

Jesus Christ As Exemplar Of Peace And Peacebuilding

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ABSTRACTS

The idea of peace in a human society contradicts God's original intention about the peace. He bestowed man at the time of creation. Man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden where he enjoyed all things including peace of mind and fellowship with His Maker but these became severed because man sinned against God. Jesus was believed to be God's incarnate, the ultimate sacrifice for man's redemption and the model for an ideal godly person whom God had initially created man to be. Peace in the real sense cannot be achieved in a chaotic atmosphere especially where strive, envy, jealousy, hatred and selfishness exist which cannot be found in Jesus Christ. Hence, the aim of this paper is to consider the personality of Jesus Christ as an exemplar of peace and peace building. Therefore, the methods adopted in this study are historical and descriptive. It was discovered that during Jesus' earthly ministry, He lived a life worthy of great emulation as He stood in the middle of the society of His days carrying out His assignments in the face of haters yet displayed a grandiose attitude of peace and peace-building to His audience. The study recommended that the society should live a Christ life-pattern pursuing peace with all men as richly found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

KEYWORDS

Jesus Christ; Exemplar; Peace; Peace-Building.

Introduction

The word peace has attracted a lot of views from biblical scholars, church historians and preachers today. Peace in the Old Testament was an expression of the Hebrew word *Shalom* which occurs about two hundred and thirty-six (236) times.³ While in the New Testament is expressed as *eirini* and it first appears in the New Testament in Matthew 10,13. It appears 91

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³ HOLLADAY, W. "Shalom". In: *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV 2000, cited in J. G. Ucheawaji, & O. D. Soyemi, "Information and Records Management As a Precursor to Peace in the Book of Esther: Lessons for Africa", *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol. xxxii, 1&2, 2014, p. 84.

other times in the New Testament in every book except 1 John.⁴ Peace is a significant period of solace within the sphere of human. It entails a moment devoid of conflicts, war, unrest and clash of interest. Peace is one of the most important virtue needed for growth and development in a society but contrarily it is almost absent in family, society, churches and the nation today.

Christianity was a religion built on the premises of Jesus' character seen in the early believers at Antioch (Acts 11,26 NKJV). These set of believers displayed a great similarity in the deeds, actions and teachings of Jesus thus ascribed to them the nomenclature "Christians". This manner of appellation can be pictured in the way Children are look upon in an African society. For instance, Africans can easily trace a child's behaviour to the father, mother or any many member of the family thus given importance to ancestry and identity through resemblance. Therefore, the early believers in the larger community were looked upon as being imitators of Christ hence the name Christians.

It has come to limelight that there is a chasm between the early Christians and the contemporary Christians. It can be said that the early Christians were epitome of fellowship, unity and peace as they display great traits of peace in their host community and in the face of great oppositions. Christians today are of different opinions when it comes to the issue of peace. They believed in the law of reciprocation rather than the law of forgiveness. However they preach peace and forgiveness yet find it difficult to forgive in the practical sense, thus they are ideology Christians rather than Practical Christian i.e Christians in acts and deeds patterned to Jesus' characters. Hence living in suspicion among others in the society and causing strife which usually leads to tarnishing Jesus' image in the society they reside.

During the life ministry of Jesus Christ, He lived in peace with people of other faiths such as the Jews, the worshippers of the emperor under the toga of State Religion which was a predominant religion in the Roman Empire, the adherents of natural phenomena amongst others prevailed throughout this time yet Jesus not only lived with them but also teach them to be peacemakers. The current situation in the world such as the warring nations of Russia and Ukraine has given more concern on the stability of peace globally. Nigeria is also at the verge of losing its remaining morsel of peace due to economy instability, political brouhaha, ethnicity and religions chauvinism amongst others which is putting the nation at a relatively stagnant position and undeveloped. There is no progress in a nation where peace is traded for selfishness, power tussle and insincerity thus the thrust of this paper is to examine a perfect model of Peace and Peace-building in the person of Jesus for Christians and non-Christians to live with one another regardless their cultural, ideological and religious beliefs. The paper is further divided into; Jesus theology of Peace, Jesus and the Jewish leaders of his days, Jesus and the non-Jews, Jesus and the Roman Government, Jesus an exemplar of Peace and Peace-building for Christians and Non-Christians in Nigeria today and conclusion.

