

~ Peace in the Middle East and in the World ~

As the holiday season approaches, the angel's words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" echo in our minds. (Luke 2: 14) Yet since this announcement of our Lord's birth some 2000 years ago, the world has not known total peace. The world of mankind, as a matter of fact, has not known real peace since Adam's fall from God's grace in the Garden of Eden.

The nation of Israel, at the time of Christ's birth, had been waiting for nearly 600 years, since the fall of Israel's last king, Zedekiah, for the coming of the promised Messiah to bring peace again. (John 1: 41) During that period, they had not known peace either with God or within their promised land. This is because of two reasons: first, God had removed temporarily the sons of David from being kings of this nation; second, he had removed His divine favor from Israel and given His blessings to rule during this period to other nations. (Ezekiel 21: 24-27) As Isaiah 48: 22 points out, Israel's heart was wicked and her people failed to keep God's commandments, thus Israel lost the blessings from God.

As described in Daniel 2: 31-40, God has now permitted four different nations to rule over the civilized world for a period of time, not that they particularly knew or followed God's divine laws. At the time of Christ's birth, it was the last kingdom, Rome, which was placing hardship on Israel. As the result of their loss of freedom, they were anticipating the promised one to assume the lost kingship of Israel. Yet, Jesus told his disciples that he did not come to bring peace, but he came with a sword. (Matthew 10: 34) This sword, given to him from God through the holy Spirit, was The Truth about God's divine law, commandments, and His Plan for His chosen people, Israel, and the world of mankind to bring hope to the peace seekers and to cut away man-made ties to selfishness, hatred, and their own doctrines and rules which had developed since the fall of Adam.

During the past 2000 years of recorded world history, this sword has been continuing to reveal its power. Yet, God permitted the work of His sword to be very limited "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in". (Romans

11: 25) Seeing the results of Satan and those fighting back against God's law and plan, to resist changes, we know and have felt the continuance of humanity's conflict, strife, and heartaches. History has recorded men striving to produce peace, only later they, or the next generation, realized that hoped-for peace lasted only for a short period of time resulting in new civil or global conflicts. Since 1914, the world has seen the replacement of European monarchies by representative-type governments with a hope of peace through the League of Nations. And after WW2, European history further changed with the break up of colonialism and the establishment of numerous nations hoping for peace through self-rule only to be shattered by new political or economical disturbances. More recently, consider the end of the Cold War. The countries of the former USSR also are struggling to reestablish governmental and commercial systems with their hope of new peace within their countries. Yet, with this freedom, these countries, as reported daily in our news, do not exist with an air of peace, and we see continual civil unrest and bloodshed particularly due to formerly suppress ethnic hatred. Furthermore, the United States, in addition to periodically fighting in foreign wars throughout its history,

is still fighting a war within its borders. Our government is telling us of our "War on Crime" or "War on Drugs". Is this real peace?

September 13, 1993, Israel and the PLO signed a peace accord as a "first step toward peace in the Mid-East", which is the hope of many Jews and Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated, "The time for peace has come." In agreement with Rabin, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said, "...the beginning of the end of a chapter of pain and suffering and the dawning of an age of peace, coexistence, and equal rights." Yet, has real and total peace begun as evident of the continued killings within the Middle East? Is it just a matter of time? What will bring peace to the idle East and unto the world?

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5: 2, 3) Well, then is God the author of destruction or peace?

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." (1 Corinthians 14: 33) Since the fall

of Adam, God has permitted mankind to develop and live in the own confusion, turmoil, and to learn about the sinfulness of sin. Those who wished to learn about God's righteous ways and to live accordingly received a degree of peace with Him. Yet *all* the generations of mankind, to have life and real peace with God and with others, must be ransomed from the sentence of Adamic death. Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 9: 6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." For Christ to bring real peace to the nation of Israel and to the world, Christ and his Church, the ruling government, must return "and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword (the same sword mentioned above), that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God". (Revelation 19: 15) For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem and it will be given to all nations as the standard to live by. (Isaiah 2: 3) What will be this great law to bring peace? It is simply, but completely the law of divine love, which is based upon God's divine

character of love, justice, wisdom, and power; this divine law will be written into every man's heart and mind. (Jeremiah 31: 33) As each individual person accepts and lives by the law of love, he will receive favor and peace with God and resulting peace with his fellow man. The present earthly governments, institutions, and religious arrangements will be destroyed with the "rod of iron" so that one true, divinely appointed government and religious institution will be established by the Messiah. Those individuals striving to resist the law will be dealt with immediately to prevent disruption of peace. (Isaiah 65: 25) Yet, can we find peace now?

The answer is YES. Our Lord, Jesus, had peace with his heavenly Father and with those who loved him. This peace, based on his love for God, was so blessed that he said that he delighted to do his Father's will (Hebrews 10: 7, 8), and when the time came to give up this earthly life, Jesus stated, "nevertheless Thy Will be done". (Matthew 26: 39) In like manner, we also can come under similar arrangement with our heavenly Father, if we would do "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you". (Philippians 4: 9)

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