

The True Peacemaker and Benefactor of the People

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Revised Version (1885), the King James Version, or are Dr Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

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False peacemakers

Chapters 22 and 23 of Luke are filled with ideas of peace and provision. The priests pose as peacemakers by accusing Christ of disturbing and exciting the people, and demand his execution. Pilate secures temporary peace by yielding to the insistent clamour of the people, but at the cost of setting loose among them an insurrectionist and murderer. Earlier, Judas had betrayed Christ under cover of a kiss of 'peace'; and in the court, where Christ was being insulted, Peter had kept the peace with his newfound companions by denying him.

False Benefactors

In chapter 22 the priests make preparation for the nation for the Passover. The preparation is to rob the people of the teaching of Christ, which the people were obviously enjoying (see 21:38), and is accomplished by the help of Satan; and in Christ's place they choose for the people a murderer and an insurrectionist.

The true peacemaker

Against this dark background, Luke skilfully portrays Christ as the perfect peacemaker. His intercession obtains forgiveness for the soldiers who crucified him, at a moment when they must have been provoking the wrath of God. Unlike Pilate, who set at large an untamed murderer called Barabbas, Christ—finding another such on the cross beside him—brings him to repentance and makes him a fit subject for paradise. Even his trial serves as the occasion for Pilate being reconciled to Herod.

Moreover, according to Luke, the atmosphere of the upper room was charged with elements which would have destroyed the peace had it not been for the skilful ministry of Christ. The strife among the disciples as to who should be the greatest (recorded in this context by Luke alone) is calmed by his teaching and example. The attempt of Satan to disrupt the band of disciples is forestalled by his intercession for Peter; the company is made aware of the insidious designs of the traitor by his solemn denunciation. In the garden of Gethsemane, the ravages of the misused sword are healed by his touch. And on the repentant thief, he bestows immediate pardon and peace.

The True Benefactor

But Christ not only brings peace, he makes provision for his own people and for the nation. He directs the preparation for the Passover, institutes the supper of remembrance for the present, and for the future appoints his disciples a kingdom and promises them fellowship with him then. His followers, disciplined by sharing his rejection, are being prepared to govern Israel in the day of Israel's glory. An incalculable blessing for Israel, Satan's attack on Peter is turned and made to serve the eventual strengthening of all the disciples. And before he sends them out into the nation, which formerly had entertained them on their preaching-tours, Christ wisely counsels them what attitude they must adopt in a world in which he himself is regarded as an outlaw.

Unlike Barabbas, the only blood Christ shed was his own. Unlike the priests, in league with Satan to rob the people, he was sustained in his exercises for them in the garden by a heavenly minister. Unlike his disciples, he was content to serve and not to be served. And unlike and excelling all, he was and is the perfect peacemaker and benefactor of the people.

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.