

August 21

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 60 & 61

Key Verse: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor...” (Isaiah 61:1)

Overview

Chapter 60 continues the train of thought from chapter 59. It begins with a command for Zion (Jerusalem) to “Arise, shine”, for Jesus the Messiah, the Light and glory of the world has dispelled the darkness and has come as a victorious King to bring His redeemed ones to dwell with Him in the new and truly Holy City from where He will reign. Isaiah prophesies that because of the Light of Jesus over Jerusalem, many people will hastily flock to her, including Gentile and Jewish believers, and she will enjoy the resources of all the nations around her (60:5-11, 16-17). Jews and Gentiles, who together will have become the true Israel by faith in Jesus, will work hand in hand to beautify and restore Jerusalem. She who was once left desolate because of God’s wrath upon her sinful people (60:10b, 15) will now “swell with joy” (60:5,10) as she is inhabited by the righteous, whom God calls “the branch of My planting” (cf. Rom. 11:17-24) and “the work of My hands” because their souls have experienced His powerful work of redemption that Jesus procured on the cross of Calvary. The reason for their “planting” and redemption is so that God “may be glorified” (60:21; 61:3b).

The Messiah’s glorious reign will be so peaceful, that Jerusalem’s gates will never need to be closed, for there will be no nation in existence that is not subject to God (60:11-12, 18). Even those nations that had previously opposed Jerusalem will now pay her homage, since she who was once weak and small will become a strong nation, for she will be the City of the Lord (60:14, 22). When the time is ripe, the Lord will bring all these things to fulfillment, just as He promised (60:22).

In chapter 61, Isaiah introduces more fully the One that will rule in the glorious Kingdom described in chapter 60. The Lord Jesus has identified Himself as the speaker of this prophecy (Luke 4:16-21); there is no need to speculate. The first verse powerfully attests to the trinity and the deity of Jesus, upon whom is the Spirit of God (42:1), so that He might be empowered to “preach good tidings” (i.e. the Gospel), which was the reason for His incarnation. He was “anointed”, which was for priests and kings, for He was the great High Priest and King (Lev. 8:12; 1 Sam. 15:1; 16:13; Heb. 4:14; 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15; Rev. 19:16).

God saw that there were the “poor” (those who are meek and humble) and the “brokenhearted” (those who are repentant, being of a contrite spirit) who needed the Messiah to bind up and heal their wounds; they needed Him as their Mediator (cf. 59:16), and they needed the liberty that only He could provide for them through His Gospel message. This liberty was to be proclaimed in the “acceptable year of the Lord”, which refers to the year of Jubilee when every Israelite slave was to be freed (cf. Lev. 25:9-10). Jesus’ work of redemption sets free the captives bound to sin.

Interestingly, when Jesus read this prophecy in the synagogue of Nazareth, He stopped in the middle of the sentence and closed the Book; then He proclaimed: “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). He did not continue to read the latter half of verse 2, which speaks of “the day of vengeance”, since this day of the Lord was not to come until His second coming. He proclaimed that His ministry of grace was now in effect, as it still is today, wherein He provides forgiveness, and sets free our souls which were once bound by sin. After the day of His vengeance in judgment upon the wicked world, the Lord Jesus will provide comfort, consolation, beauty, and joy for the remnant of faithful believers. Because of His righteousness imputed to them, they will become like trees that are firmly grounded in Him.

While praising the Lord with joy and zeal, these new inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will begin rebuilding the “former desolations” (61:4; 60:10), and they will receive honour and be named “Priests of the Lord” (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Ex. 19:6). The “strangers”, who were formerly enemies of God’s people, will now serve them and respect them (61:5, 9). God’s elect will be abundantly blessed and have “everlasting joy” because of the salvation of the Lord, which will adorn them like the most beautiful garments. What a beautiful picture Isaiah painted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and how wonderful it will be in that coming day for the humble who remain faithful to God, for they will inherit these blessings and live to proclaim His praises before all the nations.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You that You made it clear in Your hometown synagogue that Isaiah spoke directly about You. Help us to share Your good news with everyone we meet. It’s too good to keep for ourselves!