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 325.

³ Young writes: “Isaiah had already pointed out (7:14) that the Messiah would be with us (*Immanuel*) to bring us blessing; here He is to be for us (*lanu*). At the same time, this *lanu* is to be contrasted with the *lakem* (to you) of Isaiah 7:14.” *Ibid.* p. 330.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁵ E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament I* (rpt. MacDonald Publishing Co., N.D.), p. 449. “Revelation 19:12 is to be compared, where Christ has a name written that no man knows but He himself, to intimate the immeasurable glory of His nature. That which is here, in the first instance, said to all others, holds true of His whole nature; the King is a Wonder as a Counselor, because His whole person is Wonderful.” *Ibid.*

⁶ This is an example of what is known as “prophetic paradoxes.” A prophetic paradox is made up of two or more prophecies, each of which contains a seeming contradiction with no real absurdity involved, and present an enigma which, without a clue to its fulfillment, seems impossible to solve. Consider some of these impossible contrasts: God will come to earth to be born as a child. The Messiah will be begotten by God, yet He will be God. He will be providentially, even miraculously, fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament. Cf. F. John Meldau, *The Prophets Still Speak: Messiah in Both Testaments* (rpt. Christian Victory Publishing, 1988), p. 37.

⁷ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

⁸ Note the remarks of the Puritan giant, John Owen: “And this may be added to the other names of God that are attributed to Christ: as *Adonai*, Psalm 110:1; *Elohim*, Psalm 45:6; Hebrews 1:8; *Jehovah*, Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16; Malachi 3:1, Psalm 83:18; *God*, John 1:1; *The true God*, 1 John 5:20; *The great God*, Titus 2:1.” *The Works of John Owen*, XII (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), p. 315.

⁹ Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A New Translation and Commentary* (The Spearhead Press, 1971), p. 165.

¹⁰ *The Works of Thomas Manton XX* (Maranatha, N.D.), p. 403.

¹¹ J. M. Boice, *Romans: An Expository Commentary II* (Baker, 1992), p. 507.