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The Anointed Servant

Isaiah 61:1-3

Introduction

Anointing was a rite of pouring oil on the head as a symbolic act for officially setting apart a person for a leadership role in the community. It was a one-time event much like an inauguration or ordination. Things could also be sanctified or dedicated to a special purpose for God by anointing (Exod 29:36). Three kinds of leaders were anointed for their ministries in the Old Testament: priests, Exod 28:41; kings, 1 Sam 10:1; and prophets, 1 Kgs 19:16. When God anointed or authorized individuals for leadership, He also empowered them with the Holy Spirit (1 Sam 16:13; Isa 61:1). The word for the act of anointing is the Hebrew *mashach*, and the one anointed is *mashiach*, from which we get the name "Messiah." Jesus proclaimed His anointing at the synagogue in Nazareth and quoted Isaiah 61:1-3, but the people rejected His claim of leadership, see Luke 4:16-30. Note Jesus' statement in 4:21, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The Anointing of the Servant, Jesus Christ, Isaiah 61:1a

When Jesus proclaimed His anointing in the synagogue, it had already been done. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. When He came up out of the water, He offered a prayer and heaven opened. Luke reports, "And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" The little synagogue in Nazareth still exists. It is now a small chapel belonging to one of the churches. It is a wonderful experience to visit the little synagogue and read this passage while seated on the stone benches around the perimeter.

The Twelfold Ministry of the Servant, Messiah

1. The Servant will be empowered by the Spirit, 61:1a; 11:1-2.
 - The Spirit of the Lord, 11:2a, *Yahweh* (personal name), Exod 34:5-7
 - The Spirit of wisdom, 11:2b, *chokmah* (know right things), Deut 4:6
 - The Spirit of understanding, 11:2c, *binah* (discernment), 1 Cor 2:13-14
 - The Spirit of counsel, 11:d, *'etsah* (godly advice), Ps 73:24; Prov 11:14
 - The Spirit of might, 11e, *geburah* (*goel* = redeemer), Rom 1:16; Heb 4:12
 - The Spirit of knowledge, 11f, *da'ath* (right information), Prov 1:7; 9:10
 - The Spirit of fear of the Lord, 11g, *yirath* (reverence, faith), Eccl 12:13
2. The Servant will preach good tidings to the poor, 61:1b.
 - Jesus' birth announcement, Luke 2:9-14
 - The good news is the gospel, 1 Cor 15:1-9.
 - The poor is Spirit are in focus, Matt 5:3; Ps 40:17.

3. The Servant will bind up the broken hearted, 61:1c.
 - These are ones who grieve and mourn over sin, Ps 147:3.
 - This is the Book of the Covenant, Isa 40:1-3.
4. The Servant will proclaim liberty to captives, 61:1d.
 - The word "liberty" is Hebrew *deror*, a technical term for "release" in the year of Jubilee, see Lev 25:10, 13; 27:24; Jer 34:8-10; Ezek 46:17.
 - The Jubilee year was the fiftieth year, after seven sets of sabbatical years, see Lev 25:8-17.
5. The Servant will proclaim opening of the prison to the bound, 61:1e.
 - God will act as Savior and Judge, Isa 60:16; Rom 1:32; 2:2.
6. The Servant will proclaim "acceptable year," as a Jubilee year, 61:2a.
 - Jubilee year - Lev 25:8-55
7. The Servant will proclaim the day of vengeance, 61:2b, see Isa 34:5-17.
 - Vengeance belongs to God alone, Deut 32:35; Ps 94:1; Rom 12:19.
8. The Servant will proclaim the day of comfort for those who mourn, 61:2c.
 - Those who mourn for sinful conditions, Matt 5:4.
9. The Servant will console those in Zion who mourn, 61:3a.
 - Those who mourn in Zion, also shall be comforted, Matt 5:4.
10. The Servant will give beauty for ashes, 61:3b.
 - Ashes are the sign of mourning.
11. The Servant will give oil of joy for mourning, 61:3c.
 - The "oil of joy" replaces mourning in light of the celebration of Jubilee.
12. The Servant will give the garment of praise for spirit of heaviness, 61:3d.
 - Verses 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d, give a fivefold promise of comfort to accentuate the festivity of the Jubilee year.

The Results of the Servant's Ministry

The Servant will recognize those who are called "the trees of righteousness," 61:3e.

The Servant also reveals that they shall be "the Lord's planting" for His glory, 61:3f.

These elements are a fulfillment of Isaiah 60:21; cf. Dan 12:2-3; Matt 13:41-43; 15:10-14.