

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn!" (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Wow! Good news!

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 60 began with the promise of a "new day to dawn"--good news--and the call for Israel to "rise and shine"--for "their light has come"! A day, Isaiah prophesies, when in the midst of a dark world, the glory of the Lord will appear upon Israel! A day to usher in the time of the great millennial kingdom when Israel's Messiah returns to reign! When nations "will come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising"! A day, Isaiah prophesies, when Israel's sons "will come from afar, and their daughters will be carried in the arms...when their hearts will thrill and rejoice because of the abundance of the sea...and the wealth of the nations that will come to them...bearing good news of the praises of the Lord"! A time when God "will beautify His glorious house...and foreigners will rebuild the walls of Jerusalem...whose gates will be open continually ...so that men may bring to them the wealth of the nations"! It will be a time, Isaiah writes, when God says He "will make the place of His feet glorious...When those who afflicted Israel "will bow themselves at the Israel's feet," and call Jerusalem "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel"!

"Then you will know (Isaiah announces, echoing the words of God) that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob"!

But Isaiah isn't finished! God, he said, "will make peace your administrators and righteousness your overseers! Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders...and no longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light (like a great eclipse!); but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light...and the day of your mourning will be over! Then all your people will be righteous; (and) they will possess the land forever"!

We could only respond with a "wow"! And that set the tone for our lesson last night on Isaiah 61--where Isaiah begins by capturing the very words of the "Anointed One of God"--the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ, the Son of God!)--as He announces His mission (working together with all three persons of the Trinity!) in bringing "good news to the afflicted," and salvation for the world, and more!

Here are the very words spoken by the Anointed One, that Isaiah records as the lead-in to Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Lord God (third person of the Trinity) is upon me, because the Lord (God the Father) has anointed Me (the Messiah, God the Son) to bring good news to the afflicted; He (God the Father) has sent Me (Christ the Son) to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and a day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn...!" (Wiersbe notes, interestingly, that the "favorable day of the Lord" pictures the "Year of Jubilee," in Leviticus 25, when all debts were cancelled, slaves

were freed, and everybody was given a "new beginning"--thus reflecting the "favorable year of the Lord" as the "day of salvation," when sinners are "set free"!)

Luke, the apostle, would later write (in Luke 4:18-21) that Jesus Christ--during His "first advent"--after coming to Nazareth and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, would take the scroll handed to him, and find this exact passage (in the book of Isaiah!) and read it for all those present to hear! Then "close the book" and state, "with the eyes of all in the synagogue fixed upon Him," that "Today!" On that very day, "this Scripture was fulfilled by Him"! The "Anointed One of the Lord"! (Motyer notes how He "deliberately sought out this proclamation, in kicking off His public ministry)! Wow!

Interestingly (but not surprisingly, in retrospect), Jesus would omit the reference in the second part of Isaiah 61:2, and in the prophecies to follow! Because, Constable notes, He came to fulfill verse 1 and the first part of verse 2 during His first advent, but would not fulfill the remaining prophecies until His second advent, when He would return to judge the nations and reign over His millennial kingdom! (The apostle John wrote, in John 3:17, "But God did not send His Son into the world (speaking of His first advent) to judge the world, but that the world would be saved through Him"!)

And so, Isaiah continues, in verse 4 (in what Motyer calls the "tailpiece" to this passage) with his prophetic message (for them and for us!) of what will take place, and how it will be, when Christ returns to bring vengeance on the nations (and casts out Satan!), and then begins His reign in the millennial kingdom! Priority again will be given to "binding up the brokenhearted, and comforting all who mourn"! And particularly for those in Zion to whom Isaiah prophesies (in picturesque language!) that He will give (among other things) "a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting, so that they may be called the oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, so that He may be glorified"!

Then, Isaiah continues, "they will rebuild the ancient ruins...the desolations of many generations...and foreigners will be their farmers and their vinedressers...and they will be called the priests of the Lord...and spoken of as ministers of our God"! In fulfillment of Exodus 19:6, where "on the mountain, in the wilderness of Sinai, God told Moses to "say to the sons of Israel that "if they would indeed obey His voice and keep His covenant, then they would be His own possession among all the peoples...and be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"! Wow! (Interesting that the apostle Peter, in I Peter 2:9, would apply this same terminology to the church! To us as believers today!)

But Isaiah's not finished with his promises for Israel in Isaiah 61! Including the promise of "a double portion of blessing" (to replace the double portion of her exile, MacArthur notes)! Reiterating His promise to "make an everlasting covenant with them," so that their offspring "will be known among the nations...as the offspring whom the Lord has blessed"! Prophecies yet to be fulfilled!

Then Isaiah closes out this chapter with words that (as MacArthur notes) give an Old Testament picture of "imputed righteousness, the essential heart of the New Covenant,

when a penitent sinner recognizes that he can't achieve his own righteousness, and repents and calls on the mercy of God, and the Lord covers him with His own righteousness by grace through his faith"!

And here are the words of Isaiah 61:10--"I will rejoice greatly in the Lord! My soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with the robe of righteousness...So the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations"!

Wow!

What more could He say than to us He has said!

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