

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

Vol. # 771220 • December 2020 • www.bridgesforpeace.com



Peace

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AS I WAS PRAYING about what to write in this teaching letter, I felt the Lord impress on my heart one word: peace. Songs began to flow into my mind. “When peace like a river...” “Peace, peace, wonderful peace...” “*Shalom aleichem...*” “*Shabbat shalom...*” “All we are saying, is give peace a chance...” Christian songs, Jewish songs and secular songs. The world longs for peace.

In all the years I have lived in Israel, I have never met an Israeli who didn't long for peace. Some were on the left politically, and some were on the right. They disagreed on how to achieve peace and what real peace looks like, but bottom line, they all desire peace. In each generation as their young people put on the uniforms of war and pick up weapons to fight the enemy, their hope is that the next generation will have peace. The Middle East struggle could end today if Israel's enemies would lay down their weapons of war, reaching out a hand of true friendship. Prime Minister Golda Meir (Israeli prime minister from 1969 to 1974) famously said, “Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.”

In Israel, the past few months have seemed amazing as one Muslim nation after another made peace with Israel. First came the United Arab Emirates, then Bahrain, followed by Sudan. There are indications that others will follow. It is of note that these peace agreements did not require Israel to trade land for peace. As Prime Minister Netanyahu and others have noted, this is peace for peace. The peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt have been cold peace. Already we see that these new peace deals are different—we are seeing a warm peace. Direct flights have been instituted between Israel and former enemy states, Israeli businesspeople are engaging their new allies in mutually beneficial business deals, and tourism is expected to follow quickly. Israelis have rejoiced. Some Christians have rejoiced with them, while others have suggested that this is the false peace of the Antichrist and theorized that it could be Daniel's prophesied seven-year treaty. What should our response be?

What Does the Bible Say about Peace?

Israel's prophets talk of a time without war. Both Isaiah and Micah speak nearly identical words (Mic. 4:3 and Isa. 2:4):

“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” (Isa. 2:4).



In the heart of Jerusalem, a monument has been erected with this Scripture inscribed in the stone. Weapons of war go in one side and farming tools out the other. This is widely understood as a messianic prophecy.

Conversely, the prophets also speak of false peace. Israel's leaders and prophets in various times sought to appease or encourage the people by proclaiming peace when there was no peace (Jer. 6:14, 8:11 and Ezek. 13:16). In the Nelson Study Bible notes for Jeremiah 6:14, it says, "The religious leaders sought to comfort the people with a message of hope and peace. But such words were not the word of God. Peace describes the wholeness of life, the safety, security and tranquility of heart and mind that come from living by faith according to God's word."

In more recent historical times, the UK's then-Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler and negotiated the transfer of Sudetenland to Hitler in exchange for the promise of peace. Hitler even signed a non-aggression pact between Britain and Germany. When Chamberlain returned home, he proclaimed: "Peace for our time." Of course, history has shown us that this was not real peace. It was appeasement.

The apostle Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord coming like a thief in the night when they are saying, "*Peace and safety!*" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Many Christians wrote to us asking for our thoughts. Is this real peace, or is this the false peace talked about in the Bible?

Peace—A Gift from God

Peace is a good thing and something for us to seek after. King David wrote, "*Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it*" (Ps. 34:14). The apostle Peter quotes these words of David in 1 Peter 3:11.

In Israel, *shalom* (peace) is a greeting that incorporates a blessing. In essence, instead of saying hello, we are saying "I hope you have peace." In the Epistles, Peter, Paul and John used the words "grace and peace" as a blessing. When the angels announced Jesus' (Yeshua's) birth to the shepherds, a multitude of angels praised God and said, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*" (Luke 2:14).





There are many biblical references to God granting peace and being a God of peace.

“The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace” (Ps. 29:11).

“I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Ps. 4:8).

In Corinthians we read, *“God is not the author of confusion but of peace...” (1 Cor. 14:33).*

In Philippians, we are urged: *“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” (4:6–7).*

I believe that peace is a blessing God wants for His people.

