

# Rest In Peace

## Christmas' Calming Conquest

December 15, 2024

Today we're finding the personal *peace* that comes from our *confidence in Christmas*. Cuz worry is all about "what if" – while *confidence* is all about "what is" – and *Christmas* is our annual reminder that "what is" *true* has already *defeated* all our "what if" *worries*. So, the big Christmas question is: **are you at peace?** And are you *sure*? Do you know what that really *means*?



Cuz it's not *just* Christmas carols that make *peace* a big part of Christmas, it's the Christmas *Scriptures* that put *peace* at the *center* of the story:

[Like when the *angel* announced Jesus' birth to the *shepherds*, saying:]

"You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was *with the angel* a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth *peace*, goodwill toward men!" – Luke 2:12-14 NKJ



Now that's *classic* Christmas – *peace* on earth and *goodwill* toward men! Our *Savior* was *born* to *end* all our *battles* by bringing us *peace*! *Right Jesus?*



Do you think I came to bring *peace* on earth? No, I tell you, but *division*. [But... I thought the angel *just said*...] – Luke 12: 51 NIV



Do *not* suppose that I have come to bring *peace* to *the earth*. I did not come to *bring peace*, but a *sword*. - Matthew 10:34 NIV

Oh. Well, that's kind of a *bummer*. Cuz if sweet lil' baby Jesus came to *stir things up*, that kinda changes the *vibe* of all our Christmas cards. And if His *birth* marked the *beginning* of a *battle*, *which one* and with *whom*? Well, *fortunately*, when Mary and Joe took *Jesus* to the *temple* for His *baby blessing*, the *Spirit* moved a guy named *Simeon* to come *share* some insight:

"*This child* is destined to cause the *falling and rising* of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken *against*, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a *sword* will pierce your own soul too." [Which makes sense cuz when Jesus was born] – Luke 2:34-35 NIV

The *Word* became *flesh* and made His dwelling among us. [And]– John 1:14 NIV

The *Word* of God is alive and active. Sharper than *any* double-edged *sword*, it penetrates even to dividing *soul* and spirit, joints and marrow; [So, whether bound in a *book* or born as a *baby*] it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12 NIV

Y'see, just like the Bible, how we handle *Jesus* reveals what we have in *our hearts*, cuz in the end, **Jesus didn't just come to save us, but to teach us we need saving!** He came from the *other side* to show us *what side we're* really on – so we could make sure we're on the *winning* team *before* the battle ends. And just by being *born* into *this world*, Jesus helped us see the *three things* that our heart has to know to be saved: **we're at war**, **we're on the wrong side**, and **surrender means victory**.

And it all starts with making us see **we're at war!** And all *that* took was a *visitor* from the *other* side – cuz **conflict is revealed when opposition nears**. It's easy to *think* we're easy going till the going gets tough and our choices get *challenged*. It's why so many *marriages* fail these days! We can *pretend* everything's perfect as long as we can *control* our *personal* space, but when *intimacy* allows an *outsider* into the heart of our *camp*, we have to compromise our *will* to accommodate *their will* – and *them's* *fightin'* words! So, *similarly*, **it's easy to think we get along with God until He invades our space to reveal we don't want to accommodate His will.**



And when *Jesus* was born into *humanity*, we were asked to accommodate perfect *love* and *truth* – which *revealed* we were *opposed* to it:



This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. – John 3:19-20 NIV



Y'know, we got a saying down here: **The truth hurts.** And it's *NUTS* that we all kinda *accept* it – cuz it means **we're at odds with what is right!** But it's *true*, we fight to *refute* it, *revise* it, or *refuse* it – because down here, the truth *convicts*, *corrects*, or *condemns* us – and that's just plain *painful* to a person trying to *pretend* that *they're* already on the “good guys” side. But, *remember*, Jesus came “**to be a sign that will be spoken against; so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.**” And going *against* the only one *from* the “good guys” side, was meant to *teach* a hard *truth* to hard *hearts*:



Don't you know that friendship with the *world* means enmity against God? – James 4:4 NIV

And just by entering *this* world, Jesus made us *admit* that the human heart in its *natural* state is *opposed* to God – cuz the mere presence of *His true righteousness* in our *world* revealed the prevailing *feeling* wasn't just *opposition* but violent *aggression*.