⁴ Words of Faith, "Hope & Love, What is Peace in the Bible". [https://www. words offaithhopelove.com/what-is-peace-inthebible/#:~:text=Eir%C3%A9n%C3%A9%20first%20appears%20in%20the,every%20book%20except%201%20John](https://www.words offaithhopelove.com/what-is-peace-inthebible/#:~:text=Eir%C3%A9n%C3%A9%20first%20appears%20in%20the,every%20book%20except%201%20John). Accessed June 12, 2023.

Jesus' Theology of Peace

Jesus' teachings on peace can be found in the Gospels and in other books of the New Testament. According to Miller peace takes a prominent place in the Scripture⁵ thus he cited James that it is great enough to be treated as one of the great Christian doctrines.⁶ It is noteworthy to say that Miller agreed with James on peace as one the important and inevitable doctrine in Christianity since it encompasses the relationship between God and man and between man and his fellow humans. The birth of Jesus came in during the time when Israel had long time heard from God which is usually the period between Malachi and Matthew referred to as Intertestamental period thus the book of Matthew ushered in a break in the divine silence to humanity with the good news of the promised Messiah to a virgin lady – Mary.

The first instance of peace taught by Jesus can be traced to His sermon on the mountain commonly called the beatitudes (Matthew 5,1-12 NKJV). Jesus identified a certain set of people who he called peacemakers and the reward of being one. In the light of Matthew 5,9, the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God. A peacemaker according to Dolores is someone who reconciles people with God and with one another.⁷ Peacemaking, as such, requires taking the initiative to get involved in conflicts with the intention of building bridges between the parties at odds. The theology of Jesus on peace can be divided into two which are; peace between God and man; peace between man and his fellow humans.

a. Peace between God and Man

Man's relationship with his Creator became sore when he sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3 NKJV). This was the biblical account found in the Genesis record about how man disobeyed God by eating the forbidding fruits. The aftermath of this led to the severity of the relationship between God and man thus leaving man in search of peace with his Creator through various mediums such as through liturgy and sacrifices. Richie writes:

In Christ, we are offered peace with God because we who “once were far off” (Ephesians 2,13) have been reconciled to God through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' sacrifice addresses the root of the problem that the world ignores. By his sacrifice, he bridged the gap that sin inserted between us and God. He took the punishment for our sin and, in exchange, he gives us peace with God.⁸

The centrality of Christian faith is based on the resurrection, ascension and the *parousia* of Jesus Christ which has given Christianity an important unique difference among other religions of the world. In agreement with Richie, the completion of Christianity premises on the ultimate sacrifice which Jesus offered through laying down His life on the cross for the redemption of

⁵ MILLER, J. *Jesus the Prophet of Peace: The Language of Peace in the Christian Scripture*. Presented at San Diego State University Symposium on Scripture. Hermeneutics and Language, April 13-14, 2015.

⁶ JAMES, H. *The Christian Doctrine of Peace*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark. 1922, p. 3.

⁷ DOLORES, S. “What Does the Phrase ‘Blessed Are the Peacemakers’ Mean?” 2020 May 26. Accessed June 14, 2023.

⁸ RICHIE, “God's Peace is Different from the World's Peace”. <https://openthebible.org/article/gods-peace-different-worlds-peace/#:~:text=Jesus%20sacrifice%20addresses%20the%20root,gives%20us%20peace%20with%20God>. Accessed June 14, 2023.

mankind. It can be concluded that peace between God and man or vice versa was became a reality through the death of Jesus Christ. Colossian 1,20 confirms that through Him (Jesus) to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. The emphasis of peace with God through Jesus was emphatically stressed in Colossians thus affirming to most Christian adoption of perfect peace through Jesus Himself. According to *Grace to You* the gospel is that which makes a man who was at war with God to be at peace with Him. This peace is objective – that is, it has nothing to do with how we feel or what we think. It is an accomplished fact.⁹

The establishment of peace is certain as Christ affirms that “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14,27 NJKV). In this expression, Jesus stressed the fact that His peace such as comfort in the heart and mind, satisfaction, absence of anxiety and fear among others which permeates the heart of the apostles as His departure was nigh has been taken care of through His undiluted peace.

b. Peace between Man and Man

Jesus’ teaching on peace with fellow humans started from His interpretation of the second greatest commandments (Matthew 22,39 NKJV). Though the in the previous passage Matthew 5,9, Jesus mentioned the peacemakers as being the children of God but in the recent passage He established the factor that can necessitated peace in a human society. Man is not an independent entity rather man cohabits with fellow man in a particular society thus giving room for relationship, fellowship and habitation to exist regardless the cultural background and ideological differences. Anderson states:

