

GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE TO MEN

Luke 2:14

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Study Questions:

1. Read verses 1-7. What do these verses suggest about worldly power and glory? Contrast the power and glory of Caesar on the throne with the baby Jesus laid in a manger. (Think about 1 Peter 1:24,25 and Psalm 8:1-4.)
2. Read verses 8-14. To whom did the angel announce the birth of Jesus? What was their response to the angel? (8,9) What was the message of the angel? (10-12) What does this tell us about the baby Jesus?
3. Read verse 11 again. What does it mean that a "Savior" has been born? Review mankind's need for a Savior--Ge 3:15,17,19; Ro 5:12. Why the town of David? (4; 2Sa 7:11; Isa 9:6,7; 11:1) How does this reveal God's glory?
4. What is peace? How can there be peace among men? (Eph 5:33; Jn 14:27) How does eternal life bring peace? (Jn 6:35; 67-69) Why does the pilgrim life bring peace? (Mk 8:35,36) How does the kingdom of God give peace? (Jn 14:2; Lk 23:42-43; Rev 21:4) How can you live for the glory of God?

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! At this Christmas, we want to think about Luke 2:14. It says, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

First, Glory to God.

The word, "glory," is a most attractive word to all men. As there is the glory of God, so there is human glory. In history, Joseph Stalin is known as the most cruel dictator. But he had a Hitler phobia, because Hitler had great popularity among young people in all European countries, as well as in Russia. Stalin praised Hitler as "the Napoleon Bonaparte of his time." After World War II, Stalin became one of the four leaders of world power nations. But he soon died. His fearful life was too long. And his glory was too short. Everybody said that Nikita Khrushchev

was ugly, because he was chubby and looked like a bulldog. But he was sneaky. So Stalin tried to eliminate him from his political circle again and again. But Khrushchev swallowed all the humiliation Stalin inflicted on him. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev rose to power. Once, he enjoyed a one-week vacation to the Crimea. After vacation, he sat down on his chair and found a letter of dismissal from the Communist Supreme Council. Man likes glory. But it is too short and temporal. 1 Peter 1:24,25 says, "For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.'" Only the glory of God is forever.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When we read this verse, it sounds beautiful. We learn that this verse is the song of celebration of the birth of Jesus. When we prayerfully meditate on this verse, we learn that "Glory to God" has its mysterious Biblical meaning. "Peace to men" also has its mysterious Biblical meaning. In the ancient time, people knew that there was God, but they could not give him a name, because his glory was so great that men could not dare to argue pro and con on his name. Generally, God's name was regarded as "Glory," because there is no better adoration of God than the word "glory." There are many hymns which praise the glory of God. In history, innumerable genius musicians praised the name of Jesus as the God of glory. So there are many music pieces composed on the theme, "glory." Even non-Christian Beethoven composed a symphony about the glory of God. Psalm 8:1-4 says, "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens...When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him...." This Psalm best explains about the glory of God.

The angel of the Lord came to announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night, and they were terrified (9). As soon as the angel finished the announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the fields, the host of angels appeared and began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Glory is the most proper expression of God.

Glory has the same meaning as power. For example, our God is the Creator God. Out of nothing, he made the heavens and the earth. The world looks very big. But to God, the world is a handful of dust in his hands (Isa 40:12). To our God, the world is a few drops of water in a bucket. Our God is the God of glory and at the same time, our God is Almighty God.

Our God made the world and everything in it. God allowed Adam and Eve to live in paradise. It was an autumn day. A beautiful woman, Eve, went out to enjoy the beautiful sunset of the western horizon, which was colored bright red. By chance, there Eve met a friend in silky clothes. The friend was a serpent. He said, "You can eat fruit from all the trees in the garden, and you will not die." But God said, "You will surely die" (Gen 2:17). Eve took and ate the fruit, only the core of the apple was left. When her husband came to look for her, the woman gave the core to him. Adam ate the core of the apple. As a result, Adam violated the holy command of God (Gen 2:17). God gave Adam absolute freedom. But in order to keep the spiritual order between God and men, God gave Adam only one command to keep before him. Adam failed. After Adam's Fall, sin came into the world (Ro 5:12). Adam and Eve lost paradise. At the moment Adam and Eve were about to leave paradise, God saw that they were wearing skirts made of dried fig leaves to cover up their nakedness. God, in his mercy, made leather skirts and gave them to Adam and Eve to wear. In this event, instead of revealing wrath and anger, God revealed his glory to Adam and Eve.

In the course of time, twelve patriarchs were established in Jacob's place (Gen 37-50). God's purpose in sending them to Egypt was to let them experience life under godless and merciless people, so that they would come to know the grace of God. Since they moved into Egypt, their number grew and grew. So Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, began to oppress them to the degree that they would perish. But God delivered them from Egypt through Moses after 430 years. God was happy that his people came out of Egypt. God called Moses to come up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments so that they might be a people with the law of God (Ex 32-34). In the meantime, the people annoyed Aaron to make a golden calf to worship. After that, they ate and drank and danced.

