

ISAIAH LESSON 57

Dawn of a New Day^a
(Isaiah 61:1-11)

Isaiah 61:1-11 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

The Good News of Deliverance^b

61 The Spirit^c of the Lord God^d is upon me,
because the Lord^e has anointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^f
² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God^g;
to comfort all who mourn;^h
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.ⁱ
⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.^j
⁵ Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks,
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;^k
⁶ but you shall be called the priests of the Lord,
men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
you shall eat the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.^l
⁷ Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion,
instead of dishonor you shall rejoice in your lot;
therefore in your land you shall possess a double portion;
yours^[g] shall be everlasting joy.^m
⁸ For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrong;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.ⁿ
⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.^o
¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my soul shall exult 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 a garland,
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.^p
¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
 so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
 to spring forth before all the nations.^q

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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STUDY QUESTIONS:

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^a **Dawn of a New Day.**

^b **The Good News of Deliverance.** Chapters 61 and 62 of Isaiah paints a picture with light, prosperity, wealth, lush vegetation and expensive clothing of the change that will be brought by the coming of the Messianic Servant who announces His coming and role at the beginning of Chapter 61 (Is 61:1-3). There follow three divine promises. Zion will eat the wealth of the nations (Is 61:4-11). God will show the nations that Zion is not forsaken (Is 62:1-5). And The nations will not devour Zion's wealth (Is 62:6—9). Chapter 62 ends with a call for God's people to clear the way for the coming salvation (Is 62:10-12).

^c **Spirit - Ruach (רוּחַ)** usually translated as **Spirit**, can mean spirit, wind or breath. See Note on the Names of God in the Introduction to this Study.

^d **Lord God - Adonai (אֲדֹנָי) Yahweh, or Jehovah, (יהוה), YHWH** combines the plural form of lord or master with the Tetragrammaton. See note on the Names of God in the introduction to this Study. Appears here and in verse 11.

^e **Lord - Yahweh, or Jehovah (יהוה), YHWH**, written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears here and in verses 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

^f (1) Is 11:2-5, 29:19, 30:26, 32:7, 40:9, 42:1, 42:7, 45:13, 48:16, 49:9, 49:24-25, 50:4, 52:7-9, 57:15, 58:7, 59:21, 66:2; Lv 25:10; 2Sm 18:26; 2Ki 22:19; Jb 5:16-18; Ps 2:6, 22:26, 25:9, 34:18, 45:7, 51:17, 68:6, 69:32, 89:20, 102:20, 146:7, 147:3, 149:4; Jr 34:8; Dn 9:24-26; Hos 6:1; Zec 9:11-12; Mt 3:16, 5:3-5, 11:5; Lk 4:18-19, 7:22; Jn 1:32-33, 1:41, 3:34, 8:32-36; Ac 4:26-27, 10:38, 26:18; Rm 6:16-22, 7:23-25; 2Co 3:17, 7:6; 2Tm 2:25-26; Heb 1:9

The speaker of this verse is not specifically identified, but cannot be God, because the speaker is described as being anointed (**מָשַׁח**, *mashach*, from which we get Messiah) by God and having the Spirit of the Lord upon him, or perhaps as being anointed by the Spirit of God. Isaiah often associates God's Spirit with bringing justice and righteousness to the Earth, particularly through the Word of God (Is 59:21). Nor can the speaker be Israel because he will be making his proclamation to Israel. The evidence suggests the speaker is the Lord's special Servant, described earlier in the Servant Songs (Is 42:1-7, 49:2-9, 50:4, 51:16). Anointed literally refers to having oil poured on him (1Sm 10:10). Oil was used to clean (Ex 30:22-33) particularly for ritual purposes. It was also used to identify or consecrate a person for a particular office or task such as prophets (1Ki 19:6), priests (Ex 29:7, 40:12-15; Lv 4:3, 8:12) and especially Kings (1Sm 12:3, 16:1, 16:13, 24:6, 26:9, 26:16; 2Sm 1:14-16, 19:21, 22:51, 23:1; 1Ki 19:16; Ps 2:2, 2:6) and to symbolically demonstrate God's divine equipping and appointment. The Messiah would be King (Is 7:14; Jr 23:8, 31:31-34; Mi 5:2; Mt 27:37; Jn 7:42), Priest (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:11-12) and Prophet (Dt 18:15-19; Ac 3:22-23, 7:37). The speaker then identifies the tasks for which he was appointed: to bring or proclaim good news (**בְּשָׂרָה**, *basar*) to the poor, afflicted or meek (**עָנָו**, *anav*); to bind up, bandage, heal or give relief to (**חֲבַשׁ**, *chabash*) the broken or broken-hearted (**שָׁבָר**, *shabar*); to proclaim (**קָרָא**, *qara*) liberty (in the sense of free flowing water) (**רִדְדָר**, *deror*) for the captives, or those carried away, (**שְׁבָה**, *shabah*) and the opening of prison (**תִּפְתָּח־קָוָה**, *peqach-qoach*, used only here but probably related to the word used for opening of the eyes of the blind) for those who are bound (**אָסַר**, *asar*); and, verse 2, to proclaim (**קָרָא**, *qara*) the acceptable (**רִצְוֹן**, *ritson*).

