

JESUS THE PROPHET OF PEACE:
THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

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ABSTRACT

People of the the three great Abrahamic religions acknowledge the truth of God has been revealed to Man in the Hebrew Bible. For the Christian, that revelation extends to what the Christian believer knows as the Greek New Testament. One area of agreement among those of different faith traditions is that Jesus was a prophet of God. The fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic office was evidenced in both his earthy life and in the work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent after ascending to heaven. From the beginning of creation recorded in the book of Genesis, God ordained humanity for peace, but the sin of Adam and Eve brought chaos and conflict. All men and women of peace, now look for a restoration of that order through Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet of Peace.

INTRODUCTION

People of the the three great Abrahamic religions acknowledge the the truth of God has been revealed to Man in the Hebrew Bible. For the Christian, that revelation extends to what the Christian believer knows as the Greek New Testament.¹ While those who accept the Scripture as true, do not agree on every matter of theology, there is still hope that certain truths can be accepted. As C. G. Pfander writes,

Therefore, let us set prejudice and bigotry aside, and let us pray to God for help and the light of His guidance; that, as seekers after truth, we may, with sincere heart and diligent care, examine those books, and be able to distinguish truth from error; for this matter is of such importance, that the true inquirer cannot be indifferent about it.²

One area of agreement among those of different faith traditions is that Jesus was a prophet of God.³ That Jesus was a prophet of YHWH is made clear from both the confession of those who heard him teach (Mt. 21:11, 46; Mk. 6:15; 8:28; Lk. 7:16, 39; 24:19; Jn. 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17) and by his own teaching (Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24; 13:33f.).⁴ The fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic office was evidenced in both his earthy life and in the work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent after ascending to heaven. As Cairns observes,

Christ executes the prophetic office immediately—i.e., personally and directly—in His theophanies in the OT; in His incarnation, by His own words and works (Luke 24:19; John 10:37, 38). He executes His prophetic office mediately or through delegates: through the Holy Spirit (1 Peter

¹ C. G. Pfander, *The Mizan Ul Haqq; Or, Balance of Truth*, trans. R. H. Weakley (London: Church Missionary House, 1866), 2.

² *Ibid.*, x.

³ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 135.

⁴ I. H. Marshall, "Jesus Christ, Titles Of," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. by D. R. W. Wood et al., (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 576.

1:10–12; 3:19, 20); and through the Christian ministry, first by inspired apostles and later by teachers and preachers (Ephesians 4:11, 12).⁵

From the beginning of creation recorded in the book of Genesis, God ordained humanity for peace, but the sin of Adam and Eve brought chaos and conflict.⁶ All men and women of peace, now look for a restoration of that order through Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet of Peace.

THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

The Christian Scripture is comprised of both the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the Christian writing called the New Testament. This book of God is the authoritative source for the study of peace as “the master-blessing, the grand issue both of the Law and of the Gospel to mankind.”⁷ Peace takes a prominent place in the Scripture, James Hastings argues, and therefore, “is great enough to be treated as one of the great Christian doctrines.”⁸ To begin this short survey, the following sections will look at the most significant Hebrew and Greek terms for “peace.” First, a look at the Hebrew text.

The Hebrew Text

While there are a several Hebrew words translated into English as “peace,” the most common word is shalom (שָׁלוֹם). The image below shows the various translations of shalom in the English Standard Version.

⁵ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 348.

⁶ Joseph P. Healey, “Peace: Old Testament,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

⁷ James Hastings, *The Christian Doctrine of Peace* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922), 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

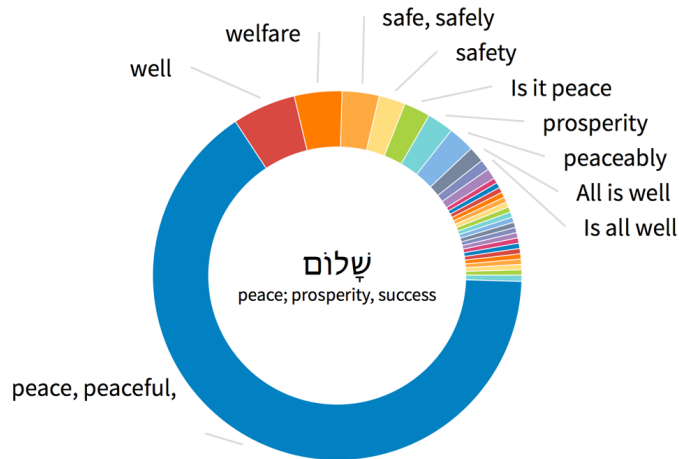


Image 1: The Hebrew שָׁלוֹם (shalom) translated as various English words from the Old Testament

The root of the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם (shalom) “is a common Semitic root with the meaning “peace” in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic.”⁹ Considering the variety of uses, שָׁלוֹם often carries with it the sense of friendly relations (see Judg 4:17; Isa 7:14; 1 Kgs 5:4, 26; 22:45). victory (Judg 8:9; 2 Sam 19:25, 31; 1 Kgs 22:27–28; Jer 43:12). and when paired with the term for prosperity (Mic 3:5; Zech 8:12; Mal 2:5) it carries the sense of economic freedom.¹⁰ While there are a variety of meanings across the semantic domain, “[t]he general meaning behind the root š-l-m is of completion and fulfillment—of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship.”¹¹ Healey expands on the etymology of שָׁלוֹם as follows:

⁹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 173.

