

JEHOVAH-SHALOM

THE NAME Jehovah-shalom is found in Judges 6:24: “Then Gideon built an altar unto Jehovah and called it **Jehovah-shalom,**” which means **Jehovah is peace.**

THE OCCASION OF ITS REVELATION

It was more than 200 years since Jehovah had revealed Himself to His people as Jehovah-M’Kaddesh. Jehovah who sanctifies. Joshua had long since died. The land had been conquered and divided among the tribes, but nothing approaching national unity had been achieved in all this time. There was no central government or worship. It was a period in which “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

For after Joshua died Israel began to forget Jehovah their God, and to turn to the gods of the peoples round about. A new generation arose which forgot Him who, as Jehovah-jireh, had provided redemption from bondage in Egypt through the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and with great and mighty wonders had led them out. They were no longer mindful of Him who, as Jehovah-rophe, had healed their sicknesses and sorrows, and would have prevented such misfortunes from coming upon them. They suffered defeats because they turned their backs upon Him who, as Jehovah-nissi, had been their banner of victory in trial and struggle. They would not sanctify themselves to Him who, as Jehovah-M’Kaddesh, had sanctified them to His cause, but they corrupted themselves with idolatries and their abominations. Thus they lost their purity, peace, prosperity, and liberty.

Israel could not appear to realize its destiny as a special and separate people, set apart to Jehovah’s service and purpose in the midst of the nations. They seemed unable to rise above a material conception and plane of living. To live, to multiply, to inherit the land-this seemed to them a sufficient fulfillment of their function, an error common to this very day. It is not difficult to understand, then, the attraction of the grossly materialistic gods of the heathen for them. Without a sense of mission there was no common purpose of uniting as one people. Without

spiritual vision they fell an easy prey to the appetites and lusts of the flesh. Every apostasy brought punishment and misery-a chastening of Jehovah to awaken them to their spiritual calling. Repentance brought deliverance through the leadership of judges raised up of God. Every succeeding apostasy called for even severer chastening by means of the surrounding nations-chastenings which not only deprived them of the fruits of their land and labors, but brought them into slavery. Without obedience to Jehovah they had no right to the land. His people must be more than mere tillers of the soil and dressers of vineyards (in any age); otherwise they should not enjoy the land. They tilled and planted, but they did not reap. As Jehovah had sown spiritual seed in their hearts, and they had allowed their idolatrous neighbors to trample and tear it out by the imitation of their corrupt idolatries, so now these same heathen embittered and endangered Israel's physical existence.

The enemy they should have completely subdued, subdued them, sweeping over the land, reaping what Israel had sown, and driving them into the caves and rocks. Israel was compelled to make underground caves with air holes, like the catacombs, to which they could flee at the enemy's approach, with watchmen constantly posted to warn them of it.

It was a period of alternating prosperity and adversity, of sinning and repenting, of slavery and deliverance. They would grievously sin and be brought very low. In their extremity they would remember Jehovah their God and cry out to Him for deliverance. Jehovah would hear them and raise up a deliverer for them. Then after serving Jehovah, Israel would fall away again, and the whole process would be repeated.

Gideon was a young man in a time of severe oppression by the Midianites. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and He delivered them into the hand of the Midianites seven years. They were compelled to live in dens in the mountains. Midian and her allies, including the Amalekites, would come with great hordes of men and of cattle and eat up the land, destroying what they could not devour and leaving neither sustenance, nor implements, nor animals. Gideon was threshing a little wheat, saved somehow from the all-devouring hordes of the enemy, and in the

secrecy of the wine-press, for fear of them, when the angel of Jehovah appeared to him with a promise of deliverance in response to Israel's cry. Gideon, after some doubt, hesitation, and reassurance, accepted the promise and the challenge. In faith he reared an altar which he called Jehovah-shalom, in confident anticipation of victory and peace.

MEANING AND USE OF THE WORD "SHALOM"

This word is one of the most significant in the Old Testament, its various shades of meaning harmonizing with the doctrine of the atonement as the basis of peace with God.

