

- 3) A third important theme in the consideration of Jesus as the fulfillment of sacred space is that of *peace*. Like light and life, the Bible everywhere associates the motif of peace with its doctrine of God's kingdom, and the kingdom is nothing more than an expanded, comprehensive explanation of sacred space. For sacred space refers to God's relational presence in His creation (especially as it is ordered in and through His human creature), and that reality of divine lordship being exercised through man, the royal image-son, is the very essence of the biblical concept of God's kingdom – whether as first expressed in the creational kingdom, later in the Israelite kingdom, or in the fulfilled kingdom inaugurated in Christ.

If peace is a central theme in the doctrine of the kingdom, and if God's kingdom is concerned with sacred space and Jesus is the fulfillment of sacred space (and so also the inaugurator of the kingdom), then the New Testament witness to Jesus ought to be preoccupied with the notion of peace. Stated differently, if the Old Testament promises a kingdom of peace and the Christ event fulfilled the Scriptures, then Jesus' work should have a focal point in the matter of peace. Here again, this is exactly what the New Testament witness declares. The One who has fulfilled sacred space is the Prince of Peace.

- The place to begin in considering the motif of peace is with a biblical definition. At the outset of this study it was seen that, in the Scripture, peace signifies much more than the absence of conflict. The fundamental sense of the Hebrew term *shalom* is wholeness and the blessedness that accompanies it. It speaks to the absence of conflict inasmuch as something that has integrity – in other words, is *undivided* within itself – is *unconflicted*. At the macro level of the whole creation, peace speaks to the condition in which every created thing is characterized by perfect conformity to its true nature and function in relation to itself and everything else. Peace is the condition when the whole creation is defined by “integrity.” Thus Plantinga: “*The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom.*” (Not the Way It's Supposed to Be)

And given that the creation is just that – it is the product of a divine *Creator*, the concept of peace has a focal point in the Creator-creature relationship, and especially the divine-human relationship. The reason is that man is more than another created thing; he is uniquely created in God's image and likeness for the purpose of administering the divine rule as image-son. If *shalom* speaks to the uncompromised, harmonious interrelation of all things, and if God determined to relate to His creation through man, then, regardless of the state of the rest of the created order, there can be no peace if the divine-human relationship is compromised or corrupted.

- Given that the Scripture understands peace as the state of the creation when it's fully conformed to its true identity and function, it's not surprising that this concept emerges at the point of God's ordering of the first creation. While the term *peace* is absent from the creation account, the concept is central to it. For after the Creator-Lord completed His work of ordering and filling – setting every created thing into its appointed domain and establishing the mutual interrelationship of all His creatures under the lordship of man, He pronounced it “very good.” By the affirmation of the Creator Himself, the whole of creation was *shalomic*, and God certified this perfect completion by establishing a perpetual *shabbat*.
- From the very beginning God revealed that His kingdom is characterized by peace, the heart of which is delightful intimacy between Creator-Father and image-son. The Fall devastated this intimacy and erected an insurmountable barrier between God and man, and therefore between God and the rest of the created order. The peace that had defined the “very good” creation had been replaced by estrangement and enmity; thus the promise to crush the serpent was the promise to restore the creation to its shalomic state; the recovery of sacred space would bring the recovery of peace.
- With this background it becomes evident why the biblical storyline introduces the terminology of peace within the context of the Israelite kingdom. That kingdom represented the typological fulfillment of the recovery first promised in Eden. The seed of Abraham –the national extension at that time of the “seed of the woman” – were being restored to the Creator-Lord by His gathering them to Himself in His sanctuary-land. Adam's estranged descendents, expelled from God's dwelling place in Eden, had now been, as it were, restored to a new Eden.

God intended the Israelite theocracy to be a typological expression of the kingdom structure first portrayed in Eden and then made a matter of promissory oath after the Fall. As such, this kingdom was itself to be characterized by the peace of divine Father and covenant son dwelling together in perfect intimacy and harmonious delight. But being merely a type of the true kingdom pledged in Eden, the theocracy only held out the notion of peace as an *ideal* – an ideal that it never saw realized.

Thus the biblical introduction of the theme of peace comes in connection with Israel's *peace offering*. Notably, God identified this offering immediately after issuing the Ten Words, which stood as the heart of His covenant with Israel (Exodus 20:22-24). This highlights two crucial observations regarding the matter of peace:

The *first* has already been touched upon, namely the fact that peace is a **relational** concept. The peace offering was intended as a tangible indicator of a person's good standing before God; it didn't effect peace, but rather testified to it. It had its focal point in the *fellowship meal* (Leviticus 7:11ff) and thus symbolized unhindered communion between the covenant parties (cf. Exodus 24:1-11).

“The most joyous of all sacrifices was the peace-offering, or, as from its derivation it might also be rendered, the offering of completion. This was, indeed, a season of happy fellowship with the Covenant God, in which he condescended to become Israel's Guest at the sacrificial meal, even as He was always their Host.”
(Edersheim, The Temple: Its Ministry and Services)

As such, it was offered only in the context of ritual blamelessness, and thus followed a sin offering where the worshipper was in need of atonement. The Israelite kingdom was to be the tangible manifestation of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Abraham's seed – a relationship defined by the “peace” of happy intimacy, free of all corruption and separation.

The *second* observation proceeds out of the first and draws upon the fact that the peace offering was one component of a complex sacrificial system whose primary concern was **atonement for sin**. The peace offering presupposed that there was no issue of alienation or enmity between God and the offerer; it symbolized that the offerer was, at that time, in full compliance with the terms of the covenant.

