

**Capitol Commission  
Books and Bagels  
1100 Court  
7:30 – 10:45 AM  
Wednesday, June 28<sup>th</sup>**

### Introduction

What would it have been like to grow up with God the Son? Scripture records that after the virgin birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary had other children. Imagine being a sibling who had a step-brother who never sinned? The natural bent of man would be jealousy, anger and hatred rising up within. The Scriptures point out the tensions of Jesus' siblings toward him, until one event happened. The event which I am speaking is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was indisputable evidence! After that event James, a step- brother of Jesus bowed his knee and put his trust in God the Son, Jesus Christ. He believed and became a follower of Christ. This James in time became a leader of the early church. The book of the Bible that God the Spirit wrote through him is James. It gives practical wisdom. In that book, James presents the reason for quarreling.

James 4:1 (ESV) *“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”*

Contrasted to Scripture is Greek Mythology. In these 7<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Century fictional writings, war, the antonym of peace is sourced and blamed on the god Ares (Ἄρης [áɾɛ:s]) the Greek god of war. According to the archaic tradition represented by the Iliad and Odyssey Ares was one of Twelve Olympians.[all viewed as gods in Greek Literature] Ares was the son of Zeus and Hera.<sup>1</sup> In Greek literature, he often represents the physical or violent and untamed aspect of war.<sup>2</sup> “Zeus calls his own son a double faced liar, the most hateful of all the gods who hold Olympus, expressing that forever quarrelling is dear to his heart...”<sup>3</sup>

The Greek hymns, 7<sup>th</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> century, depict prayers to this mythological god Ares. What is thought-provoking is that

these prayers testify to an inward struggle within the heart of man..

"Ares, exceeding in strength, chariot-rider, golden-helmed, doughty in heart, shield-bearer, Savior of cities, harnessed in bronze, strong of arm, unwearying, mighty with the spear, O defense of Olympus, father of warlike Victory, ally of Themis, stern governor of the rebellious, leader of righteous men, sceptered King of manliness, who whirl your fiery sphere among the planets in their sevenfold courses through the ether wherein your blazing steeds ever bear you above the third firmament of heaven; **hear me, helper of men, giver of dauntless youth! Shed down a kindly ray from above upon my life, and strength of war, that I may be able to drive away bitter cowardice from my head and crush down the deceitful impulses of my soul. Restrain also the keen fury of my heart which provokes me to tread the ways of blood-curdling strife. Rather, O blessed one, give you me boldness to abide within the harmless laws of peace, avoiding strife and hatred and the violent fiends of death.**"<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Even in mythological literature the truth that is declared in James 4:1 is presented. Why? Because God has written His law on the inward part of every human being, (Romans 2:14-15).

Bruce Ashford, in his chapter on War and Peace gives a quick description of how we got to where we are today.

The Bible's overarching narrative speaks powerfully to the notions of war and peace. At the time of creation, God's world was marked by peace. The Hebrew word for this is *shalom* and carries quite a bit more weight than the English word peace. In English, peace generally implies the absence of conflict. But in Hebrew, *shalom*, signifies something more; universal flourishing, delight, order, justice- and yes, the absence of conflict. The fall of Adam and Eve broke the *shalom*, leaving us with the world as we know it, full of strife, murder, and constant warfare. But God would not allow us to languish forever; his provision for a world of broken *shalom* was to send a Redeemer, a Prince of peace, to atone for sin and restore what had been lost.<sup>5</sup>

So our text today, Ephesians 2:14 brings welcome relief.

***“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall...”***

<sup>1</sup> Hesiod, Theogony 921 (Loeb Classical Library numbering); Iliad, 5.890–896.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Burkert, Greek Religion (Blackwell, 1985, 2004 reprint, originally published 1977 in German), pp. 141; William Hansen, Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 113.”... in contrast to his sister the armored Athena, whose functions as a goddess of intelligence include military strategy and generalship.”

<sup>3</sup> Iliad, Book 5, lines 798–891, 895–898 in the translation of Richmond Lattimore.