It is translated sometimes as "whole," as in Deuteronomy 27:6: "Thou shalt build the altar of Jehovah thy God of whole stones." As "finished" the same word is used in Daniel 5:26: "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." So Solomon "finished" the temple (I Kings 9:25). As "full" it is used in Genesis 15: 16: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." It is used in the sense of making good a loss and is translated as "make good" in Exodus 21:34; 22:5, 6, and in other similar passages in the laws of Israel relating to losses inflicted by carelessness. Thus also it is translated as restitution or repay. In the physical and material sense of wholeness or completeness it is translated as "welfare" and "well." in Genesis 43:27 Joseph inquires concerning the welfare of his brothers, and using the same word again in the same verse asks if their father is well. So Joab in II Samuel 20:9, before dealing the treacherous and fatal blow, asks Amasa, "Art thou in health, my brother?" It is quite frequently used as "render" and "pay" or "perform" in the sense of fulfilling or completing obligations. This is particularly true of vows rendered to the Lord. "Pay thy vows unto the most High," says the psalmist (50:14). "When thou shalt vow a vow unto Jehovah thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it: for Jehovah thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21). On the contrary, "the wicked borroweth and payeth not again" (Ps. 37:21) . It is translated "requite" and "recompense" in a few instances. As the One who deals justly and makes right, Jehovah says in Deuteronomy 32:35, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense [shillem]." About twenty times it is translated "perfect." "Give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart," David asks of Jehovah (I Chron. 29:19).

And Solomon echoes this in his own exhortation to the people when the house of the Lord was perfected (shalem) : “Let your heart therefore be perfect [shalem] with Jehovah our God” (I Kings 8:61) ; that is, let it be in wholeness or in harmony with God. And this is the basic idea underlying all the various translations of this one Hebrew word-a harmony of relationship or a reconciliation based upon the completion of a transaction, the payment of a debt, the giving of satisfaction. Therefore this word is most often and most appropriately translated “peace” some 170 times. It expressed the deepest desire and need of the human heart. It represented the greatest measure of contentment and satisfaction in life. Of King Solomon it was said that in his reign Judah and Israel dwelt safely (that is, in confidence and peace), every man under his vine and under his fig tree (I Kings 4:25). It was to be characteristic of the reign of Messiah, the righteous Branch of David, of whom Solomon was typical, that Judah and Israel should dwell safely in peace (Jer. 23:6). One of the great names of Messiah was to be “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), and Jerusalem, Messiah’s city, means city of peace or possession of peace. Peace was the most common form of greeting as it is to this day in Bible and even other lands.

Finally, it is also, obviously, the word used in “peace offering.” The peace offering was one of the blood sacrifices of which the shed blood was the atonement on which reconciliation and peace were based (Lev. 3; 7:11-21). In the peace offering this restoration of fellowship between God and man, broken by sin, but now atoned for by the shed blood, was indicated by the fact that both God and man, priest and people, partook of the offering.

The various shades of meaning contained in this word all indicate that every blessing, temporal and spiritual, is included in restoring man to that peace with God which was lost by the fall.

JEHOVAH, THE SOURCE OF PEACE

Jehovah in His own person is perfect peace. This He must be if He is to be the source of peace to mankind. He is grieved at the sin and corruption of the world, which at creation He had pronounced so good. He is stirred to wrath at the evil of the wicked. He is not indifferent to the

sorrows and needs of the race as well as of His people. “I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . I know their sorrow” (Exod. 3:7); and Isaiah tells us, “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (63:9). In the Book of Judges, when, after Gideon’s time, Israel had again fallen into sin, we read in 10:16 that “his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.” Yet none of these things disturb His peace in the sense that they can destroy or unsteady the perfect balance of His divine nature. He could never give to others a peace that passes understanding if He were not perfect, unfailing peace Himself. This is our hope and assurance.

