

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

October 17, 2015

Chris Katulka, Pray For the Peace of Jerusalem

A few days ago I had the privilege to speak to students at Lancaster Bible College on their Day of Prayer. I wanted to challenge the students to pray for peace on earth, but through a unique verse found in Ps 122:6, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Pretty soon it won't be long until we start to hear those age old Christmas songs we've all sung since we were little. Songs like: Silent Night, or Hark the Herald Angels Sing, O Little Town of Bethlehem. These songs are classic Christmas songs that all have a common phrase in them... "Peace on Earth"... each of these extremely famous Christmas songs sing about Jesus, the King of Israel being born, and now that he's come there is peace on earth.

Hark! the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

When Charles Wesley, the brother of the famous John Wesley the founder of the Methodist movement, wrote this hymn his theology is spot on... we should all be exalting the birth of Jesus the King of Israel, who through His death and resurrection now stands at the right hand of the Father reconciling sinners to God... bringing peace between God and man... but what about this idea of peace on earth. I was reading a little commentary on this verse in the hymn and

one person wrote... “It means that with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, peace was restored to Earth.”

Hmmm...

That just doesn't sound right to me. I know that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but how do we reconcile the coming of Jesus and this idea that is taught about through song... that NOW there is peace on earth. I ask this because there isn't peace on earth, and from what I can gather the world was in the past and is today a place that desperately longing for peace. You know it doesn't matter whether you are religious, spiritual or secular... isn't it interesting that we all have the same longing for peace.

Look you don't have to go too far to find a lack of peace or shalom in the world... just a few weeks ago in Oregon another college campus became a target for a young killer who took the lives of 9 people, and injured others. Or... you just simply have scroll through headlines to find that more than 230,000 Syrians have been killed in their civil war. And you'd seriously have to have your head in the sand to have not heard about ISIS... the Islamic State that is taking over large areas of land in Syria and Iraq... who behead Christians for not abandoning their faith, who throw gays off the top of buildings that are 8-9 stories high, and who are attracting more and more followers from around the world to their evilness. Is this really the peace on earth that was supposed to come with the birth of Christ?

Where is the peace on earth our favorite Christmas carols sing about... where is the Peace on Earth/Goodwill toward men we all sing about when we remember the birth of our savior.

I believe the famous Christmas carol Do You Hear What I Hear is a little more accurate in evaluating Peace on Earth... instead of admitting that there is peace today... the carol, written in the 60's says,

“Said the king to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say
Pray for peace people everywhere”

Notice the drastic shift that happens between these two Christmas carols... the first written in the 18th century... making the statement that as a result of Christ's birth there is now peace on earth... the second written in the early 1960's after seeing WWI and WWII... this particular carol was written during the Cold War during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Pray for peace people everywhere... this whole world is experiencing ruptured shalom.

I want to take you to a chapter that I think is applicable to our theme for the day. I want to take you to the book of Psalms... a really a book in the Bible of prayers... chapter 122.

Where King David begs its readers to “Pray for the “Peace of Jerusalem”... now you might be thinking... I thought we were praying for peace on earth, I thought we were praying more globally than locally... well I hope to show you that through this verse... praying for the peace of Jerusalem is praying for peace on earth.

This is a Psalm of Ascent... an Aliyah Psalm... a Psalm that would have been sung as Jewish worshipers and pilgrims would have been making their way up to Jerusalem... in order to worship at the Temple.

JERUSALEM: THE PEACE OF GOD’S PRESENCE (Ps. 122:1-2)

I love the way David begins this Psalm. There is pure joy in the thought of going to Temple... there is pure joy in knowing that he and others would be standing within the gates of Jerusalem. This joy definitely brought a peace to those traveling to worship God... But the real reason David and those worshipping with him were excited to be in Jerusalem and in the Temple was because that’s where the presence of God dwelled. David knew the creator of heaven and earth resided there... and in His presence is peace.

And really what you can see is David’s attitude as he’s entering into Jerusalem... that David had a true sense of peace within him because he knew the presence of God was there.

Jerusalem becomes the focal point because it’s from there God will administer peace globally.

JERUSALEM: THE WELLSPRING OF PEACE! (Ps. 122:6-9)

And now here is our verse... here is what we've been waiting for... now that we know and understand the significance of this little city... both locally and globally we can now see why David would say... "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem". This peace both focus' on international peace with Israel... that nations and countries would remain at peace with the Jewish State... but also internally, that there would remain peace between the people of Israel.

See when we pray for the peace of Jerusalem you almost have to think of it like this... like when we say... pray for Washington, DC. You're not simply praying for the District of Columbia, this little tiny area in the US on the East Coast... your prayer is great than that... you're praying for the leaders in Washington DC who create policy and laws and make decisions that affect every U.S. citizen. So by praying for God's guidance in Washington DC you are essentially for the entire country... it the capital of our nation!

The same can be said of Jerusalem... the prophets envisioned a day when Jerusalem would be the capital of every nation... listen to Micah 4:1-2 says

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
and many nations shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

See Micah had a vision that not only would the tribes come to Jerusalem, the city of Peace” to find justice, righteousness, and peace... but that all nations would make their way to the city of peace... that Jerusalem would sit on the highest mount and that many nations will say... “come, let us go up to the house of the Lord”.

This prophetic imagery that Jerusalem would stand as a city of peace in the midst of a world that is longing for it. But it can only come when the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, returns and sits on His throne to administer true justice and righteousness in the world.

So my friends, when we are praying for the peace of Jerusalem... we are praying that the King of Israel, the Savior of the World, the Messiah Jesus come... I love the way the bible ends in Revelation 22:20.

“Come, Lord Jesus!”

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