John describes Jesus’ “new commandment” as the appeal to love others as Jesus has loved his disciples. By the mark of sacrificial love will Jesus’ followers be recognized John 13:34-35. This love is authentic; it is not a means to an end or a bargaining chip in a transaction. Jesus’ followers are to care for each other’s needs as though caring for their own. They are to give freely, expecting nothing in return, for that is the character of unconditional love.¹⁰

From the foregoing, Jesus was teaching on how to live in peace with fellow humans. He went further to say that His disciples to love their enemies and pray for them (Matthew 5,44 NKJV). In the act of ensuing peace, Jesus’ admonishes His audience in Matthew 5,41, “and whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (NJKV). Henry as cited in *biblehub.com* commented on this he sees it as a plain instruction which implies to suffer any injury that can be borne, for the sake of peace, committing your concerns to the Lord’s keeping.¹¹ The Letter to the Hebrews stressed this as he states that, “pursue peace with all people....” (Heb. 12,14 NKJV).

⁹ Grace to You, “Gift of Peace. <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/P21/the-gift-of-peace>. Accessed June 14, 2023.

¹⁰ ANDERSON, N. Paul “Jesus and Peace”. Faculty Publications – College of Christian Studies. Paper 96, 1994. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs/96>. Accessed June 16, 2023.

¹¹ HENRY, H. Commentary on Matthew 5,41. [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/matt hew/5.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/matt%20hew/5.htm). Accessed June 14, 2023.

To actualize peace with all men, in the teachings of Jesus and Paul, peace needs to be pursued, strive to attain in the world where conflicts, jealousy, envy and hatred abound. Jones further asserts that the Christian standard of being a peacemaker is found throughout the New Testament.¹² The apostle Paul wrote that Christians are to do whatever possible to “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12,18 NKJV). Many scriptures support the basic truth that Christians are to “pursue peace with all people” (Hebrews 12,14; see also 2 Corinthians 13,11; Galatians 5,22; James 3,17 NKJV).

Peace is the replacement of conflict and severity of relationship between God and man, and between man and man thus it is a common perspective of Jesus’ teaching on peace as He replaces the strife between God and mankind with comfort, joy, acceptance, forgiveness, grace and mercy through what can be called Peace. Likewise, most of his teachings were either directly or indirectly pointers to Peace. One of his common teachings of peace in the home is on the issue of divorce. Jesus systematically presented the need for husband and wife to continue in the holy matrimony through correcting his audience who believed that a man can divorce for any reason that divorce can only be on the premises of sexual immorality (Matthew 19,9 NKJV). Thus the underlining of this passage showcases restoration of peace in the home and how it can further be enhanced.

Jesus and the Jewish Leaders of His days

The biblical records has it that Jesus was born when religious practices was it peak in the empire where different religions exist thus leaving Judaism at the mercy of the Emperor who had favourably identified it as an existing religion with various registered associations such as the association of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and the conglomeration of these registered associations into a formidable union of the Sanhedrin who were not only seen as legalists but also as law custodians, interpreters, judge and at whose mercy cases are tried and punishments are spelt out. These were the groups of Jewish leaders during the days of Jesus yet lived with peace among them.

Ayegboyin confirms that to understand the religious ‘climate’ of Palestine at the time of Jesus, the need to know the number of Jewish groups or sects becomes inevitable as he further identifies the sects as; the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, the Zealots, the Essenes, the Herodians, the Sanhedrin, the Publicans and the Sinners.¹³ The long list of Ayegboyin was a limelight to the understanding of the hostility of the Jewish leaders towards Jesus of peace. *BBC.co.uk* affirmed that Jesus often clashed with the Jewish religious leaders. They were the leading citizens – yet Jesus criticized them and exposed their hypocrisy.¹⁴ This is in contrast to his treatment of women, tax collectors and leprosy sufferers. Thus it can be stated that despite these clashes, He (Jesus) still maintain high level of peace with these set of leaders.

¹² JOHN, N. The Jesus and the Gentiles. 2020. <http://newhopelafayette.org/jesusand thegentiles/> Accessed June 14, 2023.

¹³ AYEGBOYIN, D. *The Synoptics Introductory Notes on the Gospel According to Matthew, Mark and Luke*. Ibadan: Global Estida Publishers, 2015, p. 22.

