



When Jesus was born, the angels appeared
to some shepherds in the fields
with an amazing message of peace on earth.

But there are many wars
and lots of violence on the earth today,
so what did the message mean?

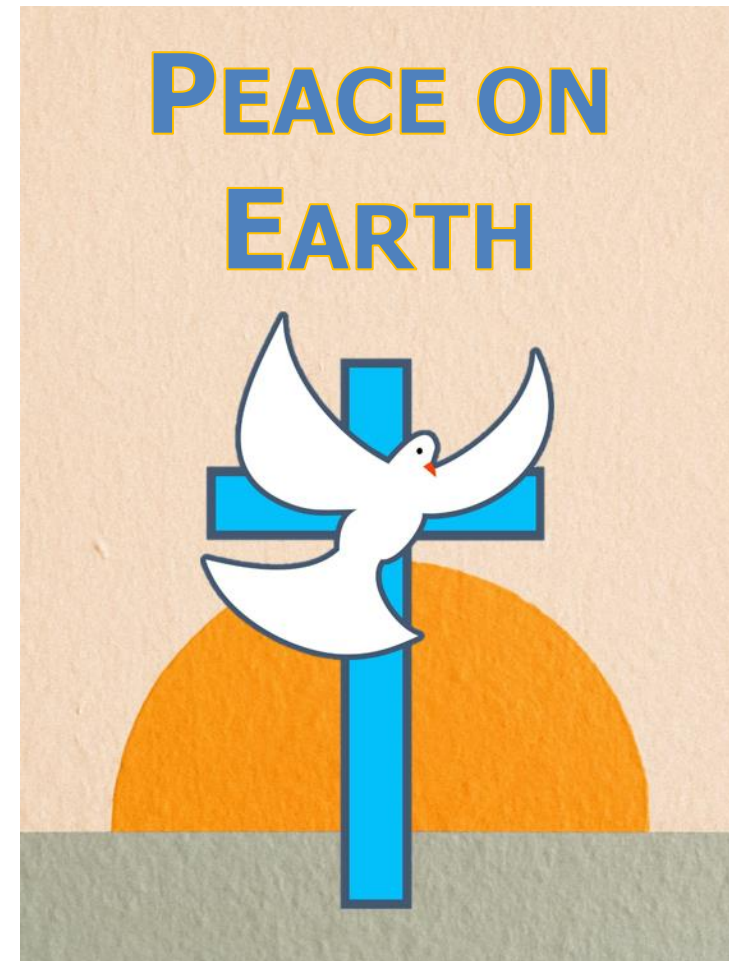
Is it still important and does it make any difference to you?
Can you really know peace on earth?



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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‘Peace on Earth’
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all Scripture quotations are taken from
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(Any words in brackets are not in the original text
but are included to help understanding)

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Being Born-Again

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for yourself personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again and have a new perfect spirit. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal love relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you do, say and think. Choose to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for you and is now alive. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Say it with your voice and believe it in your heart.

If you’ve done that sincerely, you are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. Everything you’ve ever done wrong or ever will do wrong is forgiven, and after this life is over, you’ll live in peace and joy with your loving Father God for ever.

As a child of God, you now have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God’s love for you and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

PEACE ON EARTH

When Jesus’s mother, Mary, went into labour she and Joseph were away from home in Bethlehem, and because they couldn’t find anywhere to stay, Jesus was born in a stable there. This was all part of God’s plan and He started to spread the news. The first people He told were some shepherds on the nearby hills.

The Shepherds’ Story

It starts in Luke 2:8 – *‘Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.’* The shepherds’ job was a quiet, unhurried way of life out in the fields away from people. But every so often something would happen to interrupt their routine – the weather may suddenly deteriorate or a wild animal might come and threaten the sheep and the shepherd would have to kill it to protect his flock. And of course there would be lambing time with long hours of work and little rest. But nothing could have prepared the shepherds for what was going to happen that night.

