

WHEN WILL THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

TEXT: LUKE 2:8-14

Introduction:

1. I have heard it said on a number of occasions that the angels did not sing (Luke 2:13, 14).
2. First of all the Bible does not say that they did not sing. Harry Ironside said, "I know we do not actually get the word 'sing' here. It does not actually say the angels sang. But I am sure that the ordinary speech of the angels would be sweeter and more melodious than any song that anybody could sing on earth" (*Luke*).
3. Secondly, when you have a great multitude of angels praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest," it sounds to me like singing.
4. And thirdly, the LORD told Job that the angels sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy when He created the world (Job 38:7).
5. If angels sang for joy when God created the world, I surely believe they were singing for joy when they were praising God at the birth of His only begotten Son.
6. Now what were they saying? The angels said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).
7. These words have often troubled people. "Peace on earth?"
8. Today our nation is engaged in two wars -- one in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, not counting the numerous skirmishes and so-called "peace keeping operations" around the world.
9. Not to mention the constant threats and attacks from Muslim terrorists. These have become so commonplace that they often aren't even reported in the newspapers.
10. So what the did angels mean? -- and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).
11. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote:

I heard the Bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

12. This is a question that has vexed people for two thousand years, but to me the answer is very simple.
13. This is the answer: In Isaiah 9:6, our Lord is called "The Prince of Peace." "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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
14. Therefore, there will truly be peace on earth when "The Prince of Peace" returns (Isa. 9:6, 7).
15. But in the meantime, since most people have refused Him and have rejected Him, the world remains in its unhappy condition.

I. MAN HAS TO FIRST MAKE PEACE WITH GOD BEFORE HE CAN EXPERIENCE THE PEACE OF GOD.

1. Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."
2. The Bible says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).
3. Have you experienced this peace? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. Have you been justified by faith?
5. This peace with God can only come "by faith" (Rom. 5:1, 2).
6. The Bible says, "But without faith it is impossible to please" God (Heb. 11:6).
7. Our faith must be based upon the substitutionary death of Christ (Rom. 5:6-9).
8. Many people speak of "faith." But faith in what? In whom?
9. You may have heard the term, "people of faith." But what exactly does it mean?
10. Politicians like to use this vague term to refer to just about everybody except atheists. But since atheists vote too, politicians sometimes say, "People of faith or no faith, blah blah..."
11. This way they think they have covered all the bases.

12. Well, preachers are not politicians. We have to be plain. We must be clear.
13. Jesus said in John 3:7, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."
14. Have you been born again?
15. This time of year, there are multitudes of people celebrating the birth of Christ. They get sentimental over the baby in the manger but do not want to think about the Saviour hanging on the cross, shedding His blood for their wicked sins (Rom. 5:8, 9).
16. Have you been "saved from wrath through Him"? That is the only way to experience peace with God.
17. In fact, the Bible says: "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; cf. 57:20, 21; 59:7, 8).
18. Some would object and insist that they are not really wicked; they are not so bad. But the Bible says: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).
19. According to the Bible, all those without Christ are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).
20. That is why Jesus said one must be born again.
21. Only after a sinner is born again, only after he repents of his sin and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour – only then is he able to make peace with God.
22. Then he will understand the words of the heavenly host: "And on earth peace, good will toward men."
23. Man has to be reconciled to God before he can make peace with God.
24. The great hymn writer, Charles Wesley, put it this way: "Peace on earth, and mercy mild: God and sinners reconciled."
25. Man is a rebel at war with God. The Bible says that before our conversion "we were enemies" (Rom. 5:10).
26. When we were His enemies, "we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10; cf. Col. 1:20, 21).
27. Have you been reconciled to God? You cannot experience the peace of God until you are reconciled to God.
28. To be reconciled means to bring into harmony. God does not have to be reconciled – man needs to be reconciled. God does not change – man needs to change. Sinful man needs to be reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

29. God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins. God offers reconciliation and pardon to all who come to Him in simple faith.
30. This is how we can know real peace.

