



Gracestoration

# Update

"Restoring people in God's grace and making disciples"

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## ON EARTH -- PEACE???

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace..."* (Luke 2:14).

What did God have in mind when the angels announced to the shepherds about the Messiah's birth declaring "**Peace on earth?**" There was little or no peace in Israel at that time. Israel, and much of the rest of the known world, was under the oppressive rule of the Romans. Bethlehem, due to the crowds registering for the census, was far from peaceful.

The shepherds were in charge of the flocks of sheep that were bred and raised for the temple sacrifices. The angels told them that in the birthplace of King David, Israel's shepherd king, the Lamb of God was born. These shepherds were experts regarding sacrificial lambs. Therefore, God chose them to authenticate and declare to the Jews the birth of the Lamb of God. "When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds... The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them" (Lk. 2:17-18, 20).

Our idyllic picture of the shepherds kneeling before the manger in the stable appears very peaceful, but the stable was unsanitary, dirty and

smelly. Joseph probably had to work hard and fast to make Mary as comfortable as possible as she delivered Baby Jesus. The shepherds heralding the news arrested curiosity, but not **peace** nor an attitude of **peace** to the hearers.

### Prediction of Conflict

On the eighth day, when Joseph and Mary came to the temple to present Baby Jesus to His Father, Simeon took Jesus into his arms and blessed Him (Lk. 2:25-35). His parting prophetic words in verses 34-35 spoke of conflict, not **peace**. "And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'"

### First Fulfillment of Conflict

Later King Herod, when the Magi failed to return to him, ordered that all of the male children from two years old and under in and around Bethlehem be killed. Joseph, Mary and the baby had to flee to Egypt for safety until Herod died. Upon their return, Joseph, again being warned by God in a dream, took his family to Nazareth in Galilee for fear of Herod's successor, Arcelaus (Matt. 2:22).

### Jesus Affirms Prediction

Jesus Himself later declared that He did not come to bring **peace** on the earth, but a sword. "Do not think



*that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS. HOUSEHOLD" (MATT. 10:34-36).*

Jesus again said, "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes" (Matt. 24:6-7).

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### Conflict Everywhere

Today, almost 2000 years later, hardly a place exists upon this earth where there is **peace**. Listening to

the conversations of men and women around the world, invariably the cry for **peace** is heard. It comes as the desire for resolution of conflict increases. The conflict may be between individuals, nations and ideologies. Or, it may be due to war, terrorism, oppression or victimization. Continual unrest and very little **peace** describe our world today.

### God Cannot Lie

What did God really mean when He spoke to the shepherds that glorious night of Jesus' birth? Look again at the angels' statement, "**Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.**" The emphasis is upon **peace among men with whom He is pleased** -- not upon **peace** on the earth.

### With Whom Is He Well Pleased?

He is pleased with those who by faith have been reconciled to Him. "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them*" (2 Cor. 5:19). *For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made **peace** through the blood of His cross: through Him, I say whether things on earth or things in heaven*" (Col. 1:19-20).

In Jesus' prayer to His Father, He identifies His desire for continued relationship with those He has reconciled. "*The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world"* (Jn. 17: 22-24).

### Peace in The Midst of Conflict

Jesus acknowledged that there will be tribulations, but as He overcame, so also may we, "*These things I have spoken to you, so that **in Me** you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*" (Jn. 16:33).

Jesus promises us who believe **His true peace**, "***Peace** I leave with you; **My peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful*" (Jn. 14:27).

### Our God is a God of Peace

"*Now the God of **peace**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen*" (Heb. 13:20-21).

Our Great Shepherd does not abandon us when our circumstances seem to turn against us. His promise still stands as when He commissioned His disciples, "***Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age***" (Matt. 28:20).

Until He returns for His own, may you enjoy **His peace** during your earthly sojourn--regardless of the conflict or circumstances you may face today. †

**Mark your calendars for our annual Memorial Day Weekend Retreat at majestic Spring Canyon Conference Center in Buena Vista, Colorado. The dates are May 28-31, 2004. More details will follow in our spring UPDATE. We are looking forward to your participation with us in 2004!**

### FAMILY UPDATE – 2003

We are grateful that our children and families are doing well and growing in the grace of God.

**Deanna** and Jim Finley, Laura (14), Sarah (12), Rebecca (10); Delavan, WI

**Denise** and Kirk Perkins, married November 15, 2003, Bobbie Jo (10), Mike Perkins (10); Janesville, WI

**Deedra** Bingham, Centennial, CO

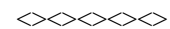
**Lori** and Vince Burke, Kelly (20), Tami (17), Vincent (14), Julie (12); Manila, Philippines

**Sheri** and Kevin Robery, Tara (18), Joshua (16), Shara (14); Park Ridge, IL

**John** and Rose Connor, John (18), Katie (16), Bobby (14), Shannon (7), Bethany (5); Boca Raton, FL

**Patti** and Mark Bogner, Mark (10), Charissa (8), Matthew (6), Connor (4), Jaclynne, 5 months; Centennial, CO

Write us or email us if you desire any of our families' addresses.



**I know of a name, a beautiful name,**

**That angels bro't down to earth;  
They whispered it low, one night long ago,**

**To a maiden of lowly birth.**

### Chorus:

**That beautiful name, that beautiful name**

**From sin has power to free us!**

**That beautiful name, that wonderful name,**

**That matchless name is JESUS!**

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