¹⁰ Joseph P. Healey, “Peace: Old Testament,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

¹¹ G. Lloyd Carr, “2401 שָׁלוֹם,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 930–931.

The principal word used to express the idea of peace in the Hebrew Bible is *šālôm*. The root of the word is found in many Semitic languages. The Akkadian *salāmū* comes closest to the core meaning of the root, “to be hale, whole, complete.” In one form or another the notions of wholeness, health, and completeness inform all the variants of the word. Peace is not, then, simply a negative, the absence of war. Peace is a positive notion, a notion with its own content.¹²

Ultimately, the fullness of peace comes only in relationship with YHWH, who is Himself the source of peace. The Old Testament makes clear that the only way to achieve peace is through a covenant relationship established by YHWH.

G. von Rad (*ROTT*, 1:130) observed that “the relationship guaranteed by a covenant is commonly designated by the word *šlm*” (see Gen 26:30ff; 1 Kgs 5:26; Isa 44:10; Job 5:23). The Hebrew Bible speaks of the *bērit šālôm* “covenant of peace” (Num 25:12; Ezek 34:25; 37:26). This notion of a covenant of peace is particularly useful in developing our understanding of *šālôm*. The covenant initiates a relationship which is based in some sense on mutually assured obligations. Though God cannot be said literally to be “obliged,” there is an implicit contract that attaches transcendent values to ordinary or customary human actions.¹³

The covenant-peace (שְׁלוֹם) of YHWH will be established through the promised “Prince of Peace” after which time God will dwell among the children of peace for eternity.¹⁴ However, before this fulfillment of covenant-peace can be discussed in relationship to Jesus, the following section will look at the New Testament language of peace.

The Greek Text

In the secular usage of ancient Rome, and even among many peoples today today, peace is often associated with the absence of war.¹⁵ This can be observed in the

¹² Joseph P. Healey, “Peace: Old Testament,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵ Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 490.

following excerpt from the speeches of Demosthenes, speech 19, "On the Embassy" written in the 4th Century BC.

If any man is really pleased with the peace, let him be grateful to those generals whom everyone denounces. For, had they fought to your satisfaction, you would have scorned the very name of peace. [97] Peace, then, we owe to the generals; a perilous, insecure, and precarious peace to these men and their venality. Put a stop, then, to his eloquence about the peace.¹⁶

The relevant portion being, "εἰρήνη μὲν οὖν δι' ἐκείνους, ἐπικίνδυνος δὲ καὶ σφαλερὰ καὶ ἄπιστος διὰ τούτους γέγονεν δωροδοκήσαντας."¹⁷ as exemplary of how peace, in the secular mind, was temporal and connected with a military campaign; won or lost in war.

However in the Christian Scripture peace takes on a much more positive meaning. The Greek word εἰρήνη (eirēnē) is closest in usage to the Hebrew שָׁלוֹם (shalom).¹⁸ This connection can be observed in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture. The image below shows how the Hebrew שָׁלוֹם was translated using the Greek word εἰρήνη.

¹⁶ Demosthenes, *Demosthenes with an English Translation*, trans. by C. A. Vince, M. A. and J. H. Vince, M.A., Speeches (English) (Medford, MA: Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1926), el. ed, Dem., 19 96–97.

¹⁷ Demosthenes, Demosthenis.Orationes. Ed. S. H. Butcher, Speeches (Greek) (Medford, MA: Oxonii.e Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1903), el. ed, Demosth., Fal. leg. 97.

¹⁸ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 402, 411.

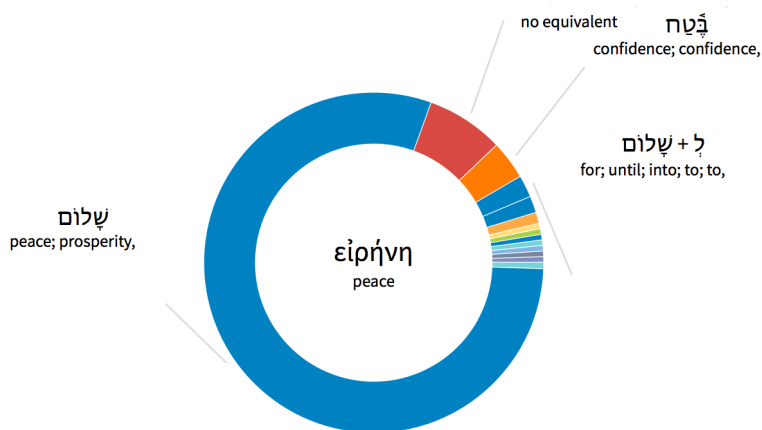


Image 2: The Greek word εἰρήνη (eirēnē) in the LXX.

Despite the similarities, there are some distinctives between the Jewish and Christian usage.

