

## CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

### **Acquiring God's Peace On Earth: Lessons From The Infant Jesus' Presentation At The Temple Part II: Acquiring Peace By Handling Sin By Faith In Jesus Like Simeon (Luke 2:25-35)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Luke 2:14 KJV reports that when the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the Bethlehem shepherds, they proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men."

However, Clifford May, president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, in his November 28, 2015 Republican-American op-ed, p. 6A, noted that though "'(p)ease on earth' is a lovely Christmas wish . . . history demonstrates it's not mankind's natural state . . . We live not in a global village but a global jungle -- and the law of the jungle operates." He supported this claim by naming recent acts of terrorism and oppression in the world, *Ibid.*

In reality, the better manuscript reading at Luke 2:14 presents the angels as asserting "peace to men on whom His [God's] favor rests," Luke 2:14 NIV. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 208; Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Greek N. T., 1971, p. 133) One must be a personal recipient of God's favor to know His peace in a troubled world.

Yet, a barrier to inner calm even for many Christians is their realization that "progressives" in power seem detached from God and peace: (a) Bret Stephens' December 8, 2015 column in The Wall Street Journal ("Fighting Terror by Self-Reproach," p. A13) claimed that President Barak Obama "asks not what he can do for his country but what his country can do for him," that "(h)is belief that terrorism is another gun-control issue draws on the deep wells of liberal true belief," and that "(t)his is . . . why he delivered" such a "sterile, scolding homily" to the nation last Sunday night "that offered no serious defense against the next jihadist massacre."

(b) Progressives at the grassroots level also seem detached from God and peace: Peggy Noonan's December 5-6, 2015 column in the journal (*Ibid.*, "The First Amendment Needs Your Prayers," p. A13) noted that "while victims of the shooting" in San Bernardino "were sending out requests for prayer," progressives, angered over talk of prayer on the social media, chided, "You can take your prayers and stuff 'em. The answer and the only answer to this tragedy is gun control." Stunned by such "prayer shaming," Ms. Noonan added, "I suspect part of the problem is that a number of the progressive finger-pointers do not really know what prayer is. Maybe no one ever told them."

***Need: So we ask, "If we want to receive God's favor and know His peace in a troubled world, how do we deal with people of influence who are progressive in ideology and seem woefully detached from God and peace?!"***

- I. We need to know that progressivism is the end-result of a compromise of Christianity with paganism:**
- A. In the third century A. D., the Alexandrian School of Theology tried to harmonize Plato with Christianity by interpreting the Bible symbolically or allegorically, John F. Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, 1974, p. 12.
  - B. As a result, "Christian Gnosticism" that errantly denied Christ's bodily incarnation arose through this school, and this heresy later greatly influenced how Muhammad formed the Islamic faith. (W. Walker, A History of the Christian Church, 1959, p. 72-73, 51-53; Robert Spencer, The Truth about Muhammad, 2006, p. 52-57)
  - C. Then, Augustine with the Catholic Church following him applied the Alexandrian School's allegorical method of interpretation to Bible prophecy to produce amillennialism that replaces Israel with the Church in God's plan (J. F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Trib., 1976, p. 12). This led to the crusades, antisemitism and British Israelism, the view that Israel's 10 northern tribes became the Americans, and British Israelism in turn spawned the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism cults, J. K. Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, 1973, p. 162.
  - D. Later, Hegel held to this nonliteral use of the Bible (*Ibid.*, Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord), and theologians following his lead added that it is to be read for its spiritual intent, not for its plain statements, *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.
  - E. Amid this subjectivism, the rise of Darwinian evolution led to "a naturalistic explanation of life as a whole," *Ibid.*, p. 13, with the authority to define truth residing in man's "reasoning processes" and the Bible ceasing to be "a message from a transcendent God," namely, Liberal Theology. (C. C. Ryrie, A Survey of Bible Doctrine, 1978, p. 7) It held that "(i)f man evolved, we are getting better and what is called sin is just a remnant of selfish animal nature . . . Christ was just a reformer and not the Redeemer," and "the Christian religion" is "a code of ethics and not the way of eternal life," Bolton Davidheiser, Evolution and Christian Faith, 1976, p. 10.
  - F. Liberal Theology necessarily denied core historic Christian beliefs like Christ's Substitutionary Atonement for sin (Wm. W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, 1973, p. 407), opening the door for applying the theory of evolution to Western Civilization's societies, and that produced the ruthless capitalism of the early twentieth century followed by fascism via Mussolini and Hitler and socialism via Marx, *Ibid.*, Davidheiser, p. 350-354.