¹⁴ BBC.co.uk. The Encounters of Jesus with Others <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zhmhcqt/revision/1>. Accessed June 13th, 2023.

On several occasions, Jesus and the Jewish leaders were at loggerheads. Mark 7,19 records Jesus' disagreement with the Pharisees and some teachers of the law over the 'clean and unclean food'. The Law of Moses prescribed the requirements for eating of which includes ceremonial washing of hands, washing of cups, pitchers and kettles which were not usually observed by the disciples of Jesus. Jesus in response condemned the shallowness of the Pharisees thus calling them the hypocrites Isaiah wrote about on unfaithfulness to God, they have failed to honour God rather have place human tradition above God's command. Hence concluded by affirming that:

Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them...Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean) (Mark 7,15-19 NIV).

Jesus further declares that what comes out of a person is what defiles them thus making a long list of uncleanness as what emanates from within that is out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person (Mark 7,20-23). This was later revealed to Peter in a dream (Acts 10) as a fanatical Jewish he refuses to eat what the tradition has called unclean but was called clean in a loud voice during his dream thus became an apostle who also embraces the Gentiles later on in His ministry.

One of the main arguments between the Jewish leaders and Jesus during His days was centered on His authority. The opponents question where Jesus' authority comes from (Matthew 21,23–27; Mark 11,27-33; Luke 20,1-8 NKJV). The crowds marvel at Jesus' authority in all of the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁵ Jesus' authority was frowned at during his teachings (Mark 1,22; Matthew 7,28–29; Luke 4,32 NKJV), during the healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5,1–20), during the cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21,23-27 NKJV) among others. Ayegboyin further confirm other areas where Jesus and the leaders of his days disagreed to include: breaking the Law of the Sabbath (Matthew 12,2 NKJV), his relationship with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9,10; Mark 2,15 NKJV), His disagreement with Herod Antipas (Luke 13,31) and they disagreed with him over resurrection (Mark 12,18-26).¹⁶ Similarly, Matthew 17,24-27 NKJV recorded that Jesus paid the temple tax demanded which is a Jewish tradition of his days. On one occasion of Jesus' journey, he was confronted whether he is a defaulter of the temple tax or not. In active response to this, Jesus commanded his disciples to "go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me" (Matthew 17,27 NKJV).

Jesus and the Non-Jews

John identified that Jesus first encounter with Gentiles is when He is visited by the wise men when He was a toddler (Matthew 2,1-12 NKJV). It is interesting that the Gospel of Matthew,

¹⁵ SIKAINEN, S. "Jesus and the Other Men in Ideal Masculinities in the Synoptic Gospel", *Biblical Interpretation Series*, 2018, volume 159.

¹⁶ AYEGBOYIN, 2015, p. 24.

written for a Jewish audience, is the only one that includes the visit of the Magi. Presumably pagan Gentiles traveled hundreds of miles to worship the “King of the Jews.”¹⁷ According to him, through this visit Matthew foreshadowed his theme of the Gentiles’ positive response to Jesus’ ministry.¹⁸ Another instance as recorded in the Bible was that of the centurion man (Matthew 8,5-13 NKJV). The conversation of Jesus and the centurion was explicitly expressed as below:

Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me... When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith... Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment (Matthew 8,7-13 NKJV).

From the above, Jesus engagement with the centurion portray Jesus’ intervention in helping the non-Jew despite the hostility between the Jews and the Non-Jews of His time. It is expedient to also state the scenario of Jesus and the Samaritan woman which express vividly states:

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey... When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”... The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans) (John 4,5-9).

The above excerpt showcases the level of hatred between the Jewish community and the Gentile. Yet Jesus knowing this, demands for a drink of water from the woman. The situation changes from a man who was physically thirsty to a woman who needed spiritual water as seen in Jesus’ expression, ‘but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life’ (John 4,14 NKJV) thus referring Himself as the water of life. The woman was shocked as a result of the secrets which Jesus exposed to her, therefore she believed Jesus to be a prophet.

Another display of great faith was found in the conversation between Jesus and a Canaanite woman. Matthew 15,21ff recorded that the revival of faith and its great display in the words of a non-Jew in the person of a woman who was a Canaanite by descent. The woman’s plea for mercy and Jesus’ response shows that the Jews were exclusivists and as such caused severity in relationship with other neighbouring tribes or culture. Matthew placed this event in the region of Tyre and Sidon where a Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Jesus, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” Jesus on the other hand, refused to heed to this crying woman but was urged by His disciples to send her away. The dialogue between Jesus and woman became climaxed as Jesus informed her of being sent to the lost sheep of Israel alone. The intelligence of this Canaanite entity was seen in her wise response as Matthew writes: “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table” (Matthew 15,7 NKJV). The end of this

¹⁷ JOHN, N., 2020.

