

# REPAIRING THE RUINS (ISA 61.1-4)

*Repairing the Ruins || State of the Church 2024*

## I. REVIEW

- A. We are currently spending three weeks in Isaiah 61.1-4 to introduce and outline several burdens the Lord has given our elders for our spiritual family in this coming year.
- B. Through the fall, we consistently talked together of being called by the Lord into a season of *building the house*. This speaks of reorienting our efforts as a spiritual family around pursuing the things of the Lord together as the first pursuit (corporately and individually) as well as seeking to grow in the knowledge of his ways that we might orient our lives around repairing the ruins of things that have been torn down in our cultural and societal moment.
- C. As those who live in times marked by the widespread decay of public morality, the death of institutions, and the growing acceptance of immorality and deception on a global scale, there is a specific need in our moment as the people of God to work to build God's house, our lives, and our families according to God's patterns.
- D. Isaiah 61.1-4 discusses the people of God who will set out to work in repairing the ruined cities and the desolate places. However, this passage does not merely command God's people to set out to do this work. Rather, it provides a portrait of the *type of people* who will be empowered by God's Spirit to engage in such work.
- E. We first looked at the *anointing that rested upon Jesus* to usher in the reign of God's kingdom through the offering of salvation, healing, and deliverance to those who were poor, wounded, and bound in captivity. In fulfilling the promise of Isaiah, Jesus introduced the age in which this anointing is experienced and received by his church.
- F. We then looked at how the image of *oaks of righteousness* as a framework for understanding the nature of kingdom work in the world — seeking to gain God's perspective on success (faithfulness) in the midst of work that is often smaller, slower, and apparently less successful than we would imagine.

## II. A FALLEN CITY

- A. Isaiah 61 was written to a people who would live in a future time from the prophet who were returning to the land of Israel to rebuild what had been torn down at the hands of God's judgments. In many ways, the people it was written to encourage lived within a type of "already-but-not-yet" in experiencing the redemptive purposes of God. They had experienced the joy of his power in their return from Babylonian captivity, but they still lived within a destroyed, desolate, and troubled land that needed to experience the full life of God's renewing grace.
- B. In many ways, these words are remarkably applicable in our day and time. As the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are recipients of his saving grace, his power, and citizenship in his kingdom — yet we live within the world that is still marked by sin, destruction, devastation, brokenness, despair, injustice, sickness, etc.
- C. Although we see many apparent "successes" in the world around us (and in our city), a closer look shows that many of the foundations that are meant to hold together human society have been systematically destroyed.
- D. We presently live in an hour of human history that is tumultuous. All around us we are witnessing an increased full-frontal assault against the things of God and against his natural order for creation. We experience this in our generation through the maturation of cultural and societal revolutions that have been at work within society for several generations.

- E. We are presently walking through one of the most dramatic and seismic transitional periods in human history. At every level of society (both in the Western world and globally) we are experiencing cultural, societal, political, economic, and relational unrest and uncertainty.
- F. We are also witnessing comprehensive and seismic changes in the landscape of Western church. Over the next decade, the church will only experience an increase to the difficulties we face and the unique pressures of the new world we live in.
- G. Like the righteous remnant in this passage, Christians are not intended to just stick our heads in the sand or to spend our time yelling at the world around us. Rather, we are to regain a *constructive vision* for what it would look like to “rebuild the ruins” of the things in our world that have been devastated by sin and destruction.

### III. THE CITY OF GOD IN THE CITIES OF MEN

- A. To set out to do such work, we must be infused with a vision of where God is taking all of creation and the God-given patterns for the church’s participation in his work through this age.
- B. The end portrait of the new creation is a city that is a temple for the Living God. This is a place where God will dwell with his people for all eternity — a city with true and eternal foundations that cannot be shaken, where righteousness, peace, joy, and life in perfection forever.

<sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away... <sup>9</sup>Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” <sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup>having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel... <sup>22</sup>And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (Rev 21)

<sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... <sup>16</sup>But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:10, 16)

- C. This is Christ’s portrait of the final consummation of the kingdom of God — the eternal, glorious city of God.
- D. We have seen that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ in the world, and that he presently reigns *through his church*.
- E. Throughout the history of the church many have utilized the image of the “city of God” to speak of God’s kingdom purposes as they are made known in his church through this age. The church is now God’s city while we live in the midst of the cities of men. As such, we seek to partner with God’s purposes (through faithful submission to his word) to expand the boundaries of his kingdom in the world and bring renewal according to his grace.
- F. Because of this, the church is called to build according to the pattern of the heavenly city. This includes ordering and establishing our lives as a people (individually and corporately) around rightly ordered worship at the heart of our pursuits together.
- G. Two important images: (1) the *tabernacle/temple*; and (2) *embassy*.
- H. This gives profound dignity and glory to the value of our work and labor in the Lord in this age — even as we wait for the fullness of his kingdom at the return of Christ.

