

Can there ever be peace?

Leviticus 26:1-13

All around us we see conflicts. In Indonesia, where I live and work we have religious conflicts in the three provinces of Aceh, Ambon and Central Sulawesi. There are political conflicts in Africa, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and the Philippines. In many countries there is persecution of believers in the Lord Jesus. We experience family conflicts and many have conflicts with 'self' resulting in frustration and stress.

In our reading we find that peace is a gift of God to His people if they walk in His ways.

1. The requirements of God for peace are quite clear:

- Do not make and worship idols.
- Observe the Sabbath, the Lord's Day.
- Have reverence and respect for God's House.
- Follow God's decrees and obey His commands.

2. The blessings of peace are outlined in the same reading:

- The rain will come in its seasons – good weather.
- We will have a good crop – all our needs are met.
- We will live in safety without fear – good and safe surroundings.
- Our enemies will be defeated – great victories.
- God will walk in our midst and have fellowship with His people.

Once while visiting Israel a Jewish Rabbi told me that the Hebrew word for peace "Shalom" does not merely mean absence of conflict but that despite conflict all is in order, generally meaning health, prosperity and well being. Both Jaffar Arafat and Ariel Sharon talk about their desire for peace but still there is no peace. There has been no peace in the Middle East and there probably never will be peace until Jesus Christ returns to set up His Kingdom. People do not meet the requirements for peace that God outlines in His Word.

We also need to understand that the Lord Jesus did not come to bring an outward peace in the world or an absence of conflict. In fact He says in Matthew 10:34, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword". In many countries the believers experience conflict and not an outward peace. There is persecution in Indonesia, where I live and work. Over 10,000 Christians have been killed by the sword of the Jihad (holy war) Militia of the Moslem political parties in Indonesia the last 3 years.

3. The Peace that Jesus offers to all believers.

Jesus Christ is offering us inner peace in a world of conflict, peace of mind and peace in our hearts and peace with one another, as members of His body, the Church. All people everywhere do desire to have inner peace. How can we experience this inner peace? Inner peace means no fear, no anxiety, no depression and no frustration.

Peace also means to be thankful. The Lord Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. Walking in God's way is accepting the way to peace He has provided for the world.

In Ephesians 2:14 it says, "He Himself is our peace". Please note that peace is Jesus Christ. Peace is a person. Jesus does not hand out peace little by little but HE IS OUR PEACE. We receive Him into our heart and life. Then and only then can we have peace, inner peace. Peace with God, Peace from God and the Peace of God. Romans 5:1 says that you and I have "Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". In Colossians 3:15 God says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful".

I have ministered several times with Sadhu John of Andhra Pradesh, India. He shared with me how he was looking for peace in heart and mind, going from temple to temple searching for peace. He finally ended up in the temple of the snakes, sitting in the middle of snakes meditating. He was worried about life after death and had no peace. The Hindu priest in this temple had told him to sit with the snakes and meditate and peace would come in due time. But peace did come! An evangelist passed by one day and asked why he was sitting there with the snakes? John explained about his search for peace. The evangelist told John to leave the snakes and come with him. He introduced John to the Prince of Peace. John became a believer in Jesus Christ and his search for peace ended. Sadhu John now is a peacemaker, introducing people to Jesus Christ.

God wants to use you also as a peacemaker in a world of conflict. So many people are searching for peace of mind and deliverance from stress and frustration. He has entrusted to you the ministry of reconciliation and the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18,19) You may be His ambassador, representing Jesus Christ who can truly bring peace to the troubled heart and mind. There is no higher calling!