

Isa. 61

Tina M. Peterson, Jay A. Parry, Donald W. Parry, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1998)

✘ **Likening [Isa. 61](#) unto Ourselves**

✘ *This chapter enumerates blessings to those who receive Christ: He will bring good tidings, healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to those who are in bondage to sin, and comfort to those who mourn the pain of death and sin. We will receive temporal support and the priesthood. The blessings we receive will be so apparent that the whole world will acknowledge them. The Lord will cherish us and bind us to himself as a loving husband does his bride.*

✘ **The Mission of the Messiah (61:1-3)**

✘ When Jesus taught in the synagogue in Nazareth, he quoted all of 61:1 and the first line of 61:2, indicating that he was the fulfillment of this prophecy ([Luke 4:16-21](#)). The remainder of 61:2 is millennial and does not apply to Christ's first coming.

✘ [Isa. 61:1-3](#) provides a powerful, compact description of the Savior's mission, both during his mortal ministry and as long as the earth shall last: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus will have the Spirit of God; he will be anointed by God; he will preach good tidings; he will be sent to bless the brokenhearted, the captives, and those who mourn (61:1-2).

✘ Those in Zion will receive special blessings from the Messiah: a crown of beauty will replace the ashes of mourning, gladness will replace sorrow, praise and rejoicing will replace depression. As Christ is the tree of life, so will his children be trees of righteousness, given life by the Lord, to his glory and to theirs ([Alma 13:23](#)).

✘ **[Isa. 61:1-3](#)**

✘ The *Spirit of the Lord God* is upon me;
because the Lord hath *anointed* me
to preach good tidings unto the meek;
he hath sent me *to bind up* the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and *the opening* of the prison to them that are bound; (61:1)
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
and the *day of vengeance* of our God;
to comfort all that mourn; (61:2)
To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,
to give unto them *beauty* for ashes,
the *oil of joy* for mourning,

the *garment of praise* for the spirit of heaviness;
that they might be called trees of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord,
that he might be glorified. (61:3)

✘ Notes and Commentary

✘ **61:1** *anointed me*. The very words *Messiah* (Hebrew *Mashiyach*) and *Christ* (Greek *Christos*) mean "anointed one."

✘ *good tidings*. On an immediate level, *good tidings* refers to deliverance from bondage. Israel, in her slavery and oppression, believed the Lord had forgotten her (40:27; 49:14), but the Lord's deliverance is assured (40:1-2; 51:17; 52:1). On a broader level, the good tidings are that we can be delivered from sin and death—the message of the gospel, the "good tidings" of Jesus Christ ([D&C 76:40-42](#)).

✘ *bind up the brokenhearted*. The Lord will *bind up* all emotional and spiritual wounds, personally healing each soul. We, as his agents, can seek to minister in the same way. [1](#)

✘ *proclaim liberty/captives/prison*. As a nation, Israel received her liberty through Cyrus (45:13). *Proclaim liberty* is an Old Testament expression referring to the practice of setting free the slaves in Israel's jubilee year ([Lev. 25:10](#); [Jer. 34:8-9](#)) in anticipation of the mission of Christ, who liberates all who are in bondage to sin (49:9). This phrase likely also applies to the freedom Christ grants those in spirit prison (42:7; [1 Pet. 3:18-19](#); [D&C 128:22](#)).

✘ **61:2** *acceptable year of the Lord*. The New International Version reads "the year of the Lord's favor."

✘ *day of vengeance of our God*. This day is the second coming of Christ, when he will cleanse the earth and intervene for his people Israel against their enemies (34:8; 49:8; 63:4). This cleansing applies to Israel herself, to her enemies, and to everyone who is bound spiritually. The cleansing will be accomplished quickly, as in a day, when the deliverance will be complete and the time of favor will begin. *The acceptable year of the Lord* subtly emphasizes his mission of saving grace. It is a long period in which the righteous enjoy the "favor" of the Lord (NIV). *Day of vengeance* reminds us that the Lord brings judgment as well as salvation. "The contrast between *year* and *day* is important: grace is God's constant attitude toward men; vengeance is an occasional judgment necessary to remove obstacles to his grace." [2](#)

✘ *comfort all that mourn*. The word *mourning* appears three times in this passage; the mourning is for physical and spiritual captivity, as well as for the pain of sin and death. See commentary on 60:20; see also 40:1-2; 50:4; 57:18.