The Jewish concept of *šālôm* undergirds the Christian view of peace. For the early Hebrews Yahweh could be designated *Shalom* (Judg 6:24) and the word designates the state of being well. Whereas the Greeks were clearly comfortable applying peace to the inner nature of humans, the Hebrews tended to use the term primarily for interpersonal or social relations where it comes very close to meaning “justice.” When justice is done it is seen as God’s gift to the people, and the prosperity (*šālôm*) comes to the people when they live faithfully under God’s covenant (Ravitsky 1987).¹⁹

In the Greek New Testament, the range of meanings includes all things being in a state of normalcy, being in harmony, with God, the final salvation of all mankind, being at a state of peace with God, an abiding state of peace with other men, and peace of soul.²⁰ The Greek, εἰρήνη, marks the eternal link between the personal and universal

¹⁹ William Klassen, “Peace: New Testament,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 207.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 412-417.

state of peace intended by God.²¹ Image 3 below, illustrates the translation of εἰρήνη in the English Standard Version.

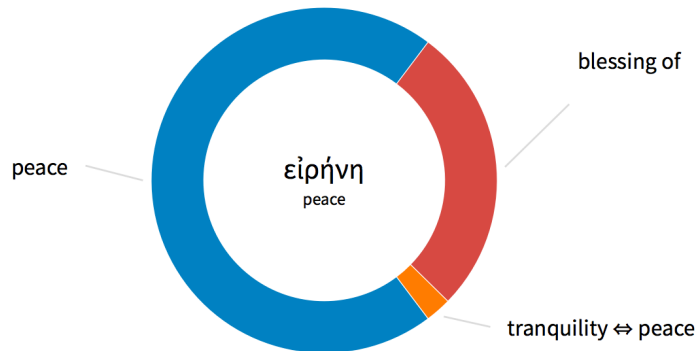


Image 3: The Greek word εἰρήνη (eirēnē) translated as various English words from the Christian Scripture

Despite the distinctive usage of the Hebrew and Greek words for peace, there is a theological unity of peace in the Christian Scripture. In both the Old and New Testaments, there is an emphasis on the holistic nature of peace which finds its source in God alone.

With this basic study of Hebrew and Greek in mind, the next section will examine the theological implications of peace as it “reaches its full meaning in the context of a personal relationship with God.”²² This personal relationship is offered through Jesus who fulfills all that God promised from the Prophet of Peace.

²¹ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 412.

²² N.-Hashem Abi, “Peace, Inner,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, Baker Reference Library, ed. by David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 840.

JESUS IS THE PROPHET OF PEACE

God is “the God of Peace.” This title is more frequently ascribed to Him than any other in the New Testament.

In Rom. 15:33 we have, “The God of peace be with you all”; in Rom. 16:20, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”; in 1 Cor. 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace”; in 2 Cor. 13:11, “Live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you”; in Phil. 4:9, “Think on these things ... these things do, and the God of peace shall be with you”; in 1 Thess. 5:23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly”; in Heb. 13:20, “The God of peace *adjust* you.”²³

It should then come as no surprise that God’s greatest messenger would be known as the Prince of Peace. Beginning in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah ascribes several names to the great Servant whom God promised will usher in peace. Most notably in “chapters 49–57, where 'The Servant' is seen as an individual, His offices executed in these nine chapters, 49–57, and they are occupied with the Servant’s three-fold office of the Prophet of Peace, 49–52:12; the Priest of Peace, 52:13–54; the Prince of Peace, 55–57.”²⁴ Peace is the singular goal for God’s Servant; the Prophet who proclaims peace, the Priest who ministers peace, and the Prince who rules in peace.

In addition to Jesus, there are many men who have claimed the title of God’s Prophet of Peace, yet God, in his eternal wisdom, provided a measuring rod against which the faithful reader can evaluate the integrity of anyone who makes this claim. The prophet Jeremiah gives this standard, “As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when

²³ Hastings, *The Christian Doctrine of Peace*, 16.

²⁴ Merwin A. Stone, "The Golden Passional of the Old Testament: A Study of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 91, no. 362 (1934): 212.

the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet" (Jer 28:9).

According to Jeremiah, anyone who claims to be God's Prophet of Peace, must bring the fruit of peace. Anyone who claims the mantle of His servant and does not bring peace is declared by YHWH to be a false prophet. Glen Stassen provides excellent contrast from Roman history between one such false prophet, Augustus, and the true prophet Jesus.

Almost twenty centuries ago there were rivals to the title "Prince of Peace." Romans celebrating the end of the civil wars which had wreaked so much havoc proclaimed their emperor Augustus the "Prince of Peace." Christians drawing upon the prophecy of Isaiah regarded Jesus as the "Prince of Peace." Luke preceded his mention of Augustus with the reference to Zechariah's prophecy:

for in the tender compassion of our God the morning sun from heaven will rise upon us, to shine on those who live in darkness under the cloud of death and to guide our feet in the way of peace (Lk. 1:78–80, NEB).

