



Where Is a Peaceable Kingdom?

The American painter, Edward Hicks, tells a story with paint and canvas that Isaiah narrates with words.

Edward Hicks painted at least 100 versions of his image, "The Peaceable Kingdom," between 1820 and the time of his death

in 1849. Hicks, a Quaker preacher, received his inspira-

tion through the word pictures

used by Isaiah in chapter 11. Isaiah pictures the wolf and the lamb, the

leopard and the baby goat, the calf and a young lion, and the cow and the bear

peacefully lying down together. The one

that always brings distaste in our minds is the child putting its hand into a den of vipers.

In our world today, these pictures could never

come to life without harm coming to the child, the lamb,

the baby goat, the calf, and the cow. However, in the kingdom ushered in by the Messiah, these things are all possible. Isaiah 11:1-2

and 10 states, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the

LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of

the fear of the LORD...And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles

seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Isaiah further declares this "root of Jesse" to be the Messiah and that he will be "...the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Isaiah's portrayal of peace can only come true when the Messiah brings peace to the world and returns creation to its original, unblemished perfection. While we can have peace now through Jesus Christ, it is something we struggle to keep in our lives. Because of our flawed world, peace seems fleeting and is definitely not the norm. The idea of peace is elusive and many think they can manufacture it on their own; but true peace is only available through the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Peace that brings us to salvation was the promise of His first advent to the world. Permanent peace will be completed with his second advent for which we wait.

Isaiah and Edward Hicks used animals to picture peace. What would be some instances in our world today that would show what real, unprecedented peace would look like? (This can be familial, political, personal, etc.)

What is Peace?

Peace is one of those words that is sometimes best described by telling what it is not rather than what it is. We all see what the lack of peace in the world brings. Nations war with one another to gain dominance in the world. Families hurt one another because others have hurt them and the cycle continues because no one knows how to stop it. Children are neglected



because their parents are trying to find peace from their guilt in a bottle or in drugs. Elderly parents are hurt or abused because their children place the blame for their own failings on their upbringing. All of these show a lack of peace in those perpetrating the violence.

The Jewish people use a word that encompasses the many and varied meanings of the word peace—Shalom. Shalom is more than just simply peace; it is a complete peace. It is a feeling of contentment, completeness, wholeness, well-being, and harmony. According to *Strong's Concordance*, other meanings of Shalom are health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, the absence of agitation or discord. Shalom comes from the root verb *salam* meaning to be complete, perfect, and full.

There is only one person capable of producing complete peace. He came to us in the form

of a tiny baby and in that coming the angels announced, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:14). He brought peace with Him to give to us. At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit descended like a dove to proclaim Jesus as God's beloved Son. The dove, as a symbol of peace, rested on the person of Jesus Christ.

Because peace rests in and on the person of Jesus, He then has authority, ability, and generosity to give it to us. John 16:33 says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Many struggle to find peace. Families, friends, and neighbors struggle to find peace. Nations struggle to find peace. Fallen creation groans in its struggle to find peace. But, we know that ultimately, we will only find peace as we look to Him to provide it.

Discuss the adjectives used by *Strong's Concordance* to define *Shalom*. Which of these surprises you the most? Which of these have you seen God provide to you most often in your search for His peace?

Describe a time when Christ was generous with His peace in your life.

What does "fallen creation groans in its struggle to find peace" mean? Romans 8:18-25 & Genesis 3:17-19 will help in this discussion.

Different Kinds of Peace

As we think about peace and its meanings, two ways best describe how peace is obtained. If we think about our lives prior to the Holy Spirit taking up residence, we realize the peace we thought we had wasn't real. It was a façade or a front we built around ourselves so others would think we had it all together. However, really, there was no substance to our "peace." Only when we come to peace with God through the person of Jesus Christ as our Savior do we discover what real peace is.

Before we ask Christ to be our Savior, we are at war with God. He wants truth, holiness, and righteousness for us but we want different things. We want what will make us look good to others. We want to be independent of anything that could "control" our lives, never realizing that with no one at the helm, Satan assumes more and more control. On our own, we always want things that will bring destruction.

