



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 079: The Messiah's Mission

Study Author: Michael Button

Read: Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:14-19.

Introduction. Early in His ministry, Jesus read the Scripture portion for that day in His hometown of Nazareth. The reading was from Isaiah, Chapter 61. His following exposition of the passage was either very brief or Luke recorded only the theme: the Messiah's mission. Jesus said Isaiah's prophesy was being fulfilled (Luke 4:21). How and by whom was it being fulfilled?

1. The power of His ministry (v1). Isaiah attributed this to the anointing of the Holy Spirit (see Matt 2:16). In biblical times priests, prophets and kings were anointed with oil, symbolising their divine appointment to office. Look up oil and/or anointing in a Bible Dictionary or similar and research how and why oil was associated with the Spirit of God (see also Short Study 018). What does that suggest to you about the ministry of Jesus?

2. The thrust of His ministry (v1).

- (i) *Preach good news.* Why is it 'good'? What is significant about this being to the 'poor'?
- (ii) *Healing the broken-hearted.* Why might people be broken-hearted and how might they be healed?
- (iii) *Proclaim liberty.* Liberty from what? (See John 8:34-36).
- (iv) *Open the prison.* The expression can also mean *Opening the eyes of the blind*. Either way, it refers to those in spiritual darkness who can't enjoy fullness of life. Can you recall what Jesus said about this (John 10:10)?
- (v) *v2 Proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.* This is suggestive of the Year of Jubilee, when slaves were set free. Find out what you can about the Year of Jubilee.
- (vi) *v2 Proclaim ... the day of vengeance of our God.* Luke tells us that Jesus closed the scroll before coming to this part of the prophecy. Why do you think that was?
- (vii) *v2 To comfort all who mourn [61:2].* This most likely means those who are mourning over sin rather than those mourning over loss, but see what various commentators have to say. Can you recall when Jesus referred to this (Matt 5:4)?
Verse v3 Expands the previous verse, with promises to those who mourn.

To think about: How have I, or can I, benefit from the Messiah's mission today?

To dig deeper: Explore the meanings of the various phrases in Isaiah verse 3, with the aid of a Bible commentary or two.