

God the Peacemaker

Introduction:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Matthew 5.9)

"Closer to the central element in Jesus' work and that of his disciples is the term of self-designation he suggests for his disciples: "child of peace" (Luke 10:6). The Jewish custom of the time was to designate persons in accordance with their behavior (sons of light, sons of darkness, sons of Beliar, sons of righteousness). Given the central place peace holds in Judaism one would expect 1st-century Jews to designate peace-loving people as "children of peace." [ABD]

I. The Problem with "Rest"

A. Static – a description more of a 'state'

B. Self-oriented – "I am at peace", "my nation is a peace" (who knows/cares what's going on elsewhere...)

C. Absence of outside-the-self enemies doesn't mean I/we are *healthy*

D. The Anesthesia Problem

1. *Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, 12 then **watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord** who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [Deut 6.10ff; NASB]*
2. *Beware lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 **lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, 14 then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the Lord** your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [Deut 8.11ff; NASB]*

II. Biblical Peace (Shalom) versus Greek/English "Peace"

A. The Hebrew word for peace: *Shalom*

B. The Greek word for peace (outside the bible): *eirene*¹

C. The Greek work for peace (inside the bible): *eirene* (2)

III. *Biblical Peace/Shalom – Description*

A. Basic Concept and Nuance

1. “The concept of peace in the OT is most often represented by the Hebrew root *šlm* and its derivatives. The noun *šālôm*, one of the most significant theological terms in Scripture, has a wide semantic range stressing various nuances of its basic meaning: **totality or completeness**. These nuances include **fulfillment, completion, maturity, soundness, wholeness (both individual and communal), community, harmony, tranquility, security, well-being, welfare, friendship, agreement, success, and prosperity**. [Revised ISBE, Vol. 3, Page 732].
2. “The noun *shalom* often denotes material well-being, sufficiency, prosperity or the inner sense of satisfaction.” [DictOTPent]

B. Beyond “Rest” to “Harmony” and “Restoration of Harmony”

1. “Isa 9:5 should be seen also in the light of Isa 11:1–5, where the figure is described who shall inaugurate **the peaceable kingdom in which lion and lamb shall dwell together**, while “they shall not hunt or destroy in all my holy mountain” (Isa 11:9). This image of peace as an eschatological event manifests the sense of completion inherent in the idea of peace. Von Rad writes that the anointed one in Isaiah will establish a “paradise peace . . . **to bring order over into the world of nature and to resolve its conflicts**” (ROTT, 2:170). Peace is, in fact, the order of creation. The theological implications are clear enough. **Creation is depicted as an act of divine completion**. “On the sixth day God completed all the work he had been doing” (Gen 2:2). “And God saw all that he had made and it was very good” (Gen 1:31). [ABD]
2. “**Harmony between God and His creatures (Isa. 27:5) and among His creatures themselves (1 S. 16:4f; Job 5:23; Zec. 6:13) is at the heart of the OT emphasis on peace as community**. Such **community results when people treat one another with goodwill and love**, but no peace is possible where there is malice (cf. Gen. 37:4; 2 S. 3:21–23; 17:3; 1 K. 2:13; 2 K. 9:17–22, 31; Ps. 120:6f; Cant. 8:10; Jer. 9:8 [MT 7]). When a community is at peace its members can experience safety and prosperity (Isa. 26:3), although a superficial peace can lead to a false sense of security and contentment (2 K. 20:19 par Isa. 39:8; 1 Ch. 4:40; Job 12:6; 21:13). [Revised ISBE, Vol. 3, Page 732].

C. Involves Growth and Development

1. *He makes **peace** in your borders; He satisfies you with the **finest of the wheat**.* [Psalm 147:14]
2. *‘For there will be **peace for the seed**: the vine will **yield its fruit**, the land will **yield its produce**, and the **heavens will give their dew**; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things.* [Zechariah 8:12]

