

# Christ Our Peace

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The difference between this world today and the world in the Millennium is incredible. As you know, it is as different as night and day, good and evil. Thomas Sowell, the American author and economist said, "Peace movements don't bring peace but war."

That is a very accurate statement when you are involving human beings. This is very true because human beings do not start at the right place. Today, many nations are forming a clay bond for the purpose of disarming. Others are arming themselves to the teeth. It is not one world! This disarming of the nations is not optional, although it is being portrayed as a way to peace.

The plan is for each nation to systematically turn over their weapons to the United Nations. Since the U.N. was established, the world has fought several wars under either the U.N. umbrella or as an "Alliance" of nations.

We saw this at work in the Gulf War and it continues today in various areas around the world. But, in most cases, adversaries have gone to the U.N. to plead their case and to either obtain or resist U.N. declarations. The world's leaders feed people the propaganda that the United Nations will bring peace to the world.

The repeated instances of wars waged under the U.N. flag, and after U.N. resolutions, and all the debates we have witnessed over the years on issues of peace, contradict what the U.N. spin doctors have been telling us. Soon, probably after a contrived, planned 'crisis', the U.N. will offer its benevolent protection and most governments will pledge their political and economic surrender to the U.N. It will be sold with the idea that this will bring peace to the world. God may have something else in mind, but this is what has been planned and is being carried at this point.

On August 14, 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill issued the "Atlantic Charter", one of the most influential documents of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Listen to point 8 of the Charter:

"Eighth...all of the nations of the world...must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten... aggression outside of their frontiers...the disarmament of... nations is essential..."

It has been planned for a long time, and it began back after World War I, the war to end all wars, and then World War II. This was actually written during World War II.

If the United Nations gains substantial power over most of the nations of the world, most people will naively believe that the U.N. will exercise 'benevolent' and 'wise' leadership. And, they will be happy to follow for the sake of promised peace. The propaganda machine is working full time right now in the media, and we hear the word peace constantly as a goal for the solution of these problems.

Obadiah 1:7 All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; The men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it.

Is that true peace? Are they truly peaceful men? Of course not, they are just putting on that hypocritical image.

People are being conditioned now to accept the exchanging of national power for U.N. power, with the seemingly innocuous exchanging their own helmets for the blue helmets of the U.N.. How is this type of thing so easily imposed on humanity?

Everyone has a self-preserving desire to have peace. Most humans do not like conflict, even though people are the cause of conflict because of their deep seated enmity.

Where do wars come from? The Apostle James said:

James 4:1-2 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

People do not ask for peace, they do not ask for God's guidance and for God's will to be done, or for guidance in how to live peacefully.

James 4:3-4 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. [Pleasures can be things like power, and pride drives that desire for power.] Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

That is the state of the world today.

James was inspired to tell us here that personal human desires for things that please us cause a kind of tumultuous churning within. Because humans desire to get and do certain things that give them pleasure regardless of how it hurts others, they war against one another. He also points out that this makes people a friend of the world, and it is something that a Christian must avoid.

Can this world ever have peace? Is it attainable by humanity? Can the leaders of the nations negotiate permanent peace on earth? They should be good at it by now because they have been negotiating it for probably 6,000 years. Will humans ever be able to live in peace? Of course these are rhetorical questions.

In his letter to the Gentile Ephesians, Paul speaks of the condition of the Gentiles before Christ came. Recognizing the unique place of the Jews in the design and the revelations of God, he draws the contrast between the life of the Gentile and the life of the Jew.

The Gentiles were called the uncircumcision by those who laid claim to that circumcision which is a physical thing. This was the first of the great divisions between Gentile and Israelite.

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—

The Apostle Paul is going to demonstrate the greatness of the power of God toward the faithful. That is what he wants these Ephesians and all Christians to know at this point. This is a special kind of knowledge. And it can only be comprehended by those whose mind is enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Especially during Paul's time and before, there was the division in the ancient world between Jews and Gentiles, and wars resulted from it. Before people like these Ephesians who were Gentiles (pagans) could ever have become members of the church, somehow or another God had to deal with that radical division. This radical division was one, as I mentioned, that caused strife.

What Paul is dealing with in these verses, beginning in verse 11, is how God has done that. The general statement is that they were in times past Gentiles in the flesh, they were, as Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:12-13 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

He starts the detailed explanation in verse 14 with the essential statement: 'He (Christ) is our peace.'

