

# BUILDING OUR VOCABULARY OF FAITH

## Water from Rock, May 2, 2017 Tim Smith

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### SHALOM/PEACE

#### INTRODUCTION

1. In the Hebrew Scriptures the outcome of Yahweh's reign over creation includes "righteousness" (tse<sup>da</sup>qah), "justice" (mi<sup>sh</sup>pat), "steadfast love" (he<sup>se</sup>d), and "faithfulness" (em<sup>e</sup>th). God's "peace" (sha<sup>l</sup>om) is the word that gathers up all of these ideas.
2. Shalom is the one word that captures the Biblical vision of wellbeing, harmony, salvation, blessing and grace. Shalom resists all of our tendencies to division, hostility, fear and misery
3. God alone is the source of peace, for He is "*Yahweh Shalom*" (Judges 6:24) who desires to give peace to His people:

#### Numbers 6:22-27

<sup>22</sup> *The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>23</sup> Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,*

<sup>24</sup> *The LORD bless you and keep you;*

<sup>25</sup> *the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;*

<sup>26</sup> *the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*

<sup>27</sup> *So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.*

#### WHAT IS SHALOM/PEACE?

1. Shalom means much more than the cessation of violence and hostility. There is considerable difference between shalom and a truce.
2. "The general meaning behind the root sh-l-m is of completion and fulfilment – of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship." (*Theological Word Book of The Old Testament*). This root meaning leads to translations that speak of completeness, wholeness, safety, welfare, prosperity, harmony, tranquility, rest, peace (of human relationships), peace (of God relationship).
3. "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing,

wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom He delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be. (Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*)

4. Shalom is everything in the right place at the right time.
5. Shalom was used both in greetings and farewells. It was meant to act as a blessing on the one to whom it was spoken: “May your life be filled with health, blessing, prosperity and victory.”
6. The verb shalem means “to make right,” “to restore”, “to make restitution”, “to reconcile”, and has to do with horizontal relationships between people. The verb shalem appears 18 times in the two chapters relating to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 21-22). When commandments 5-10 are violated, the proper response is to go back and make it right. In this way shalom in the community will be restored.
7. As followers of Jesus we are to be “*peacemakers*” (Matthew 5:9), and “*pursue what makes for peace*” (Romans 14:19). Compare Jeremiah 29:7, where the Jewish exiles in Babylon were to seek the shalom of that city.
8. “Pursuing the way of shalom issues in experience of shalom.” (John Goldingay), *Old Testament Theology*

## GOD’S CREATION AND SHALOM

1. The Genesis creation story is about God’s design for shalom; everything is the way it’s supposed to be. “The way things are supposed to be” is woven into creation. We thus long for shalom with God, with our families, communities, and with people in other places.
2. Humanity’s experience of evil shatters shalom, producing what we call the Fall. Creation’s shalom is torn asunder, rupturing every divinely created relationship:
  - Between Man and Woman (3:7,12,16)
  - Between humanity and the Creator (3:8-13, 21-23)
  - Between Humanity and Animals (3:14-15)
  - Between Humanity and Nature (3:16-20).
5. From the time our first parents left the Garden, estranged from God, each other, and the Creation itself, Yahweh has been at work redeeming fallen creation, its people and systems; namely, God has gone about establishing shalom in a universe that apart from God’s rule is disordered and unfulfilling.. Through God’s covenant with Abraham

and his family Yahweh is seeking to draw all people into the universal community into shalom.

## SHALOM AND THE MESSIAH

1. The Old Testament anticipated and the New Testament confirmed that God's shalom would be mediated through Yahweh's Messiah.

### Isaiah 9:6-7

<sup>6</sup> *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (shalom)* <sup>7</sup> *His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace (shalom) for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice (mishpat) and with righteousness (tsedeqah) from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

### Micah 5:2-5

<sup>2</sup> *But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.* <sup>4</sup> *And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;* <sup>5</sup> *and he shall be the one of peace (shalom).*

## JESUS THE MESSIAH AND SHALOM (GREEK: EIRENE)

1. Zechariah, the Father of John the Baptist, foretold the significance of Jesus' birth: Luke 1:78-79 <sup>78</sup> *By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,* <sup>79</sup> *to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (eirene).*
2. The angel choir rejoiced in Jesus' birth bringing peace: Luke 2:13-14 <sup>13</sup> *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,* <sup>14</sup> *'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace (eirene) among those whom he favours!'*<sup>\*</sup>
3. Jesus demonstrated shalom in forgiving sins, casting out evil spirits, healing the sick, raising the dead and welcoming outcasts.
4. Jesus appointed seventy to go into "every town and place" in hated Samaria with the command: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'"
5. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that His suffering would be for their shalom: "Peace (eirene) I leave with you; my

- peace (eirene) I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).*
6. Jesus’ final words to His disciples reiterates this promise: *“I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace (eirene). In this world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” (John 16:33).*
  7. On that first Easter evening, Jesus speaks to those who had abandoned Him, including Peter who had betrayed Him: *“Peace be with you...Peace be with you” (John 20:19-21).* Eight days later Jesus repeats these same words to Thomas who demanded proof of His resurrection: *“Peace be with you” (John 20:26).*
  8. According to Jesus, peace (shalom/eirene) is the goal of His death and resurrection. He has done everything to restore God’s shalom order of wellbeing, harmony and wholeness. See Colossians 1:19-20 <sup>19</sup>*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,* <sup>20</sup>*and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace (eirene) through the blood of his cross.*

## SUMMARY

“Luke depicts the establishment of God’s reign on earth through the birth of Jesus who is portrayed as a bringer of salvation understood largely in terms of the Jewish concept of peace. This finding, in turn, goes a long way toward addressing the issue...should evangelism on one hand, or the pursuit of peace and justice on the other hand, occupy the efforts of Jesus’ followers today? The answer is: the two cannot be seen as alternatives, but rather as two components of the same enterprise. Shalom involves spiritual well-being, so working toward bringing people into a right relationship with God is a key ingredient in following the bringer of salvation. At the same time, shalom also involves material well-being, of working toward the alleviation of suffering and the elimination of oppression should also be a part of the vision of one who follows the bringer of shalom... Indeed, shalom requires both sides, so that the world may know the full breadth of salvation that Jesus offers. Gary Yamasaki, *Beautiful upon the Mountains: Biblical Essays on Mission, Peace, and the Reign of God*