[Like Paul says simply:] The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. – Romans 8:7 NIV



I mean Herod went on a *genocidal rampage* in response to just the *rumor* of *baby* Jesus threatening his power! Because the reality *is*, **we're at war with God. And it's our sin that separates the two sides** – our side has a soft spot for it while *God's side* gives it a hard “no.” But making us *admit* that we're at war is just *step one* of God's battle plan; *next* he wants us to defect.

Cuz the birth of Jesus didn't *just* reveal we're *at war* with God, it showed us that **we're on the wrong side.** And *this* one is just *embarrassingly* easy to know, cuz **if truth rubs us the wrong way, it should be obvious we're on the wrong team.** I mean *righteousness* is on His side... which kinda makes *any* opposition *wrong-eousness*. And that's why the Pharisees had such a hard time finding Him *guilty* – all His *actions* and *words* were *helpful*, *healing*, and *holy!* And that kind of irrefutable *evidence* sure makes it *hard* to hold on to a *belief* that we're the “good guys.” But once again, *this* was all by *design*; cuz to get us to *change* our *allegiance*, first **He had to challenge our confidence in our goodness.** And all *that* takes is showing us a *better*, more *believable* truth.



Which is actually a *popular* war tactic! **You ever hear of leaflet bombs?** They're bombs filled with *information* aimed at *changing* the enemy's *perspective* to try and get them to defect *before* another battle. We used them all the time in WWII to let *Germans* know what an *untrustable* monster *Hitler really was* and the *atrocities* that were *really* going on. They were literally "truth bombs" – and were *effective enough* that the *Germans* tried to counter with their own. But it's easy to tell *who has truth* on *their side* when you see each *approach*. For example, a popular *German* leaflet showed a passionate couple kissing and read: **"FAREWELL! Remember her last kiss? Gee were you happy then! Together, you spent marvelous times, lounging on beaches, dancing, enjoying parties galore, listening to the tunes of your favorite band."** Whereas one of the more effective *Allied* leaflets had *no words*, but simply depicted a large open field with thousands of *German graves*. Cuz **real truth is revealed by reality, not rhetoric**. And in *addition* to these truth bombs, the US dropped surrender passes that promised *safety* to all who *switched* sides!

And although just *possessing* such a pass was punishable by *death*, 77 percent of all Germans who surrendered had one *on them*. I guess deep down **we all recognize good guys by mercy and grace!**

And it worked for *Jesus too!* Cuz Christmas wasn't *just* about bringing God's *Son* into the *world* as a *sacrifice* – **Jesus' incarnation was God's invasion!** And **baby Jesus was the biggest truth bomb ever dropped on humanity!** After God *papered* our planet with *His Word* for a few thousand years, He decided to go *nuclear* by packing *all* of His goodness into Jesus to make His Word *flesh!* And just like the *Allies' airborne leaflets*, *God's newborn Truth Bomb* promised *peace* to those willing to risk *leaving* the *lies* of their *old side* to join the good guys! Like Jesus said:

*Peace* I leave with you; My peace I give you. [But,] I do not give to you as [your old side,] the world gives. [So,] Do not let your hearts be *troubled* and do not be *afraid*. – John 14:27 NIV

[Cuz,] You will leave *Me* all alone. Yet I am *not alone*, for My Father is with Me. I have told you these things, so that *in Me* you may have *peace*. [Cuz when you join the good guys] In this *world* you will have *trouble*. But take heart! I have overcome the world. – John 16:32-33 NIV