ratson) year (שָׁנָה, *shannah*) of the Lord, or year of the Lord's favor, the jubilee (Lv 25:10-11; Is 49:8). The Messiah, in accordance with the custom, reads this verse, and part of the following verse (Lk 4:18-19) in the synagogue at Nazareth after which He returned the scroll and, it appears, preached a homily which began, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." In doing so He both interpreted this Scripture as Messianic and claimed that He was the Messiah of which It speaks. This sermon was, at first, well received (Lk 4:22). But the homily continued with a subtle prediction that He would not be accepted by His own people, the Jews (Lk 4:23-24), and stories of the prophets Elijah and the Widow of Sidon (1Ki 17:9) and Elisha healing Naaman (2Ki 7:3, 5:1-14) in which God extended His grace to certain gentiles (but see, Mt 15:22-28). At this, His listeners rejected Him and drove Him from town. The Messiah made a similar claim to the disciples of John the Baptist in Luke 7:22 by referring to a number of prophecies in Isaiah about Him (Is 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 61:1-2). The LXX for this verse and the beginning of the next reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me; He has sent Me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; 2 to declare the acceptable year of the Lord . . ." In the oldest extant Greek manuscripts, the reading of Luke 4:18 differs from the Septuagint rendering by not including the reference to healing those who are broken at heart. Otherwise, the words in Luke 4:18 are very close to Isaiah 61:1 in the LXX. Later Greek manuscripts of Luke include the words about healing the brokenhearted ones, perhaps because copyists chose to harmonize the quotation with Isaiah 61:1. In all events, the similarities of both the earlier and later versions of Luke to the LXX imply that Jesus was reading from the LXX. The *Targum of Isaiah* for this verse reads, "The prophet said, the spirit of prophecy from before the presence of the Lord God is upon me; because that the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to strengthen the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to the prisoners! Appear in light!" thus identifying the speaker with the prophet Isaiah. This interpretation fits the original context in which Isaiah was preaching a message which would have been good news to the less fortunate of his time. The references to release from captivity would have been good news to those in captivity in Babylon. This would have been analogous to the Jubilee Year in which Jews would be returned to their ancestral land and slaves would be released. Though it may have had this meaning in the original context, Jesus' reading of the passage in the synagogue and His subsequent commentary make clear that the passage also applies to him. At his baptism, Jesus was anointed with God's spirit, rather than oil, and thus empowered to carry out His mission. Jesus made it possible for those who were spiritually blind () as well as healing those who were physically blind.

^g **God - Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)**, the plural form of the generic *el* (אֵל). See Note in the Introduction to this Study. אֱלֹהִים appears here and in verses 6 and 10.