But He is the source of peace in His attitude toward us. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil” (Jer. 29:11). And through Isaiah He speaks to His people: “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (48: 18). Nothing is more clearly indicated in the Scriptures than that His desires toward all mankind and especially toward His people are desires of good. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but only that he turn from his evil way and live (Ezek. 33:11). To this end the Scriptures are full of the promise and purpose of peace. “If ye walk in my statutes ... and do them ... I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land” (Lev. 26:3, 6). “The Lord will bless his people with peace,” says David (Ps. 29:11) . “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us,” says Isaiah (26:12). Speaking of a future glory of Jerusalem Isaiah continues: “For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river” (66:12). And it forms the apex of the great high priestly benediction of the triune Jehovah, with which Aaron and his sons were commanded to bless the children of Israel: “Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. 6:24-26).

THE PRESENCE OF JEHOVAH IS PEACE

It was Jehovah Himself who appeared to Gideon, in contrast to the prophet who had first been sent to the people. For the angel of Jehovah of Judges 6:22 is addressed by Gideon in the same

verse as “O Jehovah Elohim,” and in the next verse He is spoken of as the Jehovah who spoke peace to Gideon. This was the most striking manifestation of Jehovah yet made in all this chaotic, restless, struggling period of Israel’s history. Of Othniel it was stated that the spirit of Jehovah came upon him (3:10). The Lord raised up Ehud, another judge (3:15). Barak is called through the prophetess and judge Deborah (4:6). But Gideon appears to begin a second period in the history of the Judges. A new and more striking manifestation of Jehovah appears necessary if the people are to be arrested in the evil course which seemed to be hastening toward a final crisis. Thus Jehovah appears Himself to Gideon, and the remaining and larger portion of the book, though covering little more than a century, exhibits God’s dealings with His people in much fuller detail than the first few chapters which cover about two centuries.

As in the Book of Leviticus Jehovah was most appropriately revealed as Jehovah-M’Kaddesh, Jehovah who sanctifies, so the revelation Jehovah-shalom, Jehovah is peace, appears most appropriately and opportunely in the Book of Judges. After the conquest of Canaan, Israel should have entered into its rest, typical of that rest spoken of in Hebrews 4. It was of this rest in Canaan that Moses spoke in the wilderness when he said: “Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which Jehovah your God giveth you” (Deut. 12:9). And the following verse speaks of that rest as “over Jordan.” But because of disobedience Israel failed to gain even that typical rest. Nothing is more characteristic of the Book of Judges than its chaotic restlessness. Over and over again after deliverance from bondage and misery, we read that the land had rest for awhile. In security •and fear had never been greater than in Gideon’s day.

Thus it is that the angel of Jehovah comes to Gideon saying, “Jehovah is with thee” (Judges 6:12). Israel knew no peace because it no longer knew God’s presence. This is the answer to Gideon’s question: “O my Lord, If Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” Jehovah was not with Israel. He is with those who are with Him. The word of the prophet to a king of Judah was: “Jehovah is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:2). There is never peace to the wicked. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up dirt and

mire. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:20, 21). The root idea of the word translated “wicked” is restlessness. They do not know the way of peace, continues the prophet, and whoever walks in their way doesn’t know peace (59:7, 8).

When Gideon realized the character of the visitor, he was afraid (Judges 6:22). Perhaps his doubt and hesitancy to believe the promise of deliverance made him fear. But evidently it was the consciousness of human sinfulness in the presence of the Divine. Man knows that all is not well, or whole, or peace between God and himself. Man needs to be reconciled to God, but reconciliation can be effected only by paying the price of sin. But the price of sin is death. How then can God save the sinner in that case? In the Old Testament, as we know, it was by the temporary, typical expedient of an animal substitute whose shed blood paid the price, restored harmony, and brought peace.

