

# THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

## Part 1 - Peace

When people talk about the Spirit of Christmas, they are most likely referring to an attitude, a mindset, a cultural mood that's hard to define. But why doesn't the world's spirit of Christmas last beyond boxing day?

Unlike perhaps the world's best efforts, the true Spirit of Christmas is found in why Jesus came and how He came showed us how to live out this Spirit we carry. It all leads back to Jesus! His Spirit in us enabling us to always live with the Spirit of Christmas.

### Peace on Earth - Luke 2:8-15

It is one of the greatest announcements of all time - a great company of angels announcing the birth of the saviour of the world. And this saviour will bring hope and joy and peace.

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

### Where's The Peace?

The news headlines are disparaging. The reality of war and hate among nations is all too real. And it is sometimes hard to know what to say to those enduring this season of tension and loss.

Many see and hear the sights and sounds of Christmas, and in despair they say, *"There's no peace on earth."* There seems to be forces or circumstances that shatter our internal tranquillity. Yet despite all this, the message is still ringing through the air: ***Peace On Earth.***

The Bible is clear: From Genesis to Revelation, it is packed with references that emphasise God's desire for a fear-free, peace-filled world. (Numbers 6:24-26; John 14:27-31; Philippians 4:6-7)

God's preferred state for the world—and for everyone in it—is that His peace would prevail, that we live free from fear, experiencing peace. So, what confidence can we have in a world seemingly lacking peace this Christmas that we could carry a spirit of peace?

## **Real Peace**

The angels proclaimed, *“Peace to those on whom God’s favour rests”*. God is central to finding peace. In fact, this passage would suggest that God’s peace is only available to people on whom His favour rests.

We find in other passages that the peace God has for us is only available through the person of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:5; Ephesians 2:14). If you have a relationship with Jesus, then you have the availability of peace because it is through Him, and only Him, that peace is available. We cannot find peace anywhere else no matter how hard we try. It is one reason our world is in the shape it is in today.

However, those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as Lord are not only not able to find real peace; they are in fact at war with God, others and themselves (Romans 8:5-11). Jesus is the solution to our quest for peace. Peace with God, peace with others and peace within ourselves.

## **Peace with God**

It’s quite incredible to think that you could be at war with the same God who announces peace to all mankind. However, the reason that the world is lacking peace is the problem that humanity suffers in general. It is the problem of sin.

Unfortunately for us, ever since the fruit of the tree was tasted in the Garden of Eden we have been at war with God. Sin is what separates us from God. He is holy and we are not (1 John 1:8; Romans 3:23).

This is the point where the birth of Jesus heralds an opportunity for peace. Through His birth, life, death, burial and resurrection, we no longer have to wonder how to gain access to God or His peace because Jesus provides the answer. He loves us so much that He sent His Son as payment for our sins. When we accept Him as Lord we immediately are at peace with God.

## **Peace within Ourselves**

This peace with God results in peace within us. When we are at peace with God through Jesus Christ His Son, we no longer need to run around looking for the missing piece to our lives. The Bible says that when we allow His Spirit to fill us one of the results of that spiritual experience is peace (Isaiah 26:3).

God brings peace to our lives by assuring us of our worth. He assures us of forgiveness of sins, and He releases us from the guilt and shame as He assures us of a purpose for our life.

## **Peace with Others**

Another kind of peace that results from the birth of Jesus in someone's heart is peace between people (Romans 12:18). But we know that sometimes even among those who know God there is conflict instead of peace.

Our peace doesn't rely on outer circumstances or other people but on the abiding presence of Jesus. We are given a proactive peace that sends us forth as peace makers to a hostile world.

Peace doesn't come all that naturally to us – and that's why our world is in such strife. Peace with others comes when we accept and abide in Christ and do His will in our lives.

## Discussion Questions

1. What examples of 'The Spirit of Christmas' do you observe in this season? Why doesn't the spirit of Christmas last beyond Boxing Day?
2. Peace seems so elusive in our world today. What becomes the hope for true and lasting peace despite the circumstances?
3. What are you going through right now, where it would be so good to hear God say, "Fear not." Where do you need to know God is with us in our messy manger we call life?
4. Share together a testimony of how you have experienced the peace of God at work in your life.
5. Discuss how coming to peace with God brings peace within ourselves.
6. Where do you see unrest in people around you in this season? How can you bring the peace of God into those situations?
7. Pray for each other that you may be proactive peacemakers as we head towards celebrating Christmas.