Augustus may be regarded as the symbol of peace through military force. He defeated his rivals and imposed a Roman peace, an achievement not to be minimized. Jesus is the announcer of a different way; he is the proclaimer of the reign of God. His way to peace is through forgiveness, humility, and love. Violence surrounded Jesus from his birth to his death. The defenders of Augustus' peace finally crucified him.²⁵

Augustus claimed to be the Prince of Peace, but only brought violence and war. In contrast, Jesus through his sacrificial-love demonstrates he is the absolute fulfillment of Isaiah's description of the Prophet, Priest, and Prince of Peace. In the believer's daily struggle against evil, each one needs the Prophet of Peace and Jesus meets the full measure of what the Old Testament prophets promised.

²⁵ Glen Stassen, "A Theological Rationale for Peacemaking," *Review and Expositor* 79, no. 4 (1982): 636.

The New Testament picks up the prophetic language of peace in announcing the birth of Jesus as God's chosen prophet. The Apostle Luke writes in his Gospel,

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:76–79).

In Luke's words we see the confluence of Isaiah's promise of a man who will serve as the Prophet, Priest, and Prince of Peace and sit on God's eternal throne to administer justice.²⁶ And while the Jewish expectation put upon this special prophet was to bring immediate relief from Roman oppression, God's deliverance would ultimately take a different form.²⁷ The mission of God's servant is refined in the prophecy of Zachariah recorded in Luke chapter two. Of most relevance here is the promise of peace in verse 14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Kenneth Gardoski summarizes the import of Zachariah's prophecy in his article, "Jesus and War," as the coming of God's salvation to those who are in darkness.²⁸ Once the people come out of darkness, God's Prophet of Peace will lead them along the path where they can know true peace. As Marshall writes, "[t]he way of peace is a complex of actions that promote peace and the resulting conditions; it leads to peace

²⁶ James R. Brady, "Do Miracles Authenticate the Messiah?," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 13, no 2 (1989): electronic ed., Logos Bible Software, Oak Harbor, WA. 109.

²⁷ Kenneth Gardoski, "Jesus and War," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 14, no. 1 (2010): 31.

²⁸ Gardoski, "Jesus and War," 31.

and is characterized by peace.”²⁹ The language of the New Testament Scripture makes clear the purpose of God’s peace will put at ease all those whom He has chosen.

As Zacharias prophesied that the Messiah would guide his people into the way of peace in Luke 1:79, so in 2:14 when Jesus is born, the angelic host cries out in praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” Although the KJV translation of “on earth peace, good will toward men” is well-known and preserved in our Christmas tradition (cf. also NKJV), the NASB and similar translations (e.g. NIV, ESV, HCSV, NLT, NET) are probably correct that the peace Christ brings is for those favored by God. The difference in translation reflects a textual variant, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία (“good will toward men”; see TR, MT) versus ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας, (“among men with whom He is pleased”; see UBSGNT 4th ed., Nestle-Aland 27th ed.). The genitive reading is the more difficult and is supported by the oldest representatives of the Alexandrian and Western texts. The nominative reading may have arisen through transcriptional oversight. “The meaning seems to be, not that divine peace can be bestowed only where human good will is already present, but that at the birth of the Saviour God’s peace rests on those whom he has chosen in accord with his good pleasure.”⁵⁴ Those in a right spiritual relationship with God through his Son enjoy spiritual peace with God even while here on this troubled earth.³⁰

With God’s vision of peace made clear at His birth, Jesus grew to fulfill these prophetic words and make His own prophetic promise to all those who follow Him. The Gospel of the Apostle John records these prophetic words from Jesus. First, in John 14:27 he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” And in John 16:33 he says, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

This promised peace is not established in human government, but accomplished in the hearts and minds of men who accept God’s salvation and proclaim his Word as

²⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008), 124.

³⁰ Gardoski, “Jesus and War,” 31–32.

the light of Man.³¹ No matter what conflicts arise, God through his Holy Prophet offers “Peace is the human experience arising from salvation.”³² The Christian Scriptures record that God’s salvation comes only through the death and resurrection of the Prophet of Peace. The Apostle Peter records how Jesus fulfilled all the promises of the Hebrew Bible. Speaking to the crowds in Jerusalem on the first Feast of Pentecost after Jesus ascended to heaven, Peter proclaimed,

So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed (Acts 10:34–37).

Lange, in his classic commentary, explains the meaning of Peter’s sermon:

Peter describes the *Work of Christ* with great fulness, and in a very instructive manner. He assigns the first place to the *prophetic* office of Jesus. God has—he says—proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ; thus the welcome message of peace, that is, the word or the doctrine of Christ, is prominently presented, ver. 36; but he mentions, at the same time, the acts of Jesus, or the benefits which he conferred in healing the sick and demoniacs. The act was in harmony with the word; the latter announced peace and salvation, the former (comp. ὧν ἐποίησεν, ver. 39) procured salvation and peace. Jesus—he says—was an eminent prophet in deeds and words; his doctrine proclaimed saving truth, and wherever he personally appeared, in the whole country, he furnished effectual aid, restoring the sick to health, and freeing those who groaned under the tyranny of Satan by which they were held captive.³³

³¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1566.

³² Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement*, 124.

³³ John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Acts*, Charles Scribner Sons, New York, NY, 1870, 205. el. ed. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008.