At the angel’s command Gideon had laid such an offering on an altar of rock nearby. As a token of acceptance the angel had caused fire to come up out of the rock to consume the offering. On the basis of this the angel now says to Gideon: “Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die” (Judges 6:23). Then Gideon built the altar which he called Jehovah-shalom. The experience in the presence of the angel of Jehovah had no doubt taught him also that Jehovah who sanctifies His people and demands a sanctification and purity of life on their part will enable them to fulfill His demands upon them if they will yield’ themselves to Him. Man, conscious of his sinfulness, naturally shrinks from God’s holiness and realizes the impossibility of being in himself what a holy God requires, but God reassures us and speaks peace to our hearts by saying: “I am Jehovah who doth sanctify you and enables you to live in my presence and fellowship.” This is assured in the title Jehovah-shalom. There is perfect peace to those who know Jehovah as Jehovah-M’Kaddesh, Jehovah who sanctifies, and are sanctified, separated, holy to Him. How beautifully the prophet Isaiah expresses this! “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ...” (Isa. 26:2-4).

Gideon now believed that even though his family was small, with Jehovah one could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The altar he erected was not for sacrifice, but a memorial and witness testifying to the fact that Jehovah desires certainly not the destruction but the peace of those He has already saved and set apart for His service; that in this service of His He bestows every requirement and meets every need-of sanctification, steadfastness, wisdom, courage, boldness, and victory.

JEHOVAH-JESUS, THE FULLNESS AND PERFECTION OF OUR PEACE

Gideon's name for Jehovah finds its fullest expression and realization in the New Testament. It is frequently applied to God, who is called "the God of peace" (Rom. 15:33; II Cor. 13:11; Heb. 13:20, etc.). It is also applied indirectly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He also in His own person is perfect peace. He speaks of "my peace" as when in John 14:27 He says to His disciples: "My peace I give unto you," and, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:33). As with Jehovah in the Old Testament, He also was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He Himself suffered being tempted. As was predicted of Him, He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isa. 53:4). Nevertheless He carried within Himself that perfect repose of spirit which belongs to God alone, and which alone could say to others: "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28, 29). It was an evidence of His deity.

He is the Prince of Peace promised in the Old Testament (Isa. 9:6). Before His birth Zacharias announced Him as the day-spring from on high who had visited His people "to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78, 79), while at His birth a multitude of the heavenly host sang "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14).

He also preached and promised peace. How often He said to those He healed and comforted, "Go in peace!" How He wept over Jerusalem which would reject Him, saying: "If thou hadst known

... the things which belong to thy peace” (Luke 19:42). His first words to His disciples after rising from the dead are, “Peace be unto you.” The burden of Peter’s first message to the Gentiles was the preaching of “peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:36), who, says Paul, “came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Eph. 2:17).

He accomplished that peace for us. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5: 1) . It is through His death that we were reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10), for “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (II Cor. 5:19); “having made peace,” continues Paul, “through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20). By His own precious blood He broke down the barrier of sin that stood between us and God and opened for us that new and living way into the holiest of all. And we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ may enter there with boldness in the full assurance of a perfect reconciliation and peace. But the measure of our sanctification to Him and our continued trust in Him is the measure of our peace in Him. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,” says the apostle (Phil. 4:7), but he suggests in verse 6 that it depends on the measure of our trust, and in verse 9 on the measure of our obedience. In Colossians 3:15 he tells us we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. For to be spiritually minded is peace (Rom. 8:6), and many believers are more or less carnally minded, which is to lack that peace. Peace is one of the fruits of that spirit which is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sanctification. And Paul prays that the God of peace Himself sanctify us wholly that (in His peace) our spirit, soul, and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:23, A.S.V.).

Through Him we have peace with God. He is to us the peace of God. There is no hope of peace apart from Him either for individuals or nations. First righteousness, then peace. To this both Old and New Testaments bear witness. “The work of righteousness shall be peace;” says Isaiah, “and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (32:17). But the only righteousness acceptable to God is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and those upon whom He bestows

it through their faith in Him. Those who are not thus righteous do not know the way of peace (Rom. 3:11, 17). That mysterious type of Christ, Melchizedek, is first king of righteousness, and after that king of Salem or peace (Heb. 7:2). It is glory to God in the highest, and then and then only, peace on earth, good will among men (Luke 2:14). Peace is everywhere spoken of in the New Testament as from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be had only by reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ who is the Jehovah-shalom of the New Testament.