

# True Peace Attained in Christ Alone

Isaiah 9:2–7

This is a text that gets a lot of notice around Christmastime. It speaks of the coming of the Messiah. This is a prophecy written about 700 years before the coming of our Lord. The Messiah, when he came, would be the Son of God. His name would be called “Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Our focus this morning will be on the title *Prince of Peace*, but before we look at that specifically and consider its implications, we will look at the passage in its biblical context.

We began our reading with verse 2. This is the first verse of chapter 9 in the original Hebrew. Now the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired—though they are immensely helpful: just try to imagine finding your way around a big book like Isaiah without them! But it is worthy of note that verse 1 in the English text is the last verse of the previous chapter in the Hebrew. So we began with verse 2, which says: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great *light*; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a *light* has shined.”

The “light” referred to is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming brought light into a darkened world. It wasn’t always this way. When God created the heavens and the earth, *light* was the first thing he created. “Darkness was upon the face of the deep,” but God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” When Adam sinned, God cursed the world for his sake. Fallen men “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”<sup>1</sup> But Christ is the Light of the world. His gospel gives light. Yet men prefer the darkness of their false religions rather than the light of the gospel of Christ.

We’ve got two false religions fighting with one another in the Middle East. Judaism rejects the Lord Jesus, God’s Messiah. Jesus taught “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:23). That is the truth: if you do not honor the Son in the way that you are supposed to honor the Father—that is, honor and worship him as the one only living and true God, worthy of our worship—then you are not honoring the Father either, no matter how much you might protest otherwise. Make no mistake: Rabbinic Judaism rejected Christ, so it rejects the Father as well. It is a false religion. It does not honor the God of the Bible, so it is a false religion—hard words but true!

Then there’s Islam. It, too, is a false religion. It gives greater honor to Mohammad than to Jesus, so it, too, fails to honor the Son. So no matter how much a Muslim might protest, Islam is a false religion. I know a lot of Muslims who are very sincere in their religion. Some of them are pleasant people to be around. They

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:19

live honorable lives. I do not doubt their sincerity, but sincerity will not get you into heaven. Only acceptance of the *truth* will get you into heaven. Jesus is “the way, the *truth* and the life”; no one can come to the Father any other way than through him. He did not say that because he is an egotist but because it is the truth. You can reject it if you want to, but that does not mean it is not the truth. It is true because the God who is truth itself—the God who cannot lie—spoke it. Unless you are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, you are on your way to hell.

So both Islam and Judaism are false religions, and they are at war with each other in the Middle East.

Christians do not hate Muslims or Jews, but we long to see them come to the light of Christ. In the meantime they are at war, and people are getting killed. There is a lot of mutual hatred. Neither side is saying, “We are willing to live in peace.” Neither side is saying, “We are content with the land that God gave us. We want to live at peace with our neighbors. We want the nations around us to be blessed.” People ask, “Why can’t they just get along?” But from the Bible we know that there will be no peace in the Middle East until there is universal acceptance of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

So that is a beautiful word in today’s war-torn environment: “Christ, the *Prince of Peace*.” It is a beautiful prophecy that is so needed in our era of continuous war funded by mountains of debt. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He came to establish peace between God and man. He came to establish peace between man and man, between whole nations—people groups—that look to him in faith. He came to establish peace within our own hearts as well: where there was turbulence and wavering and unsettledness and worry and doubt, to give us his peace that surpasses all understanding, even in the most trying and difficult circumstances, knowing that *he* is on the throne and will continue to rule until all his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. How each of us needs the peace that only Christ can give!

Let’s look at the context of this wonderful prophecy.

Verse 2 begins: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great *light*; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a *light* has shined.”

Notice that the prophecy is phrased in the *past* tense: “walked,” “seen,” “dwelt” and “shined” are all past-tense verbs. God is speaking of future events in the past tense. The fact that Christ would come in 700 years is spoken of using past-tense verbs. Its fulfillment is so certain that it is spoken of as though it has already taken place.