Nevertheless, when we ask for and receive the peace God gives we have peace from that war; we are at peace with God. This peace calms our soul and makes us open to the Holy Spirit and His ministry in our lives. Romans 5:1-2 states, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

When did you make peace with God? Describe the war in your soul that preceded your salvation.

There are some great truths in Romans 5:1-2. What other precepts do we learn from these two verses?

Once the war is over and our souls are calmed, we begin to find that God places layers of His peace over our lives in such a way that even though we see the turmoil and strife living in a fallen world brings, His peace keeps us quiet and submissive before Him. When our world falls apart, the peace of God keeps us grounded.

**"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know unto God."
—Philippians 4:6-7**

There is a word used in old English that we don't use much anymore. It is the word impute, and means that something is credited or given to us even though we've done nothing to make it happen.

The peace of God is something credited to us without us doing anything to make it happen. Isaiah 26:12 says, "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." He ordains peace for us; we cannot do it on our own.

Several years ago, we went through some trials that could have torn us apart from the inside out. As we watch our family continue to struggle with the lasting effects of that period, I still feel the temptation to fly apart at the seams. However, I know the only reason I haven't is because of the peace God deliberately placed over my heart during that time. I could see the devastation these decisions were going to cause in our children's lives and the brokenness it was causing in our lives. But, I saw it through the lens of God's peace. Was I horrified at what was happening? Yes! Did I struggle with deep depression? Yes! Did I run away and hide when I should've sought solace and counsel from brothers and sisters? Yes! Nevertheless, God's peace was still being placed layer by loving

layer over my soul in such a way that my faith was preserved, and I am emerging still grounded in my faith in Jesus. The peace of God keeps me grounded when I want to lash out in fear of the future because of the problems of the past.

Philippians 4:6-7 addresses the magnitude of this peace of God. We don't understand how the peace of God works; it surpasses our human understanding. God's peace does work, and we can give God the glory for times when His peace soothes, calms, and strengthens our hurting souls.

Describe a time when God layered His peace over you to shield you from hurt caused by trials and/or problems in your life.

“Even So, Come Lord Jesus”

So when can we see this “Peaceable Kingdom”? When will the peace we have with God come to fruition and bring us into eternity? When will the peace of God be layered over us permanently?

As John closes the last book of the Bible and looks to the future, he writes, “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Jesus, when His work was finished on earth the first time, told His disciples He will be coming back. He is the one in this verse saying, “Surely I come quickly.” The Apostle John states emphatically, “Amen” or “Yes, let's do this” in today's vernacular. He then adds a plea that emphasizes his own longing, “Come, Lord Jesus.”


A peaceable kingdom will arrive when He comes to claim His own people for their inheritance. Peace with God guarantees we are His own children; peace of God carries us through the difficult days of waiting.

The song, “Where I Belong,” by Jason Ingram and Jason Roy was copyrighted in 2010, the year that began our years of struggle and trial. The chorus says,

*All I know is I'm not home yet. This is not where I belong.
Take this world and give me Jesus. This is not where I belong.*

Heaven and peace await us. The lion will lie down with the lamb. The calf, the bear, and the kid goat will all learn to get along. This world, where peace does not reign, will pass away. And we will be forever in God's peaceable kingdom.

Describe a time recently when you felt the weight of "waiting for home." What caused you to know that you are not home yet?

How does it feel to know we are God's own people? How does it feel to know our inheritance is waiting for us? 

About the Writer: Joanna Felts serves as the ministries coordinator at Clovis Free Will Baptist Church in Clovis, California where her husband, Dan, pastors. She enjoys writing, learning to paint, reading, and crafts of various kinds. She would rather do laundry than dishes but they may both get left to the last minute while she takes on a new book to read or starts a new (but very amateur) painting.

Questions?

Has reading this issue raised questions about giving your life to God? He desires a personal relationship with you through His Son Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to earth to take the punishment for your sin, so you could live with Him in Heaven someday. But you must accept this gift we call salvation. Just pray to Jesus. Admit your sins and acknowledge Jesus as God's Son who died for your sins and rose again to provide eternal life. Ask Him to cleanse you, and invite His Spirit to live within you. The following Scriptures will help you understand: Romans 10:9-10,13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:2-8, 14; 2 Corinthians 5:17. Confused? Call 877-767-7662 for guidance. We're here to help.