



PEACE

ADVENT | Week 2

Peace is one of those words that we are all familiar with, whether it is used to describe a calmed spirit, the ceasing of war, or a casual greeting. Peace has its own iconic symbol that can be seen on bumper stickers and at the center of social movements.

It is a word that is also significant to the biblical story.

The angels announce “peace” to the shepherds on the hillside the night of Jesus birth (Luke 2:14).

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Isaiah prophesied, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end...” (Isa. 9:6-7).

The Gospel writer Luke records the days when Caesar Augustus was summoning the world under the name of peace to increase the burden of taxes. God was summoning the world to fulfill His Word, to establish the throne of His Son, and to make the way for a peace that will have no end.

God’s glory is revealed in the coming of His Son Jesus. God’s peace comes everywhere His Son is received. And the eternal promise is, of the increase, there will be no end!

Isaiah is looking forward. Luke is looking back. Both are looking at the same event. Both are seeing the same day. Isaiah writes with hope. Luke writes of fulfillment. Peace is announced. Peace has come!

Built Upon the Rock

“... you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

1 Peter 2:5-9 (ESV)

Do you know the name George Herman Ruth? What about Babe Ruth? You know that name—He’s the Great Bambino, the Sultan of Swat, the Colossus of Clout. Babe Ruth is considered by many to be the greatest baseball player of all time. His batting records, including most career home runs and most single season home runs, stood for decades. In fact, he still holds some major league batting records, nearly a century later.

So why is this baseball phenom known by an infantile nickname? Babe’s first coach discovered him as a teenager in a Catholic orphanage. He was so unfamiliar

with life outside the orphanage that he followed his coach around like a child, or “babe.” Others attribute the nickname to his youthful appearance when he began the sport. In either case, the nickname stuck. Nicknames can be that way. The Apostle Simon had a nickname, too. And Jesus gave it to him.

In Matthew 16 Jesus asks the disciples who the world says the Son of Man is. There are many answers, but none of them are correct. Then Jesus asks who the disciples say He is, and Simon answers, “The Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” The eternal truth of this confession is so consequential that Jesus gives Simon the nickname that he is known by today—Peter, which means *stone*. Christ then says that upon this *stone* (the confession that Jesus is Christ), He will build His Church.

In 1 Peter, the apostle wrote to this growing Church built by God. The Gentile Christians had been rejected and persecuted by the Roman world around them. In Cappadocia, the Christians had resorted to living in caves to escape Roman persecution under Emperor Nero. Peter encouraged them by reminding them who they are in Christ. In these verses the man Jesus nicknamed “stone” is encouraging believers that they too are “living stones” built upon the true “cornerstone” that is Christ.

In the face of persecution and rejection it would be easy for these early Christians to cry out. Their decision to follow Christ may have cost them their homes, their occupations, and maybe even their family relationships. Who are they when everything is stripped from them? Peter is teaching them that their identity, hope, and security is found by answering a greater question: *Who do you say that Jesus is?*

“Who do
you say
that Jesus
is?”

As Peter explains, Jesus is the stone that God the Father is laying in Zion. Either you are built upon Him or you stumble over this “rock of offense.” There is no middle ground. It is not enough to call Jesus a good teacher or to consider Him a great man. Even the demons know that Jesus is the Messiah, but they do not believe (James 2:19). Christians confess that Jesus is Christ, and they believe in Him.

The rewards that follow faith in Christ far outweigh the persecution these believers endured. Why else, Peter reasons, would God say in Isaiah 28 that He is laying a cornerstone in Zion, if He did not intend to build upon it? Just as earthen stones were used to build God’s temple, Christians as “living stones” are being built by God into a spiritual temple. Before Christ, only the tribe of Levi from the nation of Israel would serve the Lord as priests, but now God is calling Gentiles and Jews to a “holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices.” Before, only the high priest had access to the Holy of Holies where God’s presence dwelt. But now, every believer in Christ has access to God through His indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph 2:18).

God calls believers out of the darkness into His marvelous light to be a “chosen a race,” a “royal priesthood,” and to become His very own possession. The world will reject Christians as surely as the world rejected Christ, but those who believe in Him become His possession. Nothing can separate the believer from God, because nothing and no one can take what belongs to God.

This divine assurance means that Christians can be at peace with a world that rejects them because God has chosen them. More importantly, Christians can be at peace with a holy God because He has saved the believer for His own glory. Consider who is doing the work in these verses. God is building the spiritual house. He lays the stone in Zion. He has chosen His people. He calls the believer from darkness into His light.

God does all this for His glory, through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. If you are a believer in Christ, in what ways is Christ your cornerstone or foundation?
2. Who would the world (friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc.) say that Jesus is? Who do you say that Jesus is?
3. What comfort do you take from this passage regarding the security of your salvation?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?
2. How does it make you feel to know you are chosen by God and one of His treasured possessions? How should that affect the way you live each day?

Listen to | “*In Christ Alone*” by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend (2002)

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought
and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood
of Christ.

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____



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