

“Beauty for Ashes” Isaiah 61:1-11

Context: Isaiah transitions from an exhortation to turn from sin to a description of the consummation of salvation. In his concluding chapters, he uses a crescendo of depictions of deliverance, including the Remnant’s release from oppression, redemption by the Lord, preservation by the Holy Spirit, and the eternal glorification of Jerusalem. The rebuilding of a devastated Jerusalem in the post-exilic period under Ezra and Zerubbabel is used as the framework upon which the liberation of the Remnant is constructed. Their struggles and hopes foreshadow the experiences of the Remnant during the Church age, a Remnant still living under structures of sin and spiritual darkness. Our current discussion of liberation flows into revelations of future glory and gladness that come from the Remnant’s promised experience of a perfected salvation.

Life Principle: Rejoice in the fact that, although humanity is unjust, God is just, and justice finally triumphs (Isaiah 61:8).

1. Beauty of grace – Isaiah 61:1-3

The Holy Spirit lifts Isaiah from the midst of the ruins of post-exilic Jerusalem and anoints him to proclaim the coming of God’s saving work of justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification to those oppressed, wounded, and captive by the structures of sin. Isaiah sees both Christ’s first and second coming in a single scene of salvation culminating in God’s glory, the first in grace and the second in vengeance.

2. Beauty of double blessing – Isaiah 61:4-7

Strangers serve the Remnant as the Remnant serves God, thus contrasting and emphasizing their privileged position of service to God, plausibly interpreted as occurring in the Millennial Age. Where the Remnant once relinquished their blessings of labor to strangers of God, they will receive a double portion of blessing, blessing from God and blessing from those alien to God for whom they provide access to God. Further, they are promised God’s future blessing for all eternity.

3. Beauty of salvation – Isaiah 61:8-11

Isaiah leaps over questions about God’s justice in the present to exultation of God because of His justice on behalf of the Remnant in the future. The metaphor of adornment with undergarments of salvation and outer garments of righteousness reveal the believer’s change to a Christ-like glorified nature within that produces Godly outward behavior.

Study questions:

- According to Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reads only Isaiah 61:1-2a and proclaims the prophecy’s fulfillment at His reading. After comparing the two texts, explain why Jesus stopped reading where He did. What did Jesus bring to humanity at His first coming? What will Jesus bring to humanity at His second coming (cp. Revelation 19:11ff)? Our doctrinal statement describes the fulfillment granted by Jesus and prophesied by Isaiah (cp. Ephesians 4:8ff; 2 Thess. 1:5-12; Matthew 11:5ff) in footnotes 6-15 ‘**On Salvation**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org). If Jesus has set you free, what are you free from and what are you free for (cp. Romans 8:1ff; John 8:31-32)?

- Isaiah 61:6 proclaims that the entire Remnant serves as “priests” of the Lord. As a **Bible study method**, look up the term “priests” in the *TWOT #959b*. In what sense are the priests of the Old Testament types of Christ (i.e. Hebrews 2:17-3:1; 9:6ff)? What does Isaiah’s prophecy of future priests serving God have to do with you and your service to God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:6) and those serving in the Millennial age (cf. Revelation 20:6-10)?

- A proper translation of Isaiah 61:8-11 necessitates a very careful examination of the subject and the type of action the subject produces. In verses 8-9, who is the subject and who receives the reward or recompense? Is Isaiah, Jesus, or the nation rejoicing in verse 10? What are the reasons for rejoicing? Who is the cause of these reasons? Why should you be able to experience the part of the joy expressed in verse 10 now and hope for its perfection in the future (Ephesians 1:13ff; 1 Corinthians 13:9-13; 1 John 3:2ff)?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 60:3. Has the Lord given you the beauty of salvation for a former life left in the ashes of sin? If so, glorify the Lord by giving Him thanks during your quiet time this week. If not, ask Him to give you release.