



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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The LORD Will Rejuvenate His People (61:1-11)

- Today we will be looking at Isaiah chapter 61.
- As we examined chapter **60** during the last two weeks, we saw “The Future Glory of Zion” with a heavy emphasis on the glories of the Messianic age.
- But chapter 60 left one thought completely out of the picture – the Great Messianic King himself.
- Chapter 61 brings Him on the scene.
- He introduces himself and his work in the monologue with which this chapter opens.
- It has long been a matter of controversy among Bible scholars whether the speaker at the beginning of chapter 61 is:
 - The prophet Isaiah (the liberals would say it was written by “Deutero-Isaiah”, or perhaps by “Trito-Isaiah”)
 - The Messiah himself

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- I believe it is *the Messiah* who is speaking – primarily because Jesus *applies* this text to *himself* in Luke 4:18-19.
- Not only that, but the one speaking in Isaiah 61:1ff claims significant achievements that no human being could ever hope to accomplish.
- Add to this the fact that in the second half of his book Isaiah keeps himself modestly in the background.
- Therefore such grand claims as are made by the speaker in this section would seem out of keeping with the other things Isaiah has said concerning himself.
- If I'm right about the speaker being the Messiah, then he is also the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-9, and 52:13-53:12 making this another of the "Servant Songs" that we have seen in the book.

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- And so we see that while the *previous* chapter dealt with Zion's *future glory* in, the *current* chapter Isaiah presents the one who will bring this glory to pass.
- In other words, chapter 60 speaks more of the *outward* glory of Zion, while chapter 61 speaks of her *inner* glory.
- In addition to this, we will see today that chapter 61 is a message of *joy* and *hope* for the for the people of God who are struggling with the trials and tribulations of the present age.

The LORD Will Rejuvenate His People (61:1-11)

- I will be covering today's text in four parts:
 - The Mission of the Messiah (61:1–3a)
 - The People of the Messiah (61:3b–7)
 - The LORD's Confirmation (61:8–9)
 - Praise for Salvation (61:10–11)

The Mission of the Messiah (61:1–3a)

61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has [anointed] me. He has commissioned me to [proclaim good news to] the poor, to [bind up the wounds of] the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners, ² to announce the year when the LORD will show his favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance, to console all who mourn, ^{3a} to strengthen those who mourn in Zion by giving them a turban, instead of ashes, oil symbolizing joy, instead of mourning, a garment symbolizing praise, instead of discouragement.

61:1 *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has [anointed] me. He has commissioned me to [proclaim good news to] the poor, to [bind up the wounds of] the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners...*

- Having just described in the preceding section (60:19ff) what Zion will look like as it **reflects** the light, the one speaking here now speaks as the Light **itself**, the Servant/Messiah.
- Throughout the OT, the concept of the “**Spirit of the Lord**” resting or being on someone connotes supernatural wisdom and capacity (Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; Num 11:17, 29, etc.).
- In Isaiah the “**Spirit**” is especially associated with the power to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the spoken word (e.g., 32:15-16; 42:1).
- Furthermore we see here that the Messiah is “**anointed**” (consecrated and made sacred) by God for his task, and the “**Spirit**” filling is “**because**” of that anointing.

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- Interestingly, the only places in the OT where Spirit filling and anointing are mentioned together are places having to do with the establishment of Israel's kings:
 - Saul (1 Sam 10:1, 6-7),
 - David (1 Sam 16:13).
- The *classic* statement of this anointing in conjunction with the giving of the Spirit is found in 2 Sam 23:1-7, where David speaks of the function and role of the **Messiah**.
- This is the Messiah, and he is being consciously associated with the Servant by showing that the Messiah does the Servant's work.
- What is that work? It is to "*proclaim good news*".
- This phrase occurs at a number of critical places in this part of the book (40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6) dealing with the hope of the nation.

61:1 *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has [anointed] me. He has commissioned me to [proclaim good news to] the poor, to [bind up the wounds of] the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners...*

- Here the Servant/Messiah himself is the one who **brings** the “*good news*” of God’s triumph.
- Because he has done what no one else could do, he is not only the **preacher** of the “*good news*” — he **is** the “*good news*”, because he is able to **give** what he **announces** (cf. verse 3).
- He declares the “*good news*” **particularly** to “*the poor*”.
- “*the poor*” here is not restricted to people who are financially or materially poor.
- Rather, it speaks of all who are distressed and in trouble for any reason, including sin.
- As Jesus would say later, he had not come to announce good news to those who were comfortable and in control, but to those who were in deep trouble (Mat 9:12-13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32).

