



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!

God Is Holy

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.”

Isaiah 6:1-4 (ESV)

Holiness is the only attribute of God’s that is repeated three times. But what exactly does it mean, and why does it matter? God’s holiness is the foundation of the gospel!

It’s a fact of the human experience that sometimes things have to get darker before we can actually see the light. When everything around us is going well and we are enjoying prosperity, it’s difficult for us to keep our eyes on the Lord. More than 2,700 years ago, the prophet Isaiah was experiencing a profound season of darkness, but he was about to see a light unlike any other!

The first five chapters of Isaiah detail the drifting away of the nation of Israel from covenant faithfulness to their God. Israel was on the brink of social, economic, religious, and moral collapse. Throughout the indictments against Israel’s leaders, God repeated that He is holy, and that He would execute judgment and

justice for His oppressed people. But at least there was one good man in Israel, and he happened to be the king—King Uzziah. But in chapter 6, King Uzziah has died, and it is very dark indeed.

Isaiah was transported to the temple in Jerusalem, and he saw the Lord God, high and lifted up, seated on a throne. Remember, this is the temple, and kings weren't permitted to enter; only priests could go in. That's actually what got Uzziah killed. But the King that Isaiah saw here was special—He was a Priest-King and was no ordinary man. The description of His grandeur and glory is really beyond human comprehension. The hem of His garment alone filled the entire temple, and Isaiah saw that while he was face down!

Isaiah then saw massive angelic beings encircling this Priest-King, and even though they were themselves sinless, they could not bear to look directly upon His glory. They proclaimed to one another that He is holy, holy, holy—repeating this reality for emphasis and effect. Surely it must mean more than He is separate and unique, or that He is moral and pure.

Holiness is God's covenantal commitment to bringing about His character of righteousness to the world, no matter the cost. To demonstrate the cost, in Isaiah 6:6-7, one of the angels took a burning coal from the altar of sacrifice and touched it to Isaiah's mouth to pay for the sin that Isaiah carried with him so that Isaiah could remain in God's presence. Something innocent had to die so that someone guilty could enjoy and experience God.

Several centuries after Isaiah, the Gospel of John was written to tell us about the coming of Jesus into the world. John wrote that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John also said that not only was Jesus with God, He *was* God (John 14:1), there at the moment Isaiah was face down before His glory and splendor in the temple! John then wrote how Jesus suffered innocently on the cross for the sins of the whole world—something innocent died so that the guilty could enjoy and experience God.

How committed is God to bringing about justice and righteousness to the world? The same One seated on the throne in glory stepped down and became the burning coal of sacrifice. God is holy; this is the gospel. Christmas reminds us that we serve a God who will stop at nothing to bring about justice for His people.

“... we serve a God who will stop at nothing to bring about justice for His people.”

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. How does the holiness of God make us grow in affection for God?

2. How does the holiness of God help us to trust Him more on a daily basis?
3. How would you define holiness in your own words?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. Since God is holy, what do you think it means when the Bible tells us to be holy?
2. How does this story of God's glory help us to think about our own sin?
3. Why did Jesus have to become human, and why did He have to die?

Listen to | *“Holy, Holy, Holy”* by John Bacchus Dykes (1861)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye made blind by sin thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

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Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

