

MAIN POINT

Jesus came to bring peace, but not the peace the Israelites expected.

INTRODUCTION

What comes to mind when you hear the word peace?

What would you say has to take place (or cease to take place) for peace to exist in the world and our lives?

In this series, we are thinking about expectations and specifically, wrong expectations that were held regarding the promised Messiah of God. In Isaiah 9:6, the coming Messiah was referred to as the Prince of Peace. The Israelite people had a long history of facing oppression and at the time of Jesus' birth, the Israelites were under the rule of the Roman Empire. It is clear throughout the Gospel accounts that Jesus' followers expected the Messiah to bring about peace by overthrowing Roman power. Yet, Jesus showed that peace is found not in the absence of conflict, but in His presence.

DISCUSSION

> **READ ISAIAH 11:1-9 AND MATTHEW 5:38-48.**

What characteristics about this King from Isaiah 11 stand out to you the most? What images portray peace?

What do you find most striking about the behavior of the various animals described in verses 6-9? Beyond all the symbolic language, what was Isaiah's greater point?

In what ways can the statement in verse 9, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea," be considered God's purpose throughout the entire Bible? Where else is this thread woven through Scripture?

How might readers of Isaiah have misunderstood his words as applying to military peace? How might we misunderstand the peace Jesus brings today?

In Matthew 5, how did Jesus' interpretation of this law differ from the Pharisees'? How did this raise expectations for His followers?

What stands out to you about the four examples Jesus gave His followers in Matthew 5:39-42? How do these apply to our lives today?

What qualities are to replace our desire for revenge when it surfaces?

What was the main point of the law to love your neighbor and hate your enemy? How did Jesus' teaching differ from the Pharisees'? How did this change what His followers expected?

Read John 14:27. How does the peace of Jesus differ from what His early followers expected? From what we expect?

APPLICATION

How might you pursue the peace Christ offers in the midst of the turmoil of life this week?