

PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL TO MEN

Introduction – It is that season of the year when we receive Christmas greetings about a generic offer of peace from God that angels sang about at Jesus' birth. If God intended to usher in a period of peace on earth by sending Jesus, then the results so far are underwhelming. Since Christ's birth, there has been a procession of wars, mass murders, and everyday acts of violence and mayhem. The nature of Jesus' peace is much misunderstood.

A. The original message of peace through Jesus – Luke 2:8-14

1. The Greek word translated “host” of angels means a military unit. These were terrifying warrior angels filled with awe at God becoming flesh who sang this message.
2. It was not a promise of absolute peace on earth, but the possibility of peace between God and those who accepted his offer of grace.
3. In the same gospel of Luke, Jesus cautioned his potential followers about the cost of accepting God's offer of grace and peace (Luke 12:51-53).

B. God's peace requires crushing the Satanic opposition and reconciling willing rebels, which is a work in process (Romans 16:20).

Colossians 1:21-23

C. Once we have received God's peace, we are able to share it with others (Romans 15:13)

1. Relationship with our neighbors requires work (Romans 12:17-21).
2. Our relationship with difficult people in the Christian community also requires work (Romans 14:19).

D. The possibility of inner peace in the midst of life's continual struggles is available to us.

Philippians 4:5-7

Conclusion – The peace Jesus offers is not the absence of stressful situations, but the presence of God.

John 16:33

(There will be no discussion groups this week. Take time to greet someone you do not know well during this fellowship period.)