

Title: Jesus is the Great King (Isaiah 61)
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Introduction

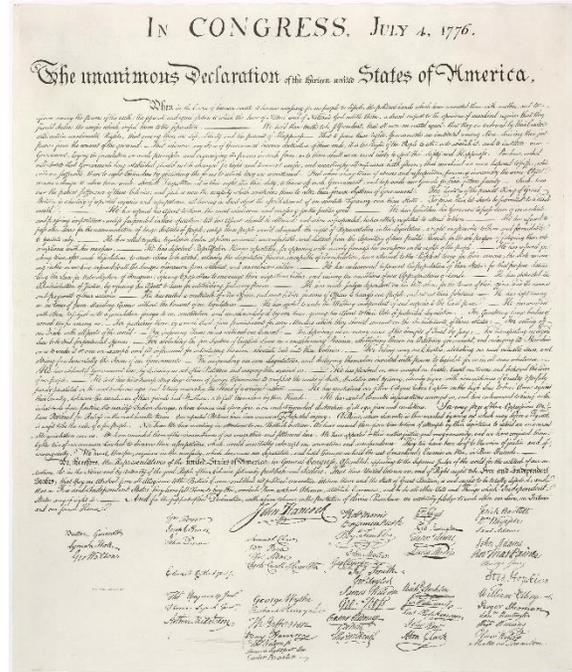
Today, many Americans will commemorate “Independence Day”, which occurs every Fourth of July. The celebration is best known for picnics and parades, flags and fireworks.

If you grew up in this country, you know why we celebrate - On this day in 1776, the leaders of what were then the American Colonies of Great Britain signed the “Declaration of Independence”. They had decided to do something that had never before been attempted: They were going to revolt against the nation of Great Britain, break away, and form their own government.

Why did they do that? Here were some of the things that they presented in the Declaration: If the King of England didn't like someone, all he had to do was make up a crime and accuse that person of it. It was then the responsibility of the person to prove their innocence. Proving your innocence could be very expensive. You had to hire a lawyer and gather evidence on your own. While you were proving your innocence, you often times sat in prison. If the King really didn't like you, he could haul you from the colonies over the ocean to England where you had no contact with friends of family. If the king really, really didn't like you, you could be submitted to torture and forced to confess.

On other occasions, the King might decide he wanted some money. He could make up a tax and demand that everyone pay it. He would offer no services in return. This resulted in a growing pile of taxes that were getting harder and harder to pay.

The residents of the colonies protested these things through official channels on numerous occasions, but the protests fell on deaf ears. In fact, in some cases, the citizens got the distinct sense that the King would mock them for registering complaints.



Here's how the Americans described the problem:

"In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. (Declaration of Independence)"

Look at that: "A Tyrant ... unfit to be the ruler..."

Because of this, the Americans wanted freedom. We all know the end of the story. This led to the American Revolution, which the Americans won.

Today, I'd like to focus on the idea at the core of the Declaration of Independence: That the King of England was a tyrant, unworthy of being a ruler. Has there been a ruler in the history of the human race who was a worthy ruler? A ruler who, rather than being a tyrant, gives freedom to the citizens of his kingdom? A ruler who, rather than take from his citizens, instead considers it his job to serve them? Yes! And we're going to learn about him today. We meet him in the Bible. Let's read about him:

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

(Isaiah 61:1-3)

To understand this passage of Scripture, we'll ask two questions:

- I. Who is this great King?
- II. How does the great King rule?

I. Who is the great king?

Who is the great king? Let's look at the first sentence from Isaiah's statement:

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
(Isaiah 61:1)

Isaiah is talking here about the one called "The Messiah". The Messiah was the great King; the final prophet sent by God, who would bring all history to its fulfillment.

Now, let's look at a quote from the book of Luke.

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. (Luke 4:14-15)

Jesus has just completed the temptation in the wilderness. He successfully defeated the Devil. Now, he's ready to begin his public ministry. We're told that he returned in the "Power of the Spirit". We learn here that he starts by visiting synagogues. These were the teaching centers of the Jewish people in ancient Israel.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. (v. 16)

At one point, Jesus returned to the town where he grew up. Just as he had been doing at other times, he goes to the synagogue to teach.

He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. (vs. 17-18)"

So, Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah. He chooses the passage that we started with; the passage describing the Messiah, the great King. After he reads, here's what he says:

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (vs. 20-21)

So, Jesus tells the crowd that the Scripture from Isaiah talks about him. He is the Messiah, the great king.

Now that we know who the great king is, let's move on to the next question:

II. How does the great King rule?

A. He rules with the help of the Holy Spirit.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, (Isaiah 61:1)”

The great King will rule with the help of God's Holy Spirit. What does that mean? The topic of Holy Spirit is complex, so let's concentrate on some things that Isaiah mentioned earlier in his book.

- 1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—
(Isaiah 11:1-2)

Here, Isaiah tells us 3 reasons why the Holy Spirit will be important to the great King.