<sup>4</sup> Homeric Hymn 8 to Ares (trans. Evelyn-White) (Greek epic 7th to 4th centuries BC)

<http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0013.tlg008.perseus-eng1>

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Ashford, Chris Pappalardo One Nation Under God (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015) 125-26

1. The Great Division ('who made both groups one')

God's plan of redemption involved choosing a person, Abram, who became Abraham. This man was chosen by God to implement bringing a redeemer into this world. The redeemer was none other than God who took upon humanity. But the framework of the incarnation had to be set up. So God chose Abraham and Sarah to bear Isaac, and through Isaac came Jacob and Esau. Through Jacob came the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel came about as the result of four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Israel went from twelve sons, to over two million in four hundred years. The book of Exodus reveals the great work of God to bring His people, Israel, out of slavery to Mt Sinai where God gave Israel the Law of God and instructions on how to worship Him.

Israel is the vehicle in which redemption was brought to the world. The position of being the vehicle to save the world made Israel proud. This is evidenced in the pride of being circumcised, (2:11) and the additional law definitions the Pharisees created. But more than that.

History of Israel scholar O'Brien comments:

The most natural reference to the fence is the law. Certainly, the oral law was understood in Judaism as a fence around the law (Mishnah *Abot* 1:1), but even the law itself provided a fence around Israel. It separated Jews from Gentiles both religiously and sociologically, and caused deep seated hostility.<sup>6</sup>

Although, Gentiles could come to know God through Israel and many did, the racial tension between Jew and Gentile was one of the fundamental divisions of the first-century world.

2. Christ, who is our peace, broke down the barrier

Ephesians 2:15 (ESV) "by **abolishing** the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace."

Through the perfect offering of Himself once for all upon the cross, (2:13,16), Jesus Christ did away with what separated Jew and Gentile, the law of commandments consisting in regulations. Paul writes to the Colossians and explains it further; Colossians 1:22 (ESV) "He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."

The highlighted word "**abolishing**" means to render ineffective or nullify. In our text this word means that Christ's death on the cross has made the Mosaic law so firmly anchored to the Mosaic covenant no longer binding to the new covenant believer. This idea is clarified in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Galatians 3:24 (ESV) "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith."

This is the hope man has to be at peace with God. Christ has kept the law in our place. Man can be justified by faith!

3. The New Man peacefully unites all. (He Himself)

Christ has created in Himself, the one, new man. It is the body of Christ, the church with Christ himself as the head of the body. The purpose was to kill hostility. The cross did that, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. All come the same way to God.

Ephesians 2:16–18 (ESV) "And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

Christ died for one race, the human race. There is only one Savior. The Law condemns all, but Christ offers to all peace with God. This is not bigotry this is the cure for all.

Conclusion: It was first called "mold juice" by a scientist who saw something different in one of his petri juices. The date was September 3, 1928. The scientist, Alexander Fleming and the discover was later identified as *Penicillium notatum*. Fleming found that his "mold juice" was capable of killing a wide range of harmful bacteria, such as streptococcus, meningococcus and the diphtheria bacillus. Fleming published his findings of this substance attack on a wide range of harmful bacteria in June of 1929.

This pioneered further research that led to the life- saving antibiotic Penicillin. Before its introduction there was no effective treatment for infections such as pneumonia, gonorrhea or rheumatic fever. Hospitals were full of people with blood poisoning contracted from a cut or a scratch, and doctors could do little for them but wait and hope. No one attacked those that administered this cure that they were bigots and particularists, that they were somehow condemning all other doctors. Penicillin was welcomed, for it saved lives.

In the same way Christ through the cross is the greatest cure of the greatest problem of man – sin and the result being at enmity with God. This narrow way of bringing peace to you is the greatest story ever told about the greatest person who ever lived who offers you the greatest gift you could ever receive. The law condemns all, and no man has kept the law. But Christ, the God-Man kept the law and on the cross nullified the effect of the law for each person who places their trust in Him. Christ himself is our peace.

Peace with God – "Jesus said, Come unto me all you who are heavy laden, (this is speaking of the religious burdened with all that religion requires) and I will give you rest." **This peace can be received by faith. Romans 10:9,10**

<sup>6</sup> O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 196). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co