
ISAIAH 61: 1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on me; because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the humble. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to those who are bound;

The subject of the preceding chapter is continued in this; and to give it the greater solemnity, the Messiah is introduced describing his character and office, and confirming the large promises made before, Isa 61:1-9. In consequence of this the Jewish Church is introduced, praising God for the honor done her by her restoration to favor, and by to accession of the Gentiles, which is beautifully described by allusions to the rich pontifical dress of the high priest; a happy similitude to express the ornaments of a restored nation and of a renewed mind, Isa 61:10. Certainty of the prophecy illustrated by a figure drawn from the vegetable kingdom, Isa 61:11.

Verse 1

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me" - The Septuagint, Vulgate, and St. Luke, (Luk 4:18), and a MS., and two old editions omit the word 'אדני Adonai, the Lord; which was probably added to the text through the superstition of the Jews, to prevent the pronunciation of the word יהוה Jehovah following. See Kennicott on the state of the printed Hebrew text, vol. i., p. 610.

In most of Isaiah's prophecies there is a primary and secondary sense, or a remote subject illustrated by one that is near. The deliverance of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon is constantly used to shadow forth the salvation of men by Jesus Christ. Even the prophet himself is a typical person, and is sometimes intended to represent the great Savior. It is evident from Luk 4:18 that this is a prophecy of our blessed Lord and his preaching; and yet it is as evident that it primarily refers to Isaiah preaching the glad tidings of deliverance to the Jews.

The opening of the prison "Perfect liberty" - פקח קוּחַ pekach koach. Ten MSS. of Kennicott's, several of De Rossi's, and one of my own, with the Complutensian, have פקחקוּחַ pekachkoach in one word; and so the Septuagint and Vulgate appear to have taken it: not merely opening of prisons, but every kind of liberty - complete redemption.

The proclaiming of perfect liberty to the bound, and the year of acceptance with Jehovah. is a manifest allusion to the proclaiming of the year of jubilee by sound of trumpet. See Lev 25:9, etc. This was a year of general release of debts and obligations, of bondmen and bondwomen, of lands and possessions which had been sold from the families and tribes to which they belonged. Our Savior, by applying this text to himself, (Luk 4:18, Luk 4:19), a text so manifestly relating to the institution above mentioned, plainly declares the typical design of that institution.

ISAIAH 61: 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

ISAIAH 61: 3 to appoint to those who mourn in Zion, to give to them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Verse 3

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion "To impart gladness to the mourners of Zion" - A word necessary to the sense is certainly lost in this place, of which the ancient Versions have preserved no traces. Houbigant, by conjecture, inserts the word ששון sason, gladness, taken from the line next but one below, where it stands opposed to אבל ebel, sorrow or mourning, as the word lost here was to אבלי abeley, mourners: I follow him. - L.

Beauty for ashes "A beautiful crown instead of ashes" - In times of mourning the Jews put on sackcloth, or coarse and sordid raiment, and spread dust and ashes on their heads; on the contrary, splendid clothing and ointment poured on the head were the signs of joy. "Feign thyself to be a mourner," says Joab to the woman of Tekoah, "and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil," 2Sam 14:2. These customs are at large expressed in the Book of Judith: "She pulled off the sackcloth which she had on, and put off the garments of her widowhood, and washed her body all over with water and anointed herself with precious ointment, and braided the hair of her head, and put on a tire [mitre, marg.] upon it; and put on her garments of gladness;" chap. 10:3. - L. פאר תחת אפר peer tachath ephar, glory for ashes; a paronomasia which the prophet often uses: a chaplet, crown, or other ornament of the head (for so the Vulgate renders the word here and in the both verse; in which last place the Septuagint agree in the same rendering), instead of dust and ashes, which before covered it; and the costly ointments used on occasions of festivity, instead of the ensigns of sorrow. - L.

Trees of righteousness "Trees approved" - Hebrews oaks of righteousness or truth; that is, such as by their flourishing condition should show that they were indeed "the scion of God's planting, and the work of his hands;" under which images, in the preceding chapter, Isa 60:21, the true servants of God, in a highly improved state of the Church, were represented; that is, says Vitringa on that place, "commendable for the strength of their faith, their durability, and firmness."

ISAIAH 61: 4 They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

Verse 4 "And they that spring from thee" - A word is lost here likewise. After ובנו ubanu, "they shall build," add ממך mimmecha, they that spring from thee. Four MSS. have it so, (two of them ancient), and one of mine has it in the margin, and it is confirmed by Isa 58:12, where the sentence is the very same, this word being here added. Kimchi makes the same remark: "the word ממך mimmecha is omitted here; but is found in Isa 58:12."

