St Peter the Fisherman – Whitianga  
Sunday December 2022

Theme: Advent Week 2

I runga i te ingoa o te papa, te tama, me te wairua tapu.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*

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The Four Weeks of Advent:

This week, we begin the second week of the Christian season of Advent, that 4 week period when we relive the time of waiting for Christ, the promised Messiah, the Saviour, to arrive. We mark that time with candles, and light one each week until Christmas Day, when we light the central, white Christ candle.

One advantage of following an annual Christmas tradition is that it deliberately gives us a time and space to reflect on Biblical themes we don’t always think about.

*The Second Week of Advent Candle, also known as the Bethlehem Candle*

Advent Candle 2 stands for Peace. As for the first advent candle it is purple, represents Peace and is also known as the “Bethlehem Candle” as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. In some traditions, the second candle and the fourth one (“The Angel’s Candle,” representing love) may be interchanged.

So, Peace is the main focus of the second week of Advent. One of the prophecies about Jesus calls him “the Prince of Peace” ([Isaiah 9:6-7](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/passage/?q=isaiah+9:6-7)). When the angels appeared to the shepherds, they ended their message by saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests” ([Luke 2:14](https://www.biblestudytools.com/luke/2-14.html)). When Simeon saw baby Jesus in the temple, he thanked God that he could now die in peace for he had seen the Messiah ([Luke 2:29-33](https://www.biblestudytools.com/luke/passage/?q=luke+2:29-33)).

*What Does Peace Really Mean?*

Peace is one of those words that people use a lot, but they don’t always explain it very well. Depending on which religion or philosophy that people follow, their definitions of peace may be highly different. Thus, it’s important for us as Christians to understand how the Bible describes peace.

(Shalom slide)

In Hebrew, the word for peace is shalom. Throughout the Bible, shalom is used in several ways. When people are feeling physically well, others say that they “are shalom” ([Genesis 29:6](https://www.biblestudytools.com/genesis/29-6.html)). People who have friendships with each other or have recently reconciled from conflict, have “shalom” with each other. People who have “shalom” with God have his protection and blessing ([Numbers 25:12](https://www.biblestudytools.com/numbers/25-12.html)). Shalom with God is to be an inner state that comes from trusting in him.

The Old Testament also talks about Israel having peace with God through a covenant, and that this peace is conditional. Israel’s people make a covenant with God where he provides peace and protection as long as they do not “turn to folly” ([Psalm 85:8](https://www.biblestudytools.com/psalms/85-8.html)). When the nation strays from following God, he withdraws his “shalom” from them ([Jeremiah 16:5](https://www.biblestudytools.com/jeremiah/16-5.html)). By the time that Jesus appeared on the scene, Israel had been ruled by other empires for centuries, so “shalom” with God had been absent for a while.

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*How Does Jesus Bring Peace?*

Much has been said about how the Israelites were expecting the Messiah to be a saviour who would rescue them from the Romans. If that were the case, the Messiah would bring peace by ending the reign of oppression and the string of failed rebellions. He would return Israel to its former national glory. (Another classic example of how we as humans have a view of what we hope or expect God to do for us, which doesn’t necessarily connect with what God has in mind for us).

Jesus talked about peace on several occasions. During the Sermon on the Mount, he taught that peacemakers are blessed and will be called God’s sons ([Matthew 5:9](https://www.biblestudytools.com/matthew/5-9.html)).

(Jesus’ peace - 1)

At the Last Supper as he told his disciples that he would leave them soon, Jesus comforted them by saying, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” ([John 14:27](https://www.biblestudytools.com/john/14-27.html)). Clearly, the peace that Jesus offered was not typical.

(Jesus’ peace – 2)

As his followers learned when Jesus died and then rose from the dead, he did not bring peace by overthrowing governments. Instead, he brought peace for Jews and Gentiles ([Romans 10:12](https://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/10-12.html)), by dying for them. He became a sacrificial lamb, dying for humanity’s sins once and for all ([Hebrews 9:12](https://www.biblestudytools.com/hebrews/9-12.html)). In doing so, he made peace between humanity and God ([1 John 2:2](https://www.biblestudytools.com/1-john/2-2.html)). Therefore, everyone who believes in Jesus’ divinity and resurrection ([Romans 10:9](https://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/10-9.html)) achieves peace with God. Their sins are paid for, and they gain eternal life ([John 3:16](https://www.biblestudytools.com/john/3-16.html)).

(Peace video clip)

*Advent Week 2 Prayer*

Here is a prayer for the second week of Advent, as we remember this theme of peace.

(Glory to God in the highest slide)

Lord Jesus, we are all tempted to live without peace. It is not easy for us to remember that our peace is ultimately found in our status as believers, like your children. Help us to see the times when we have lived without peace and forgive us for our transgression. Set our minds on you, that we may remember you are the prince of peace, and our security comes from you alone. Teach us that this peace is inward, everlasting, and can exist regardless of our circumstances. In whatever way you believe is best, teach us how to live in that peace every day. We ask for that in your holy name, Amen.