

# ISAIAH

61:1-11

## Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the Book of Isaiah is that it is quoted in the New Testament far more than any other Old Testament book. Isaiah himself is mentioned twenty-one times by name; chapter fifty-three alone is quoted or alluded to at least eighty-five times.

Jesus quoted from Isaiah. One of the most remarkable quotes is from chapter sixty-one - the passage we've just read. It is remarkable for what Jesus quoted, *but especially for what He did not quote*. Stay here in Isaiah and look at verses one and two while I read to you from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 4:16 So [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

Luke 4:17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

Luke 4:18 *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

Luke 4:19 *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

Luke 4:20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

Notice something odd? *Jesus stopped quoting from Isaiah in the middle of a verse*. He stopped after saying, "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and omitted saying, "and the day of vengeance of our God."

You're told why as the story in Luke continues:

Luke 4:21 And He began to say to them, *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

**Jesus identified Himself as the Person being described by Isaiah!** His coming to the earth in the first century AD, and especially His public ministry, was the fulfillment of the verse *up to the words He quoted*. It was the "acceptable year of the Lord" when people who were brokenhearted, bound, and blind could be restored and

released in response to His message as He went about "preaching the gospel."

It was "the acceptable year of the Lord" but Jesus was not accepted by the vast majority of the people. He was, in fact, officially rejected by the Jews and then crucified by the Romans. He rose from the dead; ascended into heaven; and is seated at the right hand of God. The Scriptures indicate that one day He will return to earth a second time. It is then, in His Second Coming, that He will fulfill the remainder of the verse in Isaiah! The "acceptable year of the Lord" will give way to "the day of vengeance of our God."

We are still living in "the acceptable year of the Lord." Men and women must still determine to accept or reject Jesus in response to the preaching of the gospel. Isaiah called the gospel "good tidings," which can be translated, *to gladden with good news*. For some reason I like that - *to gladden with good news*. It's what Jesus intended and it is what we should now proclaim as His representatives on earth during "the acceptable year of our Lord."

We'll organize our thoughts about the gospel around two points: #1 Your Spirit-Anointed Words Gladden The Hearts Of People Who Need To Be Saved, and #2 Your Spirit-Anointed Words Gladden The Hearts Of People Who Need To Be Strengthened.

#1 Your Spirit-Anointed Words Gladden The Hearts  
Of People Who Need To Be Saved  
(v1-2a)

Jesus had recently been baptized by John the Baptist. It marked the beginning of His public ministry. At His baptism at the Jordan River the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and drove Him out into the desert to be tempted by the devil for forty days. He returned from the desert through Judea into Galilee and then to Nazareth where He would take up the scroll and read about Himself.

The focus and attention in these verses is on His preaching. Yes, Jesus performed many miracles - too many for the world to hold all the books if they were written down! Still, it was to proclaim a

**message** that He came - the gospel, good tidings to gladden the heart.

As the passage opens you're reminded of something essential to preaching the gospel:

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor...

The essential thing is the *presence* and *power* of the Holy Spirit in your preaching. To put it simply: If Jesus, Who was God come in human flesh, needed the Holy Spirit to come "upon" Him and to "anoint" Him, **how much more do we need the Holy Spirit to do the same for us!**

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit empowers you to "preach good tidings to the poor." Miracles, signs and wonders are great when God chooses to grant them; but it is the preaching of His Word that He values above all else. If there are miracles, signs and wonders they are to confirm His Word. Miracles, signs and wonders by themselves do not effect a change of heart.

Jesus gladdened the heart of "the poor" with good news. "The poor" certainly describes the economic condition of most of the people Jesus ministered to... But the word means *meek* and describes those that are low or humble. Isaiah defines what it means to be "poor" when he says,

Isaiah 61:1 "...He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;

The "poor" are all those who are *brokenhearted...* Or *bound...* Or *blind.*

The idea of a broken heart is one of the most popular notions in our culture. We listen to songs about it; we watch stories about it. While we sometimes joke about it, a broken heart can represent emotional pain so intense that people seek to end their own lives to eliminate its pain.

How can you mend a broken heart? You can't! But God can, *because He can give you a brand new heart!* "A new heart also I will give you," God promises, "and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Billions of dollars are spent; millions of hours are invested; trying to mend broken hearts. Men and women need to have a new heart. The gladdening good news for brokenhearted people is that faith in Jesus can save you and give you a new heart.

"To proclaim liberty to the captives" assumes that people are bound and held captive. In what ways are you bound?

1. First, the Bible declares that you are born into slavery. You are a slave to your inherited sin nature - what the Bible sometimes calls your "flesh." You discover that you yield to your flesh. Things you want to do you don't do; things you don't want to do, you do!
2. Second, the Bible declares that you are taken captive by the devil. In Second Timothy 2:26 unbelievers are described as "taken captive" by the "snare" of the "devil." It doesn't mean you are possessed by Satan or his demons. It means you have been so influenced during your lifetime by the devil that you are ensnared into doing his will against your own will.

