

**International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
September 25, 2016**

**Lesson Text: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Lesson Title: The Everlasting Covenant**

Introduction

In chapter 60 of Isaiah, the prophet introduces and describes the glorious coming kingdom promised by the covenant-keeping God. Noticeably absent in that chapter is the identity of the King who will rule over the kingdom. The subject of the coming kingdom in chapter 60 is continued in chapter 61. In chapter 61, Isaiah introduces us to the Messiah who will rule the coming kingdom and renew the world.

The speaker in Isaiah 60 is Jehovah. Isaiah 61 opens with a new and mysterious speaker who speaks of Himself. The identity of the speaker is not revealed in the chapter, but Jesus tells us who He is in Luke 4:17-21. Standing in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 61. When He finished his reading He made a concluding statement “...*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*” (Luke 4:21). This fulfillment Jesus referred to reveals Himself as the speaker in Isaiah 61. The mission and ministry described in Isaiah 61:1-4 is of such a sweeping nature that only God Himself is able to perform it, through the Second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ.

The Messiah and His Ministry (Isaiah 61:1-4)

Verse 1

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;”

This verse is one of the few in Scripture where the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all mentioned. The “Spirit of the Lord GOD” is a reference to the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The title “the Lord GOD,” Adonai Jehovah, is the same Lord GOD mentioned four times in Isaiah 50:4-9, and is a reference to the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father.” “Me,” mentioned three times in the verse is a reference to the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Son.

Speaking for the coming Messiah, Isaiah says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,” referring back to Isaiah 48:16, “...*there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.*” The coming messianic servant will create a new

people by His Spirit-empowered preaching (Isaiah 11:2). The reason the “Spirit of the Lord GOD” is upon the Messiah is because “the LORD hath anointed me to preach...” This Spirit anointing for Christ’s preaching and ministry probably took place at His baptism when, “...*the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*” (Luke 3:22).

The word “anoint” means “to rub with oil, to consecrate.” In the Old Testament the word was often used in reference to oil being applied for special service to the Lord (Exodus 28:41). Certainly the ministry of the coming Messiah was a special work of God among men.

First, Jesus Christ came as a Preacher. “To preach good tidings unto the meek” means the anointed servant of God would announce the gospel to the “meek” or humble. The “meek” describe God’s faithful remnant. The “good tidings” is the message that enslavement to sin is about to end. This was true for Israel nationally through the coming of Messiah and it can be true for every sinner personally.

Second, Jesus came as a Healer. “He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted.” Messiah would come to bring healing to broken hearts and broken lives. The wounds of sin and suffering are so deep it requires the touch and tenderness of a Messiah like Jesus Christ. Lost humanity needs more than just the communication of preaching. A Healer is needed who like the certain Samaritan gets down in the ditch, pours in the oil, and binds up the wounds (Luke 10:30-37).

Third, Jesus came as a Liberator. “To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” is an immediate reference to the captives of Israel, but in a larger sense, it points to the deliverance of any sinner from the bondage of sin. In Jesus’ day, there were many who were “captives, in prison and bound” by the spiritual blindness of their hearts (Matthew 23:24). The captive power of sin can only be removed by the person of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Verse 2

“To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;”

Fourth, Jesus came as a Herald. “To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” refers to that glorious time when God will be merciful to His people (Isaiah 60:10). “Proclaim” means “to call out, address by name.” This is an aggressive proclamation of “the acceptable year of the LORD.”

The “acceptable year of the LORD” is not speaking about a particular date on the calendar, but rather a season during which God is pleased to accept those

who repent and turn to Him for salvation. In short, “the acceptable year of the LORD” refers to that time in history when our Lord offered the Gospel to Israel. In a much wider sense, it refers to the entire period of grace in which the Gospel is offered to all who will believe.

