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## Exhortation

# "Let this mind be in you . . ."

## 9. "Peace be unto you"

Jim Wood

"**T**HE PRINCE of Peace" was one of the names attributed through Isaiah's prophecy to the one described in these words: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isa. 9:6). It is no surprise, then, to find that the theme of peace features throughout his life. Before his birth John the Baptist is declared by Zacharias, as family and friends marvelled at the name given to the child, to be the one who would "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk. 1:79), and John came to prepare the people to receive Jesus. The birth of Jesus was heralded by "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (2:13,14).

Peace featured throughout his ministry. Part of his preaching on the mountain was: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9). He posed the question, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?", as he talked about the consequences of following him (Lk. 12:51). To many of those he healed he said, "Go in peace" (7:50; 8:48). As his ministry neared its end he said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (Jno. 14:27), and went on in his discourse to contrast for them the consequences of being "in the world" and "in me". For those in the former position there will be "tribulation"; for those in the latter, "peace" (16:33).

John records his meeting for the first time after his resurrection with the disciples, who were assembled together behind locked doors, and to them his first word is 'peace'. "Peace be unto you", he says (20:19). No longer is this merely the normal greeting any might utter as they meet together. It is now a declaration of the victory he has gained, the result of his obedience, the consequence of the gift of immortality bestowed by his Father.

Reconciliation with God is no longer just a possibility if God's plan through him succeeds,

it is a reality because he has succeeded. For emphasis, for their assurance, in his joy, and in his appreciation at what is now within their grasp, he repeats it: "Peace be unto you" (v. 21). It is an expression of fact. It is an indication of his desire for them that they should now be convinced of the opportunity set before them, channelled into committing themselves wholeheartedly to embrace it, and ultimately to be partakers of the same blessing that is now his.

He would see in this declaration an echo of the blessing Aaron was instructed to say to the children of Israel: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. 6:24-26). The wider application of this was now possible, and he, with the help of his Father, had been able to secure it.

After his ascension the disciples were given the task of making known "the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15), and Peter, in his conversation with Cornelius, speaking of that duty, describes the gospel as "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ . . . To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:36,43). It was the Lord's earnest wish that such peace should be published throughout the world. It is Peter's desire, and he is now engaged in that work. It is clearly seen as the desire of the Apostle Paul, for it is to be found in the opening section of each of his epistles; for example: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:7).

As servants of the same Lord and Master, it should be our desire that we might be, through our words and our works, the means whereby the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7) might be brought before our fellow-man, and that the day may soon dawn when we might, by God's grace, "be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14).