

Peace With God

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Throughout the history of mankind, men have attempted to force others into peace against their will. Even following the devastation of World War II and the cruelty of Hitler's Nazi regime, many Germans resisted the terms of the peace treaty with the conquering (the primarily Israelite) allied forces of the Americans, British, Canadians, Australians, French, and other Israelitish armies. It was more than three years after World War II ended before complete order and relative peace could be established. Peace did not come with the surrender of the Axis power to the Allied troops, because of the sizeable resistance of insurgents and terrorists within Germany following the war.

It seems that there are always people who believe that peace can exist only when they are in control and when power and authority is exclusively theirs. Does this scenario sound familiar? How about the current Iraqi war?

For the sake of discussion, forget for a moment about the politics involved. It is irrelevant whether the conflict is over oil, imperialist expansion, or religious conflict. Many Arabs just do not want peace, even though they call their religion a religion of peace. They certainly do not care if the average Arab family is torn apart and horrible torture is inflicted upon them. Sunni against Shiites; Shiites against Kurds; Kurds against Turks! They want no less than to destroy every human off the face of the earth who is not of their specific sect of Islam.

Would the killing stop if the whole world were Muslim? Of course not! In "the religion of peace" (the epitome of the misnomer), peace is the last thing they are interested in accomplishing. It is about the desires of their hearts. Each one is greedy for power and control, not for peace. Of course, we know that this will not be tolerated in the Millennium.

Then there is the Palestinian's lack of a quest for peace. How about the Chinese and their massive build up of a two hundred million man army? How about the Russians and their average personal abortion rate of over a dozen children murdered? How about the Japanese (America's friends), whose motto is "Business is war"?

Satan, the master conspirator, continues to encourage human nature's lust for power. His goal is to accumulate power over people, food, water, land, minerals, the air that we breathe, and anything else in our environment. He wants his human pawns to have control over the first heaven (the atmosphere) and the second heaven (outer space) as he tries to usurp the third heaven (God's Throne).

This is not something that has only recently been a problem; Jesus Christ dealt with this issue during His first coming. Also, the apostle Paul dealt with it at length in his Epistles.

Ephesians 6:12-15 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but

against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Let us look at a very important aspect of this gospel of peace, with a brief review from my last sermon. God, in and through Christ, brought the Jews and the Gentiles together in the Church by making them one body, in this way reconciling them to Himself by Jesus' death on the stake. Jesus, by dying on the stake, broke down the middle wall of partition. He did that on the stake—not before then, not until then. The veil of the temple was not torn until Jesus died on the stake. It was at the moment of His death that the veil was torn.

A great unity was made possible. It was by Christ dying on the stake that God reconciled Jew and Gentile to Himself. (However, that was not sufficient of and by itself, because mankind continues to sin.) God sent His Son to make a way of salvation. The Son did everything He was sent to do. He obeyed the Father in all things; He kept the law positively, actively; He bore the law's punishment of our sins in His own body on the stake.

In my last sermon, I spoke to you about "Christ our Peace." This time, I want to look more closely at verse 18, which we did not get to last time. Let us read the whole context again:

Ephesians 2:14-18 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. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

He is saying that we have access to peace with God. Having made the way and the possibility (or opportunity), Christ came and taught peace with God. He proclaimed that the peace between man and God, which humanity so badly needs, is available to those whom God calls. Jesus Christ made reconciliation to God possible for both Jew and Gentile, in one body, through the cross—or, more correctly, the stake—thereby putting to death the enmity. Paul is speaking about the perfect work of Jesus Christ.

Christ, through His apostles, through His servants, preached this gospel of peace with God. He made it possible by His perfect work on the stake. In one sense, He could not have done that during His life on earth, because people could not understand the meaning of what happened on the stake until later, after they received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It was

necessary for Christ's work to be finished—for Him to rise, for the Spirit to be given—before this could happen; and so it did happen.

In Acts 1, Luke reminded Theophilus of all of the things that Jesus began to do. By writing the Book of Acts, Luke was telling him and us about all the things that Jesus continued to do after His death and resurrection. It is a record of the acts of the resurrected Christ through the church, not just the acts of the apostles.