Isaiah’s prophesy concerning the “day of vengeance of our God” takes us from the first coming of Christ to the Second Coming of Christ. It is interesting that Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah 61 in his synagogue message stopped before the words “...and the day of vengeance of our God” (Luke 4:21). When Christ came in the fullness of time in His incarnation, He came to save sinners, not exact “vengeance.” When Christ comes the next time to set up His earthly kingdom, it will be a day of reckoning for the ungodly. The same Christ who came to bind the wounds of the brokenhearted is the One who will come to break the wicked. Christ will make things right when He comes the second time.

Note: It is comforting when criminals and terrorists are brought to justice. We want to see those who have committed evil acts on others brought to justice. But even human justice is never perfect. Only God can give perfect justice. Those who escape justice in this life will not escape it when they stand before God.

“To comfort all that mourn” will literally be fulfilled after the Tribulation when the godly remnant in Israel will have suffered deeply. The nation of Israel will “mourn” because of their past rejection of Christ. But the “mourning” will quickly be replaced by “beauty” and “praise.”

Verse 3

“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

“To appoint” and “to give” are synonymous expressions meaning “to console” and “grant.” The two words signify a reversal of fortune for God’s people. Isaiah sees those whose world had been ruined and destroyed seventy years earlier when God’s people were carried away to Babylon. God will make a change for them and for all who believe through the coming Messiah.

Those “in Zion” who have previously “mourned” are now given “beauty for ashes” and “the oil of joy” in place of “mourning.” “Beauty for ashes” is a reference to people who seated themselves on a pile of ashes and picked them up and poured them over their head as a symbol of mourning. In biblical times this is how people expressed their sadness and broken heartedness. Obviously, people with “ashes” on their head would look horrible. God promised to exchange “ashes” with “beauty.” “Beauty” refers to a “multi-colored turban or headdress” worn in biblical times during festive and celebratory occasions.

“The oil of joy for mourning” represents a change of appearance for God’s people. “Oil” in biblical times was placed on the face to reflect the sun. It was also used for the purpose of fragrance. The point is people will see a change in God’s people who had been marred by grief and sorrow for so long. The “joy” of the Lord is always evident in the lives of people who have trusted Him.

They are given “garments of praise” to wear in place of “the spirit of heaviness” or despair. The word “heaviness” means “a dimly lit or flickering spirit.” These people were wearing garments of captivity indicating they had little if any life left in them. The promise for Israel is instead of being wrapped in despair they can be clothed and wrapped in “praise.”

“That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” is a promise of stability for Israel’s future. There was no future in Babylon for them just as there is no future in sin for the unbeliever. The change brought by the Lord in Israel will change this unstable and insecure nation to be called “trees of righteousness.” “Trees” suggest firmness, fullness, and fruit. When nations look upon them they will call them “the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” The world will once again know Israel was chosen and “planted of the LORD” to display His “glory.”

Verse 4

“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.”

The people of Israel knew their homeland had been reduced to “wastes” and “desolations” during their seventy years of captivity. Yet, the promise of God could restore the “waste” of by gone years. Because of the ministry and mission of the Messiah, things in life devastated and destroyed by sin can be “repaired.”

This verse is a literal prophesy concerning Israel’s future restoration. It is also a promise that both Jew and Gentile can individually be saved and restored to God’s purpose in life. Because of God’s grace, right things have been ruined, God can rebuild and restore.

The Messiah and the Everlasting Covenant (Isaiah 61:8-11)

Isaiah 61:4-9 prophesies the restoration of Israel and the renewal of Israel to their appointed place of honor over other nations. As previously mentioned in verse 4, places that were once waste and desolate will be restored to fruitfulness and purpose. What a change under the Holy Spirit anointed ministry of the Messiah! No more shame. God will give them “double honor” which means a double portion of joy (Isaiah 61:7). There will be no more

confusion. Now, Israel shall rejoice in “everlasting joy,” a joy that can never be taken away.

Verse 8

“For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.”

