BibleProject

Advent: Peace

Script References

Introduction

00:00–00:42

The word peace is common in most languages. People can talk about peace treaties or times of peace; it means the absence of war. And in the Bible, the word peace can refer to the absence of conflict, but it also points to the presence of something better in its place.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*, and in the New Testament the Greek word is *eirene*. The most basic meaning of *shalom* is complete or whole. The word can refer to a stone that has a perfect whole shape with no cracks. It can also refer to a completed stone wall that has no gaps and no missing bricks. *Shalom* refers to something that's complex with lots of pieces that's in a state of completeness, wholeness.

Shalom in the Hebrew Bible

00:43–02:07

It's like Job who says his tents are in a state of *shalom* because he counted his flock and no animals are missing.[1] This is why *shalom* can refer to a person's well-being. Like when David visited his brothers on the battlefield, he asked about their *shalom*.[2] The core idea is that life is complex, full of moving parts and relationships and situations, and when any of these is out of alignment or missing, your *shalom* breaks down. Life is no longer whole. It needs to be restored.

1. Job 5:24

2. 1 Samuel 17:22-23

In fact, that's the basic meaning of *shalom* when you use it as a verb. To bring *shalom* literally means to make complete or restore. So Solomon brings *shalom* to the unfinished temple when he completes it.[3] Or if your animal accidentally damages your neighbor's field, you *shalom* them by giving them a complete repayment for their loss. You take what's missing, and you restore it to wholeness.

3. 1 Kings 9:1;
   2 Chronicles 7:11

The same goes for human relationships. In the book of Proverbs, to reconcile and heal a broken relationship is to bring *shalom*. And when rival kingdoms make *shalom* in the Bible, it doesn't just mean they stop fighting. It also means they start working together for each other's benefit.

This state of *shalom* is what Israel's kings were supposed to cultivate, and it rarely happened. So the prophet Isaiah, he looked forward to a future king, a prince of *shalom*. And his reign would bring *shalom* with no end—a time when God would make a covenant of *shalom* with his people and make right all wrongs and heal all that's been broken.[4]

4. Isaiah 9

Jesus' Birth Brings *Eirene*

02:08–03:26

This is why Jesus's birth in the New Testament was announced as the arrival of *eirene*.[5] Remember that's the Greek word for peace. Jesus came to offer his peace to others like when he said to his followers, "My peace I give to you all."[6]

5. Luke 2:14
6. John 14:27

The apostles claimed that Jesus made peace between messed up humans and God when he died and rose from the dead. The idea is that he restored to wholeness the broken relationship between humans and their Creator. This is why the apostle Paul can say Jesus himself is our *eirene*. He was the whole, complete human that I am made to be but have failed to be, and now he gives me his life as a gift. And this means that Jesus' followers are now called to create peace.

Paul instructed local churches to keep their unity through the bond of peace, which requires humility and patience and bearing with others in love.[7] Becoming people of peace means participating in the life of Jesus, who reconciled all things in heaven on earth, restoring peace through his death and resurrection.

7. Ephesians 4:3

So peace takes a lot of work because it's not just the absence of conflict. True peace requires taking what's broken and restoring it to wholeness, whether it's in our lives, our relationships, or in our world. And that's the rich biblical concept of peace.