¹⁸ JOHN, N., 2020.

event was indeed a display of faith and the miraculous intervention of Jesus to the situation of a Non-Jew recorded by a Jewish writer.

Other encounters of Jesus with the non-Jews of his days some of which includes, the story of the grateful Samaritan leper (Luke 17,11-19), in Jerusalem, during the week of Passover, a group of Greeks who had made a commitment to follow the laws of Judaism asked to speak with Jesus (John 12). Their request for an audience caused Jesus to declare: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12,23, NIV), Luke’s Gospel tells of a later preaching mission in which seventy (70) others were sent out two by two (Luke 10,1).

Jesus and the Roman Government

It is noteworthy to say that the encounters of Jesus with the Roman Government of his days can be categorized into direct and indirect encounters. The direct encounter implies Jesus’ conversation with the Roman authority (Pontius Pilate a representative of the Emperor) which is described as one of the last part of Jesus earthly ministry. While the indirect encounters includes but not limited to Jesus enjoying the benefits of *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace) and payment of tax. There are several biblical references that indicate the political atmosphere of Jesus’ days, one of those passages include Luke 2,1. The author of the third book of the gospel and the last in the synoptic catalogue writes: “in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled” (Luke 2,1). This was a clear evident of colonization during the days of Jesus.

Ayegboyin noted that soon after Pompey had celebrated his triumph in Rome, rivalry between him another Roman general, Julius Caesar, denigrated into civil war.¹⁹ The political brouhaha and supplanting led to the ruling of Octavius who was later conferred with the Honourary title ‘Augustus’ by the Roman House of Senate. Thus Octavius ruled Rome as Caesar Augustus which Luke referred to in his gospel.²⁰ The Roman Government did not operate on the policy of assimilation but rather it was premised on the principle of association since it allows the cities or towns under its hegemony to have liberty in areas like religion, culture, occupation amongst others such was the situation in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus that aided his ministerial activities throughout Jerusalem and Judea.

Judaism became a center point of attraction and a channel of transformation which was later seen in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the lives of Judaists who were the original twelve (12) disciples of Jesus Christ. Using the platform of Judaism, Jesus became an itinerant preacher going about doing good, curing the sick, restoring the sight of the blind, making the lame walk (Jn 5,13; Matthew 11,5), raising the dead to life (Luke 11,1ff; Matthew 12,15, 14:14; Mk 3,10; 6,56), feeding the hungry (Matthew 14,13-21; Mark 6,30-44; Jn 6,1-15) and driving away demons (Mark 5,1-17; Matthew 8,28-34) and in addition He was seen in the temple (Luke 2,46; Mt 21,12,23; Mk 11,11; Jn 10,23) and also in the Synagogue (Luke 4,15, 13,10-17; Jn 6,59) teaching the Torah.

One of the remarkable discourses of Jesus and the Roman Government was noted in the scenario of tribute to Caesar as recorded in Luke 20,1ff. Jesus was approached while teaching in

¹⁹ AYEGBOYIN, 2015, p. 12.

²⁰ AYEGBOYIN, 2015, p. 12.

the Temple and inquired the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar. His response was explicit as he used the analogized through the diagram on the coin to answer them thus the famous quote “give what belongs to Caesar to Caesar and give God what is God’s” which are still found in the lips of vast Christians today. Kurt opined that this passage has been viewed as ‘heavenly’ while politics were considered an ‘earthly affair’. In other words, religion is the private part of one’s life and politics are what must be carried in public.²¹ Green further buttresses that ‘give to Caesar what is his already’ in other words, the coin is for Caesar since it bears his image thus it is placing a book where it supposed to be.²²

The Johannine gospel recorded Jesus engagement with a particular group of people who wanted to crown him as king. After the feeding the multitude in John 6,10-13 NKJV, the men noticed the miracle Jesus had performed as something unique and extraordinary thus sorted to crown him. Being aware of the order of his days and the government in power and the implications of acceptance not only on his divine assignment but also on the society of Israel Jesus hence departed again into a mountain himself alone (Jn. 6,15 NKJV). The attempt of crowning Jesus was an attempt to supplant Roman Government thus Jesus knowing their thoughts and the consequences of their actions left them to solitude.