Ephesians 2:14-15 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Remember Paul is speaking to the Gentiles in the church and the Jews in the church. This is what is going to happen to this world before it can have peace in the Millennium.

Ephesians 2:16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Jesus Christ, by whose shed blood we have been brought near, is our peace. We find another expression of this in:

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

So we see there that the God of peace works through His Son Jesus Christ who is our peace, and as we will see later makes peace. This is another way of thinking of salvation; we are Christians because God is a 'God of peace.' Everything is a result of that.

God is a God of peace, and produces the peace and makes the peace, in and through His only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We find that the Lord is described in similar terms throughout the Old Testament in prophecy.

At the end of his life, Jacob blessed his sons and the various tribes that were going to develop out of those sons; and when he comes to Judah this is what he says:

Genesis 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

What is Shiloh? Shiloh is peace, 'the Prince of Peace.' It was revealed to Jacob. He did not fully understand it, but these patriarchs, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had been given an understanding of God's great purpose. Jacob had seen that it was out of Judah that Shiloh would come. Shiloh! He is our peace. He is not only 'King of Righteousness' but also the 'Prince of Peace.' Those are titles that are ascribed to Him. The "Prince of Peace" is the bringer of justice, as the vindicator. His kingdom will be established and sustained with justice and righteousness.

You will find throughout scripture, that quite often if you were to do a word search for peace, you will find that justice and righteousness are very often tied in there together as parallel with peace or as part of peace.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace partly because He makes Jews and Gentiles one, breaking their dividing wall of hostility and reconciling them.

When the Son of God was born, the shepherds watching their flocks by night heard a great angelic song of praise. Luke records the message. This is one of the Protestant world's favorite segment of scriptures.

Luke 2:11-14 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

On earth prior to that time, peace did not exist in the form that we are talking about here. It was not until Christ arrived on the scene, because Christ is our peace and with Him came peace.

This is the essence of salvation. What an astounding and amazing thing our salvation is. It is important for us to realize the glorious nature of our salvation. In verses 1 to 10 of chapter 2 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he shows that sin is that which produces death. It is only as we truly realize the nature of sin that we realize truly the nature of salvation, because they are direct opposites.

This is part of the reason that we cannot ignore the negative and only dwell on the positive side of our lives. This is one of the areas the mainstream professing Christian churches are blind to when they do not want to talk about overcoming sin. They only want to know about the "love of God" and the positive. A Christian will never realize and appreciate the glorious nature of salvation unless he realize how dramatically opposite that the negative is. Paul constantly emphasizes that.

God is bringing us up from the level of a maggot, so that we can truly understand how much greater He is than we are, and to instill in us a realistic view of how great the miracle is for us to receive salvation and eternal life. Only He can change a maggot into an everlasting spirit being.

Job 25:4-6 How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman? If even the moon does not shine, And the stars are not pure in His sight, How much less man, who is a maggot, And a son of man, who is a worm?"

This does not give a very attractive description of us.

In order to get a more realistic view of the love of God we have first to start at the bottom in our realization. Unless we know something of that depth we will barely have an inkling of the greatness of the love of God.

In verses 11-13 of Ephesians 2 (that we read earlier) Paul shows us how sin always leads to separation; specifically, the separation between the Jews and Gentiles, 'who are called Uncircumcision (the Gentiles) by what is called the Circumcision (Jews) made in the flesh by hands.' This physical separation was a type of the spiritual separation of sin.

Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

The Gentiles are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise. Isaiah mentions this same principle.

Isaiah 57:19-21 I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

On the other hand, we could say, "There is no peace," says my God, "for the world

Sin separates humans from humans, but on a much greater scale, it separates humans from God. But in verse 14 of Ephesians 2, we are shown that sin does not stop at separating humans, it goes further; sin puts people at enmity; and not only at enmity with one another but at enmity also against God. That is the ultimate sin; that is where we see the real ugliness of sin. That is the difference in what we see in the world today and what we will see in the Millennium.

Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation

Sin not only separates humans from God and from one another, it produces a state of enmity against God and enmity against one another. That is why the great problem in the world today is the problem of peace. It is interesting how the world seeks peace or uses the idea of peace in everything that they are trying to get accomplished today, whether it be the Palestinians, or in the Gulf region, or wherever it may be.

Peace is what most people in the world long for. They ask: Why can we not just have peace between us? Is there not some way of banishing war, of reconciling people to one another? Is there no way to make a durable, sure and a lasting peace?