Jesus, the Prophet of Peace, Himself, became the peace God promised³⁴ and “forms the basis of subsequent reconciliation between men under Christ.”³⁵ The Apostle Paul affirms the saving work of the prophet Jesus in his letter to the Church at Ephesus.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph 2:13–21).

In Jesus, the holistic nature of peace is fulfilled. In Jesus, Man is fully reconciled with YHWH and made a part of a community of men and women who can live at peace together. Through Jesus, the Prophet, Priest, and Prince of Peace, there is a promise to one day “still the raging sea of wickedness once and for all, and would proclaim a full and final peace to those who were far away and to those who were near.”³⁶

That peace should be the expectation and experience for every Christian is affirmed in the simple greetings and blessings that appear in most every New Testament letter. By way of example, the greeting, χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ (grace and

³⁴ Henry Preserved Smith, *The Bible and Islam, Or, the Influence of the Old and New Testaments on the Religion of Mohammed: Being the Ely Lectures for 1897* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 130.

³⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1635.

³⁶ Iain M. Duguid, "But Did They Live Happily Ever After? The Eschatology of the Book of Esther." *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 1, (2006): 96, Galaxie Software.

peace), and farewell blessing, εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος (peace and mercy be upon them), express the understanding that the work of Christ was a transformative work to be lived out among His people. Marshall makes this observation regarding the significance of these key phrases:

The opening greetings in most of the New Testament letters extend a wish for grace and peace to the recipients; the combination is a fixed one, sometimes expanded by the addition of mercy. Because of the formal nature of these greetings it is easy to underestimate their significance. Such a greeting occurs in every Pauline letter and also in the majority of the other New Testament letters. It also occurs in five closing benedictions (Gal. 6:16; Eph. 6:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; 1 Pet. 5:14; 3 John 15). These are all expressed in the form of wishes that may be understood as prayers or perhaps as statements of what the writer expects to be the case (so explicitly in 2 John 3). This understanding rests on the fact that the grace and peace come from God and Jesus Christ.³⁷

To this point, this paper has demonstrated through the language of the Christian Scripture, God has fulfilled his promise of peace through his son Jesus, the Prophet of Peace. The next section will examine four aspects of what it means for Man to live at peace with God.

FOUR ASPECTS TO MAN'S STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

All mankind seeks peace in some way, but without God this goal cannot be reached. Through Jesus, the Prophet of Peace, the goal can be attained. Through Jesus, every believer undergoes an ontological transformation that brings each one into both a covenant relationship with God and empowers them to practice peace.³⁸ The suffering of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection make Him the Prophet, Priest, and

³⁷ Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement*, 126-127.

³⁸ Paul Wells, "Covenant, Humanity, and Scripture: Some Theological Reflections." *Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 1. (1986): 29, Galaxie Software.

Prince, promised by YHWH, who brings peace of all those who follow after Him.³⁹ Ultimately, the relationship of peace with God takes the Christian on a path of peacemaking to the world.⁴⁰ The following sections outline the four basic areas of peacemaking incumbent on the believer; Peace of Heart, Peace of Mouth and Pen, Peace of the Hand, and Peace of the Sword.

Peace of Heart

Every man and woman knows the struggle to find peace of heart. Whether one seeks to eradicate personal sin, or struggles to overcome external trials, each one knows the challenge to finding peace.⁴¹ Despite the challenge, the early Apostles knew that peace was possible and encouraged their fellow believers to take joy in suffering (James 1:2). While many passages speak directly to peace of heart, the following passages are emblematic of overall New Testament teaching.

Romans 2 warns the Christian that trials and tribulation will come from those who chose evil, but God will give peace and deliverance.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.¹¹ For God shows no partiality (Rom 2:9–11).

³⁹ Michael William Holmes, *The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians commonly known as First Clement, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 45.

⁴⁰ Stassen, "A Theological Rationale for Peacemaking," 619.

⁴¹ Mateen A. Ellass, "Four Jihads," *Christian History Magazine*, no. 74 Christianity Today International, (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002), Logos Bible Software, Bellingham, WA. 2008.

Romans 5 continues this thought and makes clear that peace of heart comes through Jesus who gives every believer access to God and the power to stand in hope against injustice.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:1–5).

The Holy Spirit has been sent by the Prophet of Peace to ensure the believer does not stand alone against evil and through Him we have peace. This peace from union with God, Philippians 4:7 tells us, “surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The second century letter ascribed to Clement exemplifies how the New Testament teaching from the Apostles was understood and applied by the early Church:

Therefore, my brothers, let us do the will of the Father who called us, that we may live, and let us pursue virtue now more than ever; let us abandon that evil mindset, the forerunner of our sins, and flee ungodliness lest evil things overtake us. (2) For if we are eager to do good, peace will pursue us. (3) This is the reason why a man is unable to find peace: they instill human apprehensions, preferring the pleasure of the present to the promise of the future.⁴²

To have peace of heart, the believer must participate in the work of the Spirit and pursue what is righteous and then peace will be the reward. The active participation of the believer leads to the next charge of the Scripture; Peace of the Mouth and Pen.

⁴² Michael William Holmes, *An Ancient Christian Sermon commonly known as Second Clement, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 115–117.