- G. Today's progressives apply the Hegelian Dialectic Process of introducing tension between opposites in society to lead to a compromise that is absent all absolute religious beliefs and morals, so progressives are willfully detached from the Bible's God and His peace! (Brannon Howse, *Religious Trojan Horse*, 2012, p. 15-69, 479)
- II. However, the ministry of Simeon at the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple countered Liberal Theology and progressivism with the truth of salvation from sin by faith in Jesus, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit as in Simeon's spiritual walk, believers know God's peace in today's world, Luke 2:25-35:**
- A. When Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus into the temple to present Him to God, the Holy Spirit led an elderly, godly prophet named Simeon there to meet them, and when he saw the Baby, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God for fulfilling His Word that he would see the Messiah before death, Luke 2:25-29.
- B. Simeon's additional remarks in Luke 2:30-35 **completely counter Liberal Theology and progressivism:**
1. Simeon claimed that Jesus would be a light to illumine the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel, a claim that upholds the **literal** interpretation of Bible prophecy versus the Alexandrian School and Gnosticism and its errant offshoot(s), for Simeon held God's Kingdom will include **BOTH Israel AND Gentiles as DISTINCT groups** versus the Amillennial view of Augustine, the Catholic Church and many Protestants and cults that hold the **Church replaced Israel!** (Lk. 2:30-32; *Ryrie St. Bib., KJV*, 1978, ftn. to Lk. 2:32) (Joseph and Mary were stunned at this news of Jesus' outreach to Jews and Gentiles, Luke 2:33.)
  2. Simeon then blessed the family, adding that Jesus would cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and be a sign to be spoken against, adding that a sword would pierce Mary's own soul that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, Luke 2:34-35. In view of the Gospel records of Jesus' earthly ministry, Simeon meant He would expose man's **sin** and **save only** those who **trusted** in Him, a view full of fundamentalist theological absolutes that **DEEPLY CONFLICTS with LIBERAL THEOLOGY and PROGRESSIVISM:**
    - a. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He would teach that the **only** way to the Kingdom that Israel so desired to see established was by faith in Him for salvation, *Bib. Know. Com., N. T.*, p. 209; John 3:16-21.
    - b. According to Jesus, those who thus trusted in Him would be saved and enter the Kingdom (John 1:12), where those who did not trust in Him would miss it and end up in hell, John 1:11; Matthew 8:5-9, 10-12.
    - c. Israel's national rejection of Jesus and this teaching of His led to His being crucified (John 1:11; 19:14-16), which event fulfilled Simeon's prophecy that Mary's soul would be (figuratively) pierced, Luke 2:35.
  3. In summary, then, opposite Liberal Theology and progressivism and in line with the literal interpretation of the Bible, the Holy Spirit-led Simeon implied that man is a sinner and stands accountable and condemned before a holy Creator God, that man must thus trust in Jesus to be saved from hell! (John 3:16)

***Lesson:*** (1) *Simeon's words by the Holy Spirit's leading call us to handle the Bible literally, for he taught a future Kingdom for Israel and saved Gentiles who will co-exist as distinct, separate people groups as the literal reading of Scripture presents.* (2) *Interpreting the Bible literally also leads us at 2 Timothy 3:16 to hold it is God's inspired, authoritative Word,* (3) *and that men must trust in Jesus to escape hell and receive eternal life (John 3:16).* (4) *We also know from Scripture and history that Liberal Theology and progressivism err as they rose from the misuse of the Bible that was further corrupted by evolutionary thought and ensuing errors, and that people adopting such errors need to be disciplined for Christ.* (5) *We also know that to know God's peace on earth amid progressives who help trouble it and who apply the Hegelian Dialectic Process to get us to compromise our absolute Bible beliefs and morals, we like Simeon must rely on the Holy Spirit to stay upright in thought and action, 2 Timothy 1:13-14.*

***Application:*** *May we (1) trust in Christ to escape hell and gain eternal life, John 3:16. (2) May we also hold to the literal interpretation of the Bible and thus to the historic Christian faith that it teaches, and (3) may we heed the will of God in discipling people worldwide to trust in Christ. (4) May we finally rely on the Holy Spirit like godly Simeon did to know God's peace in a troubled world and to think and to act aright in the face of errant influences.*

***Conclusion:*** (To illustrate the message . . .)

Dr. Bolton Davidheiser, a Ph. D. in Zoology with a specialty in Genetics from the Johns Hopkins University, wrote that for many years, he could not believe in Christ since he considered evolution to be a fact, and if it was a fact, then Christianity was false, *Ibid.*, Davidheiser, p. 7, 9-10. However, he came to trust in Christ while holding to evolutionary belief due to the work of the Holy Spirit to convict him of the gospel's truth as he sat under a pastor who was not humanly gifted, *Ibid.*, p. 11. He thus testified, "It is the preaching of the gospel that leads to salvation," *Ibid.*

**May we trust in Christ. Then, may we hold to the literal interpretation of the Bible and rely on the Holy Spirit for inner peace and spiritual power to live aright in a troubled world and disciple men for Christ.**