

Isaiah 61, The Redeemer

Overview

This chapter is the second of the three sections in Isaiah 58-66 that describe the redeemer (chart). Correspondence among the other sections suggests that this is in fact the center of this nine-chapter segment, and its focal point.

Like many other sections in Isaiah (such as ch. 60), this one is marked by frequent changes in grammatical person and verb forms that reflect a regular structure (chart). Also as in other sections, there are often strong transitional ties between the sections. The notes give technical details. Our working hypothesis will be that this chapter, like the previous one, is a conversation among multiple participants.

- The conversation begins and ends with somebody speaking in the first person, claiming to have been sent by the Lord to care for the weak and to execute the Lord's vengeance. These are the two missions of the Redeemer from 59:15b-21 (chart), so it makes sense to hear his voice in these paragraphs. This person is clearly distinct from the Lord, for he describes himself as sent by the Lord in vv. 1-2, and rejoices in the Lord in vv. 10-11.
- The central section shows a conspicuous change in grammatical person in describing the redeemed. Contrast the exclusive use of 3mp pronouns in vv. 3-4 and 7b-9 with the exclusive use of 2mp pronouns in 5-7a.
 - None of these forms is used in the outer sections where the Redeemer is speaking. Only in vv. 1-2 does he mention the object of his work, and always with a specific description, not a pronoun.
 - In the second 3mp ("them") section, the speaker is clearly the Lord ("I the Lord," v. 8). We'll see if we can understand the first 3mp section as also spoken by him.
 - Who is speaking in the 2mp section?
 - It's probably not the Lord, otherwise there would be no reason to change the pronouns.
 - It's probably not the redeemer, who also speaks about his charges in the third person.
 - The remaining alternative is Isaiah. We can picture him watching the conversation, and in the center he reports to the redeemed the blessings that they will enjoy as a result of the redeemer's work.
 - Since the prophets are the mouthpiece of the Spirit, we can understand this central paragraph as the Spirit's communication to us of what God has done for us:
1Pe 1:10-11 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

If we step back and look at this structure (chart), we realize that we are standing on sacred ground.

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Theologians speak of “the councils of the Godhead,” in which the Father, Son, and Spirit together determine the plan of salvation. Here Isaiah takes us into those sacred councils.

- The Son opens by reporting the work that the Father has given him, and ends rejoicing in this work. We clearly hear in these words the heart of the obedient Son of God, whose life was devoted to doing the will of the Father who had sent him.
- The Father declares his purpose to bless his people, and thereby bring glory to himself.
- The Spirit conveys this work to the hearts of God’s people in a process that both Paul (2 Thes 2:13) and Peter (1 Pet 1:2) call “sanctification of the Spirit,” the experiential setting apart of the elect by the work of the Spirit in convicting them of sin and showing them the Savior.

1-3, The Redeemer Declares his Mission

61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;--Here is the first and most important characteristic of the Servant of the Lord, who redeems God’s people: he is empowered by the Spirit of God. This endowment was at the heart of the promise in the early chapters of the book (chart):

Isa 11:2 And **the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him**, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

It is a characteristic of the Servant:

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; **I have put my spirit upon him**: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

In the current section, it is promised in the first reference to the Redeemer:

Isa 59:19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, **the Spirit of the LORD** shall lift up a standard against him. 20 And **the Redeemer** shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

Recall the hourglass (chart). The characteristics and work of the Servant are extended to his people. The endowment of the Spirit is one of these, and the distinctive feature of the New Covenant:¹

Isa 32:15 Until **the spirit be poured upon us** from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Isa 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: **I will pour my spirit upon thy seed**, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Isa 59:21 As for me, **this is my covenant with them**, saith the LORD; **My spirit that is upon thee**, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

¹ One case in Isaiah of Spirit conveying a doom instead of a blessing: Isa 29:10 For the LORD hath **poured out upon you the spirit** of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

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because the LORD hath anointed me—In Israel’s history, anointing with oil was the symbol of the empowerment of God’s Spirit for divine service, as in David’s case (chart):

1Sa 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and **anointed** him in the midst of his brethren: and **the Spirit of the LORD came upon** David from that day forward.

Here the Redeemer claims such an anointing. Isaiah describes only one other person in such terms: Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon

Isa 45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his **anointed**, to Cyrus

Under God’s providence, Cyrus sent the Jews back to rebuild Jerusalem:

Isa 44:28 That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

As we have seen in ch. 60, the restoration after Babylon is a picture of the ultimate restoration of the City of God, and Cyrus is thus a picture of the ultimate restorer.

The Redeemer now describes the ministry for which he has been anointed. He names four categories of disadvantaged people whom he delivers. We will consider these four conditions, and the deliverance that Messiah offers them (chart). The first two describe the internal effects of suffering, while the last two describe its external form.

The first two categories are both mentioned in Ps 34, “*A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.*” David, in fleeing Saul, had taken refuge with the enemy of God’s people. Such dependence on the world is no place for a child of God, and the Lord pushed him out of this relation and into full dependence on himself.

to preach good tidings unto the meek;--(chart) David begins his Psalm,

Psa 34:1-2 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the **humble** shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

The “meek” ענו (“humble” in the KJV of Ps 34:2) are those who are bowed down, primarily with reference to their attitude to God. The first use of the term in the Bible is with reference to Moses:

Num 12:3 Now the man Moses *was* very **meek**, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.

One might compare Paul’s description of his ministry:²

Act 20:18-19 Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with **all humility of mind**, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

Those in Israel who were trusting in the Lord must have been shocked and troubled to see David seek refuge among the Philistines. Now that he has resolved to boast in the Lord alone, David reports that the meek will rejoice.