1. The Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom and understanding.

The great king will be wise. He will be understanding. He will understand the problems faced by his subjects. He'll be wise because the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom and understanding.

2. The Holy Spirit is the source of counsel and might.

We're told here that the Spirit is the source of counsel and might. Wisdom is a great thing. But for wisdom to be practical, we need two things: **First**, the person who has the wisdom needs to share it. Imagine having a big problem, and someone walks by. You share your problem with them. The person says, “Hey, I know exactly how to solve that problem.” You say, “Great! Tell me.” The person says, “Sorry, no. I'm not telling you.” Or, maybe he says, “I'm not that good at explaining things.” For wisdom to work, it must come in the form of counsel. Someone has to pass the wisdom along to you in a way that you understand.

Next, you need the power to implement the counsel once you receive it. One of the tragedies we sometimes hear about is when an earthquake causes a home to collapse. When that happens, rescuers have to rush to the scene to help. Imagine that (heaven forbid) this happened to you. Your home has collapsed. Fortunately, you weren't killed, but you're trapped. You don't know how long you'll last. But there's hope: You hear voices outside. They say, "Hey, there's a special machine that would be perfect for lifting all this debris." It's a wonder of engineering. It would be perfect for this situation. ***Isn't it a shame that we don't have one.***

Sometimes wisdom and counsel aren't enough. You need power to implement your knowledge. You need might. The Holy Spirit is the source of those things.

3. The Holy Spirit is the source of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Finally, you need knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Any human will have some knowledge.
- But, the knowledge of any human being will be limited. Any human will have some power
- but the power of even the most important person on the planet will be limited. Most important, humans can help our earthly problems. But, what about eternity? Humans can help our earthly property. But, what about our souls?

The knowledge and power of God are unlimited. We begin to have access to them when we fear the Lord - When we have an awesome respect of him. The Holy Spirit will help with the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

So, the great King will rule with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

B. The Great King will proclaim good news to the poor.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
(Isaiah 61:1)

The great King will proclaim good news to the poor. In the modern day, many people believe it's good to be kind to the poor and underprivileged. This was not always the case. In the ancient world, the purpose of the poor and under-privileged was thought to be to serve the rich and powerful!

The great King is different. He will be the king of all people, rich and poor, powerful and powerless. If you're poor, this is good news.

Please note: Modern people did not come up with the idea of caring for the poor - God did, thousands of years ago. And he sent the great King to proclaim the good news.

There's more.

C. The Great King will bind up the broken hearted.

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted... (Isaiah 61:1)”

Do you know someone who is brokenhearted? To be broken hearted is to be disappointed to the depth of your soul. To be broken hearted is to have wanted something desperately, only to have it taken from you. Maybe the only thing worse than to be broken hearted is to be broken hearted and alone. When the great King comes, the broken hearted will no longer be alone. They will be no longer desperate. He will come alongside them and bring healing - He will bind their broken hearts.

D. The Great King will free captives and prisoners.

“...to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,”
(v 1, continued)

In ancient days, there were several things that could make you a captive, or land you in prison. You could be invaded by cruel armies that would take you captive. If this happened, you could have one of two fates: First, your captors could contact your family and demand a ransom. If no one could pay the ransom, you experienced the second fate: You would be taken off into slavery. You would lose your freedom forever and serve cruel masters. The same could happen if you were part of an army. If you entered into a war and lost, you would be given the choice of death or slavery.

Prisons were different than they are today. If you committed a serious crime like murder, you would simply be executed. Prisons were reserved for those who offended a ruler in some way.

Another way to wind up in prison was this: You borrowed money and failed to pay it back. In this case, you could be put into debtors' prison until your debt was paid. Or like in other cases, you could be sold into slavery.

Isaiah says that the Messiah, the great king, would release people from prison. The Messiah would pay the ransom for those held by cruel captors. He would pay the debt for those sold into slavery.

Here's what the apostle Paul says about Jesus:

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

All the world struggles with sin. We have all rebelled against the Creator. We are trapped by the power of sin - We cannot escape. Our sin places us in debt before God. If nothing is done, this debt will lead to eternal judgement.

Somewhere in the realms of heaven, there is a certificate recording all our debts before God. Jesus took that certificate and nailed it to his cross. Through the cross, Jesus forgave our sins and the debt they create.

The cross of Jesus is more powerful than any invading army. In ancient days, if a powerful army defeated a weaker army, the survivors of the defeated army were taken captive, put in chains, and paraded before the winners. That's what Paul means here by making a "public spectacle of them." The cross has overcome the power of anything that has a hold on our souls.

Finally, darkness is a symbol of ignorance and superstition. Ignorance and superstition can lead to bondage on all levels. Here's one example: Six centuries before the time of Christ, the Persian Empire tried to take over the world. At one point, they reached to the borders of Egypt. The Persians wanted the land of the Pharaohs, but the Egyptians were ferocious warriors, and the walls of major cities were high. But the Persians learned something: The Egyptians worshipped animals. One animal the particularly revered was the cat. So, the Persians simply told their frontline soldiers to carry cats with them. Many of the Egyptian soldiers refused to fight back. Within a few days, the proud Egyptians became a subject-state of Persia.

