



**grow. pray. study.**

**December 7, 2019 *Long Lay the World in Sin and Error Pining***

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6 (CEB), Matthew 1:20b-21 (CEB), and Luke 2:13-14 (CEB)

## **The Child Born Brings the Light of Justice and Peace**

### **MONDAY 12.8.25 Isaiah 9:2-7, 1 John 1:5-7**

The prophet Isaiah said light would pierce the world's darkness in the person of a child. In the end, justice, endless peace, and righteousness would reign. The Hebrew word translated “peace” meant far more than just “getting along.” “The Hebrew *shālēm* (from which comes the familiar Hebrew noun *šhālôm*) literally refers to being uninjured, safe and sound, or whole.” \* The apostle John, writing decades after Jesus' resurrection, emphasized the same theme of light conquering darkness.

- Isaiah promised, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.” Yet even after the apostle Paul met Jesus, he wrote, ‘Now we see a dim reflection’ (1 Corinthians 13:12). In what ways has Jesus already brought light into your dark world? In what ways are you still waiting in hope for the full brilliance of God's light?
- Isaiah's verse 5 is easy to overlook: “every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.” This vivid image illustrated what it means that the promised child would be called ‘Prince of Peace’—all traces of violence would be eliminated. How can you more fully follow the Prince of Peace, learning to resolve conflicts his way in your day-to-day dealings with others?

**A daily reminder from Pastor Hamilton:** Our hope is that tonight or tomorrow morning, continuing through Christmas, each of you will, either in the morning or at night, take the time to write down three things you are thankful for. You might write these in the form of a thank you letter to God or simply write down a journal entry.

**Prayer:** Lord, so much in my world, globally and locally, tugs me toward hopelessness. Renew and reinforce my ability to live in the light and the hope of your peace-filled kingdom. Amen.

\* Article “Peace” in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 632.

## Jesus: the Shepherd who Brings God's People Peace

### TUESDAY 12.9.25 Ezekiel 37:24–28, John 17:20-23

The prophet Ezekiel was exiled in Babylon, one of a people divided for centuries—Israel split north and south. He had a vision that God would reunite the divided people, bring them home, and give them “one king” to shepherd them. God promised “a covenant of peace”—lasting *shalom*, complete wholeness and reconciliation. Later, before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed for his followers' unity. He asked “that they will be one just as we are one”—a spiritual unity as deep as that between Father and Son. Jesus prayed that we would be so united in love that the world would see God's peace in us.

- A study of the gospels shows that the people among whom Jesus lived reflected nothing like “deep spiritual unity.” Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots looked down on each other. They united only in hating Rome and rejecting Jesus' message of “the things that lead to peace” ([Luke 19:42](#)). People didn't let God's vision, as seen by Ezekiel, become real. Prophetic visions revealed God's desire but didn't force people to comply. What helps you choose to align yourself with God's vision of peace and unity rather than resist it?
- Scholar Iain Duguid wrote, “Our desired unity as Christians, if it is to be genuine, must be grounded in Jesus Christ, who fulfills both aspects of Ezekiel 37 as our true temple and our true king. It comes from Christ-centered people discovering that they are, in fact, servants of a common Lord and King.” \* As we celebrate the Prince of Peace, how can you honor the truth that many other Christians celebrate this same Lord and King—even when they worship differently?

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**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you prayed that I, and all other people who genuinely serve you, would be one beyond our natural differences. Let me be an instrument of your peace, not an obstacle to it. Amen.

\* Iain M. Duguid, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999, p. 440.

## **Zechariah said his son John Would Guide Toward Peace**

### **WEDNESDAY 12.10.25 Luke 1:67-79**

When John the Baptist was born, the Holy Spirit filled his father Zechariah. He first praised not his own son, but the child Mary would bear. He said God “has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house. He has brought salvation; he has shown mercy.” Then Zechariah showed not just fatherly pride but divine revelation. He said his son would declare, “The dawn from heaven will break upon us, to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide us on the path of peace.”

- Zechariah packed so much hoping, praying, and trusting into one phrase: “just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.” God's covenant with Abraham, God's pledge to David, God's promise of a deliverer to make our broken world new—it was all going to happen after all! How can the Advent stories of John's and Jesus' birth help to nourish and sustain your trust in God's big promises?
- Zechariah lived in Roman-occupied Judea. But scholar N. T. Wright said the “enemies” in verse 71 were not just Roman soldiers: “Zechariah's vision goes beyond simply a realigning of political powers. God's mercy, the forgiveness of sins, the rescue from death itself; all of this points to a deeper and wider meaning of ‘salvation’.” \* How has Jesus brought peace and light into your life, freeing you from internal struggles even more than external enemies?

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**Prayer:** God of peace, there is so much awful stuff in our world that deeply troubles my heart. Let my peace and trust in your promises energize me to do my part in your work of setting this broken world to rights. Amen.

