The Mission of the Servant
Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-8
SS Lesson for 12/19/2010

Devotional Scripture: Matt 1:18-25

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator. This week's lesson reviews the Mission of the Servant Jesus. The study’s aim is to demonstrate that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of the mission of the Servant-Messiah. The study’s application is to follow the example of the Servant-Messiah Jesus and become effective servants of God.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Shalom

Most of us are familiar with the term shalom, generally translated “peace.” To think of shalom as merely “peace,” though, misses its richness. We see the full beauty of this word in today’s lesson text. We tend to think of peace as being the absence of hostilities. If two nations are not having a war, they are at peace, even if their troops are on high alert. If a husband and wife are not fighting, they are at peace, even if there is deep animosity in their relationship. This one-dimensional view ignores the presence of profound, underlying tension: a war is waiting to happen. When the Bible speaks of peace as given by God, it means more than a lack of fighting. It refers to a healthy, reconciled relationship. It means that the things that cause conflict have been resolved. There is no more need or desire to fight. A situation of peace as granted by God is a promise for future health and prosperity (compare Judges 6:23). Peace is a major topic in Isaiah. The prophet can speak of a “perfect peace,” which can come only from God (Isaiah 26:3). Isaiah often looks forward to a time of peace and healing as part of God’s plan for the future (55:12; 57:19; contrast 48:22). Isaiah’s future era is a period both of prosperity and the flourishing of righteousness (32:17). All things that cause a breakdown in the peace between God and humans will be gone. This universal peace will never be the result of all the warring parties of the world working out peace treaties. It will come when all are under the rule of the Prince of Peace and are like-minded in their allegiance to him. Then, and only then, will the nations “train for war” no more (Isaiah 2:4).

Lesson Background

Some of the earliest Greek philosophers believed that nations at war was the norm rather than the exception. Heraclitus of Ephesus, one such philosopher, wrote about 200 years after Isaiah. Heraclitus summed up the thinking of many before and after him when he said, “War is the father and king of all.” Heraclitus is most known for his theory that everything is in a state of flux, constantly changing. The only constant, for him, is change. “You cannot step into the same river twice,” because it will have changed between your stepping. This dynamic view of the universe is reflected in his understanding of war. For Heraclitus, nations could not live in static, peaceful coexistence. They experienced the mighty, marauding armies of Egypt and Assyria marching across their lands. There seemed to be no other existence than war or the threat of war. This brutal geopolitical situation continued up until the time of Jesus. In the decades before his birth in Bethlehem, the Mediterranean basin was rocked repeatedly by the foreign and civil wars of the Romans. In 27 BC, these wars ended when the great-nephew of Julius Caesar emerged triumphant and began to reign as Caesar Augustus. A peace then spread over the Roman territories, including Palestine. This is known as the Pax Romana, the Roman Peace. It lasted for about 200 years. Yet it was an uneasy peace that was enforced by Roman legions throughout the empire. It was marred by various rebellions such as the Jewish Revolt of ad 66–73, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Our world is not much different today. Countries still have large armies and arsenals of weapons. War can, and does, erupt with little warning (compare Matthew 24:6). True peace will come only from God’s intervention, from the universal reign of his chosen Messiah, the Prince of Peace.
At this time of the year, Christmas programs, plays, musicals, and sermons dominate the average church’s calendar. They provide a needed reminder of the arrival of the Son of God in history. Two passages of Scripture seem to predominate at Christmas: the visit of the shepherds (Luke 2:1-20) and the arrival of the wise men (Matt. 2:1-12). Other texts give additional insights, but these two provide the basic details of Christ’s birth. Often overlooked, however, are the many Old Testament prophecies related to the coming of Christ. While some speak about the actual birth of the Messiah, others detail His work. Fulfilled prophecy is one of several reasons we can believe that the Bible is the Word of God. While skeptics claim that Christ merely arranged certain events to fulfill prophecy, He could not have arranged the events of His birth. The time, place, and circumstances of His arrival were clearly foretold by the prophets. We have the “sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19). Every good Jew was taught from an early age that the Messiah was coming and that he was to look forward to that event. Our lesson this week takes us to the prophecies of Isaiah. In the days after 739 B.C., Isaiah was called to be a prophet and to speak about the coming Messiah. Many people in this world have heard that a Messiah has come and is coming again, but it is often not a matter of priority or importance to them. Our lesson this week points out that Jesus came as our Servant-Messiah to fulfill prophecy in the Bible as well as to give us eternal life and eternal comfort. He is our peace according to the prophet. During this Christmas season, it is a good thing for us to focus on the prophecies of Scripture that proclaim that Jesus is the true Messiah from God.

### Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

**Mission of a Son (Isa 9:6-7)**

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

**To be a King (6)**

*Jesus is the only true eternal king (Jer 10:10)*

10 But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

*Jesus’ kingdom endures forever (Dan 4:3)*

3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

*Jesus kingdom reign is one of wisdom and righteousness (Jer 23:5)*

5 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

*Jesus rules over an eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11)*

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Jesus as king deserves honor and glory (1 Tim 1:17)

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus' kingdom was prophesied (Zech 6:12-13)

12 Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.'

Jesus' kingdom is within His Church (Luke 17:20-21)

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Jesus' kingdom is of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17)

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

To bring peace (7)

Peace that comes as a part of the Kingdom of God (Rom 14:17-18)

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Peace that Jesus brought by destroying the barrier (Eph 2:14-16)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Peace that comes through the blood of Jesus (Col 1:19-20)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Peace that comes from the God of peace (1 Thess 5:23)

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus and His peace overcomes the world (John 16:33)

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Because Jesus' peace is good news (Acts 10:36)

36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.
Peace because of being justified through faith (Rom 5:1-2)

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Mission of the Spirit (Isa 11:1-5)

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
3 His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

To provide power (1-2)

Power that is mightier than physical forces (Zech. 4:6)

6 So he said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.

Power that is given by God (2 Tim. 1:7)

7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Power to rebuke sin (Micah 3:8)

8 But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.

Power to do worldly work (Exodus 31:3)

3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts —

Power to express prayers (Romans 8:26)

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Power working in us that does more than asked or imagined (Ephes. 3:20)

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Power to hope (Rom 15:13)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Power to rest faith on (1 Cor 2:5)

5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Because the kingdom of God is a matter of power (1 Cor 4:20)

20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.
Power to strengthen the inner being (Eph 3:16)
16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

To provide righteousness (3-5)

Righteousness through faith (Rom 3:21-22)
21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Righteousness that is lived by faith (Rom 1:17)
17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Righteousness from a new self (Eph 4:22-24)
22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Righteousness that allows us to stand firm through the armor of God (Eph 6:14)
14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

Righteousness that is pursued (1 Tim 6:11)
11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Righteousness learned from the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16)
16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Righteousness from being a peacemaker (James 3:18)
18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Mission of Security (Isa 11:6-8)
6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

Security that leads to harmony (6-7)

Harmony that Jesus prayed to God that believers become (John 17:22)
22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:
Harmony is fellowship between believers and God (1 John 1:3)
3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Harmony where in Jesus, there are no conflicts, but all are one (Gal 3:28)
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Harmony through being like-minded and humbleness (Rom 12:16)
16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Harmony through living in peace (2 Cor 13:11)
11 Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Harmony through conducting oneself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil 1:27)
27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Harmony through being considerate of the interests of others (Phil 2:2-4)
2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Harmony through love (1 Peter 3:8-10)
8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

Security without fear (8)

No fear because through the Holy Spirit we have been freed from slavery of fear (Rom 8:15)
15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

No fear because God is our helper (Heb 13:6)
6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

No fear because God is our refuge and strength (Ps 46:1-3)
1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

No fear of man because man cannot destroy the soul (Matt 10:28-31)
28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one
of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

No fear because our trust is in God (Heb 2:13-16)

13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

No fear because there is no fear in love (1 John 4:18)

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

No fear because God is with us (Josh 1:9)