To God, 430 years of training seemed to have been in vain. To God, his people had no hope to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So God should have destroyed them all. Instead, God called Moses a second time and gave him again the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

In view of history, God sent many servants of God to his people in order to proclaim the knowledge of God. But every time, some came back with one eye. Some came back with a broken nose. Innumerable servants of God were killed because they proclaimed the word of God to his people and encouraged them to carry out God's mission (Mk 12:1-12). But God did not abandon them. God never forgot his prayer topic, "...you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). God had a great hope for his people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

But the glory of God had never stopped. God gave the primitive gospel in Genesis 3:15, that he would crush the head of Satan and that he would send a Savior. Since then, God did not forget his promise to send his servant to save men from their sins. Sinful men repeatedly committed sins. But God bore with his sinful people three times 14 generations (Mt 1:17), that is 1,680 years. Since God loved David, who was a man after God's own heart, God personally and intimately renewed his promise to send a Savior from his offspring. 2 Samuel 7:11 says, "The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you." Here, "house" means the kingdom of David, and ultimately, the kingdom of God. As God promised (Isa 11:1), God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ. God could have sent one of his servants this time, too. But this time, God sent his one and only Son, as promised, to save men from their sins. Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins. According to the angel's chorus, the birth of Jesus is glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.

Second, peace to men.

What is peace? Peace is "freedom from strife of any kind." Even though they are many, the stars are peaceful because they move around celestial courses quietly and regularly. So many a great man received one or two stars.

On the other hand, there are too many broken families and there are too many children whose hearts were broken when their families were broken. A beautiful young lady has been crying for the last six years. She cries when she is happy. She cries when she is unhappy. She cries when she takes final exams. Many people wanted to help her not to cry. But it didn't work. When her family was broken, her heart was broken. But her broken heart has been healed since Jesus came into her heart. There are innumerable broken-hearted young people. If Bob's father knew how to love his wife, he would not break his family and the hearts of his children. If Angela's mother knew how to respect her husband, she would be loved abundantly by him. And in the family where there is love and respect between husband and wife, there is paradise for their children (Eph 5:33).

But there is peace. Glory is the name of God, Peace is the name of Jesus. Jesus came to this world to give men peace. How does Jesus give peace to men? He gives peace to men by saving men from their sins. For example, there was a man of fame and wealth. He had everything he wanted to have. But at night, when nobody seemed to be around, he came to Jesus to receive the peace of mind. He had no peace of mind because he had no peace of God in his heart. Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (Jn 3:3). He was Nicodemus. He was one of the religious politicians. Living in the world, he committed sin little by little until it piled up like a big mountain. The burden of sin oppressed him. But Jesus told him to be born again and experience the kingdom of God and receive the privilege of entering the kingdom of God. Even the man of fame and wealth could not have the peace of God because he loved the world more than the law of God. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." Paul said in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Third, Jesus gives us eternal life.

Once, there were more than 5,000 people who liked Jesus, because

he fed them to their fill with the five loaves and two fish which Andrew brought. The next day, early in the morning, people gathered around Jesus. This time, Jesus wanted to give them eternal bread. So Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:35). Many people sensed that Jesus was not going to be the king of bread (Jn 6:15). When their expectation was not satisfied, they began to run away two by two, four by four, ten by ten, twenty by twenty, hundred by hundred. Only the disciples of Jesus were left. Then Jesus asked Peter, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:67-69).

Many foolish people think that death is the end of everything and they live in the world at random. They are secular humanists. They think, "My life is my own, and nobody can interfere with my human freedom." They must come to God for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Without eternal life nobody can be happy because he has no true future security. Mark 8:35,36 says, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" That's true. In order to give us eternal life, God sacrificed his one and only Son as the Lamb of God on the cross. When we have eternal life, we can live in this world as holy pilgrims. When we have eternal life, we can live in this world as sacrificial servants of God. When we have eternal life, we are compelled to teach the Bible to many secular people.

Fourth, Jesus gives us the kingdom of God.

As we know well, the plot of the Bible is lost paradise and restoration of paradise. What is paradise? Paradise is God's house. When Jesus' disciples were troubled, sensing that Jesus would leave this world, Jesus told them, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). Jesus clearly told them here that Jesus goes back to his kingdom so that he will come back to earth to bring his people home.

Mark 1:15 says, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" This is the first message of Jesus when he began his earthly messianic ministry. To those who believe in the Son, the kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed, and they experience the kingdom of God while on earth. When Jesus was on the cross, religious leaders stood two robbers in order to shame Jesus all the more. But in this situation, one robber saw the kingdom of God in Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:42-43). When Jesus was on the cross, many people hurled insults at him. But Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). Jesus prayed that they would repent of their sins and through faith, they also would come to the kingdom of God. When we study the second part of Luke's Gospel, the kingdom of God is repeatedly written. Most importantly, Luke emphasized the qualification for entering the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? According to Revelation it is built of all kinds of diamonds. There are 12 gates. In each gate the name of one of the 12 Apostles is engraved. More than the outward beauty, in the kingdom of God, there are only good people who have the likeness of Jesus. Most importantly, in the kingdom of God there are no tears (Rev 21:4). And we can see Jesus face to face.

Therefore, we must live as pilgrims, pressing forward to the kingdom of God. Whatever we do, we must do for the glory of God. If we have achieved something, we should not be proud of ourselves. Rather, we must give glory to God. We must say habitually, "Glory to God." When we live in this world, there are many ups and downs. Sometimes we are in the adverse situation. Still we must say, "I live for the glory of God."