People for the most part are hopeful and they watch the news. They are hopeful there will be a peace treaty here or there that will hold for more than a day.

These divisions, these arguments, are all over the world—between nations, between ethnic and racial groups within nations, between citizens of nations. The whole world is in a state of rivalry and of enmity. So why is that?

It is at this point that we sometimes find it difficult to be patient, as Christians. We see the world and its leaders wasting their time in attempting to vie for their own personal gain. They tell us that all we have to do is to do what they tell us, and the peace we are looking for and longing for will come any day now. They have been saying, "Any day now" for almost six thousand years.

Sin is the cause of the trouble; it puts people at enmity against God, and it puts people at enmity with other people. Sin is essentially pride and self. It is in the early chapters of the book of Genesis that we get the fundamental explanation of all that drives society today.

The root cause of all the enmity is the pride of humans; a person interested in himself; a person setting himself up as an autonomous being even face to face with God. In the garden, Satan instigated Adam and Eve to begin to ask: Who is God to tell us what to do or not to do? Why does God treat us like a slave and a servant? Why do not we stand up for ourselves and demand our rights?

Again they were not saying that in a verbal way, but the thought process was working that way.

So Adam and Eve stood up; but they stood up in a way they were never meant to stand. It was a way in which they could not stand, and it led to appalling consequences. It is all due to pride, self-interest, and self-concern.

Satan helps humans convince themselves that they have rights and that they have just as much authority as God. The result is that through their actions and thoughts they declare themselves as God.

When this self-interest, self-adulation, self-love, and self-praise is unbound we see in history that a human will declare himself, Caesar or Emperor, and require people to refer to him as "His Highness." The imperial use of Caesar was continued with the German Kaiser, and the Russian czar. 'Kaiser' and 'Czar' are derived from the word 'Caesar.'

The Japanese have called their emperor: the Tenshi (Son of Heaven), Tenno (Heavenly King). Arehito Tenno (God Walking Among Men) is another term they used. Kamigoichinin (Upper Exalted Foremost Being), Aramikami (Incarnate God), and other titles that reflect the traditional belief in his divinity.

Man is constantly revolving around himself. He is the center of his own miniscule universe. But the problem is accentuated because everyone is doing the same thing. If "I" alone existed there would be no trouble on the physical earthly plane; but every other "I" is exactly as I am. Obviously, I am speaking in generalities and of course there would be a problem if just one human being and I existed on earth. There would still not be peace because peace must be within.

The result is that the world is peopled by billions of gods, all asserting themselves and demanding their rights and claiming the same things. It is inevitable that there are clashes. It is a war of the false gods. They are all together in enmity against the one true God. This perverse state can and will for a short time give them a loose kind of unity as Satan brings them together to fight God.

This is the pattern for all the problems in the world today. The supreme tragedy is that the world does not see it. And that is because the world starts with the supposition that, whatever the explanation is, it has nothing to do with God. They do not see that it is because they are in a wrong relationship to God, that they are in a wrong relationship with their fellow human beings.

Jesus Christ put it very clearly when a lawyer of the Pharisees questioned Him.

Matthew 22:36-39 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" "This is the first and great commandment." And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Although this is a very well known and familiar principle to us, it is foundational and it helps to read it over and over again.

Notice the order: first, the relationship to God; second, the relationship to your fellow man and woman. The whole tragedy of the modern world is due to the fact that the first is entirely left out and that people think that you can start with the second.

But humans cannot, because we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. At first that sounds quite self-centered, but then, the problem is, how do I love myself?

According to the Bible, we will never love ourselves in the right way until we see ourselves as we are in our relationship to God. So we cannot possibly carry out the second commandment unless we are already clear about the first. It is impossible without that understanding.

And people today, not recognizing God, and not starting with God, and not submitting to God, are trying to reconcile themselves to their fellow man. And of course they are not succeeding, they never can.

We have been made by God, and we have been made for God. People do not see themselves truly, and they do not see anybody else truly, until they see themselves and all others in the light of God's law, face to face with God Himself.

That is the background to Paul's statement: 'He is our peace.' Christ alone is our peace. There is no peace apart from Him. We see that in a huge way in the world.

The world can go on developing intellectually and in every other respect, it can add to its knowledge of science and of sociology and of psychology and all else. It can multiply its institutions, it can train us in this way and that, but it will lead to nothing because the problem can never be solved except in, and through, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember God is the God of peace and He works through Christ only.

