

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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

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

וְבָנוּ	חֲרָב וְ	עוֹלָם	שְׁמָמ וְ	רָאשֵׁי יָמִים	
And they shall build	wastes	the old	desolations	the former	
H1129	H2723	H5769	H8074	H7223	
יִקְוּ מִן־	וְיִחְדְּשׁוּ	עָרֵי	חֲרָב	שְׁמָמ וְ	דָּוָר:
they shall raise up	and they shall repair	cities	the waste	desolations	generations
H6965	H2318	H5892	H2721	H8074	H1755
דָּוָר:					
generations					
H1755					

Additional Cross-References

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.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org