Moreover, the fact that there should be such a thing as a peace offering within the covenant definition suggested that peace between the covenant parties wasn't a foregone conclusion. And by setting the peace offering alongside the sin offering, God left no doubt that there existed a very real threat to the reality of peace: the problem of human estrangement. In the end, the peace offering only signified a ceremonial ideal; it spoke of a reality that existed only in principle. The kingdom of God was to be a kingdom of peace, but, from the very beginning, peace was conspicuously absent from the Israelite theocracy. In spite of ceremonial provision, estrangement and enmity defined the relationship between Yahweh and His covenant son (Ezekiel 20:1-26).

- The Sinai Covenant highlighted and defined the relational nature of God's kingdom, but it didn't secure that relationship; within its provisions it spoke of and celebrated the principle of peace, but it could not effect it. The Israelite kingdom was doomed to failure.

The kingdom of Israel was never intended to fulfill the promise in Eden; its role was purely prophetic and preparatory. Being a typological representation of the true kingdom, it was necessarily preoccupied with the matter of peace, but for the very same reason it could not realize that peace. The fundamental alienation between God and man continued throughout its duration, and soon Israel's prophets began to speak of a coming day of destruction and desolation. The Israelite kingdom would not long endure, *but its decreed passing provided the platform for the parallel prophetic promise of a future kingdom in which the oath of reconciliation and peace would at last be realized.*

At the same time that the prophets declared the certain end of David's kingdom, they promised a future recovery. The primal oath of the Seed's triumph over the serpent was the pledge of reconciliation and the establishment of perfect, everlasting peace between Creator and creation, and the end of the Israelite theocracy didn't spell the end of that commitment. What God had promised in Eden He would surely bring to pass; at the appointed time He would restore *shalom* in consummate fullness.

- Yahweh would recover what humanity could not, but, just as He had sworn that day in the garden, He would do so through a *man*. Peace was to be recovered through a chosen descendent of Eve – a man later revealed to be the covenant Seed of Abraham and royal Branch of David. This connection is most explicit in Isaiah's prophecy, but extends through the other prophets as well (ref. esp. Isaiah 9:1-7; also 11:1-9, 42:1-13, 32:1-20, 53:1-55:13, 61:1-7; cf. Jeremiah 33:1-26; Ezekiel 34:1-31, 37:1-28; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-5:5; Nahum 1:11-15; Haggai 2:1-9; Zechariah 6:9-15, 9:9-12).

The prophets proclaimed that the promise of the kingdom was the promise of everlasting peace, and this kingdom was to be inaugurated by the Davidic king who is the Prince of Peace. For this reason, the gospel writers are careful to emphasize the theme of peace in their presentation of Jesus and His purpose in coming.

One aspect of this fulfillment that is often missed is related to Jesus' role as the **true Israel**. As Yahweh's chosen "son," Israel was to live with Him in the intimate, unqualified devotion due a Father. The covenant nation's relationship with God was to be *shalomic*, but was instead characterized throughout its history by distrust, disloyalty, and lovelessness. Israel responded to Yahweh's faithful husbandry with unashamed and unrepentant adultery; in every way, Israel failed to be Israel. In contrast, Jesus came as a truly devoted son, living the *shalomic* life Israel could not.

So also Jesus' status as the agent of peace is directly associated with His identity as the **true David**. Isaiah explicitly established this connection (ref. again 9:1-7), which found historical precedent in David's role as Israel's king. It was David who brought the Israelite kingdom to its fullness and, under his reign, the Lord secured peace and rest for His covenant "son" (2 Samuel 7:1-2). Aware of these messianic themes, Luke was equally emphatic in associating the newborn Son of David with the dawning of Yahweh's peace (1:67-79, 2:1-14). The birth of the Davidic seed heralded the restoration of David's royal house and kingdom – the kingdom in which the long-awaited peace would at last be realized.

Finally, the issue of peace is associated with Jesus' identity as **true Man**. This relation is actually implied by the fact that He is the true Israel, for Israel as a national entity represented a kind of recovery of man back to God. The Lord's calling and constituting of Israel as His "son" reflected back on Adam's sonship and the symbolism of Eden being applied to Canaan only reinforced this connection. If Israel was, in this sense, a "new Adam," then the true Israel was preeminently so. The importance of Jesus as the Last Adam to the fulfillment of the promise of peace is two-fold:

First, peace is fundamentally relational, and is shown biblically to have primary reference to the divine-human relationship. As noted previously, whatever the relation of the rest of the creation to God, if the relationship between Creator-Father and image-son isn't shalomic, there is no peace anywhere in the created order. Thus Adam's sin brought the whole creation under the curse of alienation. The implication in the emergence of a new, shalomic Adam is that the estrangement that flowed from the first Adam to all of his descendents was now to be reversed. Christ would bring peace by bringing mankind back to God.

Secondly, and by extension, the restoration of the divine-human relationship implies the restoration of the Creator-creature relationship in total. As death (estrangement) had come upon the whole creation through the first Adam, so life would come in the Last Adam, who is a life-giving Spirit. Thus the New Testament everywhere insists that the peace secured by the Prince of Peace extends beyond the relationship between God and men to embrace the entire created order (cf. Isaiah 11:6-9 with Mark 4:35-41; Luke 4:31-35). The Creator's ancient oath promised the overthrow of the serpent, and so also the curse he had effected. The woman's seed had come to reconcile all things to God, making *peace* through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:19-20; cf. Ephesians 1:9-10). The whole creation was to find its destiny and fullness in Him.