

Final Paper

An Old Testament text that is used by the New Testament writers as prophetic of Christ Jesus.

1. Introduction

This paper will study the same passage that occurred in two different Testaments. By comparing their historical and cultural context, the intention of both authors is to present the flow of the theme in both Testimonies to get theological reflections and bring the application to our current ministry context.

2. Isaiah 61:1-2

a. Historical and cultural context

Before Isaiah came to the kingdom of Judah, the ten tribes of Israel in the north were exhausted. After nearly two hundred years of evil, the northern kingdom of eight dynasties and nineteen monarchs is facing the threat of Assyria. But King Ahaz of Judah refused to join the alliance, so Aram and Israel attacked Judah hand in hand to restrain Ahaz (2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28). With a strong enemy in sight, Ahaz had to seek help from Assyria; Assyria sent troops, and both Syria and Israel retreated. But since then, the southern country of Judah has become a vassal state of Assyria.

Soon after, Tiglakunleaser II died and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV. He decided to attack Israel, and after a three-year siege, the capital of Samaria fell (2 Kings 17:4-6), and the Israelites were taken captive to Assyria, where they were placed by the Tigris River. Isaiah was about fifty to sixty years old at this time.

Judah became a vassal state of Assyria and paid tribute every year until Hezekiah came to the throne. He led the people to return to God and relied on God, so he betrayed Assyria. Hezekiah also made an alliance with Egypt, which at that time was at the height of its power and rivaled

Assyria (Isaiah 30: 2-4). Judah rebelled, and Assyria sent troops to attack Judah. Egypt did not rescue in time, and Judah was defeated again, and then became a vassal of Assyria, and had to pay more gold, silver, and jewels (2 Kings 18:13 ~ 16). However, the friendly relationship between Judah and Egypt continued, and Sennacherib came to the city again. At this time, he sent heavy troops to cut off the line of communication between Egypt and Judah and only sent a small number of troops to intimidate Judah. When the time was right, he hoped to capture Jerusalem together (Isaiah 36, 37). At this time, Hezekiah suffered a lot from not listening to Isaiah's advice, and finally, he did not rely on Egypt but only on God. We are all familiar with the events that followed. God sent a catastrophe to the Assyrian army, decimating their vitality. Sennacherib never recovered, and Judah was able to escape the iron heels of Assyria and enjoy a period of peace.

Isaiah was a prophet in the eighth century BC. Because the great powers competed for world hegemony, Assyria and Aram (i.e. Syria) have been in war, so that Israel in the north and Judah in the south enjoy peace and prosperity. However, in the second rule of Ushiah and Jeroboan, the development of the North and South was limited to cities only. The inequality between the rich and the poor and the disparity in class have caused social unrest. With developed trade and frequent contact with the outside world, people are influenced by pagan culture, religious etiquette is mixed, and morality is increasingly declining. At that time, the people not only advocated material enjoyment but also had a very superficial optimism. They thought that the peace and prosperity of Israel would last forever. In fact, before the Assyrians invade, the defeat of Israel had been determined, because sin was the forefather of defeat.

From the background of this book, the prophet Isaiah experienced Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings of the Jewish nation. He knew well that the kings, priests, and people at

that time were far away from the true God, morality was corrupt, religion was weak, society was dark, strong neighbors oppressed the border, and the country was in turmoil. He saw that the northern kingdom of Israel was captured by Assyria. In a few years, the southern country of Judah was again captured by Assyria, and the lifeline of the entire country was increasingly in danger. In the end, only Jerusalem was spared. When he was extremely sad, indignant, sad, and sighing, he shouted out many times throughout the book, inspiring the whole country to repent early, turn away from sin and turn to the true God, and pray that the country and society will move towards the road of revival.

“The central message of the book is the prophecy concerning the Messiah (John 1:41 ; 4:25) . It is the most detailed and thorough description of God's judgment and salvation, so this book is called ‘The Gospel of Isaiah’ . The author is also known as the ‘Prophet of Salvation’ and the ‘Second Gospel Messenger’ . No one in the age of law could have written grace so clearly and precisely. Isaiah prophesied during the last seventeen years of the Northern Kingdom. His message, however, was primarily to the Southern Kingdom. When Israel’s throne was tottering because of sin, Judah also was following her sister kingdom in the downward path, though with slower steps.”¹

b. Literal study (Word, sentence, genre)

This chapter of Isaiah begins with the Servant/Messiah’s proclamation of his role. “Considerable scholarly attention has been given to the identity of the speaker in 61:1-3. One of the obvious connections is with the Servant of 42:1-9, 50:4-9. This person has been personally chosen and empowered by God for a purpose, and that purpose is to bring about the deliverance of his people so that they will be righteous, just as the Servant is said to have done (53:11). Furthermore, the centrality of this figure in this obviously eschatological section of the book

1. Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1978), 328.

argues for someone more than one of the prophets, or as is more popular today, personalization of the hypothetical 'Levitical-visionary' group. This conclusion is strengthened when one recognizes the continuity not only between this person and the Servant but also between this person and the Messiah. The 'Spirit of the Lord' is upon the Messiah; his most potent instrument is the word of his mouth; his work is directly associated with the establishment of righteousness; the result of his work is the exaltation of God. This synthesis of the Servant and the Messiah is of the greatest importance."²

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor." (Isaiah 61:1)

Throughout the OT, the use of "the Spirit of the Lord" resting on someone, means supernatural power upon this person. In Isaiah, the Spirit always comes with the power to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, normally through spoken word. Here the Messiah is specifically empowered by God. He is anointed by God and filled with the Spirit because of the anointing. He declares the good news to the poor. Over here, the good news is not limited to financial or material, nor any justification in their context. Rather, it refers to those who are distressed or in difficulties due to many reasons, including their own sin.

"He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn," (Isaiah 61:1-2)

2 John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 563.

Over here, the word “sent” is very important, this word connotes that the Messiah is the representative of God, he is the spokesman of God, to announce a year of favor and a day of vengeance. This is all because of the grace and justice of God. “The year” and “The day” are not for a specific year or day, when they refer to favor and vengeance. According to the teaching of the Bible, these words should refer to a certain length of time.

“‘Liberty to the captive, and release to the prisoners.’ In the ancient Near East, the freeing of prisoners (from debtor’s prison) as an act of justice often occurred in the first or second year of a new king’s reign (and then periodically after that). The ‘jubilee’ (year of the Lord’s favor) in this case was primarily for those in debt (for either financial or legal reasons) and for the freeing of debt slaves. Unlike Israel, this Babylonian edict was entirely at the whim of the monarch, and there is no evidence that it was divinely sanctioned.”³

“The vengeance of our Lord” is for the comfort of those who mourn. Those who mourn for their own sin and for their nation will be comforted by the Messiah. God declares a year of favor, and God will accept them despite their sin. God does this through the work of His Servant. God will reconcile with His people; they will mourn no more. One day, death and sin will be defeated, and their power will be dismissed, there will be no more mourning.

“‘Year of Jubilee’ is described in Leviticus 25:7. Every seven years, the Jews were to observe a ‘sabbatical year’ and allow the land to rest. After seven sabbaticals or forty-nine years, they were to celebrate the fiftieth year as the ‘Year of Jubilee’. During that year, all debts were canceled, and all land was returned to the original owners, the slaves were freed, and everybody was given a fresh new beginning. This was the lord’s way of balancing the economy and keeping the rich from exploiting the poor.”⁴

³ NRSV *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 1216.

3. Luke 4:16-21

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day, he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

“The ‘Nazareth Manifesto’ of Luke 4:16-21 asserts that the Isaianic signs of deliverance were at hand, as evidenced by the publication of good news for the poor, prisoners, and the blind. Jesus claimed that he was anointed with the eschatological Spirit, and the release from exile was being realized through him (Isa 44:3, Ezek 11:18-19,36:26-27, Joel 2:28). God’s favor and mercy were at hand--- not in the distant future but in the present moment of his listeners. At the same time, this kingdom is still something to be ‘entered’ as Jesus anticipated a future period in which the saving promises would be fully realized (Matt 5:20,7:21; Mark 10:15, 23-25; John 3:5).”⁵

“Jesus, in the synagogue in Nazareth, reads Isaiah61:1-2 and says, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’(4:21), a passage regarded by some as programmatic for the

⁵ Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 379.

whole Gospel of Luke. And particularly striking is the emphasis on the fulfillment of the Scripture in the last chapter of the book.”⁶

“‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’, the implication was clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who could bring the Kingdom of God which had been promised for so long---- but His First Advent was not His time for judgment. The crowd was fascinated at His teaching. Jesus’ words plainly stated that the offer of the favorable year of the Lord (i.e., the kingdom time) was being made to them through Him (v. 21).”⁷

Jesus had not come to proclaim good news to those living a comfortable life, but to those who are in deep trouble, especially in the bondage of sin, to them, the good news is God’s victory over all that is holding them back.

4. *The relationship between the two passages*

“Jesus quoted this passage when He spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth where He used this passage to point to Himself. (Luke 4:16-21). Note that Isaiah 61:1 names the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, He didn’t quote, ‘And the day of vengeance of our God’ from verse 2 because that day is yet to come.”⁸

“To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God” (61:2), which is the content of good news and the two major missions of the Messiah: salvation and judgment. Jesus read verses 1-2 in the synagogue of Nazareth and pointed out that this prophecy was fulfilled in him (Luke. 4: 16-22). But the Lord Jesus stopped when he read "To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor ", and did not continue to read "The Day of Vengeance of Our God". Because when Jesus came for the first time, "not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17); when he came for the second time, he would exercise the power of

6 Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 232.