You are familiar with the incident in which God, using the Apostles Peter and John, healed the man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, in the name of Jesus. Luke's account makes it very clear that God does His work through Jesus Christ. Faith and peace come through Christ.

Acts 3:1-16 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

God is the doer through Christ; Christ is the doer through His apostles. The apostle Paul says, writing to the Corinthians,

II Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Not only does faith come through Jesus Christ to us, but peace, as well. The God of peace sends that peace to us through Jesus Christ. We are taught about that peace through His apostles and through His ministers. In this, we see how God has chosen to work out His will. This is His government structure.

On the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, Peter made it very clear that God is the One who calls both Jew and Gentile into His church.

Acts 2:39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

God is always the author of our calling to peace, and it is always done through Christ.

Ephesians 2:17-18 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

The Apostle Paul refers to the Holy Spirit immediately following his emphasis of the concept of peace with God. The gospel of peace is a proclamation to both Jews and Gentiles that God calls, and Jesus Christ opened the way to peace with God. Mankind's fundamental need is peace with God, and that is not going to happen on a universal scale until after the return of Jesus Christ. This is the peace Christ taught and teaches through His ministers. It is not so much peace between Gentiles and Jews that is indicated in verses 16-18; Paul finished with that a few verses earlier. It is now the peace that both Gentiles and Jews need with God.

Humanity's primary need is the need of peace with God. People without a relationship with God—people in sin—are restless, miserable, and unhappy. Paul probably had Isaiah 57 in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Isaiah 57:19 "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."

Then Isaiah goes on to say this:

Isaiah 57:20-21 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."

We have just read the picture and the explanation of *like the troubled sea*. We are all familiar with that picture of the restless sea. Why is the sea always restless, always in motion? Why are there waves? Why is there ebb and flow?

The scientists tell us that the answer is that the sea is being acted upon by two opposing forces. There is, first of all, the moon, which partly controls the movements and the motions of the sea. On the other hand, there is the magnetic force in the heart of the earth, a tremendous magnetic pull. On the one hand, there is the pull and the influence of the moon and the converse influence of the magnetic powers in the center of the earth on the other. The result is that the sea is in constant motion: You have the waves and the billows, the ebb and flow. Occasionally, there comes a gale; the wind rises and begins to blow on the sea and raise the billows; and then comes a terrible storm.

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Have you ever walked along a beach after a storm and seen the mud, dirt, bits of wood, and various other debris that is washed up? It is just a chaotic mess. They are the flotsam and the jetsam, the filth and the mire left on the seashore after the ending of the storm. It is a perfect illustration! Isaiah says the wicked are like that. The picture is of man apart from God, restless like the sea.

What, then, is the cause of this? It is exactly the same explanation in a spiritual sense as that of the state of the sea. It all began in Eden. Man and woman were made by God and placed in the Garden of Eden, and it was paradise; it was peaceful and calm. There was no contrary motion, there was no restlessness in the Garden, because there was only one force working on man—and that was God! When God made man in His own image, he was in correspondence, in unity and fellowship with God. He was enjoying God, and his life was a life of unmixed peace. There was no unhappiness; there were no problems; there was no trouble; and there was no anxiety, at least at first.

Man and woman were in a state of innocence and of near-perfect peace and quiet and freedom. However, man and woman sinned against God. They listened to another power who offered them power and, in listening, became subject to it.

The force of Satan—the force of evil, the force of death—began to play on them; and from that time, on men and women's lives have been restless and in conflict. We can see it in a greater sense in this end time. There are so many people who have literally gone over the edge. They are in despair, and they are committing suicide. The suicide rate among teenagers is the highest that it has ever been.

There is in humans a factor called the conscience. Although most people probably wish they did not have one, we have one, anyway; and it will go on speaking to us and pulling and nagging. It is a definite influence in our lives. People in the world certainly do not like it; it disturbs them. It makes them restless and like the waves of the sea, the troubled sea that cannot rest. Then a storm comes—some ferocious onslaught from Satan.