Peace of Word

Christians face opposition from many fronts, and using our words, both spoken and written is an important aspect to bringing peace. As the Psalmist wrote, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Ps 34:13–14).” These words used by the Christian are not meant to tear down or antagonize opponents of the Faith but to lift up the Prophet of Peace so his work will be accepted by all.⁴³ In following the example of Jesus who laid down his life while speaking words of forgiveness, the Christian seeks to save the sinner’s life by speaking and writing those same words of peace (Luke 23:24). Hugh Martin writes the following regarding Jesus’ commission to send Christians out to speak and write of God’s salvation peace,

[Jesus] brings deliverance to the captive, and quells the sinner’s pride, and maketh him the ward and the pupil, not of any man of God merely, but of the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. He shows me a warfare in which not a single life was lost, but one was freely given; and from the altar, where that life was given, He takes a live coal and lays it on my lips, and He says, “Lo! this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.” Then I hear Him saying, “Who will go for us, and whom shall we send?” And He enables me in personal responsibility, and personal free-will to say, “Here am I, send me.” And He answers, “Thou shalt go unto all to whom I send thee, and thou shalt preach the preaching that I bid thee—deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; and all that I shall say unto thee thou shalt speak.”⁴⁴

Under the authority and command of the Prophet, Priest, and Prince of Peace, the believer goes out into the world to speak against evil and bring the peace of Jesus. As Isaiah the prophet foretold in chapter 57 verse 7 of his work, “How beautiful upon the

⁴³ Mateen, “Four Jihads,”

⁴⁴ Hugh Martin, *The Atonement: In Its Relations to the Covenant, the Priesthood, the Intercession of Our Lord* (Edinburgh: James Gemmell, 1882), 305–306.

mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." The Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah's message as he encouraged his Brethren to go out and preach the Good News of Jesus.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Rom 10:14–15).

The Christian must use words, spoken and written, to become peacemakers to every people and every nation. Stassen amplifies the Apostle's message of speaking peace when he writes,

In Romans 9–11, Colossians 1, and all of Ephesians, we are told of God's hidden purpose for the whole creation. God's plan is to bring all together into one people in peace under Christ's lordship. This is the mystery of God's will and purpose for humankind which he has disclosed in Jesus Christ: God is working to reconcile all to him and to each other. Therefore, our spreading the gospel and making peace are our participation in God's purpose for humankind.⁴⁵

If, as Philo of Alexandria has observed, "God alone is the truest, and most real, and genuine peace"⁴⁶ then it is the mission of every follower of God to proclaim that peace in words to all those who need the peace of the prophet Jesus.

Peace of the Hand

Christians are united by Jesus to the God of peace and therefore must put their hands to work doing good deeds and serving others.⁴⁷ The pursuit of peace through

⁴⁵ Stassen, "A Theological Rationale for Peacemaking," 631.

⁴⁶ Charles Duke Yonge with Philo of Alexandria, "On Dreams That They Are God-Sent," Book 2, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 406.

⁴⁷ Mateen, "Four Jihads,"

good works is described today by many as a Social or Positive Peace.⁴⁸ The Apostle James who walked with Jesus defined what it means to work for peace.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead (James 2:14–17).

James makes it clear that no one can give the blessings of “peace” to another unless their actions demonstrate the veracity of their words. While to the modern reader, the force of this teaching may be lost, Martin and Davis expand on the power of this passage in their *Dictionary of the Later New Testament Letters*:

“Go in peace” was a common Jewish farewell (for parallels, see Judg 18:6; 1 Sam 1:17; Jdt 8:35; Jub. 18:16; Mk 5:34; Acts 16:36), and that it here carries the broader sense of *šālôm* is evident from the additional comments: “keep warm and eat your fill” (NRSV). The utterance was misguided but probably sincere. The illustration is suited to the context (Jas 2:1–13) and is probably chosen because peacemaking, thus defined as the active promotion of *šālôm*, epitomizes James’s ethic (Jas 3:18; see also Guelich, 106–7, on Mt 5:9). The point is not merely that deficient faith would make such a hollow pronouncement but that “saving” faith would express precisely that sentiment and follow through with appropriate action.⁴⁹

Words of peace are not enough. To the one who claims to follow the Prophet of Peace, he must also act accordingly with good works that build peace. Good works also encompasses the call to bring justice. Healey discusses this holistic mandate from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible.

⁴⁸ Timothy A. McElwee, “Peace Research,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. by Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 117.

⁴⁹ Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) el. ed. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008.