If you try to start with the second commandment it will lead to disaster, because man is not merely an intellect, he is not merely a social being.

According to scripture, there is an evil principle at work in man. He is infected by sin; he is in a diseased condition. And before you begin to train him you must heal him. We read earlier that

Christ will do that in the Millennium

Man needs new life. The Apostle Paul puts it as a general statement essential to Christianity. 'He (and He alone) is our peace.'

Jesus Christ not only makes peace (which He does do), but He Himself is the peace. He is our peace. In other words, we must be in Christ before we can enjoy the blessings of God, as the God of peace.

It is only as we are related to God through Christ. It is only as we are incorporated in the family of God through Christ; or, in the terminology of the Bible, grafted into Christ. It is only as all this is true of us that we will really enjoy the blessings of peace. The state of the minds of the people of the world is anything but peaceful. As we realize that, we see the unmentionable superficiality of so much that is being said today with regard to peace.

Many people in the world think that the solution is so simple. They think that all you need do is to just call people together for a meeting and talk pleasantly to them, and you all end by shaking hands, and all is well. That is how we are led to believe with these constant peace meetings.

Just before World War II there were statesmen who sincerely believed that if only they could meet Hitler and talk to him, the whole thing would be settled. 'Peace in our time,' they said, 'we have met him; we have made a gentlemen's agreement.' But it was not too long before they discovered that the man with whom they had shaken hands was not a gentleman. That is still the trouble.

How superficial to believe that the problems of sin can be solved by men using catch phrases. It is Christ who is our peace, not the useless leaders of the world.

The world believes that the human race is evolving. Has anyone seen anything really change in humans in the last six thousand years that would move us closer to peace or believe that there is any positive evolution going on? That is part of the lie this world is being fed—that people are constantly improving because they are evolving. That is why the doctrine of evolution is so important to the education system of this world.

Most of the years in recorded history since the creation of Adam and Eve have been cursed by war. I think that someone counted them up, and there might possibly have been forty years, out of six thousand years, of peace where there were no wars anywhere on earth. I do not know how they did that, but the point is that there has been mostly war. The Arabs and Persians are still fighting with the Jews. The Muslims are still fighting with the professing Christians. The Shiites are still fighting with the Sunnis.

It is only as we understand the true Christian as a member of the body of Christ that we can truly share in that peace and enjoy it, because the world at this time certainly cannot.

The Apostle Paul says Christ also makes peace. How does He make peace?

The false superficial, sentimental interpretation of the scripture seems to say that Jesus Christ teaches us how to make peace. They say, 'You read your scriptures and then, in the spirit of the scriptures, and of what you have understood from the scriptures, go to your enemy, put the

teaching in practice, and you will win him over automatically.'

The argument on an international level is that if one nation simply disarmed completely it would have such a staggering effect upon all the other nations that you would never have another war. That has to be the dumbest possible, and the most naive human reasoning! There was a popular John Lennon song you probably remember — "Give Peace a Chance." That is what it advocated— disarmament. That song believed just give peace a chance and will be contagious and go around the world. I think that only was believable to those who were on those drugs at that time.

Was it really necessary for the Son of God to leave the courts of heaven if that is the answer? Was the death of Jesus on the stake really necessary, if it was just a question of applying some teaching?

That is not what the Bible says. Paul says, 'He, Christ, has made peace.'" It is not only that He tells us to do something—He does that, of course, but we can only do what He tells us because He has first done something Himself. He has made peace. He is our peace. He is the Prince of Peace. It is the God of Peace who makes peace.

It is not primarily men applying a certain teaching. It is something fundamental that is done by God in Christ that creates an entirely new situation.

This is why it is not the commission of the church merely to give advice to national leaders and others, and to tell them how to solve their problems. You cannot have peace among men until they are called by God to His Truth and accept the shed blood of Christ for the remission of one's sins and have the mind of God wash out the old man. Until that point you can speak to a person about God's way of life and about peace until you are blue in the face. It just will not work. It may work superficially for a while but it will not be a permanent peace.

You cannot apply teaching intended for Christians to non-Christians. To do so is in vain. It is casting away pearls to swine. I am speaking about peace at this point. If anyone in the church or not applies the principles of God they will be blessed for it.