God brings chastisement upon us, as he did to David, to teach us to trust, not in ourselves, but in him. He does this in our lives as believers, and he also often does it to bring unbelievers to himself,

² Suggested by L. Coppes in TWOT

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graciously showing them their personal inadequacy so that they will turn to him. The Messiah comes to announce to such that their hope is not misplaced. His ministry to them was already anticipated in Isaiah 11, the chapter which described his anointing with the seven-fold Spirit:

Isa 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the **meek** of the earth:

In both Ps 34:1-2 and Isa 61:1, the means by which the meek are encouraged is verbal. The Redeemer “preach[s] good tidings.” David blesses, praises, and makes his boast in the Lord. We who seek to live in submission to the Lord need the encouragement of other believers, both the testimony of God’s faithfulness to them, and the Scriptures that they have found comforting in their times of difficulty.

he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,--(chart) Again, we hear an echo of Ps 34,

Psa 34:18-19 The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of **a broken heart**; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

This is a common theme in the Psalms. David again writes of his experience, when Nathan rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba:

Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.

And in the time of Nehemiah, after the return from captivity, a psalmist writes:³

Psa 147:3 **He healeth the broken in heart**, and bindeth up their wounds.

The way to meekness leads through chastisement. The Redeemer brings comfort to those who have experienced God’s hand of discipline. To “bind up” refers to the process of bandaging a wound. God never brings chastisement without also providing the healing that restores, something that was a commonplace with Eliphaz the Temanite, one of Job’s friends:

Job 5:17-18 Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 18 For he maketh sore, **and bindeth up**: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

The next two conditions that the Redeemer rectifies describe the external form of Israel’s suffering.

to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison eyes to them that are bound;--
The Redeemer here echoes the Lord’s words in two of the Servant songs (chart):

Isa 42:6-7 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people [singular], for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To **open the blind eyes**, to bring out the **prisoners** from the **prison**, and them that sit in **darkness** out of the **prison house**.

Isa 49:8-9 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people [singular], to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9 That thou mayest say to the **prisoners**, Go forth; to them that *are* in **darkness**, Shew yourselves.

³ The same Psalm (v. 6) rejoices in God’s provision for the עניים: “The LORD lifteth up the meek.”

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At first glance, it is tempting to associate the references to “prisoners,” “prison,” and “prison house” with the Babylonian captivity, and liberal scholars have often made this connection. But there are difficulties with this position that make it far more likely Isaiah is speaking of spiritual bondage (chart).⁴

- Judah in Babylon was not “prisoners” in a “prison” or “prison house.” We have only one reference to imprisonment during the Babylonian captivity; of Jehoiachin, the king of Jerusalem at the time of the second wave of imprisonment (2 Kings 24:15), who was a royal prisoner for 37 years (2 Kings 25:27), and he was set free by Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, whom nobody considers to be a candidate for the Servant of the Lord. Most of the Jews functioned openly in the society: recall the roles of Daniel and his friends in the Babylonian court, or the letter that Jeremiah wrote to the captives who were taken with Jehoiachin (Jer 29), telling them to “build houses,” “plant gardens,” “take wives.”
- The first reference to the deliverance is associated with “open the blind eyes” (42:7), and the subsequent references are associated with “darkness.” Early on, Isaiah used blindness as a description of the spiritual insensitivity of Israel, which he imposed as judgment for their sin (29:10-11, cf. v. 18). Against this background, the “prison” language may be seen as a metaphorical intensification of the “blindness” imagery. We’ll see that our passage supports this qualification.
- If the deliverance from prison refers to the return from Babylon, we are at a loss for the identify of the Servant. Some liberal scholars have identified the Servant with Zerubbabel, who led the return from Babylon, but in that case Isaiah’s description of his spiritual influence and substitutionary suffering is greatly overstated. And we have seen in ch. 60 that in other respects as well, the return fell far short of Isaiah’s vision. Daniel, who lived during the captivity, thought that the Messiah was still some 490 years in the future (9:25); he certainly did not understand Isaiah to be speaking of anyone in the near future.

The same caution is reinforced when we consider the two descriptions in 61:1b (chart).

to proclaim liberty קרא דרור to the captives.--The expression “proclaim liberty” is a direct reference to the Jubilee:

Lev 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and **proclaim liberty קרא דרור** throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Those who were set free at the jubilee were not captives in a political sense. They were indentured servants and those in debt. Debts were forgiven, and fields that had been sold were restored to their original families. Certainly, this image is appropriate for the return from Babylon, but it is a much broader image of liberation from every form of oppression.

the opening of the prison eyes to them that are bound—The phrase translated “opening of the prison” is a *hapax* that is probably best understood as an intensive form of the verb פקח, “to open.” This verb never refers to opening a physical door, but almost always to opening the eyes of the blind, and

⁴ Alexander’s comment on 42:7 is a thorough and persuasive argument that Isaiah intends us to take these expressions figuratively.

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once the ears of the deaf. Its use here reinforces the association of prison with darkness and blindness in ch. 42 and 49.

These considerations suggest that Isaiah is using prison, not as a literal description of the condition of the Jews in Babylon, but as a metaphor for spiritual bondage. The return from Babylon might be a picture of the ultimate deliverance, but does not in itself satisfy the terms of the promise.

Certainly, this is what our Lord had in mind when he quoted this verse of himself in the synagogue at Nazareth and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Our Lord never concerned himself with physical prisoners or the criminal justice system. If that were his mission, he surely would have delivered John the Baptist from Herod's prison. But our Lord often spoke of spiritual bondage. Of a woman whom he healed on the Sabbath, he said,

Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, **whom Satan hath bound**, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this **bond** on the sabbath day?