There is always a slight movement in the air, but people do not always call it a gale. When the movement is magnified, it is called a gale, as in "gale-force winds." This is the state of human beings without God's Holy Spirit.

Not only that, there are ongoing and repetitious circumstances: Wars come; illnesses come; a loved one is taken ill; something goes wrong; there is trouble with others; and our whole life is upset. As a result, we feel as if our lives are like the sea, rocking back and forth in chaotic directions. In this state, we have no peace. Without trust in God, there is no peace, only restlessness. We are seeing how different the world will be under God's rule.

David contemplated this state of anxiety.

Psalm 55:1-5 Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me.

This is what we feel when we are going through a trial or when we are having contentions with someone. That is the feeling that accompanies restlessness: being fearful and overwhelmed.

The Hebrew word in verse 2 from which *mourn* (KJV) and *restless* (NKJV) come is *ruwd*. It means "to wander about; to ramble," much the same as an animal that has broken loose. When applied to people, it refers to inquiring after, to seeking, as one does by running up and down, thus representing frustrated desire or discouraged wishfulness. Not always, but much of the time, it is without any real direction. David was asking, was pleading with God to give him direction and to give him peace.

The result of all this is that man is never satisfied. There is nothing as characteristic of an unstable or sinful life as restlessness. We see it everywhere in the world today. Has the world ever been as restless as it is today, whether people are at home or out? What encourages the present pleasure mania? Restlessness! People say, "Let's go out. Let's go do something. We can't stand it if we stay home. We're going crazy. Let's escape from it." Seeking pleasure is the top priority of this society. Seeking pleasure is driven by restlessness.

People try to run away from the restlessness to some new excitement; they crave something fresh. This restlessness has been accurately termed *escapism*. The world is excited and is trying to excite itself still more. It is obsessed with drink, drugs, and entertainment. It is all an expression of this fundamental restlessness, not being at ease, having a lack of peace, a lack of a quiet mind. People in sin do not know peace of mind; they are always in disbelief and doubt. The apostle James says they are as unstable as the waves of the sea.

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

People have enmity against God; they are at war with Him. They are double-minded, with this pull and that pull. They feel they should be better but cannot put their finger on how. They feel themselves pulled toward something bad, and they are torn between the two. Without God's Holy Spirit, more often than not, they go toward the bad. Everything about their lives is like the restless waves of the sea, and there is no satisfaction.

The analogy of the sea is perfectly fitted to the life of people who are not at peace with God. There is mire and dirt that is thrown up by it all. It is in all of the papers, on the radio and television, and on the internet. It is in people's conversations. It is everywhere.

All of this restlessness and seeking for pleasure is very obvious. Respectability has disappeared, and sin is out in the open. No one seems to be ashamed anymore. The storm has been blowing for some time, and the mire and dirt are increasingly evident. That is mankind in sin: no peace, no rest, no quiet, like the troubled waves of the sea. The tragedy is that the people in their ignorance and blindness do not realize all of this.

People do not know; they do not understand. They believe their troubles are due to their circumstances or their environment, and they are always trying to find peace and produce rest—but they cannot. Try as they will, they fail. Their hopeless lives point to the fact that they are in dire need of peace and rest, the quiet mind, and the tranquil heart. It really is quite a sad state in which the world is. It almost brings one to tears.

This picture of restlessness is in direct contrast to the Millennium and God's Kingdom. Notice what God promises for the Millennium:

Isaiah 54:10-13 For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has mercy on you. "O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children."

As parents, even more than peace for ourselves, we desire peace for our children.

Isaiah 54:14 "In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you."

God promises, not just peace for our children, but great peace for them. What a contrast to today's lifestyle for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren! Today, parents have the fear of pedophiles, greedy kidnappers for the international slave trade, and perverse social workers trying to take children from their parents because they differ from the psychological profile of "normal" communitarian children.

As you know, I have been on a campaign this year to just make us absolutely sick of the world. I promise that I will end that someday. It really is important because it drives us to want to live God's way of life all the more.

