

Meditation #13: Seek *Shalom* (Holistic Peace)

What does it say?

STUDY: Jeremiah 29:1-12

GOLDEN TEXT: Jeremiah 29:7 = ...*Seek the shalom of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its shalom you will find your shalom.*

What does it mean?

The powerful Hebrew word *shalom* is translated “peace,” “wholeness,” “health,” “happiness” and “prosperity.” Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Creator tells the weak, punished, oppressed, enslaved people to become the channel for his gift of health and peace for all, even for their oppressors. *Shalom* can affect all aspects of our environment, others and ourselves. This concept transcends political categories of “liberal” and “conservative” because it affirms both the care of creation and the continuity of society at the same time.

1. *Shalom* is an inclusive word for our peaceful relationships with God, other people, and the creation, and it involves relationships, attitudes and actions. Why is *shalom* used here? Why do you think it became the primary word for Hebrew people greeting one another?
2. In the Christmas prophecies, why was Jesus called the “*Prince of Shalom*”? How did he bring peace? How does the *shalom* of others benefit you? Does *shalom* multiply? When does *shalom* reciprocate back to the giver?
3. Was living as captives in a pagan society a good excuse for the Hebrew people to evade civic and environmental responsibility? How did God want them to seek *shalom*? What should we do? Do we have any good excuses?
4. Why does God tell the people to seek *shalom* and to pray for it? Why seek *shalom* if you can pray for it? Why pray for it if you can seek it? What is the right combination of prayer and seeking? Could both be 100%?

What are we going to do about it?

5. Is Jesus’ *shalom* itself a renewable resource? Would a culture of *shalom* sustain itself in *shalom*? How would you describe a *shalom*-culture in terms of relationships, attitudes and behaviors toward other people and toward the creation?
6. Was Jesus born in an especially friendly world? Does Biblical civic responsibility require starting with a Bible-affirming culture or society?
7. What do you think of those who profess to be the Creator’s representatives on Sunday—but who carelessly pollute and deplete his world the rest of the week? How can God’s instructions through Jeremiah—and also the story of Christmas—change this kind of selfishness?

Truth To Celebrate: *Even in enslavement and captivity, the people of God were to work for peace (shalom) in the oppressor’s capital city—shalom between God and humans, among humans, and between humans and the temporal creation.*

Advent-Action: *Recycle metal, plastic, glass and paper, because producing new products from recycled materials saves 70 to 90% of the energy and dramatically reduces pollution for us all.*

