

Theological Background

1/2

The Hebrew term for peace, 'shalom', has a deep and complex meaning, encompassing much more than simply the absence of hostility or war.

Shalom includes ideas of healing and health, wholeness and well-being. It means harmony, stability and security within a community. It refers to relationships based on truth and righteousness, where people flourish because they are nurtured.

The Biblical picture of the age to come is one of Shalom. 'Swords will be beaten into ploughshares' ... 'the wolf shall live with the lamb... no-one shall hurt or destroy...' (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-9). Traditional enemies will live together contentedly and the people will be governed with wisdom, understanding and justice.

In Jesus' message, peace is an almost tangible element. It is his gift to his disciples. Paul describes God as the God of peace, the Christian message is called the 'gospel of peace' and peace is one of the 'fruits of the Spirit'.

It seems that humankind has to learn and re-learn the message of peace. It does not come easily or automatically. We constantly fall back into hostility and suspicion. Peter, quoting the Psalms, says we must 'seek peace and pursue it' (1 Peter 3:11). Jesus blesses those who are 'peacemakers' and calls them 'sons of God'.

It is noteworthy how often the word peace is used in parallel with the word 'righteousness'. Peace cannot come by simply wishing it to be the case. Peace is founded on righteousness and justice.

Christians are called to share in Christ's work of restoring wholeness. The Christian vision in this respect is far-reaching and challenging: harmony between people, harmony between people and God, and harmony between humans and the whole created order.

Theological Background

2/2

Biblical References

Psalm 34:14

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Isaiah 2:4

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Isaiah 32:17-18

The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.

Isaiah 48:17-18

This is what the LORD says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.'

Matthew 5:19

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.'

John 14:27

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.