The Apostle Paul's epistles were not written to the world, they were written to Christians. We must be begotten of God. We must begin to be made new. We must be in the process of conversion. We must have the Holy Spirit and be in Jesus Christ before we can possibly begin to comprehend and enjoy the peace of God the Father and Jesus Christ. He is our peace; and He has made peace; it is something that He brings into being.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2, how He brings peace into being. Two things are essential before there can be true peace. People must be reconciled to God, and people must be reconciled to one another.

First let us look at the problem of people being reconciled to one another. Keep in mind that Paul was looking at the Christian church and there he could see Jews and Gentiles. So he starts with the concrete fact of the church. There together, praising God, are people who were once bitter enemies. What had brought them together?

Ephesians 2:14-16 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both

one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Paul deals with the question in verses 14 and 15. Then, in verse 16, he shows how they both together have been brought to God and how the enmity between them and God has been abolished.

How then does Christ reconcile people to one another? How does He bring people together in love? How does He destroy the enmity that is between people? What has brought Jew and Gentile together in the church? This is very important because this is the method that is going to be used to bring people to peace in the Millennium.

The answer is that Jesus Christ has broken down the enmity. There used to be a kind of middle wall of partition between them. Paul is using there as a figure what was true of the temple. In the temple, the Court of the Gentiles was farthest out. Gentiles were not allowed to go into the Court of the People, the Jews. There was a wall dividing them, a middle wall of partition, as it is called in verse 14.

That old temple was full of partitions. There was in addition the Court of Priests, the Holy Place, and then the Holy of Holies (or 'the holiest of all') into which nobody was allowed to enter but the High Priest once a year only. It was a place of partitions—a place of separation.

But Paul says, in Christ the partitions have been flattened, they have been knocked down, and the way into the 'holiest of all' is open. However, he is specifically focused on the fact that the first partition between the Gentiles and the Jews, the enmity, has gone in the church.

The world today is full of such partitions. Look at the gifts that God gives to people. They are all manifestations of His abundant giving. He gives the gift of ability and understanding, He gives business sense to certain people and they prosper and succeed. He gives music abilities and athletic abilities. But how often do people think to thank God for them? They become walls of partition between people. The goodness that God has given as a blessing to individuals becomes a wall.

Do people in the world (with their many God-given abilities and talents) in humility ascribe the glory and honor to Him and thank Him who is 'the Giver of every good deed and every perfect gift'?

Of course not!

The person with ability and a sharp mind thinks to himself, and may even say out loud, "I am smart, and talented. But look at the other guy—he does not know anything." And so he despises him. And the other person looks at him and says, "Who does he think he is?" The result is enmity! Even goodness can be turned into a wall of separation by human nature.

And it is all because of the gifts of God. They are wonderful, and if we all realize that and were humble, we would all enjoy them together. The man without the talent would say, "How

wonderful it is for that person to have such a gift. God has really blessed him!"

But we know in this world it does not work that way. These things lead to jealousy and rivalry, enmity and hatred, and malice and bitterness and scorn, and everything that poisons life.

There will never be true peace until all that is broken down; especially, when it comes to religion. The way to God now is through Christ alone. So the thing that had led to the enmity, the jealousy and the rivalry, has been taken away by Christ. However only members of God's Church can enjoy this peace, thanks to Christ our Peace who "makes peace."

The Ephesians, pagans as they were Gentiles, were not only separated from the Jews—the Israelite tribe of Judah, they were, even more so, separated from God. Obviously there cannot be true unity between human and human until there is this other unity.

Instead of simply stating how the pagan Ephesians had been reconciled to God, he says, "and that He might reconcile them both [Jews and Gentiles] to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."

This relates to unity and peace. Generally, all the minor and secondary divisions, separations and arguments among people are ultimately due to the fact that all humans in the world are separated from God.

The world is full of divisions and distinctions, countries, nations, blocs, groups, curtains, one side and the other side. In the nation itself there are classes, industrial groups, employer and servant, and so on. In addition, within all these groups again, divisions, rivalries and envies. This will not work in the Millennium.

Everywhere we turn the world is full of divisions and separations. However, according to the teaching of scripture, the really significant thing is that all these minor and secondary divisions, separations and arguments are due to one thing—all non-Christians are separated from God and are in a wrong relationship with Him.

True unity among humans is only possible as people are reconciled together to God. A person has to be right with God before he can be right with his fellow men and women. Remember what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 22:

Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

The world says it loves one another, it says it loves its neighbor but it does not even have the definition of love right. Love is the keeping of the commandments. It is a way of life and how we treat others.