And recall his discussion with the Jews in John 8,

Joh 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.** 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Application: We live in an age that prizes freedom from external constraints, the liberty to do whatever one wants to do. Paradoxically, this attitude strengthens the constraints that the flesh places on us from within. The deepest bondage is not being in a physical jail, but being bound by a sinful habit such as pornography, or an addictive substance such as alcohol or tobacco, or a compulsive behavior such as pride. Israel has long suffered under the bondage of spiritual blindness, in a darkness as black as the deepest dungeon, serving false gods and ignoring the true God. The one whom God has anointed comes to deliver them from that blindness, and he can deliver us as well from our bondage.

Next the Redeemer explains his role in proclaiming two coming periods of time. Recall from our study of ch. 59 (chart) that he is responsible both for salvation and for judgment. He acknowledges them in parallel fashion, each with three elements: duration, nature, and author (chart).

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,--The phrase is literally, "a year of acceptance for the Lord." Who is being accepted? Is the Lord accepting us, or are we accepting the Lord?

The phrase "acceptable year" appears nowhere else in the OT, but we do read twice of an "acceptable time," and both times it appears in parallel with the Lord's salvation:

Isa 49:8, "In **an acceptable time** have I heard thee, and in a **day of salvation** have I helped thee"

Psa 69:13 But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, **in an acceptable time:** O God, in the multitude of thy **mercy** hear me, in the truth of thy **salvation.**

It seems clear that the point is that this is a time when the Lord is disposed to accept people.

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and the day of vengeance of our God;--The noun “vengeance” is what we would call “revenge,” getting back at people who have opposed us..

Jdg 16:28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

Pro 6:34 For jealousy *is* the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

The Scriptures exhort us not to seek vengeance for ourselves, but God is entitled to seek it:

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

These two periods differ not only in their description, but also in their duration and the title taken by their author

- Vengeance is the work of a day, but acceptance is described as a year. Compare 63:4, where the Redeemer announces, “the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” God’s vengeance is real, and terrible, but it is not where he puts the emphasis. In 28:21, he describes judgment as his “strange work.” His delight is not in judgment, but in redemption.
- In describing his work of acceptance, God takes the name יהוה, his covenant name, emphasizing his relationship with his people. The work of vengeance is ascribed to him as אלהים, simply “God.”

When our Lord read this passage in the Synagogue of Nazareth, he stopped after the “year of acceptance,” and did not speak of “the day of vengeance” (chart):

Luk 4:16-21 And 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 for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

His first advent was preoccupied with salvation; judgment was on hold.

Joh 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

But the day is coming when he will complete the mission that he accepts in our verse:

2Th 1:7-8 the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Application: It is an error to conceive of God as a doting grandparent who never criticizes us. His wrath

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is real, and terrible. But it is not the dominant characteristic of his personality. His vengeance is for a day; his salvation is for a year. “For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning” (Psa 30:5).

to comfort all that mourn;--The Messiah’s role in judgment surfaces just for a moment, then the focus returns to his work of mercy. The Massoretic accents mark this as part of v. 2, not v. 3, though it makes an excellent introduction to the words of the Lord in v. 3. In either case, “all that mourn” is a summary for the beneficiaries of the Redeemer’s work in v. 1b. It picks up the use of this term for Zion and her children (chart):

Isa 3:26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.

Isa 60:20 the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

3-4, the Lord Explains the Mission

The Redeemer always describes the objects of his care with specific descriptions: the meek, the brokenhearted, the bound ones, the captives. After one final description that echoes “all that mourn,” the speaker now shifts exclusively to 3mp pronouns. These mark the Lord’s words in 7b-9, suggesting that he is speaking here as well, picking up and amplifying the Redeemer’s description of his mission.

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,-- “Yes, you are caring for Zion’s mourners,” replies the Lord, and goes on to amplify. The Redeemer’s blessing to them has three components, which we can illustrate from other passages in the OT (chart, illustrating how the Bible provides sufficient cultural information to understand itself):

to give unto them beauty נָאֵר for ashes,--The word for “beauty” elsewhere refers to a beautiful headdress. Mourners would leave off such an article of clothing, and instead pour ashes on their heads:

2Sa 13:19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

When God forbade Ezekiel to mourn for his wife, he made a special point of telling him to put on this article of clothing, so as not to show grief:

Eze 24:17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.

The Redeemer restores them from mourning to joy, replacing their ashes with joyful clothing.

the oil of joy for mourning,--Mourners did away not only with the beautiful turban, but also with the oil with which they anointed themselves. Compare Joab’s instructions to the woman whom he wanted to act as a mourner:

2Sa 14:2 I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and **anoint not thyself with oil**, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

Conversely, when the Preacher exhorts his hearers to rejoice, he calls out the anointing:

Ecc 9:7-8 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God

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now accepteth thy works. 8 Let thy garments be always white; and **let thy head lack no ointment.**

the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;--Both of the previous verses also show that mourners wore distinctive clothing.

Application: God's chastisement sometimes leads us to mourn, but his objective is not to leave us in this condition, but to bring us out of mourning to joy. Let us be attentive to his correction, and look forward expectantly to the rejoicing he promises will follow.

Now he turns from their internal attitude (joy replacing mourning) to their external prestige, using two agricultural figures, both from earlier chapters (chart).

that and they might shall be called trees אילים of righteousness,--This prominent tree marked the idolatrous groves that Isaiah earlier condemned:

Isa 1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

Isa 57:5 Enflaming yourselves with idols [אילים, perhaps with reference to the sacred pillars] under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?

