

The Oil Of Joy

The close connection between this chapter and Luke 4:14-21 means there is no doubt as to the identity of the preacher said to have been anointed by the LORD. Isaiah is prophesying the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus read this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth at the commencement of His ministry and declared it fulfilled in Himself. God the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus, as a dove at His baptism. This was witnessed by John the Baptist who declared 'for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him'.

A well-informed people

We are again reminded how much of Christ the Messiah these Old Testament believers understood. By prophetic revelation they looked forward to Christ's coming in faith, being 'just and devout' men and women, 'waiting for the consolation of Israel'. Isaiah tells us the Lord Jesus was called to preach the acceptable year of the LORD, or, we may say the appointed time of acceptance and atonement between God and His people.

God's glory is paramount

In His covenant role it was Christ's calling to bring comfort to those who mourned in Zion. This comfort is in the form of spiritual justification and conversion. Salvation is God's sovereign work, 'the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified'. Christ gives His people 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness'. These are fruits of grace and describe spiritual transformation in a sinner's life, 'that they might be called trees of righteousness' and be fruitful in the garden of the LORD.

The work of gospel preachers

The service of these transformed individuals in the gospel age is in view. They are like shepherds and plowmen. The apostles and the Lord's preachers shall gather and build up the church through gospel preaching. Truth which had been lost and wasted over many years will be recovered and built upon. Principally, it is the work of gospel preachers that Isaiah is foretelling. 'Strangers' and 'the sons of aliens' refer to pastors and ministers of the gospel who will preach Christ to Jew and Gentile without distinction according to the priesthood of all believers.

Reassuring the remnant

Isaiah tells his generation that the gospel age will usher in a time of spiritual restoration and rejoicing. The whole church will boast Christ alone as its Head and Saviour. It will be a time of everlasting joy and enduring peace. Not that there will be no more hardship, there will be. Yet, for it grace, peace and joy will be given in measure and these blessings will reign amongst God's elect never be removed. Spiritual wisdom and discernment will also be given to the Lord's people. The work of the church in preaching Christ for truth and righteousness will bring about God's purpose of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The blessed covenant of peace

Here Isaiah speaks again of the everlasting covenant. The Jews had long been aware of this promise. Moses, Samuel, David, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all spoke of it. Now, says Isaiah, it will be renewed and God's people will again rejoice in its promises, privileges and liberties. Gospel blessings are enduring blessings to be enjoyed by generation after generation of the Lord's people. God's elect are blessed with all spiritual blessings. Their assurances of grace, mercy and peace are built upon the sacrifice of Christ and the faithfulness of God to endless generations.

Righteous and holy

Dr Hawker encourages us to see the final two verses of this chapter first as a song in the heart of Jesus our Saviour and thereafter, in union with Him, upon the lips of His people. All the blessings of the church come through the Lord Jesus and all God's promises to us are 'Yea, and in him Amen'. Christ's church is really and actually clothed with garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness. This is a blessed truth. God's elect are not waiting for justification. We are, right now, righteous and holy in God's sight, and that will never change. We are all beautiful in Christ.

God's generous provision

It is God's sovereign will and good pleasure to bestow this righteousness. Out of love for His church He has accomplished everything necessary for our cleansing, redemption and glory. We who are in Christ Jesus lack no good

thing. We should not be discouraged or distressed, God's blessings in His planted and well-watered garden will continue to spring forth. These promises ought always to reassure and comfort God's people. Neither God nor His church shall be ashamed or defeated. On the contrary, 'The Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations'.

Amen

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