But you cannot do the second until you have done the first. This is a basic foundational principle of life.

In his letter to the Ephesian members, Paul is looking at the Christian church, and he sees

fellow members, Jews and Gentiles, people who are descendants of Israel, together with those who had been aliens from it and strangers from the covenants. So in Ephesians 2, Paul is explaining how this is able to happen. Again, we read in Ephesians 2:

Ephesians 2:14-16 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

What has happened for the church will happen for the entire world.

This has happened because of the power of God. Nothing less than His Holy Spirit could do it. Nothing else could bring Jew and Gentile together in a common worship of God. That same power raised Christ from the dead. Christ Himself is our peace. And it is also true to say He makes peace.

Ephesians 2:15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

He Himself is peace and He makes peace. Jesus Christ makes peace between man and man, and between man and God. He is the peace in every respect.

The Apostle Paul puts it in that order; he puts man and man first, then he goes on in verse 16 to show how both are reconciled together in one body—as the church—to God.

Ephesians 2:16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

The order is interesting. Theologically the order is the other way round, but Paul is dealing with it in a practical sense. He is starting with the church, with Jews and Gentiles together worshipping the same way. He starts with man and man, and then he shows how they both go together to God. At this point I am talking about man reconciled to man.

To abolish middle walls of partition alone does not produce peace. Let us look at what peace is not!

Peace, according to scripture, does not merely mean the cessation of hostility. Neither does peace merely mean the prevention of actual hostility. But as the word 'peace' is used today it is obvious that that is what many mean by peace.

Peace is regarded as merely a state in which you are not actually fighting. So, when we have peace in the Middle East it means for the moment they are not fighting, and then usually within twenty four hours someone breaks that peace. Peace becomes just an absence of war. That

may be man's idea of peace. It is not God's idea of peace whatsoever. That is not the scriptural concept of peace. Merely to cease fighting is not peace, merely to prevent future hostilities is not peace.

We begin to see how misinterpreted and misrepresented the scriptures have been by people who teach that we merely have to apply 'the teaching of Christ' to the international crises to solve the problem of world tension. So we see that the efforts that mainstream Christianity is making are in vain.

God is not content merely with the absence of outward and aggressive enmity and the manifestation of that enmity. When God makes peace, He does something inward, something essential.

God is not content when people are not at one another's throats. God's idea of peace is that people embrace one another and love one another, and that there is unity and oneness, that we really become one and love one another as we love ourselves.

Peace must be thought of in terms of the heart, of attitude. It is a matter of essential inward unity and love. Paul tells us that Christ has produced that peace. How has He done this?

'to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.'

Christ's way of making peace is to form, to make, to bring into being God's church. So any attempt to understand the way of peace must immediately consider the church. Peace among people is only possible as they all together belong to the body of Christ, which means only true Christians can have true peace. It is not a matter of just taking millions or billions of people and throwing them into the millennial setting, something has to be new and created.

So obviously, peace is not something that can be applied to nations that are in this state. Therefore, to preach Christ's message of peace as if it were something that can be applied to and by nations—which are not Christian, which do not think in Christian terms, and which do not belong to the body of Christ—is ridiculous.

A statesman or nation cannot apply this teaching. Only a Christian can apply this teaching because it demands a Christian character, and it demands Christ in us.

The church is a new creation. Notice the end of verse 15, 'to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.'

In some translations the word used is *make*, 'to make in himself.' The word *make* is too weak to express what is going on here. The original Greek word means 'to create in Himself.' A creation!

The church is something absolutely new. Galatians 6:15 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."

The church has been brought into being, something that was not there before. It is comparable to what happened in the very beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. Creation means bringing into being something that was previously not there, non-existent; it is making

something out of nothing.

How does God make peace between Jew and Gentile? It is not by a modification of what was there before. It is not even an improvement of what was there before. God does not just take a Jew and do something to him, and take a Gentile and just do something to him, and in that way bring them together.

It is something entirely new. It is a creation!

As we are baptized into God's Church, we do so as a new creation, and we enter into something that is entirely new. There is a sense in which it has no relationship at all to what existed before.

Take for example, the United States of America. It is not a number of united nations. It is not a gathering of separate nations. In other words, people have come to this country from far and wide—from various countries of Europe and elsewhere. In order to be true citizens of the United States they have to finish with their past. Or, that is the way it used to be and should be.