Isaiah is teaching that though God’s people were about go into captivity in Babylon, God had solemnly promised to bring them back. Jeremiah would foretell

the exact length of time that they would be in captivity—seventy years.<sup>2</sup> We spoke of this in a recent message. A remnant would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians, to reestablish the pure worship of God and wait for the coming of God’s Messiah who would come to this earth. So strong was this faith in the hearts and minds of God’s elect that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would exclaim: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people . . . through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give *light* to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of *peace*” (Luke 1:68, 78–79). That light is Christ.

Calvin observes that “the deliverance from Babylon was but a prelude to the restoration of the Church, and was intended to last, not for a few years only, but till Christ should come and bring true salvation, not only to their bodies, but likewise to their souls.”<sup>3</sup>

So when the prophet says, “Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined,” he is speaking of Christ. And he is not speaking merely of political deliverance but of deliverance from the darkness of eternal death which fallen man experiences—darkness from which we cannot deliver ourselves, but from which the regenerating Spirit of God can and does deliver his elect. As Paul put it, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, *and Christ shall give thee light*” (Eph. 5:14).

By his regenerating Spirit Christ gives not only light but also joy—joy that is akin to the “joy of harvest” (Isa. 9:3). The ground of this joy does not lie in outward circumstances or success “but in spiritual happiness, which we obtain through the word of Christ”<sup>4</sup>—joy that no person or authority on earth can take from us. Since this is our spiritual birthright, why do many Christians not experience this joy? Why do so many experience depression and discouragement? Some of it arises because we do not take care of our bodies as we should. We do not eat healthy foods. We don’t get sufficient sleep or exercise. We focus on our fears and worries rather than the promises of God. As Isaiah says later, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect *peace*, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3). Write down that reference: Isaiah 26:3. God gives his peace to the man or woman who focuses his mind on the promises of God, not on his circumstances. Paul speaks in the same manner when he says, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these*

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<sup>2</sup> Jer. 25:11–12, 29:10

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, note at Isa. 9:2 (Logos Bible Software)

<sup>4</sup> Calvin at Isa. 9:3

*things*. 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” (Phil. 4:8–9). If the Christian’s mind is focused on Christ and the Gospel, he will experience inward peace. If his mind is focused on his troubles, then he will be robbed of his peace. It is a little like Peter, calling out from the boat to the Savior walking on the water. He said, “Lord, if it’s you, then bid me come to you on the water.” But when he focused on the storm, instead of on Christ, he began to sink.

The bottom line: train yourself, with the Lord’s help, to focus on Christ and his promises rather than on your doubts and worries. In yourself you will fail, but by the Lord’s help you will succeed. Little by little you will establish godly habits that will bring victory over the long haul. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

And God does not intend that you accomplish this alone. Be sure to solicit the prayers of the church as well. We are members one of another. “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12:21). Don’t let spiritual pride tempt you to put on a fake mask that says, “I’m a perfect Christian; I’ve got everything figured out and I don’t need anybody’s help,” while you are experiencing inner anguish and torment.

Much more could be said, but this is the basic context of the beautiful Messianic promise “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.”

Note that the text doesn’t say, “His *names*” (plural) but “his *name* (singular) shall be called.” One commentator observed that “consisting as it does of eight words, of which the last six obviously fall into three couplets, it is probable that the first two should also be taken together.”<sup>5</sup> So “Wonderful Counselor” is a couplet. At its root a *wonder* is a *miracle*—something that only God can do. Isaiah teaches later that the LORD of hosts is “*wonderful in counsel*, and excellent in working.”<sup>6</sup> This perfectly summarizes the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, who authoritatively taught the truth of God and did miracles to validate that he was sent by God. He is the “Mighty God”—God in human flesh. He is the “Everlasting Father,” the Father of all believers, who are called his spiritual children. And he is called the “Prince of Peace.” Thus we have four elements of the compound name. None have a right to this name except our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our focus this morning is the Prince of Peace. As I said at the outset, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He came to establish peace *between God and man*. He came to establish peace *between man and man*, between *whole nations*—

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<sup>5</sup> Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/9-6.htm> accessed 3-14-26

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 28:29

people groups—that look to him in faith. He came to establish *peace within our own hearts* as well. Let's look at these in more detail.