7 John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 1983), 214.

8 Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2008), 67.

judgment, so that "those who do good will be resurrected; those who do evil will be resurrected and convicted" (John 5) The Messiah proclaimed not only the grace of God but also the judgment of God; because God's salvation goes hand in hand with righteousness, he can "comfort all those who mourn" (61: 2). Those who refuse to redeem the grace can only accept the retribution of righteousness. Therefore, all those who do not dare to be righteous should "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

"Whereas OT prophecy looked forward to on Day of the Lord, the NT divides this event into two phases: 1. A day of forgiveness and reconciliation during which Jesus atones for sins by his death, and 2. A coming day of judgment is when the regal Christ will return to the earth. The inauguration of the first phrase is the beginning of the end; hence the urgency of NT's message."⁹

5. Application

Everyone in the world needs this good news. Our life is also full of all kinds of hardships. The happy time is always very short. At the end of life, everyone will face a dark death, and no one can escape. The root cause of all this is human sin. God did not want to see anyone die in despair, so he sent the Messiah the Savior to announce the good news and give the sinner a brand-new life, a bright and happy future. In verse 3, the savior gives us an alternative picture, sadness, sorrow, dust, and despair, to be replaced by comfort, joy, crown, and praise; when we shed tears and lose hope because of sin, God will replace the sadness and despair in our hearts with his love in Christ. He gives us comfort, joy, and hope through his words, through the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

"Mathew 4:23-24 summarized Jesus' ministry of power, teaching, proclaiming the good news, healing people, cast out demons from people. He performed many miracles, and that

9 T. Desmond Alexander & Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downer Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2000),126.

brought great fame to him, and many followers from the surrounding areas came to meet him. Miracles of healing were but a part of Christ's ministry throughout Galilee, for he also taught and preached the Word. 'The light' that Isaiah promised was the Light of the Word of God, as well as the Light of His perfect life and compassionate ministry. Jesus proclaimed with authority the good news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand."¹⁰

It was in Isaiah 61:1-3, the prophet prophesied about Jesus' ministry. Jesus has the power of the Holy Spirit on Him, and He was anointed and empowered by God. Compared to Matthew 4:23-24 here has more about releasing people from bondage, and also about God's favor among His people to give them the year of Jubilee. It also mentioned being transformed in God's kingdom, from ashes to oil of joy, from mourning to praise, from a plant will wither to an oak of righteousness to display God's glory. In this passage, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all present.

When it goes to Mark 6:6-13, Jesus didn't just do the ministry by himself. He called twelve disciples and sent them out to do the same work he did. In John 14:12, Jesus promised that those who believe in Him will do greater things than what Jesus had done. In Luke 10:1-2, Jesus again sent 72 people to every town and place, to do the same work he did, and he first used "harvest" for unsaved people.

In Matthew 28: 18-20, Jesus gave the command to his disciples to make disciples of all nations, not only Israelis, and also baptize them, and teach them to obey God's commands. This went deeper into his ministry, not only saving people but also equipping people to disciple others to do the same work as Jesus did. Today of course our big mission is to bring more people to God's kingdom, but another big mission is to train more people to do the work as Jesus did.

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2008), 20.

The mission in Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21, is for Jesus, for His disciples, and it's ultimately for each one of us who's the follower of Jesus.

6. Conclusion

This is all about a prophecy and its fulfillment. Jesus came to deliver good news. All his service in the world was centered on this good news - the gospel. God sent the Messiah not to establish a worldly kingdom. He wanted to build a spiritual kingdom. He wanted to bring good news, healing, and release. He wanted to bring good news to the poor, the sad, and the captivity, to bring spiritual salvation to sinners. In the previous scriptures, Isaiah once said, "Your sins have isolated you from God." Sin and death cover the earth like darkness, and all people are trapped in this spiritual darkness. Messiah's salvation is like light, illuminating darkness. He will complete the salvation of sinners from sin and death by sacrificing his life.

Although these verses of salvation also predict that God's people will return to their homes from Babylon, the captivity, it also points to greater salvation in the future; God's servant here proclaims the message of God's forgiveness and healing and uses the comforting message of forgiveness of sins to heal the sad sinners and remove the burden of guilt from their hearts; sinners are like prisoners in prison, imprisoned in despair of sin. They have no choice but to perish in despair, but Jesus will come to save them from such despair and remove sin, death, and the devil's control over sinners. Jesus came is to give a new life to those who put their faith in Him.

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