Now they will be "oaks of righteousness," emblems of obedience to God's word just as much as the pagan groves were of disobedience.

the planting of the LORD,--This expression recalls the end of the previous chapter, where the Lord says,

Isa 60:21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of **my planting**, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

In both cases the genitive is subjective. The Lord has planted them. He receives the credit for their new spiritual prosperity.

Note that the Lord is not describing himself in the third person (chart). He is stating what people will call them.

that he might be glorified—In English, this clause suggests that the Lord is not speaking at this point. However, the Hebrew verb is an reflexive (*Hithpael*) infinitive, and infinitives are not marked for person. We can translate it more literally "for self-glorification."

Application: This promise recalls the answer to the first question in the Westminster shorter catechism, "WSC 1:1 Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." The ultimate objective of our salvation, in all its facets, is to bring glory to the one who has delivered us. If we keep this objective in mind, we will enjoy more fully the blessings of our salvation.

4 And they shall build the old wastes הרבות, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.--The word "wastes" הרבות means "ruins." The rebuilding of cities ruined by God's judgment is a persistent theme throughout all three 9-chapter sections of ch. 40-66.

In 40-48, in the Cyrus oracle, the Lord says,

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Isa 44:24-26 I *am* the LORD ... 26 ... that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the **decayed places** **חרבות** thereof:

In 49-57, he promises Mother Zion,

Isa 49:19 For thy **waste** and thy desolate **places**, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, ... 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her **waste places**;

Isa 54:3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

Part of the Watchman's call, at the center of ch. 49-57, is

Isa 52:9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye **waste places** of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

In inviting the people to repentance at the beginning of 58-66, he promises,

Isa 58:12 And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old **waste places**: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

The devastation that falls on those who oppose the Lord is unbelievable, but so is the complete restoration that he brings to those who repent.

Application: There is a temptation, going back to the gnostics, to despise the physical and focus on the immaterial and the spiritual. This teaching is an error, and contradicts what God said in Gen 1 about his physical creation, that it was "good." The blessings that God intends for his people. are physical as well as spiritual. In particular, God has not permanently rejected Zion. The city that has fallen will be rebuilt as a city, not just as an idea.

5-7a, The Spirit speaks through Isaiah to the Blessed

Up to this point the Redeemer and the Lord have been discussing with one another the effect of the Redeemer's work. Now the Spirit moves Isaiah to speak directly those who benefit from his labor. The point at issue here is the relation between Israel and the Gentiles in the coming age. We have already seen in ch. 60 that Gentile nations will be subservient to Israel:

Isa 60:10 the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee:

Isa 60:14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet

Now this theme is resumed.

5 And strangers [זרים "foreigners"] shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien [בני נכר , which refers to the uncircumcised] shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. 6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God:--Isaiah reports a clear distinction in function between Israel and the Gentiles who come to her. We have learned that they will be given access to the worship of God:

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Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

But their role in the economy that will come is secular, compared with Israel, whose ministry focuses on priestly functions. The verb “minister” (*Piel* of שָׁרַת) is commonly used of the responsibilities of the Levites in Exodus and Numbers, and focuses on the duties associated with maintenance of an earthly sanctuary. Even in the NT, its Greek counterpart λειτούργη* focuses on the duties of those who are set apart from the rest in some sense.⁵

This prediction causes great consternation among many commentators, e.g.,

Oswalt: “The nation of Israel will not become priests for the Gentiles in any literal sense. ... There will be no priestly and lay castes in the new Jerusalem.”

Delitzsch: “Regarding the position assigned to the Hebrew nation after it has become the teacher of other people and the leader of their worship, as here declared, we can form no conception that will harmonize with the spirit of New Testament liberty and the abolition of all dividing-walls between the nations...”

The difficulty comes from a perceived conflict with two teachings of the New Testament: the relation of Jew and Gentile in the church, and the priesthood of all believers. Let’s consider them in turn.

First, consider the distinction between Jew and Gentile. An example of this teaching (there are others, see notes) is

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

If “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” how can the Gentiles serve as lay support for a priestly Israel in the kingdom?

To understand Gal 3:26 and similar verses correctly, we must recognize that whatever it says about the Jew-Gentile distinction, it also says about the bond-free and the male-female distinction. Clearly, Paul does not intend to abolish these distinctions. Consider three lines of evidence.

- Elsewhere (Eph 5:22-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10), he gives instructions that depend on these distinctions. Note in particular 1 Tim 6:2, which envisions a slave and master who are both believers:

1Ti 6:2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.

- In the church, Paul assigns different responsibilities to women than he does to men (1 Cor

⁵ See notes, and in particular the observations of Trench, ch. 35.

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14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:8-12).

- The New Testament clearly condemns homosexual behavior (Rom 1:26-27), which would be unobjectionable if there were no difference at all between male and female.

Clearly, these verses are not denying any difference in role between the categories they discuss. The point of Gal 3:26 is that regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social status, faith in Christ makes us children of God. Other verses that discuss the Jew-Gentile distinction make similar, very specific points about the ways in which that distinction is not applicable: the ability to call on the name of the Lord (Rom 10), access to righteousness by faith (Gal 5), membership in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12), and the privilege of being renewed into the likeness of Christ (Col 3). But children of God have different roles in society and in the church—now and in the kingdom.

The second challenge to Isaiah's promise is the notion of the universal priesthood of all believers. Peter writes,

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . 9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people**; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

If all believers are priests under the New Covenant, how can the Jews be singled out to exercise this role?