\* Wright, N.T., *Luke for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone) (p. 19). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

## Jesus' Parting Gift: Peace That Darkness Can't Destroy

### THURSDAY 12.11.25 John 14:18-29

John said just before Jesus faced the cross, “When Judas took the bread, he left immediately. And **it was night**” (John 13:30). Physical darkness symbolized spiritual darkness—betrayal, arrest, crucifixion. But that darkness couldn't conquer Jesus, “the light of the world” ([John 8:12](#)). As evil people plotted, only faith could see beyond the coming horror to Easter's light. Yet Jesus gave his followers a gift: his peace. It grew from the Holy Spirit's eternal presence with them. It alone could offer Jesus' peace even in times of great confusion or fear.

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, “The peace which the world offers us is the peace of escape, the peace which comes from the avoidance of trouble and from refusing to face things. The peace which Jesus offers us is the peace of conquest. No experience of life can ever take it from us and no sorrow, no danger, no suffering can ever make it less. It is independent of outward circumstances.” \* What makes Jesus' peace “independent of outward circumstances”? How have you found (or do you long to find) this gift of peace in your life?
- The “fight or flight” response to danger seems hard-wired into our brains. Jesus didn't promise to eliminate that biological response. Instead, he promised that trust in his presence gives us a better way to face whatever triggers it. Are there dark places of fear and anxiety in your life today? How can Jesus' loving presence free your heart and mind to live in the peace he came to give you?

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**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me a peace that isn't temporary, that nothing can take away from me. Please help me to live into that peace no matter what life brings. Amen.

\* William Barclay, Daily Study Bible Series: *The Gospel of John—Volume 2, Chapters 8–21*, (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 171.

## Jesus' Faithfulness Gives Us Peace with God

### FRIDAY 12.12.25 Romans 5:1-10

Why honor and celebrate Jesus' birth? To the Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul spelled out that the events of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection gave us peace with God. That reconciliation is much more than “fire insurance”—avoiding hell while living miserably. It opens us to a new quality of peace-filled life here and now. In this new life, we even see problems differently, knowing that “trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (verses 3-4).

- Paul later filled out “peace with God,” telling Timothy, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I'm the biggest sinner of all. But this is why I was shown mercy, so that Christ Jesus could show his endless patience to me first of all” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). Paul knew he didn't deserve God's peace, yet Christ offered it freely. How have you (or could you) open your heart to Jesus' inner peace? What barriers—guilt, shame, doubt, or busyness—keep you from receiving it?
- Paul trained as a rabbi. Rabbis used a rhetorical form known in Hebrew as *qal wahomer*, meaning “How much more.” In verse 10, Paul used that form to say, in effect, “If Christ was willing to die for us while we were still his enemies, how much more certain can we be that he will stay with us and support us now that we're reconciled?” In what ways do you depend on Christ's presence with you every day? How might it lighten your spiritual load to count on that presence more completely?

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**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for your willingness to die for me before I was even born, and to draw my heart to you. And thank you for staying with me to guide me into your peace-filled life. Amen.

## Isaiah's Peace Vision Fulfilled in Christ

### SATURDAY 12.13.25 Isaiah 9:6, Ephesians 2:13-18

In the apostle Paul's world, high barriers divided Gentiles and Jews. Paul himself had once lived out that bias fiercely (cf [Galatians 1:13-14](#)). There was even a physical wall in Jerusalem's Temple, warning Gentiles that crossing it meant death. "Interpretations of purity laws excluded Gentiles from the court of Israel (for Jewish men) and even the court of women (for Jewish women)." \*

When Paul wrote "Christ is our peace," he evoked his knowledge of Isaiah's prophetic visions. "Jesus is the Prince of Peace Isaiah foretold because Jesus made Jew and Gentile one, breaking down their dividing wall of hostility and reconciling them." \*\* What seemed impossible, the baby born in Bethlehem did—reconcile enemies, break down ancient barriers, and create peace not through force but through self-giving love. In verse 17, Paul used language from [Isaiah 57:19](#), applying 'near' and 'far' to spiritual and ethnic differences as well as the geographic distances Isaiah originally had in mind.

- The angry young Hebrew Pharisee Saul approved of stoning the Gentile Christian Stephen ([Acts 7:54-8:1](#)). Yet that same man became the apostle Paul, who wrote, "Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group." What changed him?" Do you see a difference between peace as a human effort based on "splitting the difference" and weighing interests, versus peace based on who Jesus is and who you are in him? Is one more lasting than the other?
- All systems of belief—including Christianity—tend to attract some people who nurture feelings of hatred and grievance. Some may even call for violence against people with different beliefs. How can you differentiate those in any group who seek to build walls from those who wish to tear down walls and create more goodwill, peace, and cooperation? What attitudes and actions show that you have committed your life to the "one body" (Ephesians 2:16) Jesus came to create?

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**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you showed us the better way of peace. You reached out to people who snubbed you and asked God to forgive the soldiers who crucified you. Help me to live into the power of your love. Amen.

\* Craig Keener, comment on Ephesians 2:14 in NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 10326). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Article "Peace" in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 633.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) Prayers of peace and comfort for:

To **Anne Hodson** following the death of **Ken Hodson** (Husband), who died 11/29/2025.