

The Road to Jesus: The Gospel according to Isaiah
The Grand Finale of God's Restoration - Part 1
Isaiah 60-61
February 10, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 60 begins seven chapters in which Isaiah discusses the "grand finale" of God's restoration of the nation of Israel. Keep in mind that Israel is *not yet* in exile but, they have just weathered their salvation from the Assyrians when God killed 185,000 of them with an angel sent from heaven (37:36-38). Isaiah has also warned them of the coming exile in Babylon (39:5-7). That exile will be because of their sins. But, if they will repent, God will bring them back to Palestine. But that "return" foreshadows the importance of the *spiritual* return to God and receiving the forgiveness of sins.

As we study through these last chapters, keep in mind the *spiritual fulfillment* of these images. Isaiah is not talking about a physical kingdom/city! In the words of Protestant scholar Motyer (420): "No geographical Zion could contain the gathering world with its flocks." Isaiah is portraying the church of Christ (see Hebrews 12:22) in physical terms that the Jews of his day would understand. Many of the pronouns are feminine, referring back to the city Zion mentioned in 59:20. The church is, of course, God's people today, His spiritual "city" (Galatians 4:26).

THE NATIONS SEE GOD'S GLORY - 60:1-3:

"Light" has been an important theme for Isaiah since the very beginning, going all the way back to 2:5 (He uses the word "light" 29 times in his preaching/writing). It is in *that* context that God will establish His new, spiritual temple in Jerusalem and all the world will flock (or, better said, "flow") to Jerusalem to learn the law of the Lord and walk in His ways. That "walk" is portrayed as "walking in the light of the Lord."

Then, in 9:2 (see also 42:6 and 49:6), Isaiah predicts that the Jews, walking in darkness, will "see a great light." Matthew tells us that Jesus is that light (Matt. 4:16) and so does John (8:12). Here in chapter 60, Isaiah returns again to that light and calls on Israel to "arise" because her light has come. The glory of the Lord has risen upon her - God's salvation He offers is going to be made available to her, like light in the darkness.

The people sit in darkness but the Lord will rise among the Israelites and His glory will shine among them. Then, as Isaiah has so often predicted, the nations will come to the light shining from within the nation of Israel (vs 3) and the kings (Gentiles) will come to the brightness of her rising.

"The wonder of this chapter is that the glory of the Lord is to be reflected from Israel. This is the climax of one of the prominent themes of the book" (Oswalt, 537). That glory is personified and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 2:11; 17:4, 22; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:13-14).

JERUSALEM'S POPULATION, WEALTH, AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATIONS WILL GROW - 60:4-16:

All this imagery simply portrays the Messiahs' people, the church of Christ, growing and swelling with the increase of the Gentile nations and all the treasures they will bring with them - human beings primarily but also all that they bring with them - physical wealth, talents, skills, gifts, contributions - everything!

Verse 4 - People will flow to Jerusalem, sons and daughters (the next generation).

Verse 5 - Jerusalem will be radiant with the righteousness and salvation poured out from the heart and love of the God of heaven. The faithful remnants' heart will thrill and rejoice because the "abundance of the sea" will be turned to them - a reference to the peoples and nations of the earth. "The wealth of the nations will come to" Jerusalem - human beings bringing themselves to God, and all they are.

Verse 6 - People will come with camels, loading down with gifts, gold and frankincense. Notice that these "gifts" are figurative, metaphors for obedience to the God of heaven: "they will bear good news of the praises of the Lord." Of course, we see this verse literally fulfilled in the wise men in Matthew 2:11 but they only symbolize the Gentiles bringing themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 7 - Camels bring gifts in verse 6. Here, "flocks" are brought as well as "rams" as sacrifices. Here is pictured *worship* from the *Gentiles* to the God of the Jews. He will accept the worship of the Gentiles and His "glorious house" will be "glorified" as salvation is made available to everyone. See Romans 15:31-33. The root word for "glorify" is used in Isaiah 31 times. How will God glorify the nation of Israel? "By sharing his own glory (55:5), through the work of the Servant (49:3)" (Oswalt, 542). Jackson writes (120): "The flocks represent *spiritual* sacrifices and the altar/house symbolize acceptable service to God in the church of Christ."