Interestingly, the notion of universal priesthood is not distinct to the New Covenant. 1 Pet 2:9 is quoting God's promise to Israel at Sinai,

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests**, and **an holy nation**.

There was a sense in which every Israelite was a priest. Every Israelite could come directly to God in prayer (as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 2, and as David does throughout the Psalms), and God often appeared directly in vision to people who were not priests. They could offer the same spiritual sacrifices that are assigned to us:

Heb 13:15-16 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But the nation had a physical sanctuary with specific cultic duties, and these were restricted to the Levites. When Korah protested against the special role of the Levites (Num 16), or Saul offered a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel (1 Sam 13), or Uzziah tried to offer incense in the sanctuary (2 Chr 26), God's judgment fell.

There is no physical sanctuary with cultic ritual in this present age. We have previously suggested (in our study of Isa 60:7) that this circumstance goes along with the present form of our Savior's kingdom as "not of this world" (John 18:36). Under these conditions, we, as a universal priesthood, can offer up spiritual sacrifices, just as all Israel did throughout the Old Testament. We, like they, can come directly to God with our sacrifice of praise. But we also saw evidence that when our Lord returns to set up his

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physical kingdom, the physical sanctuary will be restored, and with it, animal sacrifices of a memorial character. There is nothing inconsistent with the restoration of a specific cultic priesthood at that time, and with a distinctive role for Jews in leading the ritual in the restored temple.

Application: The objections of the commentators appear today in the form of egalitarianism, the teaching that “all Christians are equal.” Such an unqualified statement has no foundation in Scripture, and in fact, the NT is full of instruction urging us to be diligent in the distinct roles in which God has placed us and not to be jealous of the roles of others. We need to recognize and embrace the diversity of gifts and roles that God has placed in the body of Christ. When we do, we will not see anything strange or difficult about the distinctions that, according to our text, will be in place in the coming kingdom.

ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.--Once more, the Jews are told they will be honored and enriched by the Gentiles, who formerly had oppressed them.

7 For your shame ye shall have double;--The “double” emphasizes that the blessing she will receive from the Gentiles more than compensates for the shame that they previously heaped upon her. The same idea (though with a different word) appears in 40:2 (chart),⁶

Isa 40:2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

7b-9, The Lord Explains the Mission

Now the second person pronouns suddenly change to third person, even as the thought continues within the same poetic bicolon. The Lord picks up the words of Isaiah and finishes his sentence for him.

and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion:--This echos the same idea, that their past dishonor shall be replaced by abundant joy.

The two negative terms in this colon occur together four times in the Psalms, but only once else in Isaiah:

Isa 30:3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your **shame**, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt **your confusion**.

In both cases, the context is their relation to the Gentiles. In Isa 30, the nation was looking to the Gentiles (Egypt in particular) for defense against the Assyrians, a shameful thing for the people of God. But now the Gentiles are seeking the Lord through Israel, and their international relations glorify the Lord, and them.

therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.--This bicolon summarizes the first half of the verse: the double blessing, the joy, and the land that is their portion. It adds “everlasting” to emphasize the permanence of the change. “Rejoicing” and “joy” recall v. 3, “the oil of joy for mourning,” though all three terms are distinct Hebrew roots.

Application: The theme of comfort that was so powerful in the Redeemer’s self-introduction continues. God’s blessing is more than enough to outweigh his chastisement. Whatever pain he imposes on us in his wisdom, he will more than repay with the blessing that he gives us.

⁶ See notes on that passage for discussion.

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The next verse has the same kind of ABAB structure.

8 For I the LORD love judgment,--We have seen this word often as part of the pair, “judgment and justice.” We recognize “judgment” as doing what God commands, following his law. He is pleased when we do this, but it is not enough. He want “justice,” doing what he desires, as well.

I hate robbery for with burnt offering;--This word “burnt offering” עולה is the standard term for this class of sacrifice, which expresses the devotion of the worshipper to God. With different vowel points, the same consonants can mean “wickedness, sin,” and there are a few cases where the pointing we have here appears to bear that meaning. Newer translations almost universally read the word here with the sense of “sin.” But we should be cautious.

As even the newer translations recognize, the translation “for” is extremely unusual for Hebrew כ. The central meaning is “in,” and the sense of “with” is common and fits well here. The AV translation would thus be saying that God is displeased when people engage in both robbery (more generally, selfish grasping) and burnt offering; when they presume to worship him while still continuing in their sinful habits.

We have heard such criticisms before (chart). At the beginning of the book, God condemns the people for their sacrifices, because they have not forsaken their sin.

Isa 1:11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. ... 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

The theme of impure worship resurfaces in ch. 58, with reference to fasting:

Isa 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

We will see it again, in ch. 66,

Isa 66:3 He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered* swine's blood; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

The last two of these stand in an interesting relation to our verse (chart). They appear in the outer wings of the chiasm in whose center our verse appears. This pattern, with an important them at the center of an odd chiasm also echoed in its outer members, has been recognized for some time. We saw an example of it in the voice of the Redeemer, which is symmetrically distributed. Nils Lund's classic

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1941 dissertation, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, devotes nearly 90 of its 400 pages to the Old Testament. Lund summarizes seven principles that he observes widely in chiasms. His “third law” is:

Identical ideas are often distributed in such a fashion that they occur in the extremes and at the center of their respective system, and nowhere else in the system.

That’s exactly what we observe in this case. The strategic placement of these three references in ch. 58-66 sounds this note over the entire final section of the book, and shows that the KJV’s rendering here makes excellent sense.