Let us shift gears here, and notice that Paul wrote at length about justification by faith in chapter 4 of the book of Romans. He wraps up chapter 4 by explaining that Jesus Christ's work was accepted by God, thereby guaranteeing our justification. This acceptance is evidenced by Christ's resurrection and is the reason we have access to peace with God.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Again, we see how God works through Jesus Christ to accomplish His will.

Therefore in verse 1 indicates that the immediate benefit of justification is that we have peace with God. The justified members of the body of Christ receive this peace with God because of this justification by faith. To have faith is to be spiritually minded. Elsewhere, Paul says that, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Romans 5:3-9 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Justification is a declaration that God has made a judgment. It is a legal act on God's behalf to impute the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us once we have accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. It puts us in alignment with God and His law. This alignment is absolutely necessary.

Can two walk together, unless they are in agreement? Without agreement, there is no peace. We know this from simple observation of the peace processes that are attempted between nations. Even divorce hearings show this uncomplicated but powerful principle at work.

Romans 5:10-11 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Five times in this passage, Paul emphasizes that this is made possible by God *through* the work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ is a pivotal point in God's plan, and He is essential in every way.

Sinners are the enemies of God because of their pride and rebellion. There can never be true or long-lasting peace between enemies. The sinner is always somewhat troubled, and his natural state of distress makes it impossible for him to have peace with God. In this state, true peace of mind is unattainable. Thus, we see a world full of people who are restless and torn within.

However, as God calls a person He begins the process of salvation and the process toward true peace, by way of a new creation. God has shown His willingness to be reconciled through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. He is willing to forgive and be at peace with us. This peace cannot be acquired from the world; it is a result, a fruit, of the Holy Spirit of God, which is a gift from God. We have peace with God and access by faith to His grace through our Savior. Once we begin to have this peace with God, we can begin to reflect this true peace to others; and it actually becomes part of that true witness that God requires of us as members of His Church. This, of course, depends on whether we have a peaceful relationship with Him.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

This is something that every Christian should be always doing. We should always try to keep peace among people. As we know, "A soft answer turns away wrath." Yet, we know that we are human, because here at the Feast, there are contentions between people, and the peace is destroyed. Paul puts the responsibility on us to use the peace we have been given as a gift from God through Jesus Christ to live at peace with others. Interestingly, Paul does not say that others will always reciprocate. In fact, it does not matter whether they do or not; we still have the responsibility to be peaceful ourselves. "A soft answer turns away wrath" is a simple but important illustration.

Human nature interferes with peace with our neighbors, friends, and even family, making it quite difficult to be peaceful with others—but the person who loves God must work hard for peace. We cannot have fights, conflicts, and contentions with others without having our own peace significantly disturbed. When someone is arguing with us over scripture, it is they who are causing a lack of peace; it is their warring attitude. Of course, we still have to stand firm in the truth and never shrink back from it.

The Millennium and the Kingdom of God, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, is what the whole world is waiting for, whether they know it or not. We desperately need God's rule on earth over a new creation. In the world today, we see that God, according to His plan, is letting people rule themselves, under the intoxicating influence of Satan.

At the time of Christ's first coming, the Jews were actually looking for the Messiah for the first time. They knew He was sent by God, but they did not want to accept Him because He did not align Himself with them. They were expecting the Messiah to come to align with all their institutions: the temple, the sacrifices, and the Jewish government with the Pharisees and the

Sadducees. They fully expected the Messiah to come and deliver them from the burden of the Roman Empire.

What did Jesus tell Pilate when He was questioned, before He was scourged and sent out to be crucified?

John 18:33-36 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

By Christ's statement there, it is very obvious that there will be a time where the spiritual children of God, returning with Christ, will bring peace—but it will also be a time of war, as Ecclesiastes 3 says, "a time of war, and a time of peace." Pilate could not understand that concept. One of the reasons the Jews delivered Christ to Pilate was that He said He was a king. In order to be rid of Christ, they falsely accused Jesus of wanting to usurp Caesar's throne. Pilate found himself in a quandary as what to do with Him.