D. Healing/Health – personal and social

1. “For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely. 14 “And they have **healed** the brokenness of My people **superficially**, Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace. [Jer 6.13ff; NASB]...From the prophet even to the priest Everyone practices deceit. “And they **heal** the **brokenness** of the daughter of My people **superficially**, Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace. [Jer 8.10; NASB]. “The biblical peacemaker is therefore physician as well as prophet.” [DictBibImagery]
2. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine indignation; There is **no health** in my bones because of my sin.* [Psalm 38:3]
3. *Creating the praise of the lips. **Peace**, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,” Says the Lord, “and I will **heal** him.”* [Isaiah 57:19]
4. *Hast Thou completely rejected Judah? Or hast Thou loathed Zion? Why hast Thou stricken us so that we are beyond **healing**? We waited for **peace**, but nothing good came; And for a time of **healing**, but behold, terror!* [Jeremiah 14:19]
5. *‘Behold, I will bring to it **health and healing**, and I will **heal** them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of **peace** and truth.* [Jeremiah 33:6]
6. “Shalom also describes **friendly relations between people**” [DictOTPent]
7. “The Hebrew term for peace means “well-being” (e.g., Num 25:12; Ps 38:3; 73:3; Jer 14:13; cf. P. B. Yoder). It covers **health**, prosperity, security, friendship and salvation. It is the desired experience of individuals, families and Israel as a nation. It is present because of God’s own presence and his favor toward his people. The Greek term *eirēnē* in classical Greek literature means little more than absence of war. In the NT, however, it incorporates the breadth of meaning conveyed by the Hebrew *šālôm*...This can be sensed in passages like Mark 5:24–34. Verse 29 reports **the physical healing of a socially and religiously unclean woman**. Jesus, not content to provide **mere** physical relief, exposes the woman’s secrecy, publicly discloses her faith and her healing, and thus effectively **restores her to community and wholeness**. Jesus “saves” her (5:34). His final “Go in peace” is more than a parting blessing. It is the bestowal of *šālôm*, the gift Jesus gives whenever he ministers to needy people. [DictJG]

E. Repayment, Recompense, Re-distribution

1. *The days of punishment have come, The days of **retribution** have come; Let Israel know this!* [Hos 9:7]
2. “All but one occurrence of the verb in the Pentateuch are in the *piel*, which invariably denotes the idea of **repayment, retribution**... This indicates that an **essential ingredient for peace is the payment of recompense** for wrongs with the two parties being reconciled.” [DictOTPent]
3. “The noun *shalom* often denotes material well-being, sufficiency, prosperity or the inner sense of satisfaction...In summary, peace is more than the somewhat bland definition of ‘wholeness’ or ‘totality.’ It is more than absence of warfare and hostility. It is a state of **positive friendship** and security between two parties, **often the result of restitution and reconciliation**.” [DictOTPent]

F. Much more ‘relational’ and ‘interpersonal’ than ‘Rest’

1. *Even my **close friend**, in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.*” [Psalm 41:9]
2. *‘Then behold, all of the women who have been left in the palace of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women will say, “Your **close friends** Have misled and overpowered you; While your feet were sunk in the mire, They turned back.”* [Jeremiah 38:22]

G. Opposites include chaos, harm, calamity

1. *‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and **not for calamity** to give you a future and a hope.* [Jeremiah 29:11]
2. *Then the officials said to the king, “Now let this man be put to death, inasmuch as he is discouraging the men of war who are left in this city and all the people, by speaking such words to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of this people, but rather their **harm**.”* [Jeremiah 38:4]
3. *“for God is a God not of **disorder** but of peace.”* [1 Cor 14:33]

IV. The Wider View

A. The absolutely central message of the Gospel!

1. *Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. 36 **You know the message God sent** to the people of Israel, **telling the good news of peace** through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around **doing good** and **healing** all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.* [Act 10:34ff; NIV]
2. *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to **reconcile** to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by **making peace** through his blood, shed on the cross.* [Col 1.19f; NIV]
3. *For **He Himself is our peace**, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, **thus establishing peace**, 16 and might **reconcile** them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and **preached peace** to you who were far away, and **peace** to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.* [Eph 2.14ff; NASB]

4. “Finally, the formula: “he gave the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of All,” (Acts 10:36) indicates that the author of Luke-Acts **saw the word “peace” as a capsule for that which the good news about Christ contains**. It is incorrect to restrict the meaning to peace between God and humans. Especially in this context of the gentile mission—where the universality of God’s love and acceptance is being proclaimed—it is **not irrelevant that one of the greatest human divisions of ancient society, that between Jew and gentile**, is described as overcome. [ABD]
5. The *‘feet of the gospel of PEACE’*—Isaiah 52.7; Romans 10.15, and Ephesians 6.15

B. Peace is UNIQUELY important to the Judeo-Christian God

1. “We find here the surprising fact that the formula, **“the God of Peace”** if not a Pauline construct, was so attractive to him that **he avails himself of it more frequently than any other ancient writer. It is known to appear in only one other ancient writer prior to Paul.** [ABD]
2. “The imperative “be at peace among yourselves” occurs three times in the Pauline letters: once in Romans urging his readers to make peace with all people (12:18) and twice urging unanimity among the believers (1 Thess 5:13; 2 Cor 13:11). These imperatives, **without parallel in Greek and Roman literature**, have the same impact as the imperatives to “pursue the things that pertain to peace” (Rom 14:19); “send him (Timothy) on ahead in peace” (1 Cor 16:11) and “Take heed to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). ..The cumulative impression of these texts is that for the early Christian community peace had a very high priority [ABD]