Recall that the other major instance of the theme was in the very first chapter, which stands alone as a prolog (chart). Thus this notion brackets the entire book.

and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.--As in v. 7, the second half of the verse recapitulates the themes of the first (chart):

- Their truthful work is the judgment that God loves;
- Instead of their hypocritical execution of the Mosaic ritual, he will bring them into a new and unbreakable covenant.

Application: The strategic placement of this concept as a wrapper around the entire book of Isaiah shows us how important it is. The whole history of Israel may be understood at one level as driven by the inconsistency between the worship that God prescribed for them and their disobedience of his moral commandments. It is a precious privilege to worship the Lord, and the symbols and structures he gives us to assist our worship are treasures of grace. But they become an abomination to him if we presume to exercise them while we are rebelling against him.

9 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.--The figure of a seed recalls “the planting of the Lord” in v. 3.

As often, “people” is plural, in parallel with “Gentiles.” The non-Jews who have despised them down through the ages will finally recognize the Lord’s blessing on them.

10-11, The Redeemer Rejoices in his Mission

Once again the Redeemer takes up the conversation (chart). For the first time in the chapter, there is no reference to the redeemed. They are the mission of the Anointed One, but his focus is on serving the Lord.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God;--After all the emphasis on the blessings that the Redeemer is bringing to his people, it is remarkable that he finds his satisfaction, not in them, but in the Lord. His reward is not in the work he has accomplished, but in having done the will of the Father. Recall his attitude earlier (chart):

Isa 49:4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

Psa 40:7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8 I delight to do

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thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

Joh 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Application: In serving the Lord, it is easy for us to become so focused on the work he gives us to do that we find satisfaction in that—the lives we have influenced, the victories we have helped people win. Those are precious, but ultimately, our satisfaction needs to be in the one whom we serve. Whatever the outcome of our work (or lack of any outcome that we can see), our joy is to know him and be able to do what he commands us.

for he hath clothed me with the garments בגדים of salvation ישע, he hath covered me with the robe [מעיל, 59:17 “cloak”] of righteousness צדקה--The two kinds of clothing mentioned here, garments בגדים and robe מעיל, are the same as the two mentioned in 59:17 that are *not* echoed in Eph 6 (chart). There, they are associated with vengeance and zeal, which characterize his judgment. Here, they become part of his panoply of grace, characterizing the same things that the breastplate and helmet did earlier.

In 59:17, the garments and robe are named after what their bearer brings. So here, the Redeemer brings these qualities to his people. The next chapter picks this up by way of transition:

Isa 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the **righteousness** צדק thereof go forth as brightness, and the **salvation** ישועה thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Stylistically, note that the short and long forms of the nouns are reversed.

The Redeemer takes great pleasure in his wardrobe, and illustrates this with two metaphors.

as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments--The imagery here is extremely dense and provocative. Let's unpack it (chart).

First, he presents himself as a bridegroom. This draws on the image of the Lord as Israel's husband that we saw in the lament of Zion in ch. 49-50.

Isa 50:1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?

Zion's judgment is depicted as a divorce from her heavenly husband; her restoration is pictured as the coming of the bridegroom. We see here the roots of the NT teaching of the church as the bride of Christ:

Rev 19:7 the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Second, the garments and robe remind him of the festival clothing that the bridegroom would wear.

The third point is not clear in our version. The verb “decketh” יכהן is derived from the word for “priest,” and “ornaments” פאר is the word for “turban” that we saw in v. 3. There, we saw that it was a garment associated with joy. Literally, he “plays the priest with a turban.” Apparently, the customary headdress of a bridegroom in ancient Israel was reminiscent of the headdress of the priest. The Redeemer compares his wearing of the clothing that the Lord has given him with the priestly echo of the bridegroom's turban. Like the bridegroom's turban, his clothing brings to mind the priest. It is a

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priestly function to bring righteousness and salvation, and he is undertaking that function.

and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.--We can understand how the redeemer presents himself as a bridegroom, but how can he also be the bride?

As we have already seen, the righteousness and salvation that form his garments are what he imparts to his people. He wears them, in order to convey them to his bride, that she might be similarly adorned. Recall how the gifts that Abraham's servant brought became the adorning of Rebekah:

Gen 24:53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah:

So the Redeemer's clothing becomes that of his bride. Once again, we see the identification between the Servant as the unique Messiah, and his bride and body.

Application: Our Savior has come to adorn us with two things: salvation and righteousness. Evangelicalism tends to emphasize the need for salvation, but we should be equally excited about the gift of righteousness—not just as an abstract, imputed quality, but as a change in our manner of life that we will experience as the Spirit applies the Word of God to our hearts.

To emphasize the impact of these gifts on the recipients, v. 11 compares it to two aspects of the growth of plants. Here the Redeemer is responding to the agricultural metaphor that the Lord used in v. 3 (“the planting of the Lord”) and v. 9 (“the seed”).

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud,--First he reminds us how things grow by themselves: the snow-drops push up through the snow in early spring, the green buds appear on the trees. Just so, righteousness springs up as the natural result of life.

and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth;--Though things grow by themselves, they often grow better when they are sown purposefully, in prepared soil, and tended by the gardener to tend them.

so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.--

Righteousness and praise⁷ correspond to the plants in the two similes. He speaks of praise rather than salvation, perhaps because he sees that salvation has had its effect, and now people praise God for the deliverance they have experienced. This praise, and their practical righteousness, “spring up” as plants do. They are the natural result of the life that God gives. They are not just wild plants, but the object of the tender care that he offers as the gardener.

