

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is the fact that it was written over a period of about 1500 years, by over 40 different authors – and yet there is one theme from the beginning to the end – and that is the salvation of mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption that he would bring.

As I have told you before, just after the fall of man and the entrance of sin into the world, God promised a Savior. In Genesis 3:15 we read: “*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*”

This is the first promise of a Savior and throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we read more and more prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. We have seen some of them in the season of Advent and the beginning of Christmas season, which ends on January 6, Epiphany. From his birth, his life, his death, resurrection, ascension and his coming again – they are all there in the Old Testament Scriptures. Many have been fulfilled, some await his glorious return.

Another of those prophecies is that which we read from the book of Isaiah 61:1-3, which was for the Epistle lesson for today, the 2nd Sunday after Christmas. Turn with me there. What we see in this passage is both comings of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (READ).

The interesting part about this passage is that at the beginning of our Savior’s ministry, some 600 years after Isaiah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recorded these words, our Savior quoted part of these words from Isaiah. In Luke 4:16-19 we read: “*So He 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. 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: 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; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*”

The interesting part about this passage is what we read in the following two verses from Luke 4:20-21: “*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. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*”

Wow – the very words that Isaiah wrote 600 years prior, were now fulfilled in the life of our Savior, as were a multitude of other prophecies concerning him.

Now, as I said, we see in the three verses from Isaiah 61, both comings of our Savior. His first Advent in verses 1 and the first half of verse two. And then his Second coming in glory, in the second half of verse 2 and verse 3. Let’s take a look at them together.

What we see in the verses 1 & 2a is the good news of salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ brings to those who receive him as Savior and Lord.

Isaiah begins: “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,*” – in other words, what Isaiah is about to say is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These were not his words, but the words that the Lord God inspired him to write.

It's important that we understand this. Because this fact is true of all of the Scriptures. As we read in 2 Timothy 3:16,17: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* This is precisely why we call it the Word of God. It is not Paul's words, or Isaiah's or Jeremiah's – or any of the other humans that God used – it is God's Word.

Now, remember, that with many of the Old Testament prophecies while there was a future fulfillment, there was also a present day application. The people of Israel were in captivity, and as we saw Christmas Eve, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah concerns God's judgement on Israel because of their sin. From chapter 40 on there is a message of comfort and hope.

And that is exactly what we see here in verses 1 & 2b: *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, and what did Isaiah tell the people: "Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; 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; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,"*

The word *"anointed"* in the Hebrew is the word from which we get the word *"Messiah"* – which means *"the anointed one"*! Interesting, especially when we consider the words that we read in Luke, that our Savior then said were fulfilled in him – because he indeed, is the anointed one!

Now we think about these good tidings in relation to the people of Israel who were in captivity. They wanted good news about their captivity – they wanted good tidings. They were poor .. They were brokenhearted ... they wanted liberty and they wanted out of their prison. These were words of comfort to them.

But we also think of these words in relation to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news ... the good tidings is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He came to those who were poor in Spirit ... he came to save those who were brokenhearted to give us comfort ... he came to proclaim liberty and freedom because of the forgiveness of our sins.

Again as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see that without Christ we are in bondage to sin and we are at war with God. But because of the good tidings ... the good news ... the Gospel of Jesus Christ all this is changed. There is freedom from sin and we are no longer at war with God.

Listen to our status as Christians from Ephesians 2:13-20: *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,"*

Good tidings to those who were in captivity in Babylon ... good tidings to us who have trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord.

But, as I said, there is also a future fulfillment. And that is what we see in the rest of our passage. “*And the day of vengeance of our God;*” Remember, the first time that Jesus came, he came as a suffering servant. But when he comes again – something that we confess each week in our Creed – he will come again in glory and judgement – “*And the day of vengeance of our God;*”

And what will he do? As we conclude: “*To comfort all who mourn, 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 comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion. Again, both a present day application to the people of Israel – at their deliverance, they will be comforted. But, I believe it also refers to those who mourn over sin. Remember the words of our Savior in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:4: “*Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*”

There is a lot of sin in this world and the many results of that sin – we see it in individuals, in our cities, in our country and around the world. When our Savior returns, those who mourn over sin will be comforted, because he comes in judgement.

To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Jewish mourning included sackcloth and ashes – people knew when someone was in mourning. However, at times of celebration it called for brightly colored garments and the pouring of expensive oils upon one’s head.

This is the picture that we see here – mourning will be replaced with celebration. *To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

With the concluding words: *That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.* Those that no longer mourn, will be like sturdy Oak trees. We should be reminded of the description of the righteous man from Psalms 1:3: “*He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.*”

And in Jeremiah 17:8: “*For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*”

When our Savior returns – all will be made right and God will be glorified. But for now, in spite of the difficulties in our lives ... the difficulties in our nation and in our world, we can rest in the comfort that God gives us through the Lord Jesus Christ.