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- To such persons, God's victory over all that is holding them in bondage is "*good news*" indeed.
- Who are "*the poor*"? Those who:
 - Are so broken by life that they have no more heart to try
 - Are so bound up in their various addictions that liberty and release are a cruel mirage
 - Think that they will never again experience the favor of the Lord, or see his just vengeance meted out against those who have misused them
 - Think that their lives hold nothing more than ashes, sackcloth, and the fainting heaviness of despair
- These are they to whom the Servant/ Messiah shouts "*Good news!*"

61:1 *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has [anointed] me. He has commissioned me to [proclaim good news to] the poor, to [bind up the wounds of] the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners...*

- Will the Servant/Messiah simply hurl words at the poor?
- No, for his words will **accomplish** what they speak of.
- He will “*bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted*”.
- This same verb (“*bind up*”) appeared in 1:6, speaking of unbandaged, oozing wounds that were the result of sin.
- Furthermore, he will “*decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners*”
- Only a king greater than all those kings who hold his people captive can make such an announcement.
- This is the Messiah at work, bringing in his reign of justice and righteousness (11:3-5; cf. also 1:27).

61:2 ...to announce *the year when the LORD will show his favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance, to console all who mourn...*

- “*the year when the LORD will show his favor*” points to “*the year of jubilee*” (Lev 25:13ff).
- Every fifty years horns had to be sounded (“*jubilee*”, means “*a ram’s horn*”).
- And in that year those who had defaulted on their debts and had been sold into slavery were released, and those who had lost their ancestral homes and property could go back and reclaim them (cf. Lev 25:8-28).
- Just as the priests by blowing the ram’s horn announced the year of freedom, so the messianic messenger declares the inauguration of a year of release “*when the LORD will show his favor*”.
- “*favor*” here refers to that which was pleasing to the LORD.
- This same word had been applied to the LORD’s acceptance of the offerings of the nations (cf. 60:7, 10; cf. also “*a time of favor*”, 49:8).

61:2 ...to announce the year when the LORD will show his favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance, to console all who mourn...

- However, there is a **darker** aspect to the coming of the Messiah, “*the day when our God will seek vengeance*”.
- When he read this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus stopped short before reaching this phrase because he knew it did not apply to his mission at that time.
- Subsequently, in the **second** coming of the Messiah, there **will** be “*days of vengeance*” (Luke 21:22).
- But the full revelation of **that** aspect of the coming of the Messiah is yet future (cf. 2 Thes 1:8–10).
- Although Isaiah was well aware of the dual implications of divine intervention (cf. 59:17–18), the time lapse **between** the two was not revealed in the Old Testament.

61:2 ...to announce the year when the LORD will show his favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance, to console all who mourn...

- “*to console all who mourn*” picks up on the grand theme of the second part of Isaiah’s prophecy (the Hebrew word translated “*console*” is the same word that is translated “*comfort*” in 40:1).
- “*console*” (*nāham*) involves a wordplay on “*vengeance*” (*nāqam*).
- “*mourn*” relates not only to sorrow over the misery and suffering that exist in this world, but to personal grief over the fact that sin has distorted the relationship that we should enjoy with God (cf. 57:18; 60:20).
- For those who mourn in this way, the ministry of the Messiah will bring an end to their sorrow.

61:3a ...to strengthen those who mourn in Zion by giving them a turban, instead of ashes, oil symbolizing joy, instead of mourning, a garment symbolizing praise, instead of discouragement.

- Messiah asserts that his mission includes most welcome relief for those who “*mourn in Zion*”.
- The wholesome mourning over sins is what is being talked about here.
- Not only is the cause for grief overcome, but a positive ground for joy is offered – here it speaks of “*a turban, instead of ashes.*”
- In place of a mourner seated on an ash-heap, strewing ashes on his head, there is the figure of a man arranging a gaily-colored turban as his headdress for a festive occasion.