It is this association of *šālôm* with *bĕrît* “covenant” and also with *mišpat* “judgment, justice” that ties together the nuance of wholeness with the notion of peace as an action. In Ps 34:14 the psalmist charges hearers, “Do good, seek peace, pursue it.” Here peace is not something that simply happens; it is a content-laden thing that one can lay hold of. And, further, peace is not seen as a mere product but as an end in itself.⁵⁰

This contemporary understanding of offering the hand of peace finds its roots in the earliest of Christian writings. “The letter from the Christians in Rome to their fellow believers in Corinth known as 1 Clement is one of the earliest—if not the earliest—extant Christian documents outside the New Testament.”⁵¹ Written c. 60 AD at the time the Apostle John was writing the Book of Revelation, it gives today’s reader an important insight into how the message of peace was interpreted by the earliest believers:

Moreover, you were all humble and free from arrogance, submitting rather than demanding submission, “more glad to give than to receive,” and content with the provisions which God supplies. And giving heed to his words, you stored them up diligently in your hearts, and kept his sufferings before your eyes. Thus a profound and rich peace was given to all, together with an insatiable desire to do good, and an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit fell upon everyone as well.⁵²

The early Church knew the importance of doing good deeds and did so under the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. The letter from Clement goes on to say,

Now faith in Christ confirms all these things, for he himself through the Holy Spirit thus calls us: “Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. (2) Who is the man who desires life, who loves to see good days? (3) Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. (4) Turn aside from evil and do good. (5) Seek peace and pursue it. (6) The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are turned to

⁵⁰ Joseph P. Healey, “Peace: Old Testament,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

⁵¹ Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 22.

⁵² Holmes, *First Clement*, 31.

their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to destroy any remembrance of them from the earth.⁵³

This passage reinforces the connection to between peace of the heart and peace of the hand in that personal holiness leads to peace in the community of faith (Heb. 12:14; Col. 3:15; 1 Pet. 3:11). As Hebrews 12:4 affirms, “[s]trive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Peace of the Sword

Having expanded upon the call to peace of heart, word and hand, the fourth and final aspect to discuss is peace of the sword. While there may be conditions under which nations use war to bring temporal peace,⁵⁴ the mandate to the individual Christian is to turn the other cheek, seek peace, and live in brotherhood with all people. As Webber explain, the ultimate act of worship is to set aside all cultural, racial, or national prejudice and offer peace to everyone:

The Prince of Peace is the one whose dominion brings this quality of life. In the New Testament, the peace of the covenant is extended beyond Israel to all people; in Christ, both Jew and Gentile have been united. Thus, Paul states, “He himself is our peace” (Eph. 2:14), having broken the dividing wall between cultural groups.⁵⁵

The Apostle Paul instructed the early church to lay aside their own cultural prejudice and, “above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were

⁵³ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., eds., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 836.

⁵⁵ Robert Webber, *The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, 1st ed., vol. 1, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1993), 35.

called in one body. And be thankful" (Col 3:14–15). The Christian does not resolve conflict using the sword, but lays aside anger, resentment and past hurts. The Christian must follow the example of the great Prophet and live as peacemakers. It is not God who sins. It is not God who needs to find peace is, but the individual person who does evil who must be reconciled:

In speaking of the resolution of enmity between parties, Paul uses the word *eirēnopoieō*, "make peace," a word implying a well-known Greek concept of hostility that requires pacification (see Triumph). Furthermore, enmity is implied by reference to the blood of his cross (Col 1:20b), and this alienation is applied to "us," the personal recipients of reconciliation. E. Schweizer states the essential minimum when he says, "in the whole of the NT it is always the individual person, not God, who needs to be reconciled" (Schweizer, 92). It is humans who are characterized as "strangers and enemies in understanding in their evil works." The modifying phrase "in understanding" brings the active sense of enmity to the fore, since "understanding" specifically locates animosity in the human mental activity.⁵⁶

The world brings the sword of violence, but this is not the way of Jesus. Peace of heart, word and deed require that the Christian lay down arms and do not harm in the name of the Prophet of God. Brubacher expands on this great doctrine of peace when he writes,

Nonresistance implies suffering wrongfully, innocently. If we suffer patiently for well doing, how much less should we resist when smitten because of our faults? If we are willing to suffer for that which is good, how much more willing should we be for being smitten on the left cheek? To suffer as a thief, etc., is not grace; but to suffer as a Christian means to glorify God.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 698.

⁵⁷ Jacob N. Brubacher, "Nonresistance," in *Bible Doctrine: A Treatise on the Great Doctrines of the Bible, Pertaining to God, Angels, Satan, the Church, and the Salvation, Duties and Destiny of Man*, ed. by Daniel Kauffman (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1914), 535–536.

This does not mean that Christians in history have walked in complete faithfulness to their calling. Some have wrongly taken up the sword to advance the cause of Jesus. Just as tragic, many early rulers have taken the Christians' devotion to the Prince of Peace as a sign of rebellion to their earthly power. The early Romans are one such example. Here the story as told by MacGregor.

The first Patristic references to the issue of Christians and violence sprang from Justin Martyr (110–165), the early church's foremost Greek apologist. Refuting the charge of sedition, which the Romans saw latent in the Christian proclamation of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁸

As citizens of God's Kingdom, Christians do not train for earthly wars, but a spiritual war. Their mission is not to conquer territory, but to conquer hearts with Jesus' message of peace. MacGregor goes on to describe Justin's response to those who feared a violent Christian rebellion.

