



September 23, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

Foto: P. Johanning

“The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6: 26). Our Bible text is taken from what is known as the Aaronic blessing. It was with the following words that the priests of the old covenant were to bless the Israelites: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6: 24–26).

The Aaronic blessing incorporates the promise of God’s protection, grace, and peace.

The countenance of God

The countenance (or “face”) of God is referenced twice in this blessing. The wish for the face of God to shine upon us refers to man’s dependency on God. The shining face—as opposed to one that is darkened—is an indication of positivity and friendliness. God is devoted to man. He grants him life, which He also protects and sustains.

When God turns His face to a human being, the latter can be sure that God is not indifferent toward him, but rather is present—and can be addressed—in all situations.

Peace

Peace, which is also highlighted by our Bible text, comes from God. Although even human beings are capable of keeping and making peace, the peace that comes from God is of an all-encompassing nature. After all, it consists of harmony between

God and man, and of harmony among human beings. This peace surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4: 7). Such peace is almost impossible to imagine in this world, which is not defined by peace but by war and crises.

The New Testament makes it clear that peace is directly associated with the appearing of Christ. The shepherds in the field were not only told of the birth of the Saviour, but also received the message of peace: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2: 14).

This peace on earth cannot be created by human beings or by state institutions. Jesus Christ told His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14: 27a). The peace of which Jesus speaks is primarily a reference to the kind of peace guaranteed by the Roman state. Such peace is always at risk. Jesus brings an ultimate kind of peace. It exists between God and mankind, and also shines upon the relationships that exist between human beings. The Christian church is to demonstrate how this peace has become reality within it. Christians are called to be both messengers and makers of peace.

Elements of the perfect peace that we expect in the new creation will already begin to be felt in the kingdom of peace. It will also manifest itself in that no one will be able to prevent the preaching of the gospel any longer, and that evil will be put in its place (Revelation 20: 2; CNAC 10.6/CNAC-QA 575-577).

Peace will be perfected in the new creation, where God will live among His people, and where Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will rule. An image of the peace that will then also even prevail among the world's living creatures is foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11: 6).

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