The last days of Jesus’ ministry marked his direct encounter with the Roman Government through a Roman representative, Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman procurator in Judea who presided over the Roman trial of Jesus and handed him over to the Jews to be crucified.²³ John 18,28ff accounted that Jesus was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor which the successive verse identified Pilate as the governor who came out to address the rampaging public. The conversation between Jesus and Pilate shows the keen interest of Pilate in the person of Jesus but was beckoned upon by his wife who had been previously warned through a dream not to be a party to the death of the innocent man (Matthew 27,19 NKJV). He asked Jesus, ‘Are you the King of the Jews’ Jesus responses show no implicative effects as he response shows that he has no interest in the physical rulership of Israel in his tone, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ hence Pilate concluded that he has found this man guiltless contrary to the criminal appellation given to him.

The encounters of Jesus with the Roman government ended as soon as Pilate handed Jesus to his accusers who in turn take law into their hands by crucifying an innocent man. Pilate did not just release Jesus to them but first claimed his own innocence by washing his hands before the congregation of Jesus’ accusers and stating that ‘I am innocent of the blood of this man’ (Matthew 27,24 NKJV).

Jesus an exemplar of Peace and Peace-building for Christians and Non-Christians

Jesus is a real model of Peace and Peace-building in a secular state like Nigeria. The religious atmosphere of the Jewish community during the days of Jesus is quiet similar to that of

²¹ KURT, W. “The Roman Empire During the Time of Jesus (Background of Luke’s Gospel)”, 2017. https://theologycurator.com/roman-empire-during-time-jesus/#_ftn46. Retrieved June 16, 2023.

²² GREEN, J. B. *The Gospel of Luke*. Edited by Gordon D. Fee. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

²³ AYEGBOYIN, 2015, p. 12.

the Nigeria religious sector. This is because there are more than one religion in Nigeria-Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). The lifestyle of Jesus and his relationship with different people in his society has shown above models how to live with peace and contribute to building in ones' community. The following are ways in which Jesus lived as an exemplar of Peace and Peace-building for Christians and Non-Christians:

1. Jesus encounters with the Jews model a life pattern of an imitable icon of peace to the family structure. The evident of oneness and togetherness should be first seen in the family before extending to the larger society. Jesus was a Jew by descent yet his own rejected him (Jn. 1,11 NKJV). However, despite this rejection, Jesus was conscious of the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15,24). He never held them responsible for his crucifixion rather he forgave them unconditionally (Luke 23,34 NKJV). On several occasions, he also heals the Jews
2. His theology of peace encompasses two facets which depicted man's dual relationship (God and man, man and man). His life was paid as ransom which led to the restoration of peace between God and man. He also taught about peace in Matthew 5,9 thus directing his audience to emulate peace in order to be attain the title of God's son hence '... for they shall be called the sons of God.' In Jesus' theology of peace, he referred his audience to love which is one of the basic criteria for maintaining peace in a society where hatred and conflicts abound. His parable of the good Samaritans (Luke 10,25-37 NKJV) shows Jesus interest as a peace promoter through his teaches.
3. Jesus and the Roman Government shows a contraction rule which lies in the expression of a divine being clothed in human nature and hence shows obedience to the constituted authority as a law-abiding and peaceful person. Jesus was indeed an exemplar of peace as he maintains his position by refusing his propositions of his kingmakers who united to enthrone him over the Roman Government thus causing conflict in the socio-political and religious compasses of his time (John 6,10-13 NKJV).

Conclusion

The life and ministry of Jesus was no doubt a model for Christians and Non-Christians in the 21st century Nigerian society where it almost becomes impossible to maintain peace with all men. Peace entails the availability of comfort which ushers in the inevitable growth, development and progress a society may enjoy. Jesus encounters with his society shows a complete man of peace and peace-building as he upholds this peace with different people of his society. Christians of the 21st century claims a lot when it comes to peacekeeping and building but on the other hand it is untrue. The Nigerian society is made up of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ideologies and religions thus the tendencies to disagree is abound to happen in such a society. Therefore, Christian roles should be modified in the manner of Christ as indicated in the Christian Bible. Living with a non-Christian is not a yardstick for disagreement and conflict in the society rather Christians should find it worthy to emulate Jesus a great model of peace and peace-building for a free, safe and progressing society.

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