In a sense, it is a new nation. It is not a collection of British, Germans, French, Swedes, Norwegians, Italians and Greeks. They were all doing their best, and quite rightly, to forget all that. They are Americans. They have finished with the old national ties. There is a new nation. And much of the international enmity was left behind. It may have taken a while, but the Irish even got along with the Protestants, so on, and so forth. The nation thought of itself as one people, but, sadly, not so today. Of course, I am speaking of the United States idyllically and patriotically.

But that is all changing. People come here, bring their cultures and anti-American ideas and religions, and set up microcosms of exactly what they fled from. They bring with them fierce enmity against the people whose blessings they have come to steal and enjoy and ruin.

The church is not a sort of coalition of Jews and Gentiles. It is something entirely new. This nation only worked when that was what happened in this nation on a physical level.

The church is formed in Christ. The church is formed in Him. It happens as the result of her relationship to Him. The church is the body of Christ, and He is the Head. The church derives her life, her sustenance, and her power, everything from God through Jesus Christ.

Although we are all individual members of this one body, there is an essential unity in a body. A body is not a collection of parts. It is not a mere loose attachment of fingers and hands, arms and legs and toes. Not at all!

It is a vital unity of individual parts. However, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We must not think of a finger in isolation, it is always a part of the whole. The church is the body of Christ. The world is not the body of the world. In a sense it is because it all thinks the same, but there is no real unity.

In the body of the church, you and I have peace and enjoy peace with one another. There is peace in the church, only on the condition that we realize and put into practice the principles that Christ is our peace, He makes peace and He has made a new creation without any enmity within. That means that we have to live it as a way of life. So when there is enmity and arguments between us as members it is because our relationship with God is waning somewhat.

We have to stop thinking of ourselves in the old way and in the old terms in every respect. As Christians, as members of the church, we have to stop thinking of one another in terms of our former religions. I do not think it is a problem with us, but I think when new people come into the church, they forget to leave their former religion behind. It does not matter whether you were highly religious or not, the question is whether you are a Christian now.

You may have been very devout. It does not matter—you can be devout without being a Christian. All that is finished with. The old categories and terms no longer apply. It does not matter where a person comes from. Where is he going? Is he destined for glory, for God, for eternity in the peace of Christ?

In light of peace, what will the Millennium be like? The Spirit of God is going to be available. Salvation is going to be given to everyone at that time all during the Millennium. It is going to be the greatest time that humanity has ever experienced, excluding perhaps the hundred year period that follows when Satan is unleashed for a time.

Isaiah was inspired to describe the Millennium period.

Isaiah 32:15 Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

This sounds a little like what happened in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. The Holy Spirit is going to be available to all people.

Isaiah 32:16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

Remember I mentioned earlier that justice and righteousness are spoken of very often.

Isaiah 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

It is not just a physical place, more importantly it is a time for the work of conversion all during the Millennium. This is talking about a spiritual harvest that is going to take place. In a sense, it is a complete worldwide salvation that is going out to all people.

Notice verse 17, "The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." People will be shown how to live righteously and helped to live it as a way of life; peace will be the result. And the effect of this is no more crime or fear.

Isaiah 32:18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,

Those peaceful resting places will be typical of the living conditions during the Millennium.

Isaiah 32:19-20 Though hail comes down on the forest, And the city is brought low in humiliation. Blessed are you who sow beside all waters, Who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey.

This is a description of the peace of God's reign. We get a more descriptive picture of this in a physical and a spiritual sense, in Psalm 1:

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Again a description of what will happen in the Millennium.

All during the Millennium everyone is going to produce spiritual fruit in season. And God is going to harvest it. How many millions, even billions, will be added to the Kingdom of God? The universe is vast beyond human imagination and certainly has more than enough room for everyone.

Look at how much has been discovered about the universe within just the last hundred years. Scientists are having trouble recording all of the new data coming in from the super telescopes and space probes. Information is coming in daily by infrared imagery and radiation detection. The pictures from space are both beautiful and breathtaking beyond our understanding.

Who will help God rule all of that? His Spiritual Family! It will be members of the God Family—God willing: you and I! God's government will be one of peace.

We will end by reading Isaiah 26:1-3. Here we find a prophecy about Judah.

Isaiah 26:1-3 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:  
"We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

Thanks to God, Christ is our peace and He makes peace.