✘ **61:3** *appoint unto them that mourn.* The word *appoint* here means to give the blessing promised to those who mourn.

✘ *beauty for ashes.* As a sign of mourning in Old Testament times, one experiencing great sorrow sprinkled ashes on his head or sat in a pile of ashes ([Job 2:12](#)). Putting ashes on the head signified self-abasement and humiliation ([2 Sam. 13:19](#); [Esth. 4:3](#); [Jer. 6:26](#)). This practice was generally combined with the wearing of sackcloth, an uncomfortable, coarse fabric made of the hair of camels and goats. Sackcloth was intended to be used for sacks and bags rather than for clothing, but mourners wore it to show sorrow and humility ([Gen. 37:34](#); [Esth. 4:1-3](#); [Jer. 6:26](#)). For the faithful, the Lord will replace the ashes of mourning with a "crown of beauty" (NIV), meaning he will crown them as joint heirs of God with Christ.

✘ *oil of joy.* It was the Israelite custom to anoint oneself with oil in preparation for festivities and in times of happiness and prosperity ([Eccl. 9:8](#); [Ps. 45:8](#)). In times of sorrow and mourning, anointing oil was not used ([2 Sam. 14:2](#)). The Lord will bless the faithful that their sorrows will be replaced with joy.

✘ *garment of praise.* A garment of praise was worn for festivals and times of rejoicing (52:1), in contrast to the sackcloth worn in times of mourning (3:24). The Lord will give the faithful cause to rejoice with praise instead of feeling discouraged or depressed.

✘ *spirit of heaviness.* A spirit of heaviness is characterized by discouragement, despair, and weakness of spirit.

✘ *that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.* Men of faithfulness and of prosperity are likened to healthy trees ([Ps. 1:3](#); [Jer. 17:7-8](#)), just as the Perfect Man is likened to the tree of life. In addition, as Isaiah declares, Israel is the Lord's chosen vineyard (5:7; 27:6; 60:21; [Gen. 49:22](#); [Ps. 80:8-11](#)). When we are planted by the Lord, we submit our will to his, relying on him for strength and blessing.

✘ **Blessings to Restored Israel (61:4-9)**

✘ When scattered Israel returns to the covenant, entering the Lord's Church, they will be given great blessings:

✘ They will be given their former inheritance of lands, which they will rebuild (61:4).

✘ People of other nations will serve them (61:5); the Gentiles will bring their wealth (61:6).

✘ The Lord's people will be given the priesthood (61:6).

✘ Israel will be more than compensated for the loss suffered in their earlier captivity (61:7).

✘ The descendants of these righteous ones will be known around the world; and all those that see them will acknowledge that they have been blessed by God (61:9).

✘ [Isa. 61:4-9](#)

✘ And *they shall build the old wastes,
they shall raise up the former desolations,
and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. (61:4)
And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. (61:5)
But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord:
men shall call you the Ministers of our God:
ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles,
and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. (61:6)
For your shame ye shall have double;
and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion:
therefore in their land they shall possess the double:
everlasting joy shall be unto them. (61:7)
For *I the Lord love judgment*,
I hate robbery for burnt offering;
and I will direct their work in truth,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. (61:8)
And *their seed shall be known among the Gentiles*,
and *their offspring among the people*:
all that see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are the seed *which the Lord hath blessed*. (61:9)*

✘ **Notes and Commentary**

✘ **61:4** *build the old wastes*. For many generations the land and cities of Palestine have been wasted. In the last days Israel will be blessed to repair, restore, and reinhabit these lands (58:12; 60:10). Rebuilding the ancient ruins can also symbolize the Savior's healing of old wounds caused by sin and sorrow.

✘ **61:5** *strangers/sons of the alien*. *Strangers* is a metaphor for Gentiles. Those who formerly were their oppressors—even the kings—will now be Israel's servants and aides (60:10). This metaphor may also have spiritual application—the converted Gentiles may help feed the flocks that are the members of the Church.

✘ **61:6** *Priests of the Lord/Ministers of our God*. This prophetic phrase indicates that in the Restoration, the priesthood will be given to many, not just to the Levites. With the

priesthood, the Lord's people will minister the ordinances of the gospel to the world. As the Lord promised in Exodus, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, . . . ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" ([Ex. 19:5-6](#)).