^h (2) Is 1:24, 2:12, 13:6, 25:8, 34:2, 34:8, 35:4, 40:1, 49:8, 57:18, 59:17-18, 60:10, 63:1-6, 66:10-14; Lv 25:9-13; Jb 5:11; Ps 110:5-6; Jr 31:13, 46:10; Ezk 9:4; Dn 9:4-21; Mal 4:1-3; Mt 5:4, 13:37-43, 21:33-44, 22:2-13, 24:36-51; Lk 4:19, 6:21, 7:44-50, 21:22-24; Jn 16:20-22; 2Co 1:4-5; 2Co 6:2; 1Th 2:16; 2Th 1:7-9, 2:16-17

When Jesus quotes these verses as applying to himself in Luke 4:18-19, He stops after the "acceptable year of the Lord" and before referring to the day of vengeance (נִקְמָה, *naqam*) of God and comforting (נָחַם, *nacham*, can also mean repent) those who mourn (אָבֵל, *abel*). It is not clear whether Luke simply abbreviated the quote anticipating that his, likely gentile, readers would know the rest, Jesus only read the first verse and a half knowing that His Jewish listeners would be quite familiar with the rest of the passage, or Jesus intentionally omitted the rest of verse 2. Jesus would elsewhere describe a time when God would come in vengeance or wrath (Mt 24:30; Mk 13:1-27; ____). Many commentators suggest that Jesus stopped where He did because the favor of the Lord had come with His first incarnation while the vengeance would come at His second. That interpretation, however, does not take into account that God's favor and vengeance are both present now, and will both only come to completion with the Eschaton. At the time Jesus read the passage, of course, there were no verse numbers so a break in the middle of verse 2 would be less unusual. Also at that time it is likely that there was a customary "lexicon" of synagogue readings which would have included the Prophet Isaiah. Though none have survived from Jesus' time, there are a number of extant documents from early mediaeval times. If there were a regular reading schedule, it might be possible to infer the day of the year in which this event occurred. There may be significance to the "year" of God's favor and the "day" of God's vengeance. Those who mourn are generally viewed as those to whom tragedy has come. But they might also include those who regretted the prevailing situation characterized by disregard for God (Is 1:2-20) or who repented of their own sin (____).

ⁱ (3) Is 1:6, 3:23, 12:1, 28:5, 44:23, 51:3, 55:10-11, 60:20-21; Ruth 3:3; 2Sm 13:19; Est 4:1-3, 8:15, 9:22; Jb 2:8; Ps 1:3, 23:5, 30:11, 45:7, 92:12-15, 104:15; Ec 9:8; Jr 17:7-8, 31:13; Ezk 16:8-13; Zec 3:5; Mt 5:4, 5:16, 7:17-19, 15:13; Lk 15:22; Jn 15:8, 16:20; 1Co 3:9, 6:20; Php 1:11; 2Th 1:10; Heb 1:9; 1Pt 2:9, 4:9-14; Rv 7:9-14

The mission of the Lord's Anointed also includes giving, putting or appointing (נָתַן, *nathan*) those who mourn in Zion beauty, a garland or a headress (פֶּאֶר, *peer*) instead of ashes (אֶפֶר, *epher*), oil (שֶׁמֶן, *shemen*, especially olive oil, and figuratively richness) of gladness or comfort (שִׂשׂוֹן, *sason*) rather than mourning (אָבֵל, *abel*), and a mantle (מַעֲטָה, *maateh*) of praise (תְּהִלָּה, *tehillah*) rather than a faint spirit or spirit (רוּחַ, *ruach*) of heaviness (כְּהֵה, *keheh*). This will happen so that these people may be called the oaks (אֵיל, *ayil*, or ram for food or sacrifice, building or pillar, or strong man or chief) of righteousness or vindication (צְדָקָה, *tsedeq*) and the planting (מַטָּע, *matta*) of the Lord, and that God Himself will be glorified (פָּאֵר, *paar*). The LXX reads, ". . . that there should be given to them that mourn in Zion glory instead of ashes, the oil of

joy to the mourners, the garment of glory for the spirit of heaviness; and they shall be called generations of righteousness, the planting of the Lord for glory.” The Targum of Isaiah renders the verse, “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, that unto them be given a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the spirit of praise for their spirit which is faint; they shall be called princes of truth, the people of the Lord, that He may assuredly be glorified.” There is no object for שׂוֹם in the Hebrew leading some translators to have the speaker provide for the mourners. Based on the context, the object might also be “comfort” or “joy” to complete the thought. The now repentant remnant would again enjoy God’s approval and blessing and would flourish like big trees.