II. CHRIST IS COMING BACK TO JUDGE AND MAKE WAR

1. In Revelation 19:11, the apostle John says, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11).
2. There will be peace on earth but only after the Lord Jesus Christ returns to judge and make war.
3. People are somewhat familiar with the story of the first advent -- Mary and Joseph making the difficult trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the shepherds watching their flock at night, the wise men following the star, etc.
4. But very few people are prepared for the second advent.
5. Revelation 6:16 refers to "the wrath of the Lamb."
6. But most people are unfamiliar with the book of Revelation. In fact most people (even many Christians) are unfamiliar with most of the Bible!
7. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. Matthew 1 & 2, and Luke 1 & 2 are the only two chapters that tell us about our Lord's birth.
8. That means 1,185 out of 1,189 chapters do not tell us about our Lord's birth. But they have much to say about the judgment of God.
9. Therefore, it would be wise for us to read and study the entire Bible. Let me encourage each and every person assembled here this evening to read the entire Bible through in 2011.
10. Some of you have been reading your Bible through all the way from Genesis through Revelation year after year and you have told me what a blessing that is.
11. Praise the Lord for that. Keep it up!
12. Before we attempt to interpret Luke 2:14 -- "and on earth peace, good will toward men," let us be careful to compare Scripture with Scripture. This is the proper way to interpret Scripture.

III. RECEIVE CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS (PSALM 2)

1. The nations are "raging" against God (Psalm 2:1-3).
2. This is why there is presently no peace on earth (Ps. 2:4-9).

3. The Bible instructs us to "be wise" and "serve the LORD with fear" (Ps. 2:10, 11).
4. "Kiss the Son" (Ps. 2:12) means to be reconciled with Him. This is the only way to find true peace on earth.
5. Matthew Henry says we are to "kiss the Son," not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites, who pretend to honour him, but really affront him; but with a believing kiss.
6. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Psalm 2:12b).

CONCLUSION:

1. Ira Sankey led the music for many of D.L. Moody's preaching campaigns, and he also wrote many beautiful Gospel songs.
2. In 1876, Ira Sankey was traveling on a steamboat up the Delaware River on Christmas Eve. On the deck were gathered a number of passengers, and someone asked him to sing.
3. Before he began to sing, Mr. Sankey stood for a moment and prayed quietly, asking the Lord what he should sing.
4. He wanted to sing a Christmas song, but somehow the words of the song, "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us," were what came to his heart.

"Saviour, like a shepherd lead us,
 Much we need thy tender care.
 In thy pleasant pastures feed us,
 For our use thy folds prepare."

5. Every heart was stirred, and at the end of the song, one man stepped forth — a rough-looking man.
 - To Sankey, he said, "Did you ever serve in the Union Army?"
 - "Yes," answered Sankey. "In the spring of 1860."
 - "Can you remember if you were doing picket duty on a bright moonlight night in 1862?"
 - "Yes, I do," answered Sankey, with surprise. "Were you...?"
 - "I did, too, but I was serving in the Confederate Army. When I saw you standing at your post, I said to myself, 'That fellow will never get away from here alive.' I raised my musket and took aim. I was in the shadow, completely hidden, while you walked in full moonlight.
 - "At that instant, you began to sing — just as a moment ago. The song was 'Saviour, like a shepherd lead us...'

- "The music reached my heart. I took my finger off the trigger. 'I'll wait until the end of the song,' I said to myself. 'I can't miss him, and I can shoot him afterwards.'
- "As you sang, you reached the place where it says,
 "'We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,'
 "'Be the guardian of our way...'
- "I could hear every word perfectly, and how the memories came to my heart! I began to think of my childhood and my mother. She loved God. She had sung that song to me many times. But she died all too soon, otherwise I think my life might have been different.
- "At the end of the song, I could not raise my musket again. It was impossible for me to take aim, though you still stood in the bright moonlight, a perfect target.
- "Then I thought of the Lord. I looked at you and thought, 'The Lord who was able to save that man from certain death must surely be great and mighty.' My arm dropped to my side and I cannot tell you all the things I thought at that time. My heart was smitten, but I didn't know what to do.
- "Just now, when you were about to sing and stood quietly as if praying, I recognized you. I've wandered far and wide, since that other occasion. I have never found that Shepherd. Please help me now find a cure for my sick soul."
- Deeply moved, Mr. Sankey threw his arms about the man who had been his enemy, and who came very close to killing him.
- That Christmas Eve night way back in 1876, that man found peace with God.