

## Eirene Used in the New Testament Epistles for Peace with God through Reconciliation & Spiritual Growth; the Jewish Mind-set During the Incarnation

- 32) Further analysis of the use of εἰρήνη in the Classical and Koine Greek is provided by:

**Spicq, Ceslas. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by James D. Ernest. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 1:424-30; 432; 434:**

In secular Greek—classical and Hellenistic—*eirēnē* designates a political and social phenomenon, and first of all the state of a nation that is not at war. War is enmity and peace is harmonization. (p. 424)

If peace is the situation of a nation that is not at war, it also defines the public order, relations between citizens, and social peace, as opposed to discord, trouble, and sedition. (p. 425)

*Eirēnē* refers to the state of a person who is not troubled or disturbed, who is tranquil. (p. 426)

It is always synonymous with tranquility. *Eirēnē* almost always translates the Hebrew *shalom*. *Shalom* expresses “the state of a being who lacks nothing and has no fear of being troubled in its quietude; it is euphoria with security. There is also a nuance of plenty and prosperity. The Israelite greeting is a wish for peace, that is, for well-being and happiness. But the great innovation of the Old Testament is to make peace a religious idea: it is a gift of God. If it is commanded to seek peace (Psalm 34:14), much more often it is stated that it is God who secures peace (Isaiah 26:12; 57:19; 66:12) and that there is no peace for people except for that granted by God when they are in conformity with his will (Jeremiah 29:7—“by his peace you will have peace”; Lamentations 3:17—“My soul is deprived of peace, and I have forgotten happiness.”). There can be no peace for the ungodly (Jeremiah 6:14), but it is granted to those “who walk with God in peace and uprightness” (Psalm 37:11 [**“The humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.”**])). (pp. 426-28)

The Messiah brings peace, the gift of God to all people. Jesus, sent by God, carried out the mission that was entrusted to him; salvation is certain, and its author glorified. Clearly the point is the reconciliation of humans with God, on the spiritual level. (pp. 429-30)

Peter says to the centurion Cornelius: “God has sent the word to the sons of Israel, announcing peace by Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36). This has to do with the gospel message, which is the salvation granted by God to all people. This reconciliation translates for them into peace of the soul, thanks to forgiveness of sins.

The most important text is Romans 5:1-2: “Being therefore justified by faith, let us keep peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we owe our access by faith to this grace in which we stand and our glorifying in the hope of the glory of God.” The first result of justification was obtaining peace, not only reconciliation with God, the end of a breach and a disorder, but the inauguration of new relations that promise future blessedness: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, so that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). This Christian peace, which comes with the call to salvation and endures until the point of entering heaven, is the consequence of all the gifts of a God whom Paul describes as “the God of peace” (Romans 16:20), because he alone creates peace. (p. 432)

This altogether spiritual peace resides in hearts and thus points to the Holy Spirit, who infuses it in the form of mutual love, harmony, and brotherly unity: “To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6); “the reign of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). So we understand not only that “the peace of God passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), but that the apostles ceaselessly exhort believers to seek and find peace between themselves, because peace is a distinguishing mark of their religion (Romans 12:18—“Be at peace with all people”).

This is what gives the *eirēnē* of the apostolic salutations its density of meaning [χάρις ὑμῶν καὶ εἰρήνη, *charis humin kai eirēnē*], it includes peace with God, the benefits of salvation, harmony with all people, Christian blessedness, that is, peace of heart or calm in the soul which is purified from its sins; an interior well-being that follows justification by faith and is the work of the Holy Spirit. (p. 434)

- 33) From these excerpts we can now draw some conclusions regarding the Zeitgeist during the time of the Lord’s public ministry, the Jewish mind-set regarding “peace,” and the meaning intended by the writers of the epistles as New Testament theology was being recorded into the canon.
- 34) The use of the Greek word *eirēnē* varies as one moves from Classical to Koine. In addition, the Hebrew equivalent, *shalom*, possesses several definitions as well.
- 35) Its Classical definition is an “interlude in the everlasting state of war.” The basic Hebrew meaning is “well-being” regarding bodily health, prosperity, stability of relationship, and political deliverance from oppression.
- 36) However, in New Testament Koine, the word can include these concepts but in the Epistles the stress is on reconciliation with God through faith alone in Christ alone.
- 37) During the Incarnation, the Jews were concentrated in an area called Palestine, or as the Romans called it – Palaestina. It consisted of several provinces including Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. During the time of our Lord’s public ministry, Pilate was governor of southern Palestine, which included Judea, and Tiberius was emperor of Rome.
- 38) Tiberius was a tyrant, completely deranged, and ruthless in his dispensing of justice based on nothing more than whim and suspicion.
- 39) His unpredictable personality left all who served under him fearful for not only their jobs but also their lives. This anxiety was endemic throughout the empire and affected the mind-set of men like Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas who ruled Galilee.
- 40) The Jews were subjects of the Roman government and although they were given a great deal of leeway in the practice of Judaism they were otherwise clasped by the talons of the Roman Eagle.
- 41) The Roman approach was to allow those who were wedded to their own customs the freedom to continue functioning within their culture. In this way they were able to flatter the Jews by allowing them to worship Yahweh but keep an eye on them all the while.

- 42) This gave the Jews the semblance without the substance of freedom which the Jews were wise enough to realize. This caused resentment throughout the Jewish community and their hearts' desire was to somehow become free of Roman rule.
- 43) And it was assumed that freedom from Roman occupation would bring long-sought peace which to them was an environment in which there would be no tyranny, no violence, no problems.
- 44) Seeing no prospect of this condition occurring anytime soon the great "hope" of Israel became the "political solution" for Judea. The prophecies of the Old Testament that promised a conquering Messiah became the underlying desire of most Jews.

They are still looking for the First Advent of the conquering Messiah to establish the millennial kingdom while ignoring the prophetic necessity of His sacrifice and the subsequent Tribulation. Because of this confusion, the Jews continue to celebrate the Passover and part of its ritual is to recite the phrase, *bashana ha-ba'ah be Yerushalayim*: Next year in Jerusalem.