

THE FATHER'S CHRISTMAS GIFTS TO US IN HIS SON
"Gift Four - Christ As Our Key To Future, True, World Peace"
(Isaiah 9:6d-7)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

True, lasting peace in our world is still a dream:

(1) **Internationally**, President Clinton recently ordered bombs to fall on Saddam Hussein's forces in Iraq. Saddam's incessant refusals to let United Nations weapons inspectors in to view sensitive areas had sparked this latest round of bombing missions. Now that the bombs have stopped falling, the President says that the missions will guarantee Mr. Hussein has been put back a *year* in his program for building weapons of mass destruction. **A YEAR? Are we going to have to risk American lives and relations with our allies to bomb Iraq every YEAR? We still lack peace in the Middle East!**

(2) **Nationally**, we started to pray on the December 16th Prayer Meeting about the impeachment vote that was at hand. Since then, the President has been impeached, and we are awaiting the specter of a trial in the Senate! **There is certainly a lack of peace in our nation's government in Washington!**

(3) At the **State** level, though Governor Rowland got the legislature to ratify bringing the New England Patriots to Hartford, many remain concerned about the state's being saddled with a high price tag for the football stadium's special seats. Others feel state coffers could be better used to help our poor. Ralph Nader leads a group to counter the Patriots' coming. **There is UNREST in our State.**

(4) **Personally**, many lack peace. Though it is the number one men's basketball team in division I of the NCAA, the UCONN players managed to get into a brawl with the nationally unranked University of Fairfield players. The question is, "Why?!" Had the opponents been Duke or some other highly ranked team, maybe it would have been understood, though still inexcusable. But *Fairfield* -- **why?!**

(5) In our last Prayer Meeting, January 6th, we had an all-time record of prayer requests due to needs and a lack of peace! Before the meeting, several calls had come in from believers who needed **peace!**

With PEACE -- true, lasting, effective peace still often just a dream in our world, and that at all levels, IS there any hope for peace in our world? If so, what can WE do to further its arrival?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Whether we look at the international, national, state or even personal levels, real, lasting peace in our world is still just an ideal! What can make it happen -- what can I do toward that end?!"

- I. **When Isaiah wrote Isaiah 9:6 predicting Messiah's birth, peace at all levels of government was quickly deteriorating into chaos:**
 - A. **Internationally**, the cruel Assyrians were predicted by Isaiah to be moving to invade and conquer the whole land of Israel, Is. 8:7-8.
 - B. **Nationally**, the people of Israel had floundered under the bond of wicked kings to where, in the invasion, the afflicted, hungry people would actually curse their **king**, Isa. 8:21b.
 - C. **Personally**, Isaiah's call to trust God instead of making national treaties to protect against Assyrian invasion led his countrymen to view Isaiah as allied with Assyria. They thus charged a "conspiracy" between Isaiah and Assyria, Isa. 8:11-12, Young, *Isaiah*, v. I, p. 310.
- II. **In response, God graciously led Isaiah to declare MESSIAH to be Israel's "PRINCE of PEACE", or FUTURE KEY to world Peace!**
 - A. The title "Prince" signifies that Messiah is *yet to reign* in some capacity, embodying a **hope** of *future* ramifications, Isaiah 9:6d.
 - B. This **hope** is for "Peace", or hope of a **peaceful reign** explained in 9:7:
 1. The Hebrew word for "prince," *sar* of Isa. 9:6d quite possibly plays on the word "government," *misrah* in Isa. 9:7a, *Ibid.*, p. 342!
 2. Thus, the "Prince of Peace" title is expounded in Is. 9:7 as follows:
 - a. The **government** of Messiah would **increase**, causing divisions to be healed and Gentiles to be added in partnerships, Isa. 9:7, *Ibid.* In fact, Israel with Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt will all be unified with a highway running between them. Isa. 19:23-25.
 - b. Yet, **contrary** to how nations *usually* expand, Messiah's reign would enlarge in **peace**, Isa. 9:7b, *Ibid.*, p. 343! This could only come about by the Spirit's working in men's hearts to cause them to yield to God's will, a state that occurs as men believe in Christ for salvation. *Ibid.*; Joel 2:28, 32 with Zech. 12:10; 13:1,9.
 - c. This rule will be **endless**, set up on **David's** throne, Isa. 9:7c.
 - d. Finally, this reign of Messiah was **sure** to be **installed** and **last forever** because Israel's very *motivated* **God willed** for it, 9:7d.
- III. **The New Testament explains this Kingdom in greater DETAIL:**
 - A. When Christ returns after the Great Tribulation, He will produce a **forced peace** for a thousand years, Rev. 20:4-6.