God “loves judgment” means He loves that which is right. “I hate robbery for burnt offering” is most likely a reference to how the heathen nations and the Babylonians had robbed Israel of her sacrificial system. God “hates” when His people are robbed of that which brings Him glory. God will also “direct their work in truth.” That implies He will place the result of their work in security by giving them the wages they deserve. No more will heathen nations take advantage of God’s people.

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them” is a reference to the New Covenant Jeremiah would reveal in Jeremiah 31:3, *“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”* This “everlasting covenant” is a covenant of grace, which is the result of the Messiah, God’s Servant. It is based upon the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and the atonement He would make for our sins.

Verse 9

“And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.”

Saved and restored Israel and her “seed” will be “known” or acknowledged by the nations as God’s people. The descendants of Abraham will be known throughout the earth, and whoever sees them will know “the LORD hath blessed” them. Today the nations of the world are envious of Israel. In the future they will know they are a people “blessed” by God Himself.

Again, this is a literal prophesy concerning the future of Israel. But practically speaking, the truths of this verse can be applied to the life of the believer who is recognized as “blessed” by the Lord. When God’s Servant, Jesus Christ, works in the life of those who have trusted Him for salvation, everyone knows he has been “blessed” by the Lord!

Verse 10

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the

robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”

Isaiah 61 ends with praise for the work of the Lord. There is some question as to who is speaking in these verses. Some say it is Christ, the One who spoke in the first three verses of the chapter. However the speaker cannot be Christ because the Scriptures never say Messiah will be “clothed with the garments of salvation.” The Messiah brings “salvation” and “righteousness,” He does not receive them. Therefore, the one speaking in verses 10-11 must be Isaiah the prophet.

These verses are about the future generation of saved Israel. Isaiah is speaking for the nation to come as they “rejoice exceedingly in the Lord” and give praise for the blessings to come. In the future, Israel will be saved in the same way Gentiles are saved today. There is only one way of salvation and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

While the words of verses 10-11 are Israel’s words of praise to God, they are our words of praise also. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God” is the proper response for a saved person whether Jew or Gentile. The focal point of rejoicing is “in the LORD.”

The prophet compares Israel as adorned in “garments of salvation” as a bride and bridegroom would be dressed for their wedding. In other words, they are splendidly dressed. Because of the ministry of the Messiah and His sacrifice on the cross, Israel is like a “bridegroom decked with ornaments” or dressed for his wedding.

The “bride” is “adorned with jewels” which stands in total contrast to the appearance of mourning and sadness emphasized in the early verses of this chapter. Everything happening in verses 10-11 is a gift to those saved by grace by the gracious Messiah.

Verse 11

“For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

This verse summarizes God’s promises to Israel as sure as the law of nature. Just as a seed planted in the soil under the right conditions brings forth fruit, “God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nation.”

It is “the Lord GOD” who will “cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations.” There is a sense in which we can never make anything grow. Paul told the Corinthians, “*So then neither is he that planteth any thing,*

neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1Corinthians 3:7). The salvation and blessing nations need and the only hope for mankind is the power of God in God alone. Like Israel, we can put our hearts and minds in the right environment to flourish and be blessed, but only God can “cause righteousness and praise to spring forth.” Isaiah promises Israel and us God will do that in the future. Bless His name!

Conclusion

The type of ministry described in Isaiah 61 is the ministry the nation of Israel could expect. They anticipated a coming Messiah to preach good news to them and to help them. But His ministry was far more than preaching, healing, and liberating. The ministering Messiah of Isaiah 61 is also the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Everything Jesus Christ did through his preaching, healing, liberating, and heralding, is based on His sacrificial death on the cross.

Without the cross there is no good news, no hope for the future, and no everlasting covenant. Christ has come and died for the sins of man. Because of His sacrifice, you and I have good news to preach to those who are brokenhearted, captive, and bound in sin. In spite of all the sin and heartache of this present day we have a glorious future ahead. One that is eternal and will never cease to increase in joy and glory.

Amen.