Justin informed the Emperor that this prediction was starting to find fulfillment through the church and its missionary expansion: "That it is so coming to pass, let me convince you.... We who once murdered each other indeed no longer wage war against our enemies; moreover, so as not to bear false witness before our interrogators, we cheerfully die confessing Christ."⁵⁹

The actions of those who lived their lives closest to the time of Jesus are clear, they were willing to die by the sword, before they would take up the sword to defend God's Prophet of Peace. Early first and second century uses of the New Testament εἰρήνη present a consistent message of nonviolence against aggression. Polycarp, who himself was martyred in the Roman colosseum c 108 AD, is used as an example of how the Christians played aside violence in obedience to the Prophet of Peace.

⁵⁸ Kirk R. MacGregor, "Nonviolence in the Ancient Church and Christian Obedience," *Themelios* 33, no. 1 (May 2008): 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 18.

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the church of God which sojourns in Philomelium and to all the communities of the holy and catholic church sojourning in every place: may mercy, peace, and love from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied.

We are writing to you, brothers, an account of those who were martyred, especially the blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution as though he were setting his seal upon it by his martyrdom. For nearly all the preceding events happened in order that the Lord might show us once again a martyrdom which is in accord with the gospel. For he waited to be betrayed, just as the Lord did, in order that we too might be imitators of him, “not looking only to that which concerns ourselves, but also to that which concerns our neighbors.” For it is the mark of true and steadfast love to desire not only that oneself be saved, but all the brothers as well.⁶⁰

The early believers saw their sacrifice as exemplary of Jesus’ own death—a sacrifice of life meant to bring peace in a violent world. In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35 AD — c.107 AD), we read again of the early understanding of εἰρήνη:

Therefore make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith. There is nothing better than peace, by which all warfare among those in heaven and those on earth is abolished.⁶¹

The Christian story as one of peace laid out to this point is summarized well by Charles Stanley:

The angels spoke peace to the earth at Jesus’ first coming (see Luke 2:14). More than four hundred times in the Scriptures, the Lord says that we are not to fear, but rather, we are to have peace. The prophet Isaiah referred to Jesus as the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Throughout His ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke peace—to a woman with an issue of blood He said, “Go in peace”; to a stormy sea He said, “Peace be still”; and to

⁶⁰ Michael William Holmes, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 227.

⁶¹ Michael William Holmes, *The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch To the Ephesians, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 145.

His disciples He said, “My peace I give you.” The Lord calls us to peace as we await His return.⁶²

Stanley advances the story of peace to the point of when Jesus will return, not just as a Prophet of Peace, but as the ruling Prince of Peace. When Christ returns, he will first bring a 1,000 year reign of peace. But the peace of Jesus is not the same as human declarations of peace such as when the persecution of the Church was ended in 313 with the Edict of Milan or in the ‘Clementine Peace’ (‘Pax Clementina’), ratified on January 19, 1669.⁶³ It is a stronger and long lasting theocratic-peace unseen by any nation in the history of mankind.⁶⁴ At the end of his reign of peace, Jesus will then bring a judgment on all evil and sin left on the earth.

While Jesus proclaimed peace as the work of his followers today, there is a time to come for judgement of the unbeliever. Unlike the false prophets who came before Jesus, he did not proclaim only the good, he gave a holistic proclamation from YHWH that included judgement.⁶⁵ Peace is synonymous with justice, but this judgement will be executed by Jesus himself and as a result all wars will cease. The confluence of peace and justice in the person of Jesus is clear from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah.

The figure, then, of the *śar šālôm* “Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:5—Eng 9:6) is to be seen as the bringer of justice, as the vindicator. He is “in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father of all time, Prince of peace” and his kingdom shall be established and sustained with justice and

⁶² Charles F. Stanley, *Preparing for Christ's Return* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 105.

⁶³ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1253.

⁶⁴ Murray J Harris, “The New Testament View of Life after Death,” *Themelios* 11, no. 2 (January 1986): 50.

⁶⁵ Willem A. VanGemeren, “Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, no. 1. (1990): 84, Galaxie Software.

righteousness. The same confluence of the peace-bringer with the renewal of justice and righteousness is found in Isaiah 40.⁶⁶

The Christian has no need to take up the sword because that is the responsibility of Jesus to bring the final judgement to all people. In the end, Jesus will bring a forceful end to all war and restore peace. Jesus alone will judge the sinner for their evil deeds and reward the faithful for following his plan of nonviolent resistance of the world's corruption.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, it has been shown that from the beginning of creation, through the promise of the age to come, Jesus has been the fulfillment of all that YHWH has promised in his Prophet of Peace. Menno Simmons observed,

[Jesus] was the conqueror of the serpent, was promised to Adam and Eve; a blessing and benediction to all people, the true Shiloh, Messiah and Emmanuel, the true plant of David, the Lord who justifies us, the Prince of Peace, and the true Son of the Almighty and living God, whom all the righteous and true prophets desired.⁶⁸

Through Jesus, the Prophet of Peace, the Christian is called to walk in his path. To that end, this paper will close with this entreaty from the Book of Common Prayer.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that as

⁶⁶ Joseph P. Healey, "Peace: Old Testament," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206.

⁶⁷ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer*, 65–66, Logos Bible Software, Bellingham, WA. 2005.

⁶⁸ Menno Simons, *The Complete Works of Menno Simon*, vol. 1 (Elkhart, IN: John F. Funk & Brother, 1871), 192.

there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 37–38.

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