



Once again (as in 59:21) the Messiah, the Servant of God, speaks for himself, describing his own ministry. This is the passage Jesus applied to himself when he visited the synagogue in Nazareth¹.

¹ see Luke 4:16-22

1. The Messiah has the anointing of the Holy Spirit

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¹The Spirit of the Sovereign Yahweh is on me, because Yahweh has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³and provide a crown for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.'

¹ Exodus 29:21
² Exodus 40:9
³ 1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Kings 9:3
⁴ Psalm 23:5
⁵ Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 61:3
⁶ Psalm 55:21
⁷ Psalm 104:15
⁸ Proverbs 27:9

• Oil – a symbol of consecration

Oil is used today for different kinds of lubrication, and it could be used that way in the ancient world. It was also used as a symbol of consecration (as in Genesis 28:18; 35:14). The priests who worked in the tabernacle would be anointed with oil¹. The various parts of the tabernacle were also consecrated to God by being anointed². Kings were anointed³. Anointing oil also speaks of personal 'lubrication'. It could be used for lubricating oneself by putting it on the head and rubbing it into wounds. The freshly anointed person could feel comfortable even in the presence of his enemies⁴. It was 'the oil of gladness'⁵, famous for its softness⁶. It made the face shine⁷ and the heart glad⁸.

• Anointing – personal 'lubrication'

• A freshly anointed person comfortable

• The Messiah's work has the power of the Holy Spirit 'lubricating' all He does – it empowers Him

The spiritual equivalent of all of this is the 'anointing of the Spirit'. The outstanding mark of the Messiah is that his work has the power of the Holy Spirit 'lubricating' all he does. He is **conscious** of his spiritual power.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do all that he had to do. 'Yahweh has anointed me to preach . . . , to bind up . . . , to proclaim . . . and release . . . , to comfort . . . and provide . . . , to bestow . . .' All that he does is done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Messiah preaches a word that liberates

2. The Messiah preaches a word that liberates. It must be noted that the preaching is mentioned first! 'Yahweh has anointed me to preach good news . . .' It is the preached word that has such power. It helps the poor, giving them a message which lifts them up in a way that can be achieved by nothing else. It liberates. The Word and the Spirit come together (as in 59:21 and elsewhere). After the preaching there are other tasks. There is (i) a ministry of caring in every kind of human breakdown, (ii) a 'jubilee' ministry of setting free enslaved people in every kind of bondage. It starts with proclaiming the freedom of those who are slaves to other people (compare Jeremiah 34:1–22). Then it moves on to action – releasing – to help other kinds of imprisonment. We help to get people out of dark dungeons.

• Then:

(i) A ministry of caring

(ii) A 'jubilee' ministry of setting free enslaved people

Verse 2 focuses on what God is doing. Jesus proclaims a 'year' (a long period) when God is specially wanting to be gracious. God's 'favour' is his goodwill, his wish to see people reconciled to himself. Isaiah also sees 'a day [a short period] of vengeance'. The prophecy takes in the panorama of all that God will

• Two stage prophecy

do. As it works out in its fulfilment there are two stages. 'What Isaiah saw as one messianic work, the Lord Jesus divided into two'.^a It was for this reason that Jesus 'closed the book'^{b1} without reading beyond verse 2a.

📖 Luke 4:20

• The Saviour transforms our lives

The coming Saviour transforms our lives. He makes us kings (providing a crown), he brings us joy (removing grief and ashes), he changes our expectations (taking away despair), he brings us comfort (removing the dryness and deadness of ashes and giving the soothing comfort of oil). He takes away the clothes we wore in prison and gives us the garment of praise.

3. Isaiah wants us to see the greatness of what God does

3. Isaiah wants us to see the greatness of what God does. The people of God will become like beautiful and majestic trees that cannot be moved, and give shade and freshness to people beneath them.

• The people of God will be like beautiful trees giving shade to those beneath

They will be called large trees of righteousness, a planting of Yahweh for the display of his splendour.

⁴They will rebuild what has been ruined for a long time, and restore the places devastated among people in former days; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

• They will recover what they have lost

They will recover what they have lost, like a ruined nation that recovers its prosperity.

⁵Aliens will stand and shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

• They will be admired by those around them

They will be admired by people around them, who will want to work for them.

⁶And as for you, you will be called priests of Yahweh, you will be named ministers of our God.

• They will have a ministry to others

They will have a ministry to others. Exodus 19:6 will be fulfilled.

You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their glory you will boast.

• They will enjoy the blessings that new converts bring in

The revived people of God will enjoy the blessings that new converts bring in.

⁷Instead of shame, there will be a double portion, and instead of disgrace, they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit an ample portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

• Shame and disgrace will fade away

Every kind of shame and disgrace will fade away as new blessings come to them from God.

⁸For I, Yahweh, love justice; I hate robbery in the matter of burnt-offerings. I will give them their full due. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their seed will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people Yahweh has blessed.'

• God will delight in their new ways and reward them

• The relationship will be a covenant

Note

God will take delight in the new way in which they live and in due course will reward his people for their godly ways – although he was the One who brought it about! The relationship God has with them will be a covenant-relationship in which – as they walk before him – he swears to them and says, ‘I will indeed bless you – I give you my oath!’

a. J.A. Motyer, Isaiah, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Tyndale, 1999), p. 376.

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