

# Prince of Peace

December 22, 2009

Of course, he's quoting the prophet [Isaiah](#), who predicts Jesus will be [called](#) "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But neither the prophet nor the composer took a coincidental approach to their work. In that line from *Messiah*, "Prince of Peace" climaxes a phrase and resolves a chord. Everything comes together. So, too, with the prophecy. This final name for Jesus telescopes his mission—deep, ultimate, everlasting peace.

Some folks—committed and passionate Christians among them—might downplay that idea. They might insist God cares about eternal life and saving relationships, and Jesus' purpose in coming to Earth was to reconcile people to God. How true.

## **The point: Peace**

But that's just the point. From the Bible's standpoint, peace isn't just the absence of war or conflict. It's wholeness and completeness. It's the way things ought to be. The way God created them to be.

Peace defined Eden before the fall. Complete, unashamed relationship with God. Pure love. Innocence. Harmony. Perfection.

And peace is God's aim for us all. For two millennia, Christians have argued about the Bible's descriptions of "the end of the world as we know it"—the gathering of the saints, the final defeat of evil, heaven and hell. Those would be enough arguments for all humanity, but they don't even take into consideration the perspectives of other world religions. How ironic: Interminable arguments about ultimate peace.

But confusion and conflict aside, we celebrate Christmas as the advent of

peace. The Prince of Peace came to earth to bring peace—to reconcile us to God, to make us one in God.

## **Un-peace**

Of course, we're horribly off track. We've always been off track. "Wars and rumors of wars" dominate the news and our common thinking. And that's just the start of it. In America, the partisan debacles on Capitol Hill push us further from peace. The devastated economy unsettles us and causes us to feel anything but peaceful.

Then there's the stuff of life. Internal turmoil about big decisions. Concerns about health—either for ourselves or for people we love. The bumps and grinds of family life, work and friendships. So often, we feel many senses and emotions, but peace isn't one of them.

And yet Jesus came to bring peace. It's God's ideal.

## **The way of peace**

Almost immediately after Isaiah called Jesus "the Prince of Peace," he offered a formula for lasting peace: Jesus will establish and uphold justice and righteousness. Justice and righteousness may be ultimate goals for the consummation of the age, but they also provide paths to peace in our time. If we seek justice and righteousness, we pursue the best for others. If we put others first, we restore relationships, and peace and harmony result.

These are ideals. Yet the Prince of Peace, whose birth we remember, told his followers the Kingdom of God already had arrived. We're living in it. So, as we celebrate Christmas, let us set our vision for a New Year upon realizing the peace Christ's birth promises.