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Paul presents the accomplishment of Jesus on the cross as going beyond Isaiah’s description of the coming Prince of Peace. Jesus is more than the bringer of peace. Paul says, “He himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). Paul goes on to say that Jesus has “destroyed” the wall that divides Jew from Gentile, and at the same time, Jesus’ work on the cross has reconciled both groups to God (2:16). All of this is an act of “making peace” (2:15). In the Christmas season, we often see cards wishing for “peace to men” on earth (see Luke 2:14). Christians understand that this is more than a disbanding of earthly armies. It is the promise of reconciliation between God and human beings, which makes possible the reconciliation of all men and women. He is our Peace, the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Isaiah 9:6 is a powerful prophecy of the divine Messiah. It is a passage that has become so familiar to so many (through works such as Handel's Messiah that we often fail to realize some of the starkly disparate juxtapositions it confronts us with. The prophecy begins with the announcement of the gift of a son, the birth of a child, as an event already accomplished. Messiah's coming was an accomplished fact in the mind of God from the inception of His creation. Just as Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), so He is likewise the eternal Son, and His incarnation is an eternally decreed event. Even before any human being had sinned, God had determined His plan to redeem sinners from the righteous wrath that was their just punishment. We see in this famous passage that God's plan of salvation was never an afterthought. It was never a Plan B, resorted to only after man's moral failure and fall into sin in the garden. Oh, not Christ's death for sinners was always God's Plan A! It is the only plan God ever had, knowing as He did the needs of sinful humans from all eternity. This Son, this Child, was not born to be perpetually cared for as an infant. He was never meant to be imagined as somehow frozen in infancy as "Baby Jesus." On the contrary, this Child was born to rule! His mantle was to be the full weight of world dominion as the only rightful Heir of His heavenly Father! Here the prophecy draws aside the veil of Christ's humility, which clothed Him upon His first advent, to reveal His future glory as Christ triumphant, in all the varied facets of His consummated authority. He is the Counselor whose unparalleled wisdom blesses His subjects in miraculously wonderful ways. There is no greater wisdom than God's, for the highest wisdom of man is merely foolishness to God (1 Cor. 1:19-20). The wisdom of the reigning Messiah will bring such daily wonders to His kingdom that all the man-centered wisdom of human history will be but
dimly recalled—by those who remember it at all—as mere silliness, unworthy of even such sparse remembrance. The reigning Messiah will be universally acknowledged as the one and only God Almighty. All disputes about Christ's full divinity and Godhood will cease and be jettisoned as the lowest dust of the earth, for Christ Himself will be fully revealed indisputably as God the Son, the eternal Heir and Lord of all! No longer will His might be clothed in the humility of a servant; the full power of His universal authority will be made manifest to all continuously. Then will the Son become the Father of His people, guiding them with the same love and understanding that led Him to the cross for the sake of His own. The Son will bring the only genuine peace the world has ever known, for only the Prince of peace has the power and wisdom to keep it.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. Depend on God to always keep His promises (Isa. 9:6; cf. Matt. 1:21; Gal. 4:4)
2. One day the entire world will see Jesus for all that He really is (Isa. 9:6-7)
3. Jesus, the God-Man, is our perfect example (11:1-2)
4. The justice of Jesus may be delayed, but it is sure (Isa. 11:3-4; II Pet. 3:3-7)
5. The millennial kingdom of Jesus will be characterized by faithfulness to God's Word and will (Isa. 11:5-6)
6. The harmony that Jesus brings will affect all of creation in the millennium (vs. 6-8)

**Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

I have never been comfortable around selfish people, and I have never been comfortable being a selfish person. I believe this dual lack of personal comfort results from the knowledge that selfishness is the priority attitude of the sinful nature. On the other hand, I receive great comfort in being with unselfish people and in being an unselfish person. I believe this dual sense of comfort results from the knowledge that a selfless, servant attitude is the priority mind-set of a godly character. God's people derive great comfort from being in the presence of their selfless Servant-Saviour, Jesus Christ, whose mission was, and still is, to give of Himself so that His people may experience righteousness.

**The ruling authority of God's Servant (Isa. 9:6-7)**

The birth of Jesus Christ fulfilled the nativity portion of the prophecy given by Isaiah in the first part of this week's lesson text. The remainder of the prophecy, dealing with ruling authority, will also be perfectly fulfilled when Christ returns to make fully manifest His rule over His kingdom and to reign with righteous authority. One glorious day, we will know Jesus as our King who will fully manifest the authority reflected in His multiple titles. As the wonderful Counselor, Christ will lead His people in the ways of righteousness and truth. As the mighty God, He will be a valiant King. His eternal rule, as everlasting Father, will convey a sense of loving care and wise leadership. As Prince of peace, His heart will clearly be fixed on maintaining the safety, health, and prosperity of His people. I want to experience the comfort of living under the authority of Jesus Christ. I do not—and will not—fully experience that type of life on this earth. For believers, the best is yet come. We can rejoice in the hope and certainty that a righteous comfort will be the prevailing tone of our eternal state.

**The peaceful consequences of our Saviour's righteous reign (Isa. 11:1-8)**

The righteous and Spirit-infused reign of the Lord Jesus Christ will bring an eternal end to all of the inequities of this temporal and sin-cursed life. This present world's emphasis on outward appearance and the prominence of hearsay over truth will disappear. As a result, divine justice will prevail. The prospects of Christ's visible reign are enormously attractive. People will respond to His divine authority with obedient attention. The enmity that currently exists between natural enemies in the animal world will be eternally removed. Children, even nursing babies, will experience an unfettered enjoyment of the animal kingdom. The mission of the Servant-King will be realized—perfect peace will characterize God's kingdom. This present world is a place of turmoil. In 1988, "The Personnel Journal reported this incredible statistic: since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time! In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3,530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace.
Moreover, in excess of 8000 peace treaties were made—and broken" (www.bible.org). The mission of the Servant-King, Jesus Christ, is to rescue His groaning creation and its suffering inhabitants and to reign over an eternal environment of perfect peace.