✘ *eat the riches of the Gentiles/in their glory shall ye boast.* The priests of ancient Israel received on behalf of the Lord offerings from the people. In the same way, latter-day Zion will receive tribute (glory or wealth) for God from the nations (60:5- 11).

✘ **61:7** *shame . . . double/confusion . . . rejoice in their portion.* This passage is rendered in the New International Version as "instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance." For generations the people of God have been shamed by bondage to sin or to foreign conquerors. But in the last days, God's people not only will have their lost blessings restored to them but their blessings will be doubled. In ancient Jewish law, the double portion was allotted to the firstborn, thus indicating that restored Israel is in a favored position ([Deut. 21:17](#)).

✘ *everlasting joy.* The inheritance of the faithful is never to be taken away again. Instead, they will have eternal *joy* in Christ (35:10; 51:11; [D&C 45:71](#); [Moses 7:53](#); [Rom. 5:11](#)).

✘ **61:8** *hate robbery for burnt offering.* Other translations read, "I hate robbery and iniquity" or "robbery and wrong," without a reference to offerings. But the translation here is a reminder of Malachi's scathing "Will a man rob God? . . . In tithes and offerings" ([Mal. 3:8](#)). Certainly God would be displeased if we were to offer that which we had gained by theft. But giving to the Lord only part of what he is due is another form of robbery. With burnt offerings in ancient times, the sacrifice was total, with nothing held back. The Lord requires full obedience to his laws; only complete commitment merits the desired blessings.

✘ *I will direct their work in truth.* The Lord is the head of his church and the director of the covenant people. As a God of truth, he leads his people to proceed in the spirit of truth and obedience in all they do for him.

✘ *everlasting covenant.* The Lord will make the righteous his covenant people (55:3; 59:21). The *everlasting covenant* is the gospel with all its requirements of man and its promises from God.

✘ **61:9** *seed shall be known . . . the seed which the Lord hath blessed.* This passage is a renewal of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-2). Furthermore, in the future all the world will recognize the Lord's hand in the spiritual and temporal prosperity of his covenant people (60:3, 14).

✘ **A Psalm of Rejoicing (61:10-11)**

✘ These verses are a psalm of praise to God, sung about the pending marriage between Jehovah and his bride, the Church ([Rev. 19:7-9](#)). The Church rejoices because the Lord has given her salvation and righteousness. Isaiah uses two analogies to demonstrate the blessings of the Lord. First, he compares the blessings of salvation and righteousness to the ornaments and jewels of a bridegroom and bride (61:10). Second, he compares the blessings of righteousness and praise to the buds and seeds that spring forth, without fail, from the garden after it has been sown (61:11).

✘ [Isa. 61:10-11](#)

✘ *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my soul shall be joyful in my God;
for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments,
and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. (61:10)
For as the earth bringeth forth her bud,
and as the garden causeth 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.
(61:11)*

✘ **Notes and Commentary**

✘ **61:10** *I will greatly rejoice.* This psalm is sung by the Saints in Zion. It may also be a song of Israel: how she has been saved, cleansed, and prepared for the fulfilling of her covenant.

✘ *garments of salvation/robe of righteousness.* These garments are not the same as those of 61:3, which was clothing worn in celebration, but instead suggest the garments and robes of the priesthood, as found in the temple. These earthly garments and robes, when one is purified, will be exchanged for eternal robes of glory. Jacob compared the robe of righteousness to "being clothed with purity" ([2 Ne. 9:14](#); [Ps. 132:16](#); [Isa. 22:21](#)).

✘ *bridegroom . . . ornaments/bride . . . jewels.* We will be adorned with the Lord's blessings as a bridegroom and bride are adorned with ornaments on their wedding day.

✘ **61:11** *bud . . . garden . . . spring forth.* This image is the reason for Zion's rejoicing: Like the promise of a bud in a garden, the prophecies concerning Israel's deliverance and glory will be fulfilled. Her righteousness and favor before the Lord will blossom and become as a garden full of pleasant plants and flowers (42:9; 45:8).

✘ *before all the nations.* All nations will see the marvelous works of the Lord (40:5; 52:10).

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 40, 76.

2. *Interpreter's Bible*, 5:710.