Luke 2:9 says – *‘Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.’* Imagine in the quiet of the night an angel suddenly appearing and the sky shining with the glory of God. Shepherds had to be strong and brave and they’d be used to emergencies, but this was completely different and they were frightened.

Luke 2:10-12 – *‘The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. ¹¹For there is born to you today, in David’s city, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²This is the sign to you: you will find a*

baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a feeding trough.” How amazing! The shepherds must have wondered what it was all about and why the angel had come to tell the news to them.

Luke 2:13-14 – *‘Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God, and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.”* What an amazing sight and sound!

Luke 2:15-16 – *‘When the angels went away from them into the sky, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem, now, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶They came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby was lying in the feeding trough.’* The shepherds will have told Mary and Joseph all about the angels and everything they’d seen and heard.

Luke 2:19 – *‘But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.’* She thought about how her baby would be a Saviour, how He would bring peace on earth and how His birth was an act of good will from God. That’s what this booklet is going to do now – look in some detail at the good tidings of great joy that the angels told the shepherds.

We have a huge advantage over Mary as we think about the angels’ message. For Mary, what was being told her was all in the unknown future. The reality of Jesus’ birth for her, was a new-born baby in her arms needing her for food, warmth, love and security. How could she have any idea how He would save people and bring peace on earth? This is why she kept all these things until the day came when she could understand them. But we live after Jesus’s life, death and resurrection. We have the New Testament and the Holy Spirit to help us understand just what the angels were talking and singing about.

So is it ok to Carry on Sinning?

All this leads to the seemingly logical question – “If my sins are already forgiven and don’t make God angry, can’t I just carry on sinning?” The Bible gives a very emphatic answer – “No!” There are many reasons not to sin – it can give the devil a way into your life; it has damaging consequences for you and often for others. It won’t stop God loving you, but it will make it harder for you to love Him back. When you sin, your peace relationship with God still exists, but if you keep on sinning, you can lose your experience of that relationship.

What to Do when we Sin

But no-one’s perfect. So what do you need to do if you do sin? Confess it to God – agree with Him you were wrong. Don’t beg Him for forgiveness – you can never be humble enough or sorry enough or guilty enough to earn God’s forgiveness. When you confess, God says, “I knew about this 2000 years ago and I punished Jesus for it then so you are forgiven. The job is done.” Turn away from the sin and thankfully receive your forgiveness allowing it to wash away all your guilt and shame.

Peace on Earth

God poured out all His anger against sin once for all on Jesus, so you could come into a love relationship with Him and be at peace with Him here on earth, as well as through eternity. Praise God for the good tidings of great joy in Luke 2:11&14 – *“For there is born to you today, in David’s city, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ... Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.”*

they have rejected Him, when they die they will go to everlasting punishment. But while anyone lives there is always the opportunity for them to find peace with God.

Your sins don't become forgiven when you're born again (what the Bible calls accepting Jesus as your Lord and Saviour) – they were forgiven on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says – '*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses.*' Your sins aren't written up on a list which God will confront you with one day. And if He isn't counting your sins against you then He isn't angry with you and you can have peace with Him. Every sin has been punished and forgiven. But for forgiveness to become real in your life you have to receive it. (To read about being born-again go to the end of this booklet.)

The Cross was Enough

If God was still angry with you, then it would mean that you still have to earn your forgiveness, which would put you back under the law. It would mean the Cross was not enough. God doesn't expect people to have to strive to be perfect so they can climb up to heaven to find peace – Jesus came down to them here on earth as their Saviour while they were still sinners. He came to save them and bring them peace with God they can experience here and now on earth. The Cross was enough – there is nothing anyone can do to add to it. It's all about what Jesus did, not what you do – how you measure up or how you perform. God's anger has been satisfied and you can have peace with God here on earth through faith in Jesus. The way for peace on earth has been established, just as the angels proclaimed – His mission was a complete success. Romans 5:1 says – '*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*'