The desolations of many generations - It seems that these words cannot refer to the Jews in the Balbylonish captivity, for they were not there many generations; but it may refer to their dispersions and state of ruin since the advent of our Lord; and consequently this may be a promise of the restoration of the Jewish people.

ISAIAH 61: 5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall work your fields and your vineyards.

Verse 5

Strangers shall - feed your flocks - Gentiles shall first preach to you the salvation of Christ, and feed with Divine knowledge the Jewish congregations.

ISAIAH 61: 6 But you shall be named the priests of the LORD; men will call you the ministers of our God: you will eat the wealth of the nations, and you will boast in their glory.

ISAIAH 61: 7 Instead of your shame you shall have double; and instead of dishonour they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be to them.

Verse 7

For your shame "Instead of your shame" - The translation of this verse, which is very confused, and probably corrupted in the Hebrew, is taken from the Syriac Version; except that the latter has not expressed the word מִשְׁנֵה mishneh, double, in the first place. Five MSS. add the conjunction וּvau to שִׂמְחָת simchath. The Syriac reads תִּרְנֻוּ taronnu, and תִּירָשׁוּ tirashu, in the second person, "ye shall rejoice, ye shall inherit." And for לָהֶם lahem, to them, two MSS., (one of them ancient), three of De Rossi's, and the Syriac, read לָכֶם lachem, to you, in the second person likewise.

The Version of the Septuagint is imperfect in this place; the first half of the verse is entirely omitted in all the printed copies. It is supplied by MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. 2 in the following manner: - Αντι της αισχυνης υμων της διπλης, Και αντι της εντροπησ αγαλλιασεται η μερις αυτων· Δια τουτο την γην αυτων εκ δευτερου- "Instead of your shame ye shall have double,

And instead of your confusion their portion shall rejoice;

Therefore, they shall possess their land a second time."

In which the two MSS. agree, except that 1. D. 2 has by mistake ημερας, day, for η μερις, the part. And Cod. Marchal., in the margin, has pretty nearly the same supplement as from Theodotion. - L.

ISAIAH 61: 8 "For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity; and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Verse 8

I hate robbery for burnt-offering "Who hate rapine and iniquity" - The Syriac, and Chaldee prefix the conjunction וּvau, instead of the preposition בְּbeth, to עוֹלָה olah, which they render iniquity or oppression; and so the Septuagint, ἀδικιας. The difference lies in the punctuation; בעוֹלָה beolah, in a burnt-offering בעוֹלָה beavelah, in iniquity. The letters are the same in both words. Five of De Rossi's MSS. confirm this reading.

ISAIAH 61: 9 Their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed."

 Verse 9

Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles - Both Jews and Gentiles are to make but one fold under one shepherd, Christ Jesus. But still, notwithstanding this, they may retain their peculiarity and national distinction; so that though they are known to be Christians, yet they shall appear to be converted Jews. After their conversion to Christianity this will necessarily be the case for a long time. Strange nations are not so speedily amalgamated, as to lose their peculiar cast of features, and other national distinctions.

ISAIAH 61: 10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful 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.

Verse 10

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord - These may be the words of the Jews now converted, and brought into the Church of Christ, and with the Gentiles made fellow heirs of the blessings of the new covenant.

As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments "As the bridegroom decketh himself with a priestly crown" - An allusion to the magnificent dress of the high priest, when performing his functions; and particularly to the mitre, and crown or plate of gold on the front of it, Exo 29:6. The bonnet or mitre of the priests also was made, as Moses expresses it, "for glory and for beauty," Exo 28:40. It is difficult to give its full force to the prophet's metaphor in another language. The version of Aquila and Symmachus comes nearest to it: ὡς νυμφιον ἱερατευομενον στεφανω· "as a bridegroom decked with a priestly crown." - L.

ISAIAH 61: 11 For as the earth produces its bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring out; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring out before all the nations.

Verse 11

The Lord God "The Lord Jehovah" - "אֲדֹנָי Adonai, the Lord, makes the line longer than the preceding and following; and the Septuagint, Alexandrian, (and MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. II.), and Arabic, do not so render it. Hence it seems to be interpolated." - Dr. Jubb. Three MSS. have it not. See the note on Isa 61:1 (note). Both words יהוה אֲדֹנָי Adonai Jehovah, are wanting in one of my MSS.; but are supplied in the margin by a later hand.