Application: We should be cautious of trying to make God's work happen in people's lives by our own strength. If they have received God's salvation, new life will bring forth righteousness and praise, and we can trust God to watch over the process like a skilful gardener. He may use us in one way or another, but we must trust in him to bring forth the produce.

⁷ Rarely used in parallel; see Ps 35:28 for one instance, and see notes for an exposition of how Isaiah may be drawing on that passage.

Notes

Structural Analysis

Here are some observations, and the structure that they might reflect.

v. 1 begins in the first person, with somebody other than the Lord (because the speaker claims to have been anointed by the Lord). This first person voice speaking about the Lord returns in v. 10. At least part of what comes between (v. 8) is spoken by the Lord.

Where is the boundary between the words of the anointed one, and those of the Lord? In v. 8, the Lord speaks of the beneficiaries using 3mp pronominal suffixes, and much of the surrounding material uses such suffixes and unspecified 3mp verbal forms, suggesting that it is also spoken by the Lord. This would indicate that the Lord's words start around v. 3, and end with v. 9. The beginning is fuzzy: the shift from infinitives construct (characteristic of the words of the Anointed one in vv. 6-2) to finite verbs (characteristic of the Lord's speech) occurs in the middle of v. 3, "and they shall be called" But we will see a strong correspondence between 3a and 7b, suggesting that we hear the Lord's voice beginning at least at 3a.

In the middle of the 3mp section (vv. 3-9), somebody speaks directly to the beneficiaries (vv. 5-7a) in the 2mp. The shift from the 3mp suggests that this is not the Lord, but either the Anointed again, or perhaps Isaiah. The simplest scenario is to hear the voice of the Anointed one returning. This would place increased emphasis on the Anointed one, in the center of the central section of the whole nine chapters.

We can discern further correspondences between the two 3mp sections.

- At the center of each is a motive statement focusing on the Lord (3c, 8a; note that 3c does not use the third person of the Lord, as the KJV suggests, but is simply a *Hithpael* infinitive construct, "for self-glorification")
- The portion preceding each motive statement describes the joy of the beneficiaries
- 3b and 9b anticipate that others will recognize the Lord's blessing upon them.

Israel's Preeminence

This prediction causes great consternation among many commentators.

Oswalt: "The nation of Israel will not become priests for the Gentiles in any literal sense. ... There will be no priestly and lay castes in the new Jerusalem."

Delitzsch: "Regarding the position assigned to the Hebrew nation after it has become the teacher of other people and the leader of their worship, as here declared, we can form no conception that will harmonize with the spirit of New Testament liberty and the abolition of all dividing-walls between the nations..."

Alexander: "the promise is addressed to Israel not as a nation but a church; so that when the Jewish people ceased to bear this character, they lost all claim to the fulfilment of the promise, which is still in

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force and still enures to the benefit of those to whom it was originally given, namely, the Israel of God, that is to say, his church or chosen people.”

This is the object of Mosaic promises:

Deu 26:18-19 And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all his commandments; 19 And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

Deut 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: ... 10 And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. ... 13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*:

Deut 28 conditions this preeminence on their obedience. But by the time Isaiah writes, their disobedience is manifest. Yet he persists with the promise of preeminence, along with a promise that the Servant will redeem them and their sin will be forgiven.

Isa 14:1-2 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. 2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Isa 45:14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none else, *there is* no God.

Isa 49:22-23 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders. 23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

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Isa 61:5-6 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien *shall be* your plowmen and your vinedressers. 6 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.

Isa 62:1-2 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp *that*

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burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

Isa 66:10-13 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

He opens up the possibility of those who love Zion sharing in her blessings.

Isa 66:18-21 For I *know* their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20 And they shall bring all your brethren *for* an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21 And I will also take of them for priests *and* for Levites, saith the LORD.

Gentiles are the likely antecedent of “them” in v. 21, but note the partitive מֵהֶם "some of them." This is not the universal priesthood of all Gentile believers spoken of in the NT.

Two sets of NT teachings challenge the natural sense of these OT prophecies.

The first are statements that give Jew and Gentile equal standing before God.

Rom 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Col 3:9 ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

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If we understand these promises to erase completely the distinction between Jew and Gentile, then they also erase the distinction between bond and free, and between male and female. Yet the rest of the NT emphatically preserves these distinctions.

- It prescribes distinct functions for men and women in marriage, and in the church.
- It condemns homosexual behavior.
- It gives very distinct instructions to servants and masters.

It is more likely that we should understand them to mean that *with respect to the subject under discussion*, there is no distinction. Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, may all find salvation by calling on the name of the Lord (Rom 10), are all God's children (Gal 3), receive righteousness by faith (Gal 5), are members of one body (1 Cor 12), and are being renewed into the likeness of Christ (Col 3).

The second are statements that assign the role of priests to all believers:

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1Pe 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Rev 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

In understanding these passages, it is important to observe that Peter, who introduces this line of thought, is actually quoting the OT!

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

The Lord's statement in Exodus is even stronger than that of Peter and John. The entire nation were priests. Yet God's ongoing revelation at Sinai (the book of Leviticus) definitely set apart one tribe for function in the sanctuary, and he severely judged those (like Korah, or Saul, or Uzziah) who undertook cultic initiatives that were reserved for the Aaronic priesthood. Individual Israelites could pray to God without a human mediator (as David's psalms, and other recorded prayers, show). Blood sacrifices were required to be brought to the sanctuary, to avoid the temptation to enter into the pagan cults of the high places, but they were still brought by the individual worshipper.