- B. Satan will be bound during this time, holding the **sins** of men with Christ's reign of forced peace in great **check**, Rev. 20:1-3; Rev. 12:5a.
- C. However, as children of **mortal believers** who survive the Tribulation Period finally **rebel** due to their **sin natures**, Satan will be released to deceive the ungodly into a worldwide rebellion, Rev. 20:7-8.
- D. Christ will judge them and create a **sinless** universe, 20:9; 21:1, 27.
- E. Consequently, there will be an **eternal** peaceful world of Jew and Gentile under Christ of all saved peoples of world history, Rev. 22:3-4

IV. **However, an INDIVIDUAL can NOW live in peace with Christ:**

- A. Jesus told those who believed in Him that they could have peace in Him though experiencing even tribulation in this life's events, Jn. 16:33
- B. The **way** such a peace is **realized** is stated in Scripture as follows:
 1. The believer's sins must be first confessed so that God will want to commune with him, supplying peace, 1 Jn. 1:9 with Ps. 66:18.
 2. Then, as one heeds God's Word in his life, God signals His very encouraging presence in his life's events, John 14:21,23.
 3. When anything rises that causes worry, the believer can commit it in prayer to God and find God supplying peace, Phil. 4:6-7.
 4. To **stay** at peace, one fills his **mind** with Bible truths pertinent to all crises that arise, and **applies** them in living to find **God's** aid, 4:8-9.

Application: *For peace, one must START by addressing his SIN: (1) he must believe in Christ as personal Savior from sin to receive forgiveness and a new heart and the indwelling Spirit of God, Jn. 7:38-39. (2) Then, he should fellowship with Christ to live effectively a life of righteousness: (a) this includes confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) dependence upon the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) for (c) the capacity to obey Scripture, 1 Jn. 2:3-6. (3) In so doing, he can GAIN experiential INNER peace by (a) prayerfully depending on God for whatever worries him (Phil. 4:6-7), and fill his mind following such a prayer of commitment with GOD'S Biblical values and thoughts so that he can STAY at peace, Phil. 4:8-9. (4) Once he has found true inner peace, he can work for WORLD peace by doing God's will for HIS role in discipling others to become future subjects for the COMING eternal reign of the Prince of Peace. (See the concluding illustration for a practical example of this!)*

Lesson: *SIN in man causes unrest, so SIN must be overcome for peace!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

To show how Christ's coming reign of peace will handle the problems we mentioned in our sermon introduction this morning, consider the following:

Some days back, I approached a young homemaker in our Church, requesting that she consider running for Church Clerk. Judy Ruhm has informed me that she needs to back out of that position, so the Board and I agreed for me to ask this other party if she would consider running for as Church Clerk.

After having considered it, this homemaker called me this past week to say she was **declining** to run, giving me some interesting reasons. She wants to serve the Lord in a **quality** way, one in which she can afford to be **faithful**. However, having small children, she felt she could not do her duty before the Lord of meeting the mothering needs of her children in accord with Scripture and guarantee they would not need her attention during a given Annual Meeting where she as a Clerk would have to attend. Also, she did not want to take the Clerk job if she could not faithfully minister in that position. Thus, for the time being, she respectfully **declined** to run for that office.

I was even **glad** she had turned **DOWN** a Church ministry opportunity. Why? Because she had all the **right reasons** to do so.

Viewing Christian service this way, from the BIBLICAL values perspective, is what will make our Church a strong, effective ministry for the Lord and His coming Kingdom! This young mother's decision will also produce PEACE in the Church, in her family and in her OWN mind, for it is the RIGHT decision that God will BLESS and ENCOURAGE her at all levels of life!

Someday, this same attitude and set of values, spreading throughout the basketball teams of America, the legislatures of the nation, the halls of Congress and the White House and in the palaces of the Middle East will cause great peace. When the righteousness of Christ is shed abroad in man's HEARTS on a personal level, there will be peace -- real, GREAT peace!

Let us BEGIN working toward that end by starting with our OWN lives as has this young homemaker in our Church. Then, we can testify to others and line up more subjects for the Prince of Peace and His coming Kingdom!