

MA THESIS ABSTRACT

The Restoration of Israel and its Messiah:
The History of Interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2

By Andrea Alvarez

The goal of this thesis is to look at the history of interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2 from the time it was originally written to the time of the New Testament authors. There are three key questions that form the basis of this thesis: (i) How did the Israelites, the Qumranites and Gospel writers understand Isa 61:1-2?; (ii) How did the translators of the Septuagint, Targum and Peshitta translate the text into their respective languages?; and (iii) Why did the Qumranites and New Testament writers use Isa 61:1-2 in the contexts that they did? In other words, what specific features or aspects of Isa 61:1-2 compelled the Qumranites and Gospel writers to rely on this text and does it shed any light on the text itself?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the thesis is divided into three sections: (i) Chapter one—this chapter forms the foundation of the following two chapters which focuses on an indepth look at the base text of Isa 61:1-2 in the Masoretic text and the subsequent versions—the Septuagint, Targum and Peshitta; (ii) Chapter two—this chapter looks at the Isaiah Scrolls from Qumran in which Isa 61:1-2 is extant, and then turns to the two more controversial scrolls, 4Q521 and 11QMelchizedek, both of which allude to Isa 61:1-2. 4Q521 and 11QMelchizedek are essential to this study because of their interpretative use of Isa 61:1-2; and (iii) Chapter three—this final chapter looks at three scriptures in the New Testament that allude to or quote Isa 61:1-2. Of particular importance is the manner in which New Testament writers have used Isa 61:1-2 in regards to the figure of Jesus. A section in the final chapter also studies any correlations of text and interpretation between 4Q521 and 11Qmelchizedek and the New Testament passages. In addition, we look at whether or not the two Qumran texts shed any light on how New Testament writers used Isa 61:1-2.

Finally, the conclusion consolidates the previously discussed chapters by providing answers to the aforementioned questions raised at the outset of this abstract.