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.

Christ had been a peaceful individual during His life, but war was coming against Him.

With his question, "What is truth?" Pilate showed himself to be in the same confusion in which we find this society today. The apostle Paul reminds us that God is not the author of confusion but of peace. This present world is a society of massive confusion in all areas of life: politics, economics, business, health, psychology, philosophy, education, and everything else that defines life. God will have nothing of the sort in His Kingdom. Just as this present evil world is characterized by confusion, in sharp contrast, God's Kingdom in the Millennium will be characterized by peace.

Neither Pilate nor the Scribes and Pharisees understood that this was going to be a spiritual kingdom run by spiritual sons and daughters of God over the human beings on the earth. There was no peace in the society that the Jewish leaders controlled. These blind Jewish leaders wanted their own human power to be right under the Messiah's so they could exercise their authority over the people. Although the Pharisees and Sadducees thought that they had things under control, Jewish society was in mass spiritual confusion. They had made life a bitter

burden on the people, forcing them to serve the corrupt hierarchy. Things were anything but peaceful. There was no peace with God.

In contrast, in the Millennium, God is not going to leave rulership to people who are confused. He is the Author of peace. Peace is possible only if the rulers are spiritual sons and daughters of God, whose hearts and minds have been changed to be incorruptible by the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to me that, in the epistles of Paul and Isaiah, they so often talk about the Millennium. When people are forgiven for their sins and given the Holy Spirit to remove the veil from off their eyes, opening their minds to understanding God's way of life, it will be like a refuge from the restlessness of the storm that they have suffered in their formerly disturbed lives.

Isaiah 25:3-7 Therefore the strong people will glorify You; the city of the terrible nations will fear You. For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. You will reduce the noise of aliens, as heat in a dry place; as heat in the shadow of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones will be diminished. And in this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

Verse 6 sounds like a description of the Feast of Tabernacles, with rich food and good wine.

Notice, in verse 7, that God will destroy "the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations." This is speaking of the people on the earth at the beginning of the Millennium. God is going to remove the spiritual blindness from them at the beginning. He will also have to do this at the beginning of the Great White Throne Judgment, pictured by the Last Great Day.

Isaiah 25:8-9 He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

This is the attitude people will have all through the Millennium. As a result of this attitude, they will be teachable, and people who have waited for something for a long time will be very excited about it and very attentive to it. They will be so easy to teach. As we read earlier, God will teach our children, maybe not personally, but through Christ, the apostles, and us.

We are going to be the ones teaching God's way to the world. God is going to have us very

busy with His work, doing His will during this time. There will not be the distractions of war or crime. Satan will be bound and unable to disturb the peace. There will be a peace unlike any ever experienced by mankind.

Micah 4:1-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Remember, peace with God is more than the absence of war. It brings to mind the Arabs and what they call Al Qaeda and the training that they give the children, almost right from birth. Nothing like that will be tolerated or done.

Micah 4:4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

When the Millennium begins, we are going to and help Christ establish and enforce His government of God. We are going to have authority over the nations to rule or shepherd them with a rod of iron.

Isaiah 2:1-2 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

In verse 2, "the mountain of the Lord's house" is a symbol of God's government. As we read in Isaiah 9, the government is going to be on His shoulders and He is going to delegate to all the saints who are in the First Resurrection, so that they can rule and reign with Him. In the kingdom of God, the spirit children of God, ruling on earth, will be with Christ ruling over the whole world.

Zechariah reveals that the world will never experience universal health, happiness, and peace until God's government is restored to this earth. When that government is restored, mankind will not continue to observe its present pagan holidays. One of the first things the people will do

in the Millennium is to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Verse 17 tells us what will happen to some nations if they decide that they do not want to observe the Feast of Tabernacles:

Zechariah 14:17 And it shall be that whicheckver of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

Verse 18 tells us that if they do not observe this important feast that God will punish them and they will receive severe drought and consequences:

Zechariah 14:18 If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Then, we see in verse 19 that God will be impartial in passing judgment upon Egypt or any nation that refuses to keep His commanded Feast of Tabernacles:

Zechariah 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

God's power far outguns any physical weapons that rebellious nations may contemplate using. Many nations will want to submit to the government of God, because they want the blessings rather than the curses that God tells them that they will receive. We read in Isaiah 2: 2 that all nations will flow to Judah—more specifically, Jerusalem—because it will once again be the Lord's house and will be filled with God's Spirit and the Word of the Lord.

