

Reading Plan

July

Covenant

Week Thirteen

Monthly Description

YHWH desires that all of humanity would be reconciled into relationship with him. This relationship between God and his human family is called covenant. In covenant, God promises to care for and bless his people and we, his people, promise loyalty to him.

Peace

Note: Daily descriptions in **bold**.

Weekly Description:

The victory of Jesus in his death and resurrection has made the way for humanity to be restored to covenantal relationship with God. The kingdom of God, the places where and people among whom the reign of God is manifested, is where God's human family enjoy the blessings of covenantal relationship with him.

The premier blessing promised to God's people is *shalom* or "peace in wholeness." The fullness of that peace will be realized in new creation but, as citizens of the kingdom of God, we are promised God's peace as a foretaste of what is to come. In this week's readings we will see how the subject of peace is throughout the entire Bible as a multi-faceted promise God gives to his people, rooted in this Hebrew word *shalom*.

Weekly Video:

Shalom/Peace

<https://thebibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>

Day One: Peace in Human Habitat

Humanity was placed in the sacred space of Eden to care for it as God's administrators and to see to it that the order they enjoyed in creation was expanded throughout the rest of the earthly domain. To the Hebrews, the concept peace or *shalom*, was much more than simply the absence of conflict. It was the existence of wholeness and order in the presence of God. It is in understanding this ordered *shalom* that we best understand the original covenantal vocation given to Adam and Eve. They were placed in sacred space as priests and priestesses to God, stewarding and making space for YHWH's *shalom* to fill the earth as it did in Eden.

Genesis 2:1-25 (ESV)

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

⁴ These are the generations
of the heavens and the earth when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up— for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

To read more about God’s *shalom*, see Gen. 1; Ezek. 43; 47; Rev. 21-22.

Day Two: Pronouncing Peace as God’s Priesthood

The ancient Israelites believed that there was tremendous power in pronouncing a blessing or curse over another person or a group of people. We read how the Israelite blessing in today’s reading pronounced God’s peace over his people but also how that peace was within the confines of a covenant relationship (v. 27). Israel enjoyed the peace of God through his wholeness in their individual families and as a society by living in covenantal relationship with him. God’s covenantal blessings to Israel were expressed in wholeness and abundance, for which this blessing prays.

Numbers 6:22 – 7:11 (ESV)

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

²⁷ “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

¹ On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings and had anointed and consecrated the altar with all its utensils, ² the chiefs of Israel, heads of their fathers’ houses, who were the chiefs of the tribes, who were over those who were listed, approached ³ and brought their offerings before the LORD, six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the chiefs, and for each one an ox. They brought them before the tabernacle.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, ⁵ “Accept these from them, that they may be used in the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service.” ⁶ So Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. ⁷ Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service.

⁸ And four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. ⁹ But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because they were charged with the service of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulder.

¹⁰ And the chiefs offered offerings for the dedication of the altar on the day it was anointed; and the chiefs offered their offering before the altar. ¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses, “They shall offer their offerings, one chief each day, for the dedication of the altar.”

To read more about priestly peace, see John 14; 17.

Day Three: The Personal Transformation of Peace

The Book of Psalms

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/>

Remember from our previous readings that the peace of God, *shalom*, refers to wholeness and restoration. It conveys more than just the absence of conflict, but rather the presence of order and wholeness. This peace is God’s design for all of creation. We will see in today’s reading how God’s peace extends into and transforms our own lives and how we experience wholeness as God’s sons and daughters. We will read how David brought a troubling matter before the Lord. He describes how he was shamed by his enemies—a serious matter in the ancient world, for honor and shame were the glue that held relationships together. But as he prayed, he recognized that because God is true to his covenant promises, he can dwell in peace under the shadow of YHWH’s covenant faithfulness (v. 8; cf. Ps. 17:8). David recognized that God is true to his word and that those who are in covenantal relationship with God partake of the blessings and peace God extends to his people.

Psalms 4:1-8 (ESV)

- ¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!
- ² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*
- ³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
- ⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*
- ⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.
- ⁶ There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!”
- ⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
- ⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

To read more about peace in God’s family, see John 13:35; 17; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 1; 12; Gal. 3.

Day Four: Peacemaking in the Way of King Jesus

The Gospel of the Kingdom

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/gospel-kingdom/>

Matthew 5-7 are the first records of Jesus' teaching that we read in the New Testament. The word "blessed" in the first part of this teaching (commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount) should call to mind the Priestly blessing in Numbers. As the King of his kingdom, Jesus pronounces God's blessing over those who are loyal to the King by following the kingdom ethics he described. Jesus' specific call for the sons and daughters of the kingdom to be about the business of peacemaking means that they are to take up the reconciliatory work of God himself, who restored us to covenantal relationship with him. Jesus is saying that those who claim to love the Father will seek to model their actions after the Father, "loving people with his love" as Jesus himself would eventually model at its highest expression on the cross.^[2]

[1] Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1993, 55-57.

[2] Stott, John R.W. *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1978, 50.

Matthew 5:1-26 (ESV)

¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same

way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

To read more about peacemaking, see Prov. 12; Rom. 14; Heb. 12; 1 John 4, see XX.

Day Five: Eternal Peace

At the beginning of the week we read about how Adam and Eve engaged in the stewardship of God’s perfect *shalom* in the garden of Eden. Between Eden and the New Eden (Rev. 21-22) we live in a “now but not yet” kind of *shalom*—where we experience and are transformed by God’s peace but still awaiting the return of Christ when that peace is brought to its highest expression. In new creation, God’s *shalom* will renew all of creation and his people will rule as his vicereagents over creation in keeping with our original creation vocation.

Revelation 1:4-8 (ESV)

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 21:1-26 (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and

its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

To read more about the peace of new creation, see Rev. 22.