- I. We recognize that this work will always be in part until the day Christ returns — but we seek to order our lives around submission to God’s ways and his word — asking him to open his hand and allow us to experience as much of his kingdom as he will in this age.

<sup>24</sup>The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, <sup>25</sup>but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also... <sup>28</sup>So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both grow together until the harvest.’ (Matt 13.24-30)

<sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. (1 Cor 13.9-10)

#### IV. GOD’S PATTERN OF RENEWAL

- A. We see in the Scriptures a pattern to seek and pursue the face of God as the means through which we might experience renewal.
- B. The prophets gave the people of God a paradigm for seeking the Lord and seeing renewal.

<sup>12</sup>“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup>and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. <sup>14</sup>Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him (Joel 2.12-14)

<sup>1</sup>Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. <sup>2</sup>After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. <sup>3</sup>Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. (Hos 6.1-3)

- C. Peter gave a similar pattern for renewal in the New Testament.

<sup>19</sup>Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup>that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3.19-20)

- D. God promised that he would again raise up David’s tabernacle. In the New Testament, James understands that the Lord is fulfilling this promise through the expansion of the church (Acts 15.12-17). This demonstrates that the people of God are the dwelling place (tabernacle) of God that are to perpetually seek him through worship and prayer in order that his kingdom might be expanded in the world.

<sup>11</sup>In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old (Amos 9.11)

- E. This is a call for us to order our lives (both individually and corporately) around seeking the first things of the kingdom first. In seasons of hopelessness, the pattern for the people of God is to order our pursuits around putting worship and prayer at the center of our life together as the people of God. Corporately, this will include commitments in our instruction, our resources, our programming, etc.
- F. There is an invitation to press into the Lord (regardless of the cost) with a *spirit of repentance* (turning away from the world to the Lord) and a *spirit of pursuit* (seeking the Lord while he may be found). The promise of the Scripture is that God delights in mercy and steadfast love.
- G. Many Christians experience a vision for renewal and seek to set out to work for it within worldly structures and patterns. We must understand that *worship* drives *values* (what we love) and that *values* drive *culture* (encoded values that further grip the imagination), *society* (institutions that enforce cultural norms), and *politics* (state laws that enforce and further society’s desires).

## V. REPAIRING THE RUINS

- A. *Worship & prayer*: At the heart of our work to ‘repair the ruins’ is to establish the glorious reality of worship and prayer at the heart of our lives (both individually and corporately). The Scriptures declare that God is enthroned upon the praises of his people. This means that as God’s people gather to worship, pray, hear his word, and celebrate at his table, the kingdom of God is present among us. Each week as we gather, we ascend the mountain of the Lord together — coming (and being) the heavenly city of the Lord. We are not simply pointing to that city that is to come but are the present presence of that city in this world — a glorious foretaste of what will one day fill the whole earth. This beautiful reality carries within it profound implications about the *necessity of our participation* in the corporate gathering of the saints!

<sup>3</sup>Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel (Ps 22.3)

<sup>22</sup>But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, <sup>23</sup>and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup>and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12.22-24)

- B. *God’s word*: Growing in conformity to God’s ways in our worship and in our lives hinges upon our knowledge of God and his patterns as revealed through his word. Seeking God’s kingdom purposes requires that we submit our lives wholly to his word. We must let God’s word shape our ways of seeing, imagining, and valuing in order that our work is conformed to his patterns.

<sup>104</sup>Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. <sup>105</sup>Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path... <sup>111</sup>Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. <sup>112</sup>I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end. (Ps 119.104-112)

<sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom 12.2)

- C. *Family*: The Scripture presents the family as the first institution given by God for the purpose of fulfilling his righteous purposes in the earth. We are to recognize that the first place we walk out our calling related to the kingdom of heaven is to seek to order our lives around the commandments of Jesus within our families. This includes diligently seeking to cultivate *godly marriages, raising children in the discipline and instruction (education) of the Lord*, and (specifically for children) *walking in obedience to our parents*.

<sup>31</sup>“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

<sup>32</sup>This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5.31-33)

‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6.1-4)

- D. *Vocation*: As followers of Jesus, we seek to order everything in our lives under the present reality of Christ’s kingdom. This has far reaching effects for the choices we make related to our vocation (what job we take, where we live, the use of our resources) as well as how we engage in our labors (fidelity, ethics, diligence, etc.). As citizens of Christ’s kingdom, our vocational labors should be an extension of the reality of Christ’s kingdom made expressed in this world.
- E. *Ministry*: Look for ways in this season to minister the grace of Christ’s kingdom in the relationships around you. Ask the Lord for wisdom to walk faithfully with those in your spheres of influence (family, neighbors, co-workers, etc.). This primarily happens through the means of *hospitality* (table fellowship, sharing with others in thanksgiving), *witness* (speaking of the kingdom of Christ and the glory of the gospel), and *discipleship* (teaching others to order their lives according to the commandments of Jesus).