And **our confidence comes from witnessing His conquest.** Jesus came into *enemy* territory *alone* and *outnumbered* as a *vulnerable baby* to show what kind of *courage* we should have once we've *made peace* with the *right side*. Cuz God *knows* how tempting the *world's* sinful propaganda *can be* – after all, who doesn't love **"beaches, dancing, and parties galore!"** – but, He proved the power of *His truth* prevails in even the most *humble* human so that each one of *us* can be completely *confident* that *our surrender means victory*. And by *personally* walking the path from *newly born* to *eternally alive*, Jesus proved *His "surrender passes"* had the power to ultimately lead *anyone* to the safety of the *winning side*. Because like Luke says, Jesus came here

To guide *our feet* into the *path* of peace [that He laid out for us to follow]. – Luke 1:79 NIV

[Cuz God wants peace – it's us who have to maintain our allegiance] You [God] will keep in perfect peace those whose *minds* are steadfast, because they trust in You. – Isaiah 26:3 NIV

Leaving the *losing* team *does* mean joining one who's *winning* – but **we have to fully defect before we can join Team Perfect**. No double-minded, double-agents who still want the *enemy's* approval! Cuz contrary to the *common* Christmas thought – God *doesn't* openly offer peace on earth AND goodwill toward men; that's a *mistranslation* that nearly every Bible has changed to something like:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests. – Luke 2:14 NIV

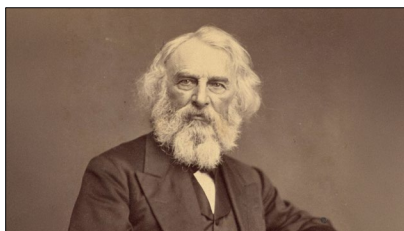
[And just to be *clear*, James lays it out] "God opposes the *proud* but shows favor to the humble."  
[So] Submit yourselves, then, to God. – James 4:4, 6-7 NIV

The Heavenly host are declaring peace *TO* – those who God's made peace *WITH* – because He "**shows favor to the humble**" who have *surrendered* themselves to His side. And,

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God [not just peace from God] through our Lord Jesus Christ – Romans 5:1 NIV

So are *you* at peace? Have you *completely committed* to God's side by completely surrendering? If so, **you should see this world as enemy territory** – just like *Jesus*. And like *Him*, you shouldn't worry about what the world thinks because you know **the approval of a losing side is a bad thing!** We should be so loyal to *truth* that we can *confidently conquer* any worry of this world. Y'know, a few months ago, I stood in line behind an *elderly* man at a busy Rite Aid who was *returning* a pack of adult *diapers*. And as he *loudly* argued with the lady at the *register*, I thought to myself – *this guy is my hero*. Cuz he didn't give two *shakes* what the world thought – he was totally focused on what was *right* – and as *he declared* to the whole store, **"These things aren't any more absorbent than a pair of jeans!"** And even when the *clerk* calmly said, **"But sir, you've used half of the bag..."** he just replied, **"Exactly! I wouldn't be burning through 'em if they were any good!"** Wow! Now I *don't know* if his confidence came from his *faith*, but, either way, we should all aspire to be so free from earthly opinions, cuz **it takes earthly humility to erase our heavenly hostility**.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 NIV



"What if" worries *only* exist in *this world* and once we make peace with *God*, we can look *past* it all to see "*what is*" true. Which Henry Wadsworth Longfellow learned after his son was nearly *paralyzed* in the Civil War. Cuz the poet looked around at a divided and desperate country and *struggled* to understand *how* God had promised peace. Until the day, it clicked and he wrote the words that later became the *carol* "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Cuz here's the bottom line: **God's got everything under control**. And if *you're* on *His* side, He's got you *too*. So, as the *Christmas chaos* comes, don't *settle* for *shallow wishes* of *peace on earth* – pursue the *real rest* of *peace with God*. Cuz Jesus came on Christmas to conquer our *hearts*, by telling us, **"You don't have to fight Me anymore. Surrender, and I'll fight for you. And we'll win."**