61:3a ...to strengthen those who mourn in Zion by giving them a turban, instead of ashes, oil symbolizing joy, instead of mourning, a garment symbolizing praise, instead of discouragement.

- Furthermore, “*instead of mourning*”, they are given “*oil symbolizing joy*” i.e., a precious and fragrant perfume to cover themselves with.
- The same thought is expressed by the next figure which the speaker mentions: there is to be given “*a garment symbolizing praise, instead of discouragement.*”
- This illustration grows out of the fact that a man may, so to speak, wrap himself in his moods, like the mood of “*discouragement.*”
- Instead, grace is given to him to instead be completely enshrouded in “*praise.*”
- The favors bestowed by the Messiah make the man so joyful that his mouth overflows with vocal “*praise.*”

The People of the Messiah (61:3b–7)

^{61:3b} *They will be called oaks of righteousness, trees planted by the LORD to reveal his splendor. ⁴ They will rebuild the perpetual ruins and restore the places that were desolate; they will reestablish the ruined cities, the places that have been desolate since ancient times. ⁵*

“Foreigners will take care of your sheep; foreigners will work in your fields and vineyards. ⁶ You will be called, ‘the LORD’s priests, servants of our God.’ You will enjoy the wealth of nations and boast about the riches you receive from them. ⁷ Instead of shame, you will get a double portion; instead of humiliation, they will rejoice over the land they receive. Yes, they will possess a double portion in their land and experience lasting joy.

The People of the Messiah (61:3b–7)

- In this section, the results of the Messiah's work are detailed, beginning with God's people becoming "*oaks of righteousness*."
- This is the opposite of what was said of them in 1:27-31, where they were an "*oak with fading leaves*" because of the unrighteousness and injustice practiced among them (1:21).
- But even there God promised that Jerusalem would one day "*be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City*" (1:26).
- Now he reveals the means by which that will become a reality.

The People of the Messiah (61:3b–7)

- The Servant/ Messiah's work will not only *deliver* but also *transform*.
- That deliverance and transformation is expressed in the language of rebuilding in 61:4 and in the language of freedom in 61:5.
- The nations will make it possible (61:5-6) for the people of Israel to fulfill their ancient calling, to be a royal priesthood (Ex 19:6), serving God in the beauty of holiness.
- They will move from “*shame*” and “*humiliation*” to the inheritance of a firstborn son – a “*double portion in their [heavenly] land*” in which they will “*experience lasting joy*” (Isaiah 61:7).

The LORD's Confirmation (61:8–9)

61:8 For I, the LORD, love justice and hate robbery and sin. I will repay them because of my faithfulness; I will make a permanent covenant with them. ⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations, their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will recognize that the LORD has blessed them.”

The LORD's Confirmation (61:8–9)

- In this section we see the LORD *himself* speaking.
- What the LORD has to say here once again underscores the central point in this final section of the book.
- Why will the people of God enjoy the inheritance of the firstborn son? Because (“*For*”) “*I, the LORD, love justice* .”
- What is the logic here?
- God loves justice and hates “*robbery and sin*” in his people.
- Therefore one of the effects of the “*permanent covenant*” (i.e., the New Covenant) that he will make with them is that they will be able to live the life of God’s true children.
- “*All who see them*” (61:9) will recognize this fact.

Praise for Salvation (61:10–11)

61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; I will be overjoyed because of my God. For he clothes me in garments of deliverance; he puts on me a robe symbolizing [righteousness]. I look like a bridegroom when he wears a turban as a priest would; I look like a bride when she puts on her jewelry. ¹¹ For just as the ground produces its crops and a garden yields its produce, so the Sovereign LORD will cause [righteousness] to grow and give his people reason to praise him in the sight of all the nations.

Praise for Salvation (61:10–11)

- As has happened before when the work of the Servant/ Messiah is presented, the response is praise on the part of the people.
- Israel sees herself as a bride whom the Groom has dressed in beautiful wedding garments.
- What are the garments? They are “*deliverance*” and “*righteousness*” (61:10).

Praise for Salvation (61:10–11)

- The figure changes in 61:11.
- Now Israel sees herself as a fruitful field in which God has planted the seeds of flowers, namely, “*righteousness*” and “*praise*.”
- In the overall context of Isaiah 56-66, there can be no doubt of the meaning of these words.
- God will give his people the righteous behavior they have been unable to produce in themselves.
- He will do this for his own praise and glory before the nations as a witness to his almighty power.