Verse 8 - People will "fly like a cloud" to come to the House of prayer for all peoples, like doves to their "lattices."

Verse 9 - The "coastlands" (Gentiles) will wait for the Lord. Ships from Tarshish (Gentiles) will bring their sons and their silver and gold with them, "for the name of the Lord God" and "for the Holy One of Israel" *because* "He has glorified" Jerusalem. This is all figurative imagery illustrating the "wealth of the nations" from verses 5 and 11. This is the next to the last time "Holy One of Israel" will be used in Isaiah; the last time is in verse 14. "Now the *Holy One* who is the final judge is displayed to the nations as the God of *Israel*, who has given himself away to his people in love" (Oswalt, 543).

Verse 10 - Foreigners will "build up" the walls, that is, Gentiles will be part of the composition of the new temple of God. Their kings will minister to the God of the Jews. God had struck them in wrath but He will have favor on them in His compassion. The wealth of the nations was used *literally* to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, as we see fulfilled in Nehemiah 2:7-8 but that was foreshadowed the *spiritual* "rebuilding" of the ("spiritual") temple with the *nations* themselves. Young agrees (450): "The prophecy is not speaking of the literal rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, but of the building up of God's kingdom through the inclusion of Gentiles therein."

Verse 11 - The gates will be "continually open" for *everyone* to come into the new spiritual city of Jerusalem, into the new, spiritual temple of God. So that *everyone* may continue to bring their "wealth" to the God of heaven.

Verse 12 - For those who refuse to recognize the God of Israel, destruction awaits.

Verse 13 - But, the best of the nations will come to Israel - the best of Lebanon (speaking figuratively) will be brought: their cypress, junipers, and box trees. They will be

utilized to “beautify the place of God’s sanctuary” - His spiritual temple, the church of Christ. With all these gifts (forgiven human beings!), God will make the place of His feet “glorious.”

Verse 14 - The “sons” of those who had been Israel’s enemies will come and those who “despised” Israel will also come! We’ve seen this before, enemies of Israel worshipping beside her (cf. 19:23-25). Israel will be called “the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Verse 15 - At one point, they were “forsaken and hated” but God will make them an “everlasting pride” and a “joy from generation to generation.”

Verse 16 - Again using imagery similar to the “wealth of nations” coming into the church of Christ, Isaiah portrays God’s people as “sucking the milk of nations,” and “suck the breast of kings.” When the spiritual temple grows in this way, then mankind will know that Jehovah God is the “Savior,” the “Redeemer,” and the “Mighty One of Jacob.”

If Isaiah 1-39 show that God is the “Sovereign of the nations,” then chapters 40-66 prove He is the “Savior of the world” (Oswalt, 551).

GOD’S SPECIAL BLESSING RESTS ON HIS PEOPLE - 60:17-22:

One day (vs 17), God’s people will be *better quality* people - instead of bronze, they will be “gold.” Instead of wood, they will be “silver.” Instead of stones, they will be “iron” (imagery picked up by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 and 2 Timothy 2:20). Peace will be the administrators of the faithful remnant and “righteousness” will be their overseers. Clearly we see that Isaiah’s message deals with *spiritual* realities, not *physical*. “In reality the nation will not need rulers, judges, and government officials to keep people in line if everyone follows the principles of righteousness and peace” (Smith, 624).

Verse 18 - Violence will no longer be a part of God’s people nor devastation and destruction. Their walls of defense will be their salvation and their gates will be their praise - praise for the salvation from sins that God provides.

