
Hope for Peace Part II: Peace on Earth

Summary:

In this session we examine two more "peace pictures." Both of these have a far-reaching vision that moves beyond nationalistic interests to a dream of world peace.

Basic Bible References:

Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 19:19-25

Introduction

In a world where fighting has continued in some countries for years, where new tensions and new conflicts are breaking out every few months, and where people exist in fear of devastating acts of terrorism, the usual vision of *peace* which people are ready to affirm (if they have hope enough to affirm anything) is one in which one's own security plays a prominent role. Protection from all that is going wrong now and preservation from the even worse things that could happen soon are deeply felt needs, and for good reasons. We ought, therefore, to be able to understand and not be too critical of Israel's similar feelings, which resulted in the preservation of so many expressions of hope for her own future safety in the Old Testament.

In this session, however, we come to something more surprising-passages which express a breadth of vision and a concern for other nations which transcend the usual human need to be sure that one's own nation or group has its interests protected in any projection of a better future. The two principal texts do not happen to use the word *shalom* at all, but that is probably just coincidence, for they certainly have every right to be called *peace*-pictures.

Guidelines for Study

Background from the Author

Session 13 tries to express the breadth of the vision of *peace* which appears in Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 19:19-25, and to suggest there is a concept of world *peace* which is broader and more far-reaching than any national government is willing to take very seriously in our day. Those passages are a challenge to us not to be satisfied with anything less.

It may help to reveal the remarkable breadth and tolerance of outlook of these two passages if they are set alongside one dealt with earlier, Leviticus 26. Here *peace* means being able to drive out enemies when attacked. The question will be, for some and perhaps for most, whether there is any point in taking the language of Micah 4 and Isaiah 19 seriously. Isn't that just daydreaming? The Old Testament contains challenges to the familiar concept of security at someone else's expense, and holds up an ideal of true security – meaning everyone is secure. Whether we can make any significant progress toward such a goal is also debatable.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you think of the idea that *peace* is no longer “victory over the enemy” as proclaimed by Micah? Is this a “*peace* picture” you can imagine? What would the world be like if his vision became a reality?
2. If Micah’s vision is to come true, what part do you think God expects us to play?
3. Can you apply Isaiah’s perspective (19:19-25) to our relationship with such nations as China, Russia, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia? Is it possible to hope for the welfare of your enemy rather than the destruction of your enemy?

4. Is there real security for our country if security does not exist in all countries? Is the challenge presented by Micah and Isaiah just a “pipe dream” or is it a challenge we should be seeking to meet?

For Further Study

1. Research the background of the prophets Micah and Isaiah and their prophecies.
2. Formulate your own “*peace* picture” for the church and our world.

For Groups

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