Billions of dollars are spent; millions of hours are invested; trying to set you free. It amounts to reform. You can be reformed; but you need to be *transformed!* When you accept Jesus Christ, your flesh is considered dead and the devil is defeated. You are given a new nature - God's nature. The Holy Spirit takes residence within you. You are enabled to yield to the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of your flesh. You are enabled to resist the devil and his snares.

"Opening of the prison to those who are bound" is the final definition of the word "poor." When Jesus quoted from Isaiah He interpreted these words by saying, **"the recovery of sight to the blind."** He was describing a person who had lived their entire life in a darkened dungeon, never having seen the light. It's an illustration of the true spiritual condition of men and women before they are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. They are in darkness and cannot find their way out.

Multitudes of religions and philosophies have been formulated by men. But men are blind and it is so dark they cannot ever find their own way. If men and women are to be saved, God must reveal Himself to them. To stay with the picture - God must come and give them light; He must be the light. Jesus is "the Light of the world." There is **no** spiritual sight or insight apart from Jesus.

Let's summarize. Men and women are *blinded, bound, and brokenhearted*. They are blinded with regard to spiritual things; bound by their own flesh and the devil's influence; brokenhearted by their experiences in a fallen world dominated by disease and death.

**That's the bad news!** The **good news** is that Jesus came into this fallen world of brokenhearted people to open blind eyes and release those who are bound. It is done by the preaching of the gospel. It is done by **you!** Your Spirit-anointed words are the power to gladden the hearts of these people who need to be saved.

Let's be brutally honest: Salvation does not always change your circumstances. People who are saved therefore need to be strengthened.

## #2 Your Spirit-Anointed Words Gladden The Hearts Of People Who Need To Be Strengthened (v2b-11)

Jesus stopped in the middle of the verse. He had come in fulfillment of God's promises to save His people and all people who would accept His Son as their Savior. They largely rejected His offer; they still do.

It remains "the acceptable year of our Lord" when the offer of salvation by grace through faith is going out everywhere and to all men. A day is coming, however, when God will withdraw His gracious offer. "The day of vengeance of our God" is coming. We know it as the Great Tribulation - a seven-year period of judgment that is coming upon the whole earth to prepare mankind for the Second Coming of Jesus.

The remaining verses in Isaiah sixty-one are promises to the nation of Israel of their restoration after the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Jesus. The Lord will establish a kingdom on this earth and the Jews will be prominent in it.

Listen again to verses four through eleven and think about what is being promised to Israel in the future earthly kingdom:

Isaiah 61:4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.

Isaiah 61:5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner *shall be* your plowmen and your vinedressers.

Isaiah 61:6 But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, they shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast.

Isaiah 61:7 Instead of your shame *you shall have* double *honor*, and *instead of* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs.

Isaiah 61:8 "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant.

Isaiah 61:9 Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the posterity *whom* the LORD has blessed."

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels.

Isaiah 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes 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.

In the future God would *restore* the Jews to their land; they would *replant* it and *rebuild* it.

They are in their land, aren't they? We are living in exciting times from the point of view of Bible prophecy! The most difficult time is ahead - the Great Tribulation is coming upon the earth. But you - if you are a Christian - won't be upon the earth when it comes!

It seems that this future hope was to strengthen the Jews in their present circumstances - **whatever their present circumstance might be at the time!** In verse two, after the Lord speaks of the coming "day of vengeance," He says His words "comfort all who mourn." This word for "comfort" can be translated *to strengthen by companionship*. If you're saved, the Lord strengthens you by His companionship regardless your situation on earth.

God's strengthening companionship is described in verse three:

Isaiah 61:3 To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

"To console" means *to care for their needs*. "Those who mourn in Zion" were the Jews in Jerusalem. We can extend the application to ourselves by remembering that believers are citizens of a New Jerusalem, the city God is busy building for us in heaven. While we wait we often have cause to "mourn." **But God cares for our needs.**

God gives you a picture to consider. "Ashes," "mourning," and "the spirit of heaviness" describe the dress and disposition of a person attending a funeral service. "Beauty," "the oil of joy," and "the garment of praise" describes the dress and disposition of a person attending a wedding ceremony.

**God's companionship can transform what feels like a funeral into a wedding feast!**

"Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" is a picture of strength. Though the winds and storms may come against you, you can remain standing. As you do the Lord is "glorified." Others looking on see that your companionship with Jesus is the source of your strength. Without Him you would be uprooted; with Him you bring forth "righteousness" - right thinking and right living - despite adversity and affliction.

You need to be saved; then you need to be strengthened. **Both** occur as you hear Spirit-anointed words that gladden your heart.

Conclusion

Whenever I've been called-out to a tragic event, the person or person's suffering the loss are always greatly helped when others that they know intimately and love deeply arrive. The tragedy has not changed; in fact, it may have worsened. But the companionship of loved ones is a strengthening of the spirit.

If you are a Christian... God is your companion who comes to strengthen you in those times. God's companionship means everything.