Verse 19 - Once again, Isaiah could not be more clear that he is *not* talking about physical realities but spiritual when he says here that they will not have the sun to brighten their day nor the moon by night because the Lord will be their “everlasting light” and God will be their “glory.” Beyer (231) calls this “imagery ascended to the apocalyptic level...” Without a doubt, Jesus is the “light of the world” (John 8:12). Isaiah is not picturing a millennial kingdom. He’s talking about the age of the Messiah, the *present* age of the Messiah. It is, of course, also applied to the “new heavens and new earth” in Revelation 21:23 because in *heaven* it is consummated. “With the first advent of Jesus Christ these prophecies received their fulfillment” (Young, 455).

Verse 20 - This light was be perpetual; the sun will not set, nor the moon wane. Didn’t he just say in verse 19 that there won’t *even be* a sun or moon? He’s speaking in figurative terms not literal. Again, the Lord will be the “everlasting light” and there will no longer be any “days of mourning” for their sins and the result of their sins (things like the “exile”).

Verse 21 - In this new age, the age of the Messiah, all the people will “be righteous.” They will have the “land” (“spiritual land,” not the land of Palestine!) forever, the “branch” of God’s planting, the “work” of His hands so that God will be glorified in all His works. Oswalt writes (559): “Thus the land has become a metaphor for God’s faithfulness to preserve the posterity of Abraham.” Young agrees (456): “Inheritance of the land is a symbol of the future

spiritual blessings that come to man through Christ.” Protestant scholar Motyer also agrees (424): “Did he know that these territorial predications would (not be contradicted or modified by but) find their realization in a ‘kingdom not of this world’ (John 18:36)?”

Verse 22 - God will cause all Israel to grow and increase through the influx of the Gentile people into His spiritual nation.

GOD’S SPIRIT-LED ANOINTED ONE - 61:1-3:

If man’s biggest problem is defined as “not knowing” or “not understanding,” (see Isaiah 1:3), then God’s answer, His solution, is to send a preacher. But not just *any* preacher - Jesus Christ, His Son. In Isaiah 6:9-10, the prophet was told by God: “He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.”

Israel needed a preacher. But not just *any* preacher. They needed the Son of God who would live and embody in the most profound way the Truth from the heart and mind of God.

Chapter 61 is the answer to that problem - the Spirit-Led Anointed Preacher of the Good News from God. In verses 1-3, there are a number of “infinitives” that describe the work of the Anointed One. Observe these points from the text:

First (61:1), Jesus’ preaching was guided by the Holy Spirit. Back in 11:2, we saw a seven-fold blessing that would be made available to the Messiah, from the Holy Spirit. Also, in 42:1, the Servant of the Lord would have the Holy Spirit.

Second, the preaching of Jesus would have a positive element. This is illustrated in the number of infinitives (some visible in the English text, some not) that complete the *reason* why the Messiah would be anointed with the Holy Spirit. Those infinitives are: *to* bring good news (vs 1), *to* bind up the broken-hearted, *to* proclaim liberty, *to* proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (vs 2), *to* comfort all who mourn, “*to*” give a garland instead of ashes (vs 3).

“The coming of the Anointed One marks the *year*, the prolonged period, in which the Servant’s achievement can be enjoyed: Gentiles are fully accepted and compassion flows freely” (Motyer, 427).

The result of His ministry work would be that His followers would be “called oaks of righteousness” (vs 3). Their lives and their faith would be stable, strong, unswerving and rooted in the Messiah. “We are made to be mirrors; when his beauty is reflected in us, we become beautiful” (Oswalt, 568).

Third, Jesus’ preaching has a negative element to it. He is to proclaim “the day of the vengeance of our God” (vs 2). Earlier, in 35:4, Isaiah had said: “Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.”

Fourth, Jesus’ preaching has as *its final goal or purpose* **the glorification of God**. Observe verse 3: “that He may be glorified.”

If our preaching is to reflect and imitate the preaching of Jesus, it needs to be guided by the Holy Spirit, through His word (1 Cor. 14:37; Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:25; 6:16)..