Peace on Earth

The angels said that Jesus was to bring peace on earth. But the world is not at peace – there are so many wars and atrocities, so many broken families and relationships. If Jesus came to bring peace between people on earth, then His mission obviously failed. But Jesus explained that He hadn't come to bring peace between people. In Matthew 10:34-35 He said – "*Don't think that I came to send peace on the earth. I didn't come to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I came to set a man at odds against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*" Jesus wasn't saying that He wanted to break families up. He was saying that it would be the inevitable result of His coming to earth, as some accepted and followed Him and others rejected Him.

So what Sort of Peace was it?

So if it wasn't to be peace on earth between people, what sort of peace was God talking about? Colossians 1:19-20 – '*For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile all things to himself by him, whether things on the earth or things in the heavens, having made peace through the blood of his cross.*' Here is the answer. Through Jesus, God was reconciling everything to Himself. Jesus wasn't going to bring peace on earth between people – in fact His coming meant there would be less peace. His coming to earth was to make it possible for people on the earth to be at peace with God.

How did He do it?

Guilt and shame can rob you of peace with God. Before Adam and Eve started thinking and speaking and doing wrong (what

the Bible calls sin) they had perfect peace with God. But once they listened to the devil and sinned they hid from God – they were ashamed – full of guilt and fear. But God is the perfect Father – He doesn't want people to be fearful before Him; He wants them to be at peace with Him. So He set His peace plan into action in Bethlehem just over 2000 years ago. 1 John 3:8 says – *'To this end the Son of God was revealed: that he might destroy the works of the devil.'* By doing this, Jesus made it possible for you to be free of guilt and shame and fear and have peace with God, just as Adam and Eve did in the beginning.

Good Will towards Men

The angels declared that God was willing good towards all people through Jesus. God only wills good toward you, never bad. It is the devil who sends the bad stuff. God didn't send Jesus to earth to judge people or condemn them. John 3:17 says – *'God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.'* God was willing good to you when He sent Jesus – He was willing salvation and peace towards you.

How did it Work?

In the Old Testament God gave His people the law with lots of details about how they should live. He has always hated sin and He couldn't let it go unpunished, so when they broke the law He had to punish them. But because of His love, He never wanted to do this. It sounds like a catch 22, but God had a solution.

He'd always required a sacrifice for forgiveness, so He had to find a perfect one which could provide forgiveness for every sin once and for all. There was only one way to do it – He had to

send His Son, Jesus, to die as that perfect sacrifice. God dealt with sin once and for all as Jesus took the punishment for all sin on the Cross. God still poured out His anger on sin, but instead of doing so on the people who had committed the sin, He poured it out on Jesus. He took all your sin, all your guilt and all your shame on Himself. Have you ever woken in the middle of the night, overwhelmed with shame at something you'd done or said? Jesus suffered that. Add to that all the guilt and shame of your other sins and then add it to the sins of everyone, past, present and future. Jesus suffered it all. The agony of the shame and guilt was beyond anything we could begin to imagine.

Once for All

And He did it once for all. He did it for all people, for all time and for all sin. The Cross was enough for every person who has ever lived, who is living, and who will live – that includes you. The angels said that the good tidings were for all people. And the Cross was enough for all time. It stands in history at a specific date and will never need to be repeated. The Cross was enough for all sin – for all sin throughout the history of the world; for all sin that is being committed now; for all sin that will be committed in the future. And the cross covered all sins, not just those we repent of. There will always be some we haven't recognised and so haven't repented of. We'd still be condemned if they'd not been forgiven as well.

The cross covered all sin, not just the sins of people who would believe. 1 John 2:2 says – *'And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world'* This is hugely significant. The sins of the most evil people on the earth, past, present and future, have been forgiven. But that forgiveness can't operate in their lives if they reject Jesus – if