

Enough

“Peace is Inevitable.”

Isaiah 2:1-4

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Miracles

I think that we've seen the miracle already, sometimes.

Some of you can remember Egyptian tanks rolling across the Sinai desert in 1973 when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat led the Arab League's surprise attack against Israel: over 18,000 deaths and 45,000 injuries.¹

War. 1973. What happened to completely change the Egyptian president? Near-defeat? Pressure from the Soviet Union or the United States, or the United Nations? Or was it a change of heart?

Within two years he signed two peace agreements. In 1976 he met with Rev. Billy Graham and Pope Paul VI. In 1977 he visited Israel, embraced its leaders, and spoke before the Israeli Knesset, calling for normalized relations and a lasting peace. In 1979 he signed the Camp David Accord establishing that peace – earning him and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin the Nobel Peace Prize.²

What happened? I remember marveling at the events as they unfolded...and believing, that whatever was or wasn't going on in the heart of Sadat or Begin or any of the other players, I was seeing the impossible take place. At the height of 3,000 years of conflict we saw an outbreak of peace. I was certain then, as I am today, that God's fingerprints could be found everywhere in those unfolding events.

The fall of the Berlin Wall. The end of the Cold War. Normalization in Chinese-American relations. The ending of Apartheid in South Africa with truth and reconciliation. Peace in Northern Ireland...

I believe that when God promises there will be peace...Peace is inevitable. Even today.

¹ "Yom Kippur War," *Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_war. Modified November 25, 2011.

² "Anwar Sadat," *Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anwar_El_Sadat Modified December 2, 2011.

Prince of Peace

The Prophet Isaiah must have been crazy. Assyria was his world's superpower,³ swallowing up kingdoms like Israel and Judah left and right. Warfare was treacherous – people falling victim to trampling armies were doomed. No Geneva Convention: mass bloodshed, annihilation of cities, slavery, and exile were their real and constant and ever-present threat. And there was no change in sight.

Yet, the prophet spoke for God and promised: *It would be different.*

(The Lord) shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

'Must have been crazy. Now or then, anybody can see that there will always be war. Whether it's Assyria or the Third Reich, Soviets or terrorist cells: there is ever a menace; ever reason for waging war so that the world will never be at peace. Right?

Yet, the prophet says so: not because he or she has lost touch with reality; but because the prophet listens and knows the mind of God.

God says there will be peace.

And so there will be peace.

Because when God says there will be peace...Peace is inevitable.

And so Jesus is born in Bethlehem: the birth of Messiah. Promise is fulfilled: God is now with us – dwelling with us in the flesh. And out in the country are shepherds watching their sheep by night as the sky bursts with the song of angels. *Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace...*

*Hark the herald angels sing! Glory to the newborn king! Peace on earth and mercy mild: God and sinners reconciled!*⁴

Jesus Christ is born for a God-given purpose. Turn a violent globe on its ear – truly change the place into a world of justice, truth, love and peace. And when you read his story – his whole story: isn't that what he does?

Reconciliation with God... the beginning of God's Peaceable Domain.

³ Susan Ackerman, "Isaiah Introduction," *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press p 955

⁴ Charles Wesley, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, refrain. 1734. Alt. by George Whitefield, 1753.

Swords beaten into plowshares. Spears refashioned into pruning hooks. Sometimes people think that it all depends on us. If our governments and our businesses, and our political parties just got around to it, there would be peace.

But you know that they won't. It's been going on for ten thousand years and it's bound to go on for 10,000 more – provided we don't just waste the planet along the way.

But what if peace doesn't depend on us? What if it depended on God?

And what if we haven't gotten it finally and fully yet because we: our governments and business and caucuses and you and me –because we keep getting in God's way?

We've seen outbursts of peace, been surprised by hope here and there. But when will God's people look on the injustice of the injured innocents and finally say "We've had enough?"...then get out of the way and let God have God's day?

Work with God instead of just for God?

Inevitable

During the darkest days of apartheid Archbishop Desmond Tutu used to say to South African President P.W. Botha, "we have already won," and he invited the president to join the winning side. He wrote, "All the objective facts were against us—the pass laws, the imprisonments, the tear-gassing, the massacres, the murder of political activists – but my confidence was not in the present circumstances but in the laws of God's universe."⁵

It is not enough to just try and live more peaceably than yesterday. A little more civilized than last year. A little less violent than in ancient times. You also have to look to God.

Peace has already won. May God's people lead the world's people to hear the unshakable promise of God. Swords beaten into plowshares; spears into pruning hooks; the Prince of Peace who is born to us: the first thing we need to do

...is believe it.

⁵ Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream*. New York: Doubleday. © 2004. p 2.