

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Isaiah 61:1-4 & 8-11

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, September 25, 2016

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 25, 2016**, is from **Isaiah 61:1-4 & 8-11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Isaiah 61:1-4 & 8-11

(Isaiah 61:1) The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

Jesus quoted these verses in His hometown of Nazareth when He spoke in the synagogue (see Luke 4:16-19). He may have quoted these verses at other times as well to explain His mission on earth. He applied them to himself after He read them from the Isaiah scroll. After quoting Isaiah, Jesus said directly to His listeners: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

Interestingly, the Isaiah scroll is arguably the most important of the Dead Sea scrolls that have been found. To a much lesser degree, Isaiah probably applied these words to himself; as a Spirit-anointed prophet his words would encourage the exiles in Babylon. Jesus received the Spirit of the Lord for ministry after John baptized Him in fulfillment of prophecy. The Lord also anointed Jesus as prophet and priest: “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’” (Psalm 110:4; see also, Hebrews 5:6). Jesus’ ministry included preaching the truth of God in various places and for various purposes, and the truths He preached and demonstrated were good news to those enslaved by the religious traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. He freed those oppressed by the devil when He cast out demons. He bound up the brokenhearted when

He healed the sick and raised the dead. He freed those enslaved to sin when they repented and came to faith in Him. In the Book of Acts, when Peter and John were arrested, He sent angels from heaven in order to free them from prison. Isaiah, of course, did not do all of these things, but all true prophets of God in the Old Testament were empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit upon them, as was Isaiah.

(Isaiah 61:2) to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

Jesus claimed that He was sent by God and His presence was the sign of the Lord's favor upon His people. Jesus kept the focus upon himself and what the Lord would do through Him because He was the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus came into our world the first time to bring salvation. According to the Book of Revelation, when Jesus returns it will be a day of vengeance for the ungodly rebels who oppose God and His Kingdom. Jesus warned of the Lord's punishment upon those who would not repent when He preached various "woes" (for examples, see Luke 6:24-26, Luke 10:13, and Luke 11:42-52). Some mourned because of their sins; others mourned because they suffered unjustly; others mourned because of disease and death. Jesus comforted and still comforts those who mourn for any reason. Jesus preached, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

(Isaiah 61:3) to provide for 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. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

Job mourned his loss (or what seemed to him was his loss) of the favor of the Lord and he covered himself with ashes. Various enemies, including the devil and those who have given their allegiance to the devil, afflict God's people. Jesus came to help God's people, and He still helps God's people as He reigns from heaven and intercedes for them as their High Priest. Jesus gives God's people the strength to live righteous before the Lord and display the power and glory of the Lord by their choices and actions. To those with eyes to see, God displays His presence and power through His children on earth.

(Isaiah 61:4) 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.

Since Israel became a nation in 1948, many ancient ruins have been excavated from the time of Jesus and earlier that verify the truth of the Scriptures. Many cities have been rebuilt and new cities have been created. Today, many cities in the Middle East are being destroyed and

many thousands are being murdered by evil people. Unless God intervenes and many repent of their sins and turn to faith in Jesus the Messiah, this death and destruction will continue until Jesus Christ returns as He promised.

(Isaiah 61:8) For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

In the Bible, God has revealed His true character and what He expects of His people. The LORD is the Creator of all, and God revealed His nature and the moral law because He loves justice. Because He loves those He created, He hates how many people suffer from those who do evil, from robbers and other wrongdoers, and God will punish persistent evildoers as a matter of justice. Because God is faithful, God will punish those who afflict His people and reward those who remain faithful to Him in spite of affliction. Though many Christians suffer now, the Bible assures us that God will bless His people forever.

(Isaiah 61:9) Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

About 2500 years after Isaiah preached, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still known among the nations, and many thousands of them are in leadership

positions in these nations. In worldly ways, people can see how the Lord has blessed them as a people, whether or not they acknowledge the Lord as their God or not. This fact alone provides a good reason to trust the Bible as the true Word of God.

(Isaiah 61:10) I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being 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.

Isaiah spoke for himself with these words, but they also perfectly describe the reality for the followers of Jesus the Messiah. Those who trust in Jesus may be rich or poor, afflicted or at peace, but whatever their circumstances they delight in the Lord and rejoice in their relationship with God made possible for them by the grace of Jesus Christ through faith in Him. Notice carefully that those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are clothed in “His righteousness.” The followers of Jesus Christ should live before the world as priests of the LORD God, and they should pray for others and point others to the saving truth of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. In the future, the followers of Jesus Christ will be blessed in ways that will never disappoint them or leave them open for the abuse of unbelievers and others who delight in evil.

(Isaiah 61:11) 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 up before all the nations.

In a limited way, the process of sanctification (the process of moral and spiritual rebirth and renewal of Christians by the truth of the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians) is visible before all the nations, and this sometimes leads to the persecution and death of Christians. Still, Christian churches and Christians (though perhaps hidden from view and worshiping the Lord underground for safety reasons) are still sprouting up and growing as healthy plants. When Jesus Christ returns, the Sovereign LORD, who is Lord over all despite appearances today, will make righteousness and praise for Him spring up and be visible before all nations as the LORD has promised in Isaiah. Christians look forward to the time the Lord will visibly return and establish the justice He loves in every nation and all around the world.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Name one way that Jesus helps the oppressed today?
2. Name one way that Jesus helps those who mourn today?

3. What does the LORD love and hate? What is He going to do because of what He loves and hate?
4. What are some of the ways the prophecy of Isaiah in these verses have been fulfilled?
5. As a Christian, how has the Lord clothed you?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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