

Peace on Earth?

If Christ came to bring peace on earth, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14), why is the earth groaning with strife and suffering?

Listening to the news reports of violence, scandals, and natural disasters makes the ringing of Christmas carols seem like childish naiveté. How could the angels have proclaimed peace on earth at the time of Christ's birth while there was so much death and destruction?

Since Adam and Eve's fall, mankind has inherited a sin-cursed world. Genesis reports how wickedness prevailed in Noah's time. The parallels between Noah's day and ours show the reality of judgment, the reach of grace, and the remedy of salvation.

God did not overlook the corruption in Noah's day: "*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,*" (Genesis 6:5). In judgment for sin, God promised to send a Flood to destroy man and the earth (Genesis 6:13, 17).

Most people today would agree society is also corrupt, filled with all kinds of wickedness. Yet they would blame the problem on poverty, government, or a lack of education. The average person sees himself as pretty decent. Surely on Judgment Day, God would allow such a "good" person into heaven, right? Jesus, however, said no one is good except God (Mark 10:18; Romans 3:10-12). Paul's list of serious sins, such as loving self, money, and pleasure more than God, accurately describes our world today (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We're all born dead in our sins, following Satan to pursue selfish desires as "*children of wrath,*" (Ephesians 2:1-3). We deserve God's wrath (Matthew 10:28; Romans 3:23, 6:23). While God promised never to send a worldwide Flood again, He is going to send a consuming fire (2 Peter 3:1-13).

If all have sinned and deserve judgment, why is anyone alive today? Not even Noah deserved to be saved from the Flood. "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*" (Genesis 6:8).

Grace is an undeserved gift. We cannot earn God's saving grace by doing good works like serving in a soup kitchen, going to church, or trying to keep the Ten Commandments.

God has given everyone grace by showing Himself in creation and man's conscience (Acts 14:16-17; Romans 1:18-22, 2:14-16). Because everyone is dead in sin, sinners need the Lord's saving grace (Ephesians 2:1-10). The God of grace made one way of salvation that He revealed in His Word - the Bible.

God made one way to save Noah from the Flood. Noah believed God. His faith proved genuine by his obedience in building and entering the Ark (Hebrews 11:7). Still by grace through faith alone, God saves sinners today who flee His wrath against sin by turning to His one way of salvation. The Christmas account unfolds God's salvation plan.

Like Noah, Mary "*found favour [grace] with God,*" (Luke 1:30). Like all other sinners, Mary needed God's grace. She realised this and sang praise to God her Saviour (Luke 1:47).

Angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds, calling Him "*Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,*" (Luke 2:11). These titles have tremendous significance: Saviour shows Jesus has come to save sinners, Christ shows His position as the promised Messiah, and Lord shows His power as God in the flesh.

Jesus lived a perfect life, teaching and doing miracles that showed He was the Son of God. As the perfect sacrifice, Jesus took the punishment for sin – death - by dying on the Cross in the believer's place. He proved His victory over sin and death by rising from the dead.

God has made Jesus the one way of salvation (Acts 4:12). As Noah believed God by entering the Ark, sinners believe God's one way of salvation by entering into Jesus, the Door of Salvation (John 10:9). God saves repentant sinners from the penalty and power of sin through faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Noah's salvation from the Flood through the Ark pictures the believer's salvation through Jesus (1 Peter 3:18-22). Just as the waters of judgment fell on the Ark instead of Noah, God's wrath against sin fell on Christ at the Cross instead of the believer (John 3:36).

Sinners must not postpone turning to Jesus. As God finally closed the door of the Ark and sent the Flood, the Lord promised to again send His wrath, a surprise to people living as those in Noah's day - unprepared, unrepentant, unregenerate (Genesis 7:16-17; 2 Peter 3:1-13). After the fire of judgment consumes unbelievers with the earth, the Lord will reign over believers in a new heaven and earth of peace (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21).

So, this Christmas, remember that peace on earth comes only through Jesus. His sacrifice on the Cross made peace between God and believing sinners (Colossians 1:20; Romans 5:1). One day, after judgment, His peace will reign forever.

Enter into Jesus, the Ark of Salvation!