Jesus' Citation of
Isaiah 61:1-2
in Luke 4:18-19

Isaiah 61:1 *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has [anointed] me. He has commissioned me to [proclaim good news to] the poor, to [bind up the wounds of] the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives and the freeing of prisoners, ^{2a} to announce the year when the LORD will show his favor. (NET)*

Isaiah 61:1 *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, ² to summon the acceptable year of the Lord. (Septuagint)*

Luke 4:16 *Now Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the regaining of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to tell them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read." (NET).*

Jesus' Citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19

- Jesus' citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19 follows the introduction of Jesus' identity through the heavenly voice in the baptismal scene, his genealogy, and his temptation in the wilderness.
- What an interesting passage this is!
- Here Jesus combines the natural and customary with the amazing and unexpected.
- Jesus rolls up the scroll, returns it to the attendant, and sits down to speak.
- In all this he did not depart from customary procedure.
- But at this point the unexpected happens. Try to visualize the situation:
- The atmosphere in the probably crowded synagogue is charged with curiosity.

Jesus' Citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19

- Everybody in the audience is wondering what their fellow townsman, the former carpenter, about whom they have been hearing so much of late (see verse 23), is going to say in elucidation and application of the Scripture passage he has read a moment ago.
- All is quiet, so quiet that one can hear a feather drop.
- Every eye is fixed on Jesus. He opens his mouth. He begins his address.

Jesus' Citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19

- Does he start out by reminding the audience of the golden days, now gone forever, when Jehovah stretched out his mighty arm and performed miracles on earth?
- He does not.
- Does he begin by entertaining his listeners with bright promises pertaining to the future? Not that either.
- Instead, he speaks about the here and now!

Jesus' Citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19

- Jesus assures the people with whom he had grown up that the golden age has actually arrived.
- “Today,” says he, “while you are listening to me, the passage I read to you has been and is being fulfilled.”
- Were not the blind gaining their sight, cripples walking, lepers being cleansed, deaf people having their hearing restored, and even some of the dead being raised back to life?
- Was not the good news being proclaimed to the poor?

Jesus' Citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19

- We are reminded here of a response that Jesus will later give to a question that messengers brought him from John the Baptist:
 - *When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'" ... So he answered them, "Go tell John what you have seen and heard: **The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news proclaimed to them.**"* (Luke 7:20,22)
- And who was "the Servant of the LORD" through whom all this was being accomplished?
- The implication is clear!

Next Time

- I hope to cover *The LORD Takes Delight in Zion* (62:1-12)

Class Discussion Time

- Our text this week and in previous weeks portrays the Gentile nations as “coming” to Zion and giving honor to Israel and her God.
- I have pointed out that one of the fulfillments of this is the honor that we as Gentile Christians owe to our Jewish forebears and the Jewish heritage that undergirds our Christian faith.
- The Apostle Paul expresses this idea in some of his writings when he says things like, *“For Macedonia and Achaia [Gentile areas] are pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do this, and **indeed they are indebted to the Jerusalem saints.** For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are obligated also to minister to them in material things.”* (Rom 15:26-27)
- We see a lot of antisemitism in our modern world, mostly stemming from Muslim groups, but what is most unfortunate is that throughout much of church history, a strong antisemitic sentiment seems to have prevailed on the part of Christians.
- Why do you think that is?

Class Discussion Time

- In our passage today, we see a prophecy of the Servant/Messiah coming to Zion and announcing “Good News”.
- The initial fulfillment of that, as we saw in Jesus’ reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue at Nazareth was the coming of Christ to bring healing and deliverance to Israel and the nations.
- With the return of Christ to heaven at the end of his earthly ministry, the announcement of that “good news” falls to us as his church. (Mat 28:18-20)
- A crucial part of that good news, is that we have forgiveness of sin and an opportunity to have a relationship with the LORD.
- But as we saw in our passage today, there is also healing and deliverance in every area of our life – in this world and especially in the world to come.
- Do you think that sometimes in our presentation of the good news we might be overly focused on “getting saved” and going to heaven and neglect to communicate that for those who come to Christ, the LORD will bring about a renewal in **every** area of our lives?