Our preaching must have a strong positive element: saturated with graciousness (Col. 4:6), done with patience (2 Tim. 2:24), characterized by gentleness (2 Tim. 2:25; 1 Cor. 4:21), and love (Eph. 4:15), designed to build up (1 Cor. 14:4) and intended to encourage (1 Thess. 4:18). We need to comfort the afflicted in our preaching.

But, we also need to afflict the comfortable, as the old preacher use to say (I don't know who he is!). If one does not have courage and conviction in the truth of God's word, he cannot, he must not be allowed to preach. The preacher of the Gospel needs to know what he believes and whom he believes.

Our preaching needs to reprove and rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2). We have to rebuke the brother who sins (Luke 17:3) and we must rebuke those who contradict the Word (Titus 1:9). We must also instruct (2 Tim. 4:2). We need to instruct those who are atheists and those who believe in premillennialism. Those who are Calvinists and Pentecostals need to be instructed. All those who have an imperfect and inaccurate understanding of the truths of God's word need instruction.

Jesus' preaching had as its goal the glorification of God. Our goal, in our preaching and in *all* that we do, needs to be the glorification of God, our Heavenly Father (Galatians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

ISRAEL'S REBUILT CITIES - 61:4-9:

Yes, Israel will return to the land of Palestine from their 70-year exile in Babylon and they will rebuild their cities. But, the primary focus is rebuilding their relationship with the God of heaven. The imagery from verse 4 is picked up by Amos in 9:11ff and quoted by Peter as being fulfilled in the church of Christ in Acts 15:16-18. So, we are still looking at *spiritual* truths in this text.

Verse 5 - "Strangers" (Gentiles) will pasture flocks beside the Jews and will be farmers and vinedressers with them. This continues the imagery from chapter 60 - the "wealth of the nations" coming to Jerusalem. In the remainder of this chapter (verses 4-11), there are six references to the Gentiles being included in the people of God.

Verse 6 - They will be called "priests" of the Lord and "ministers" of the God of heaven. The passages that show these two terms fulfilled in Christians and the church are many (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 5:9-10). "The nations would serve the Israelites physically and provide for them materially, and the Israelites would serve their spiritual needs" (Beyer, 233). For the NT fulfillment of this principle, see:

Verse 7 - Because of this new relationship with the God of heaven, they will no longer have shame but a "double portion," as firstborn sons (see Hebrews 12:23 for the spiritual fulfillment in the church of Christ). "Everlasting joy" will be theirs.

Verse 8 - All this will happen because the Lord "loves justice" and "hates robbery" in worship. God will "faithfully give recompense" - blessings to those who turn to God in repentance and punishment to those who refuse to turn. He will "make an everlasting covenant" with the former. Other references to this new, everlasting covenant are found in Jeremiah 31:31; Malachi 3:1-2; Matt. 26:27-28; and Hebrews 8 and 9:11-22.

Verse 9 - Then, future generations will benefit from the Lord's blessings, even among the Gentile peoples. They will all recognize God's people as belong to the Lord, blessed by the Lord - a reference to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless those who bless his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). It is clear that it is not the *physical* nation of Israel that will last but the *spiritual* nation of Israel, the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

ISRAEL'S EXULTATION - 61:10-11:

Through this renewed relationship with God, Israel will be glorified and beautified like a bride dressed for her husband. She will rejoice greatly and will "exult" because the Lord has clothed her with "garments of salvation" and wrapped her with "a robe of righteousness," as a bridegroom decks himself and as a bride adorns herself with jewels (vs 10).

Just like the earth provides sprouts and the garden produces crops, so the Lord will provide righteousness and will produce praise to spring up in the sight of all the nations (vs 11). The only other place where this noun "sprouts" is used is in 4:2.

This imagery of a wedding between God and His faithful remnant is picked up and elaborated on in chapter 62...

Next week:
The Grand Finale of Restoration - Part 2
Isaiah 62-64