Jesus came to establish peace between God and man. The truth is that because of sin, man is at war with God. Romans 8:7 teaches that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” The ESV renders it as “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law.” But the Greek is actually a little bit stronger than that. The mind that is set on the flesh is not just *hostile* but *hostility itself*. The mind set on the flesh cannot be reformed but must be entirely subdued by the sanctifying power of Almighty God. God will not settle for less hostility but demands total and unconditional surrender. Man does not have the right to be hostile to God. If we remain enemies of God, then we are in danger of hellfire. What God requires is that each and every one of us lay down our arms and surrender to him. We must admit that we were wrong and he is right. We must bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

There are two powerful pictures in the Word of God. The first is a picture of the human race at war with God. Consider Psalm 2: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” Isaiah 57 adds: “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is *no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked”—a picture of the human race at war with God.

The second is a picture of Christ’s peaceable kingdom. As described in Isaiah 11, “The wolf . . . shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Two pictures: the first of a world at war with God, and the second of Christ’s peaceable kingdom—a world subdued by his Spirit, where former enemies learn to live in peace: men and women redeemed to God by Christ’s blood “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,”<sup>7</sup> living constructively together, gathering to worship the Lamb. This is a world that is being realized right now in the church of Jesus Christ, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11). Through the Gospel, “the kingdoms of this world have become the

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<sup>7</sup> Rev. 5:9

kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11:15). Eventually, *all* the kingdoms—all the nations of earth—will surrender and willingly submit to Christ’s perfect reign.

There are those who claim that *diversity* is a strength, that national boundaries are bad, that having unrestricted immigration, where people enter our country both legally and illegally and get to stay, is a good thing; where attracting people to enter a country to live at public expense is a good thing—where working people are forcibly taxed to pay for those who choose *not* to work: people who do not hold biblical values of thrift, hard work, honesty and cooperation for the public good come in to invade a peaceable society and ultimately to take over, where those who *built* the society are told that *they* are the problem.

But the church is made up of former enemies who are now reconciled to a holy God and come together as his worshippers. Paul writes: “For if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). This is the wonder of the Gospel: that those who formerly were enemies of God and enemies of one another are now *reconciled*—restored to friendship and harmony in the common cause of worshipping Christ the King.

Have you been reconciled to God? Have your sins been washed away by the blood of Christ? Have you laid down your arms and surrendered to Jesus Christ? Have you become his willing worshipper? Have you received him as your Savior and embraced him as your Lord, saying, “Lord, I am yours, I belong to you as your property, both now and forever. Make me one of your children. Help me to live in harmony with my neighbor. Be magnified in my body both in life and in death.”

The other day I received a text from a man whose car had suddenly needed an expensive repair when he was out-of-town. That same day he’d also had an unfortunate exchange of words with a superior at work. Two major blows the same day! I reminded him that the Lord uses setbacks and disappointments to sanctify us and strengthen us our faith.

He asked a perceptive question: “What tests make us stronger?” I was happy to reply: “All of them”—yes, *all* of them! I elaborated a little on my answer: The Lord brings evil and calamity into our lives for the purpose of showing us that he can give us peace in even the worst of circumstances. He is God, not only in the good times, but at all times. Nothing is too hard for him!

The fact is, all of us are guaranteed to go through testing. No follower of Christ is immune. Paul and Barnabas warned the saints in Lystra that “we must *through much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). What was true for the saints in Lystra is certainly true for all of us as well. In this life we are guaranteed to go through many sorrows. That is why the Puritans called it a *vale of*

*tears*. Sorrows are sure to come, but the Lord is faithful and will not allow us to suffer above that we are able. He will give us grace for our time of need.

Yet in the midst of this, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He assures his people, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

All of us need to experience personal peace in a world of turmoil. We need to experience peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to pray for peace among nations. Let us together serve the Prince of Peace. Amen.