To those trapped in bondage to superstitious and ignorance, Jesus said:

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)"

The great king would proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. This proclamation of freedom was expanded with two images. The first was what Isaiah called "the year of the Lord's favor." Many scholars believe this is referring to an event that was commanded in the Law of Moses: The year of Jubilee.

In Leviticus 25, Moses instructed the people to count off 50 years. On that year, something amazing would happen. When the people of Israel entered the promised land, each of the 12 tribes got a parcel of land. They could divide the land amongst themselves as they saw fit. There was one condition: They were to remember that the land ultimately belonged to God, not them. During each block of 50 years, the owners of a plot of land could rent the land, but they were never to sell it permanently. After 50 years, every parcel of land was to return to its

original owners. That created constant cycles of renewal. If properly implemented, the Jubilee would prevent some individuals from becoming so powerful that they would own everyone else. Also, all debts were to be forgiven, and all indentured servants freed from their contracts. So, it was a time of great celebration. It was a time of renewal and freedom. It's where we get the modern word, "Jubilee".

Sadly, there is little evidence that it was ever fully practiced. The result was great riches for some, and great poverty for others. The rich became powerful, and in some cases oppressed the poor rather than have mercy on them.

That leads us to the next proclamation of the great King:

“...The day of vengeance of our God... (Isaiah 61:2)”

God would someday come to take vengeance on all those who disobeyed him. He would take vengeance on those who used their power and wealth to oppress.

Many of those who are familiar with the Bible know the story of Zacchaeus. He a tax collector who lived at the time of Jesus. A tax collector was a Jewish man who agreed to help the Romans by gathering taxes from his fellow Jews. Tax collectors would take what the Romans commanded and then add a healthy amount for themselves. Many became very wealthy. Their wealth was built through oppression of fellow Jews. But this man, Zacchaeus, had a big change of heart one day when he met Jesus Christ. Here's how his story is told:

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:8-10)

When people who cheated others met Jesus, they did more than repent. They followed their change of heart with actions meant to restore what had been taken. Zacchaeus was one of many who would escape the vengeance of God. Tragically, there would be many who didn't follow the great king. They are warned of what will happen: The vengeance of God.

E. The Great King will comfort those who mourn.

But to all those who followed Jesus the great King there would be something better. The great King tells us more about why he will come:

...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Isaiah 61:2-3)

The great King does not see the pain of his subjects from afar and simply shake his head. He doesn't just say, "Oh, that's too bad." He comes to walk with those who grieve to give them comfort. And he gives more than emotional support: He provides for those who grieve.

In ancient days, when people grieved, when their hearts were broken, they would go outside and throw ashes on themselves. The great king will sweep the ashes away and replace them with a crown of beauty. Where the ashes cause dry and cracking skin, the great King will pour on sweet, soothing oil. He will replace mourning with joy.

When people of those days were desperate, they tore their garments and sat in the dust. Instead of dirty clothes coated with dust, the great King will give clean new clothes: a garment of praise.

Let's pull this all together.

Conclusion

Today, we celebrate the Independence Day of the United State of America. We enjoy many freedoms because of the courage of people who lived centuries before us. But remember, what we have come because people decided to throw off an unworthy ruler.

Is there a worthy king? Today we learned that yes, there is a Great King who is worthy to rule our lives - His name is Jesus.

How does the great King rule?

He rules with the help of the Holy Spirit. the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

The Great King will proclaim good news to the poor. He is the king of everyone, not just the rich and powerful.

The Great King will bind up the broken hearted.

The Great King will free captives and prisoners. He will free them from the bondage of sin. He will pay their debt. He will overpower the forces that imprison them.

When the citizens of the British colonies of America decided to throw off an unworthy king, they had to raise an army. The great King, Jesus, had something better than an army: The cross. But someday, the great King, Jesus, will come with the armies of heaven. On that day, he will bring vengeance on all wrongdoers and oppressors.

The Great King will comfort those who mourn. He will provide for those who grieve. He will replace the ashes of despair with a crown of beauty. He will heal their pain like oil on dry, cracked skin. He will give those who mourn a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

The great king is Jesus. He offers to everyone the opportunity to enter his kingdom.

Will you accept his invitation? Talk to us, and we'll tell you how to enjoy all the things offered by the great king, Jesus Christ. There are some important links at the end of this article.

A final note: Many have followed the invitation of Jesus Christ. They have made Jesus their King. They know that everything we've talked about will be true someday. But they also know that not everything happens right away. For all those, we give a reminder: Give the great King time. Another king, whose name was Solomon put it this way:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Make Jesus your king. Make him your king today. Then, give him time to do all the things he's promised. If you do, you'll have something better to celebrate than all the Independence Days that were ever remembered.

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church
www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil's Site
PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:
PeaceWithGod.net