C. Peace is linked closely to Righteousness – they “feed” each other

1. *Mark the **blameless man**, and behold the **upright**; For the **man of peace** will have a posterity.* [Psalm 37:37]
2. *And the **work of righteousness will be peace**, And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.* [Isaiah 32:17]
3. ***Peacemakers** who sow in peace raise a **harvest of righteousness**.* [Jas 3.18 NIV]
4. *“If only you had **paid attention to My commandments!** Then your **well-being would have been like a river**, And your **righteousness** like the waves of the sea.* [Isaiah 48:18]... *For thus says the Lord, “Behold, I extend **peace** to her like a **river** [66.12]*
5. “In classical Greek *eirēnē* had a primarily negative force; but by way of the lxx, the word in the NT has the full content of the OT *šālôm*, and nearly always carries a spiritual connotation. The breadth of its meaning is especially apparent from **its linking with such keywords** as grace (Rom. 1:7, etc.), life (Rom. 8:6), **righteousness** (Rom. 14:17), and from its use in benedictions such as 1 Thes. 5:23 and Heb. 13:20f. (cf. 2 Pet. 3:14). [New Bible Dictionary]

D. Peace is from God, and mediated through Jesus

1. Isaiah 53.5:
 - a. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that **made us whole**, and by his bruises we are healed.* (NRSV)
 - b. *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us **peace** was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.* (NIV)
2. “We may perhaps include in this section a note about the expression “the God of peace” which is particularly familiar through the concluding salutation in Romans 15:33 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. **The more widely used form of the idea “peace from (apo) God” occurs in the opening greetings in all Paul’s letters. It appears that the quality which God can impart has become an ascription to him.** The form “God of peace” is suggestive because it points to the absence of conflict in God and his solicitude for his people’s welfare (*šālôm*). Indeed 1 Corinthians 14:33 brings this out explicitly—“God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.” **Peace therefore describes an attitude of God as well as a quality which he imparts. Peace cannot be bestowed “from God” unless it is an integral part of his nature.** [DictPaulLetters]
3. “Because of the world’s chaos through man’s sin, and because **peace comes only as God’s gift, the Messianic hope was of an age of peace** (Is. 2:2-4; 11:1-9; Hg. 2:7-9), **or of the advent of the Prince of peace** (Is. 9:6f.; cf. Je. 33:15f.; Ezk. 34:23ff.; Mi. 5:5; Zc. 9:9f.). The NT shows the fulfilment of this hope. In **Christ** peace has **come** (Lk. 1:79; 2:14, 29f.). **By him it is bestowed** (Mk. 5:34; Lk. 7:50; Jn. 20:19, 21, 26), and his disciples are its messengers (Lk. 10:5f.; Acts 10:36). [New Bible Dictionary]
4. “**As the source of all peace, God is frequently referred to in the epistles as the “God of peace”** (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; He. 13:20; cf. also 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; 2 Thess. 3:16). **Peace is included among the gifts of the Holy Spirit** to believers (Rom. 8:6; 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 5:22). [Revised ISBE, Vol. 3, Page 732].

E. *Shalom* was part of the Messianic expectation

1. *And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:*

*68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— 71 Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 74 To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. 76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; 77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, 78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, 79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, **To guide our feet into the way of peace.**” (Luke 1.68ff; NASB)*
2. “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to men on whom his favor rests.*” (Lk 2.14)

3. “The songs of Zechariah (Lk. 1:68–79), the Gloria in *Excelsis Deo* (2:14), and the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29–32) all demonstrate that **peace in its full dimensions is the fulfillment of the messianic expectations of God’s people** (e.g., 1:79; 2:14, 29; cf. 19:18; Isa. 9:6f [MT 5f]). Peace is **likewise** an essential part of the eschatological **hope of Christians** (Rom. 2:9f; cf. 14:17; 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:23).[Revised ISBE, Vol. 3, Page 733].