In the OT, the priesthood of all Israelites existed side by side with the priesthood of Aaron. The latter had to do with the sanctuary and the specified cultic rituals; the former enjoyed access to God even

away from the sanctuary. We observed in our study of ch. 60 that a physical sanctuary is part of the civil structure of a people constituted as a physical kingdom, something that our Lord disowned for his people in this present age. Today, there is no earthly temple, there is no cultic ritual, and thus there is no temple priesthood. But we have also seen that the Scriptures anticipate a temple with renewed animal sacrifices during the coming kingdom, when God's anointed king rules from Zion, and in that context, Isaiah anticipates once again a distinct subset of the people who lead the nation's worship in the temple, and that subset will be drawn mainly (though not exclusively, 66:21) from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

v. 6 “Ministers of your God” משרתי [D ptc] אלהינו

Translation Equivalences

This root overwhelmingly corresponds to the Greek stem λειτουργ-:

	שרת	פלה	עבד, עבודה	צבא	Total
λειτουργος	10	1			14
λειτουργεω	63		12	6	98
λατρευω	2	7	72		109
Other ⁸ max	3				
Total	100	11	476		

This word indicates formal ministry, restricted to a few, as opposed to λατρευω. Trench ch. 35:

To serve God is the duty of all men; λατρεύειν, therefore, and λατρεία, are demanded of the whole people (Exod. 4:23; Deut. 10:12; Josh. 24:31; Matt. 4:10; Luke 1:74; Acts 7:7; Rom. 9:4; Heb. 12:28); but to serve Him in special offices and ministries can be the duty and privilege only of a few, who are set apart to the same; and thus in the O. T. the λειτουργεῖν and the λειτουργία are ascribed only to the priests and Levites who were separated to minister in holy things; they only are λειτουργοί (Num. 4:24; 1 Sam. 2:11; Nehem. 10:39; Ezek. 44:27); which language, *mutatis mutandis*, reappears in the New, where not merely is that old priesthood and ministry designated by this language (Luke 1:23; Heb. 9:21; 10:11), but that of apostles, prophets, and teachers in the Church (Acts 13:2; Rom. 15:16; Phil. 2:17), as well as that of the great High Priest of our profession, τῶν ἁγίων λειτουργός (Heb. 8:2).⁹

⁸ Omitting correspondences with pronouns, etc. that are unlikely to be intended as direct translation counterparts

⁹ Trench, R. C. (2003). *Synonyms of the New Testament* (9th ed., improved.) (126–127). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Uses of λειτουργη* in the NT:

References to OT Cultus

Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his **ministration** were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

Hebrews 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the **ministry**.

Hebrews 10:11 And every priest standeth daily **ministering** and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

NT Apostolic Ministry

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Romans 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Philippians 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Magistrates

Romans 13:6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Service to other people

Romans 15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to **minister** unto them in carnal things.

2 Corinthians 9:12 For the administration of this **service** not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

Philippians 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger αποστολος, and he that **ministered** to my wants.

Philippians 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of **service** toward me.

Angels

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his **ministers** a flame of fire.

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all **ministering** spirits, sent forth to **minister** for them who shall be heirs of

salvation?

Christ as Priest

Hebrews 8:2 A **minister** of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Hebrews 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent **ministry**, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

1 Pet 2:9 “Chosen Generation” γενος εκλεκτος

Only other association is

Isa 43:20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen עמי בחירי
το γενος μου το εκλεκτος.

Γενος is a rare correspondent for עם (14x, compared with 137 for εθνος and 1557 for λαος. But עם is not uncommon for γενος (the only more common antecedent is מין 16x, possibly six more counting instances of מן, and the next is זרע 7x).

εκλεκτος is the most common translation of בחיר (12x out of xxx instances of the Hebrew word), and most instances of εκλεκτος translate forms of the root בחר, with בחיר being the most common.

בחיר and עם appear together a few times in addition to Isa 43:20:

Psa 105:43 And he brought forth his **people** with joy, *and* his **chosen** with gladness:

Psa 106:5 That I may see the good of thy **chosen**, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy **nation**, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

Isa 65:22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my **people**, and mine **elect** shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

The phrase also appears in the LXX expansion of Est 8:12 in reference to the Jews.

v. 11 Righteousness and Praise

This pair appears elsewhere (with צדק rather than צדקה) only rarely: David's Psa 35:28 and (less parallel) Ps 48:11. It is interesting to contemplate links with Ps 35:28.

1. The Psalm has three stanzas, each ending with a doxology: David's personal trust in the Lord (vv. 9-10), his public praise (v. 18), and an exhortation to the public to praise God. along with his personal praise (vv. 27-28). This process illustrates how “the Lord God causeth righteousness and praise to spring forth.”
2. The origin of David's praise is in his deep suffering. The use of ריב in v. 1 recalls 1 Sam 24:15, and suggests that the Psalm has its origin in David's unjust persecution by King Saul. Similarly,

Isaiah 61, The Redeemer

the righteousness and praise that Isa 61:11 anticipates come out of the suffering of Israel as she is restored from her rebellion and chastisement.

3. Another suffering may also be in mind. Our Lord quotes Ps 35:19 (cf. v. 7) as fulfilled in his rejection by the Jews (John 15:25), and numerous verses in the Psalm are reminiscent of his rejection (e.g., false witnesses in vv. 11, 20; mockery in v. 21). The relation between Israel's suffering and righteousness-praise is one of contrast, but the relation between our Lord's suffering and righteousness-praise is one of causality. Interestingly, David describes himself in the Psalm as the Lord's "servant" (v. 27), and it is not unreasonable to think that Isaiah may have incorporated the Psalm at multiple levels into his exposition of the Redeemer's suffering and bringing of righteousness and salvation to God's people.