Isaiah 2:3-4 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Notice that verse 3 does not say "all" people; it says "many." There will be those who will want to submit to God and the kingdom of God, and it will start with Israel first. The authority and command to keep the law goes out. The law has never been changed, and it will not have changed then, either. Only the rituals and the sacrifices have been superseded by something greater, having been replaced by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His priesthood.

There are still going to be insurgents and terrorists and remnants of fighting against implementation of the Kingdom of God on earth at the beginning of the Millennium. God will allow this at first to give people a choice and an opportunity to see whether or not they will obey and submit. If they will not, then, after a given period of time, He is going to exercise His power and authority over them so they are going to learn, because God will not allow contempt and disrespect for very long.

What if God were to handle the insurgents and terrorists at the beginning of the Millennium the same way that the United States has handled them today? Because of human nature, rebellious people are a terrible plague on the earth. If they were allowed to continue, they would be a plague and would keep this world in a state of restlessness, unhappiness, and war.

When we compare James 3: 18—"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace"—with Isaiah 32: 17—"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever"—we find that a peaceful environment is required for the fruit of righteousness to be produced. At one and the same time, righteous living produces peace. It is impossible for the world in its present condition to have true, long-lasting peace. Its restlessness destroys physical and spiritual well-being.

The principal word used to express the idea of peace in the Bible is *shalom*. In one form or another, the concepts of wholeness, health, and completeness are all closely linked. Peace is not simply a negative—the absence of war. Peace is a positive concept with its own unique meaning.

Shalom is the daily greeting in Israel; *shalom alekhem* means "peace upon you." It is a common expression we could translate as, "good day," but it really is closer to, "may you be well." To be well is to be whole, to be complete, to have physical and spiritual resources sufficient for one's needs.

Since peace is tied together with the concept of wholeness, in this sense, the concept of peace is an action as well as a state of being. In Psalm 34: 14, the psalmist encourages hearers to, "Do good, seek peace, pursue it." Peace is not something that simply happens; it is something that we can lay hold of. However, we cannot lay hold of it permanently and spiritually, unless it has been offered to us. Therefore, God has seen to it that we have been called through the work of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 9: 6-7 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His

kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

There is a theological sense to peace that is far beyond the simple idea of the cessation of war or the absence of conflict. Peace is not as much tranquility and order as it is the deep commitment to the work of justice. Peace also points to the future, because it reconnects an ideal of justice that is remembered and expected into the millennium. God's plan of peace and salvation is going to go on into eternity.

God, through Christ, offers and is able to give peace to all who see their need of it. Christ has made and opened up the way. No one can reconcile himself to God, but Christ has made peace between humans and God, by the blood of His cross. He has taken it upon Himself, and it was because of that that Jesus could say,

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The mind that has confidence in God will not be troubled by the trials that affect us in life—not by persecution, poverty, sickness, sorrow, or grief. That restlessness is gone.

Jesus Christ made it possible for us to receive His righteous mind, making it possible for us to really have true peace with God. As we receive this peace, God gives us an increasing ability to make peace with others by increasingly producing the fruit of the spirit. Christ reconciles us to God, and the peace of God that passes all understanding can keep our hearts and minds if we seek God.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The peace of God guards our hearts and minds! We have nothing to fear, and we do not need to allow that restlessness in us. We can take all our cares to God, because Christ has opened the way for us to go to Him with our troubles, our problems, whatever they are.

The God of Peace, through Jesus Christ, has given us peace with God, peace with others, peace within. God has called us to a wonderfully peaceful calling. In the Millennium, peace with God will be offered to all who seek it. May the God of Peace produce peace in your life.