Satan Counterfeits

The Bible says that *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above; and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).* For every good thing that God creates, Satan makes a counterfeit or perverts the good. God created love; Satan perverted it to lust. God created truth; and Satan dilutes it by saying: “We all have our truths” or “There is no absolute truth.” God created faith, and Satan caused doubt. God promises hope, and Satan sponsors fear and despair. God’s ultimate messianic Kingdom will be marked by peace and a lack of war. Satan’s promises of peace are not genuine and will not last. How do you discern if something is counterfeit? You compare it to the real thing. That might sound rather easy, but actually it can be difficult. The aim of counterfeiters is to deceive by being as close to the real thing as possible.

End-Time Theories

My father, Dr. David Allen Lewis, specialized in the study of end-time Bible prophecy (eschatology). After years of hearing him teach and hearing him respond to questions, I realized that there are strong opinions within the Christian world, and people can be very dogmatic about issues that other sincere Christians view in a totally different manner. I have the conviction that part of our beliefs about future prophetic events rely on theories, because it isn't simply, clearly defined in Scripture. I advise our staff to not be dogmatic about theories. On non-salvation issues, we should learn to disagree in a loving manner. The main thing is to love and worship God, to study the Bible, follow the example of Jesus (Yeshua) and the disciples and to trust the future to God.

Many—but not all—Christians will agree with the following short synopsis of Christian thought on the false peace in the end times. Most would also find some point they don't agree with.

In the end times, the Antichrist (or anti-Messiah) will arise as a man of peace and make a seven-year peace treaty with many (Dan. 9:27). That peace is revealed as false after three and a half years. At that time, he will set himself up in the Temple to be worshiped and the Temple will be desecrated. Jesus, in speaking to His disciples about end-time events, said, *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand) ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains’”* (Matt. 24:15–16). The holy place is the Temple. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled historically when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple in 164 BC. Nearly 200 years later, Jesus referenced this passage as a future event. So, we understand that it will happen twice, the second time by the archenemy of God called the Man of Sin or the Antichrist. The period of tribulation which follows will be of limited duration. The peace will not endure; it is a false peace.

One of the difficulties we have today concerns discerning the times. Many are asking: is the current peace plan part of the seven-year peace treaty talked about in Daniel and by Jesus? If so, what does that say about those involved in the process? Should we rejoice in the peace deals as genuine, or should we call them false peace?



At the present time, we just don't know. We do know that there is no Temple today. It is impossible for the Man of Sin to desecrate something that doesn't exist. If the words of Jesus are understood literally, then the Temple will be rebuilt in the future and then desecrated.

Building in Israel takes time. Getting a building permit is a major endeavor. Imagine the red tape and difficulty involved in building on a major biblical site. The archaeologists have to examine the site and approve the permit. Then imagine that the site is one of the most contested pieces of real estate in the world. If you can manage to pass those hurdles, construction in this part of the

world is not easy or fast. Everything is made with concrete, stone and steel rebar, and requires extensive foundational work. A major building takes years to complete. No such work has started, and while there is a hope in the heart of many Jewish people to once again build the Temple, we have not heard of any official plans to do so. In fact, to the contrary, the government of Israel stays away from the topic, understanding that World War III could erupt over such an endeavor.

Our Response

The Bible says that we should bless Israel and the Jewish people. The apostle Paul said: *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”* (Rom. 12:15). We

have wept with Israeli parents whose sons have died defending the nation of Israel. We have seen the pain, the sorrow and the cost paid by thousands of families in Israel. Israeli parents spend the years their children are in the army with bated breath—hoping and praying that their son or daughter will be safe. Now they are rejoicing over peace prospects. I will rejoice with them. I don't know how long the peace will last, but I will rejoice in times of peace and quiet.

As we move into the future, we will pray for clear understanding of the times and seasons. We will study the Scriptures, as we ask the Lord for revelation and direction for how we should act in the midst of the present and the future. We will love, bless and rejoice with the nation of Israel. Jesus (Yeshua) told us to be ready, alert, sober and to reach out in love to those in need (Matt. 24 and 25). As Jesus said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16).

Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God's chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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