

Luke 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Analysis

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. This verse records the heavenly host's doxology, one of Scripture's most sublime expressions of worship. The phrase "Glory to God in the highest" (Doxa en hypsistois Theō, Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ) ascribes ultimate honor and praise to God. The term doxa (δόξα, "glory") encompasses God's radiant majesty, His revealed character, and the honor due His name. "In the highest" (en hypsistois, ἐν ὑψίστοις) refers both to the highest heaven (God's dwelling place) and to the highest degree of glory imaginable.

The second phrase, "on earth peace, good will toward men" has textual variations in Greek manuscripts. The more widely attested reading is *epi gēs eirēnē en anthrōpois eudokias* (ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας), which translates as "on earth peace among men of good will" or "peace to men on whom His favor rests." This reading emphasizes that the peace Christ brings is for those who receive God's favor through faith, not universally automatic. The word *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη, "peace") corresponds to Hebrew *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם), meaning not merely absence of conflict but wholeness, harmony, and right relationship with God and others.

Theologically, this doxology establishes the dual result of Christ's incarnation: vertical reconciliation (glory to God) and horizontal reconciliation (peace among humanity). The Incarnation simultaneously exalts God and brings peace to humanity—these are not separate goals but unified outcomes of Christ's saving

work. The peace proclaimed here is not the Pax Romana achieved through military might, but Pax Christi accomplished through sacrificial love. This peace will be fully explained throughout Jesus' ministry and ultimately secured through His death and resurrection, which reconcile believers to God (Romans 5:1, Colossians 1:20).

Historical Context

This angelic chorus occurred on the night of Jesus' birth, approximately 5-6 BC, near Bethlehem. The appearance of a "multitude of the heavenly host" (plêthos stratias ouraniou, πλῆθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου, verse 13) suggests countless angels in military formation—stratia (στρατιά) is a military term meaning army or host. This martial imagery is significant given the Roman military occupation of Judea. The true heavenly army announces peace, not through conquest but through a baby born in weakness.

The proclamation of "peace on earth" directly challenged Roman imperial propaganda. Augustus Caesar (reigned 27 BC-AD 14) had established the Pax Romana (Roman Peace) through military conquest and claimed the title "Prince of Peace." Inscriptions throughout the empire proclaimed Augustus as savior and peace-bringer. The angelic announcement subverts this ideology: true peace comes not from Rome's legions but from the newborn King whose kingdom is not of this world.

For first-century Jews, this peace fulfilled prophetic expectations. Isaiah 9:6-7 had promised a child who would be "Prince of Peace" with endless peace on David's throne. Micah 5:2-5 predicted a ruler from Bethlehem who would "be our peace." The angels' words confirmed these prophecies were being fulfilled. Within Judaism, the messianic age was expected to bring universal peace, the end of war, and reconciliation between God and humanity. The angels announce this age has begun with Jesus' birth, though its full realization awaits His return.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the Incarnation simultaneously bring glory to God and peace to humanity?
2. What is the difference between the peace Christ offers and the peace the world seeks (John 14:27)?
3. Why does the peace announced at Christ's birth require 'good will toward men' or 'men on whom His favor rests'?
4. How does the angels' proclamation challenge worldly systems that promise peace through military power or human achievement?
5. In what ways should the angelic doxology shape Christian worship and our understanding of the gospel's vertical and horizontal dimensions?

Interlinear Text

Δόξα	ἐν	ὕψιστοις	θεῷ	καὶ	ἐπὶ	γῆς	εἰρήνῃ	ἐν
Glory	in	the highest	to God	and	on	earth	peace	in
G1391	G1722	G5310	G2316	G2532	G1909	G1093	G1515	G1722
ἀνθρώποις	εὐδοκία							
men	good will							
G444	G2107							

Additional Cross-References

Romans 5:1 (Peace): Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Luke 19:38 (Glory): Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

Colossians 1:20 (Peace): And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Luke 1:79 (Peace): To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Revelation 5:13 (Glory): And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Isaiah 57:19 (Peace): I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

Acts 10:36 (Peace): The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

John 17:4 (Glory): I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 (Good): Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Philippians 2:11 (Glory): And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.