4. “Peace was **central to the eschatological expectations** of the OT prophets. **The messianic child would be a “Prince of Peace”** (Is 9:6). He was expected to come in peace, to end warfare and to proclaim peace throughout the land (Zech 9:9–12). He would reunite families (Mal 4:6); he would decimate Israel’s enemies in order to bring lasting peace to Jerusalem (meaning “city of peace”) (cf. Is 66:10–16). With his first coming, Jesus fulfilled some of these expectations... Through his caring ministry, his miraculous works, his gift of salvation, his offer of acceptance and community to outsiders, Jesus gave a foretaste of that eschatological well-being. Yet, instead of reuniting families, he divided them (Lk 12:51–53). Instead of destroying Israel’s national enemies, he rejected the revolutionary option, preached non-violence (Mt 5:38–48) and suffered a violent death at the hands of enemies he loved and forgave (Lk 23:34). **Jesus planted the seeds of the “Kingdom of Peace.” Its harvest awaits his Second Coming.** [DictJG]

V. *Recap*

1. Greek extra-biblical peace was absence of conflict.
2. Biblical *Rest* was absence of distractions/irritants (including enemies).
3. Biblical *Rest* included ‘discretionary time’, to reflect on the Big Picture and to pursue God’s will for one’s life.
4. Biblical *Rest*, however, did not address the ‘enemy who is us’.
5. Biblical **peace** (*shalom* in the OT), included *Rest*, but went beyond it to health, harmony, welfare, social cohesion and warmth, and holistic prosperity.
6. Biblical *Peace* was NOT ‘inactive’ but rather filled with positive movements of growth, development, and forging new bonds with community.
7. It also required remedial movements of healing, recompense, reconciliation.
8. Biblical *Shalom* comes from God, characterizes God, and is His goal in the redemptive dance—God is the ultimate PeaceMaker (Reconciler).
9. This emphasis on *Peace* and Peace-making was **UNIQUE** in the ancient world—the True God had manifested Himself!
10. *Shalom* is closely related to Righteousness (and truth).
11. Universal *Shalom* was ‘hard-fought’, the effort and cost being borne by Jesus the Messiah.
12. You can have Rest-without-Peace (e.g., a comfortable, self-absorbed existence) and Peace-without-Rest (e.g., God’s blessing in the midst of warring enemies), but the ultimate goal in the New Future is to have *both*.

VI. *To do's (smile):*

A. Full *shalom* requires activity—it is to be “pursued”

1. “*Love your enemies...do good to those who mistreat you...*” (Jesus, Paul, Peter...)
2. “*Seek peace and pursue it...*”(Ps 34.14)
3. “**For sinful man there must first be peace with God**, the removal of sin’s enmity through the sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). Then inward peace can follow (Phil. 4:7), unhindered by the world’s strife (Jn. 14:27; 16:33). Peace between man and man is part of the purpose for which Christ died (Eph. 2) and of the Spirit’s work (Gal. 5:22); **but man must also be active to promote it** (Eph. 4:3; Heb. 12:14), not merely as the elimination of discord, but as the harmony and true functioning of the body of Christ (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 14:33). [New Bible Dictionary]
4. “According to Mark the gift of peace is not only to be granted to people as they leave but is also **an action which can be commanded**. ... Mark 9:50c: “Have salt among yourselves and **keep peace with each other**”... What is noteworthy is **the imperative verb which is repeated in later Christian texts. If peace can be commanded it clearly takes effort and not just receptivity to divine gifts.** [ABD]
5. “Among the beatitudes of Jesus the term “peacemaker” is the most **assertive**. All the rest designate a state or an attitude while **this one describes a concrete act.** [ABD]
6. “The **imperative** “be at peace among yourselves” occurs three times in the Pauline letters: once in Romans **urging his readers to make peace with all people** (12:18) and **twice urging** unanimity among the believers (1 Thess 5:13; 2 Cor 13:11). **These imperatives, without parallel in Greek and Roman literature**, have the same impact as the **imperatives** to “pursue the things that pertain to peace” (Rom 14:19); “send him (Timothy) on ahead in peace” (1 Cor 16:11) and “Take heed to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). .. In total there are **eleven imperatives “to seek” or “pursue peace” and several specify to live at peace with all people.** [ABD]

B. Let the Word have its effect on you

- *Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.* (Ps 119.165)

C. Trust the Spirit to produce (and ‘marshal’) His peace for you:

1. “It is no wonder that Paul, in desiring to allay anxiety among Christians, not only exhorts them to commit themselves to God, but also assures them that the peace of God will **garrison** (*phroureō*, i.e., act as a sentry or patrol, to guard the city gates against invading attack) their hearts and minds (Phil 4:7). [DictPaulLetters]
2. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...*” [Gal 5.22]

D. See God’s heart for YOU in all this...

- “*The Lord be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.*” (Ps 35.27)