

# Isaiah 61:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

## Analysis

The promise continues: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." Three parallel phrases emphasize comprehensive rebuilding. The Hebrew charaboth olam (old wastes), shomemoth rishonim (former desolations), and shomemoth dor vador (desolations of generation and generation) stress that what has been destroyed for extensive time will be reconstructed. This is not merely physical rebuilding but spiritual and social restoration. From a Reformed perspective, this describes the church's mission of restoration. Through gospel proclamation and faithful living, believers rebuild what sin destroyed—restored relationships with God and neighbor, renewed communities characterized by justice and mercy, reformed cultures reflecting biblical values. Christ is the master builder (Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11) who through His people reconstructs what Adam's fall demolished. Individual converts are ruins rebuilt (Ephesians 2:1-10), and corporately the church represents humanity's restoration to God's original intent.

## Historical Context

Literally, this addressed the post-exilic community called to rebuild Jerusalem's physical ruins (Nehemiah 2:17, 4:2). The destruction had lasted multiple generations (586-516 BC). Beyond physical reconstruction, it prophesied spiritual rebuilding. Jesus announced rebuilding the temple in three days (John 2:19-21),

referring to His resurrection. The church becomes God's rebuilt temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21-22). Throughout church history, believers rebuild what sin and false teaching destroy—reforming doctrine, renewing morality, restoring true worship. This continues until Christ returns to complete all restoration (Acts 3:21).

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What 'old wastes' in our culture and communities is God calling His church to rebuild?
2. How does personal regeneration participate in God's larger restorative work?
3. What hope does this promise provide for areas where sin's devastation seems irreversible?

## Interlinear Text

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וְבָנו	רָאשֵׁן יָמִים שְׁמָמָה וְתַּחַת עַזְלָם	מִקְרָב וְתַּחַת	מִקְרָב וְתַּחַת	וְתַּחַת
<b>And they shall build</b>	<b>wastes</b>	<b>the old</b>	<b>desolations</b>	<b>the former</b>
H1129	H2723	H5769	H8074	H7223
וְיִקְרָם מִזְרָחָם	שְׁמָמָה וְתַּחַת חָרְבָּם	עַרְבָּם	שְׁמָמָה וְתַּחַת חָרְבָּם	יִדּוֹרָם
<b>they shall raise up</b>	<b>and they shall repair</b>	<b>cities</b>	<b>the waste</b>	<b>desolations</b>
H6965	H2318	H5892	H2721	H8074
<b>generations</b>				<b>generations</b>
H1755				H1755

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 58:12** (Resurrection): And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

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