^j (4) Is 44:26, 49:6-8, 51:3, 58:12, 65:21; Ezk 36:23-26, 36:33-36; Am 9:14-15; Zec 1:16-17

Because of the work of the person described in the prior verses the redeemed people will rebuild (בְּנֶה, *banah*) the old or ancient (עוֹלָם, *olam*) ruins, waste or desert (חֲרָבָה, *chorbah*; derived from חָרַב, *chareb*), and raise up or establish (קוּם, *qum*) the former, older, or earlier (רִישׁוֹן, *rishon*) devastations (שָׁמֵם, *shamem*), repair or renew (חָדַשׁ, *chadash*) the ruined (חָרַב, *choreb*) cities (עִיר, *ayar*). The ruins are described as the devastations or ruins (שָׁמֵם) of many generations or generation after generation (דּוֹר, *dor*, repeated to convey the idea of multiple generations). The same concept is repeated three times using different words in parallel constructions to emphasize that restoration. In its immediate context it might refer to the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the return from Babylon. But in a metaphorical sense it could refer to the restoration of those devastated by sin. The sin of Adam, and of all his descendants, transformed everything including the natural world, to ruin. Only the work of the special Servant will make release from sin possible (Jn 5:24; Rm 6:4-7; Eph 2:1-6; 1Jn 3:14).

^k (5) Is 14:1-2, 56:6, 60:10-14; Eph 2:12-20

^l (6) Is 23:18, 56:6, 60:5-17, 66:12, 66:21; Ex 19:6; Dt 33:19; Ezk 14:11; Jl 1:9; Ac 11:28-30; Rm 12:1, 15:26-27; 1Co 3:5, 4:1; 2Co 6:4, 11:23; Eph 4:11-12; 1Pt 2:5, 2:9; Rv 1:6, 5:10, 20:6

^m (7) Is 25:9, 29:22, 35:10, 40:2, 41:11, 51:11, 54:4, 54:7-8, 60:19-21; Dt 21:17; 2Ki 2:9; Jb 42:10; Ps 16:11, 126:5; Zec 9:12; Mt 25:46; 2Co 4:17; 2Th 2:16

ⁿ (8) Is 1:11-13, 1:17, 5:16, 24:5, 28:17, 30:18, 40:10, 42:6, 49:4, 54:9-10, 55:3, 59:15, 59:21; Gn 9:16, 17:7; 1Sm 15:21-24; 2Sm 23:5; Ps 11:7, 25:8-12, 32:8, 33:5, 37:28, 45:7, 50:5, 99:4, 105:10; Pr 3:6, 8:20; Jr 7:8-11, 9:24, 32:40; Am 5:21-24; Zec 8:16-17; Mt 23:14; 2Th 3:5; Heb 13:20-21

^o (9) Is 43:5, 44:3, 48:19, 65:23; Gn 12:2, 22:18; Dt 28:3-12, Ps 115:14; Zec 8:13; Ac 3:26; Rm 9:3-4, 11:16-24

^p (10) Is 7:13, 12:1-2, 25:9, 35:10, 41:16, 49:4, 49:18, 51:3, 51:11, 52:1, 59:17; Gn 24:53; Ex 28:2-43, 39:28; 1Sm 2:1; 2Ch 6:41; Neh 8:10; Jb 27:6; Ps 2:11, 28:7, 45:8-14, 132:9, 138:1-2, 139:16; Jr 2:32; Ezk 16:8-16; Hab 3:18; Zec 3:4, 10:7; Lk 1:46-47, 15:22; Rm 3:22, 5:11, 13:14, 14:17; Gal 3:27; Php 3:1-3, 3:9, 4:4; 1Pt 1:8; Rv 4:4, 7:9-14, 19:7-8, 21:2, 21:9

^q (11) Is 4:2, 45:8, 45:23-24, 55:10-11, 58:11, 60:18, 60:21, 62:1, 62:7; Gn 47:23; Ps 72:3, 73:16, 85:11; Song 4:16, 5:1; Mt 13:3, 13:8, 13:23; Mk 4:26-32; 1Pt 2:9