

Isaiah Chapter 64

Verses 1-12

In this chapter Isaiah pleads with God to “come down” and intervene in the affairs of nations.

God’s presence is described as “melting fire” that causes the nations to “tremble.”

Yet the prophet realizes “we are all ... unclean” (*tame*, a technical term for legal impurity).

“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”:

describes the total depravity of mankind.

In this condition of sinful depravity, “there is none that calleth upon thy name.”

Therefore, Isaiah pleads with God not to judge “thy people” but to extend them mercy.

Verses 1-5

A plea for the Lord to demonstrate His power as He did in earlier days.

Verses 1-2

“Rend the heavens ... tremble at thy presence”:

Israel’s response to her own complaint (63:19), was a plea that God would burst forth to execute vengeance suddenly on His people’s foes (Psalms 18:7-9; 144:5; Hab. 3:5-6), manifesting Himself in judgment again as He did at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:18; Judges 5:5; Psalm 68:8; Heb. 12:18-20).

As God’s name is to receive glory through His redemption of Israel (63:14), it also is to have widespread recognition because of His judgment against Israel’s enemies (Psalm 99:1).

Isaiah 64:1 "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,"

This is a continuation of the prayer from the last chapter.

This is a request for more.

They are now asking for the presence of God to manifest itself upon the earth.

God did come down to man in the appearance of Jesus Christ, (God manifest in the flesh).

To "rend the heavens" would be to make an opening so that God could come down and they could go up.

They get the answer to this prayer in Jesus.

When the veil in the temple is rent from the top to the bottom, it opens the way to the Father.

Matthew 27:51 "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;"

Isaiah 64:2 "As [when] the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, [that] the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

It is an automatic thing for water to boil, when it is heated greatly.

It would be an automatic thing for their enemies to be afraid at the presence of God.

God's presence, in the past, had been a fearful thing.

God's people had feared greatly, when God spoke to them from Mount Sinai.

They had feared so greatly, that they asked Moses to speak to God for them in the future.

Isaiah 64:3 "When thou didst terrible things [which] we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence."

"Terrible things":

Another reference to God's acts at Sinai (Deut. 10:21).

This is a way of expressing things, like God separating the Red sea with the breath of His nostrils during the exodus from Egypt.

They also were aware of the earth shaking at the presence of God at another time.

It would be nothing for the presence of God to melt a mountain.

Isaiah 64:4 "For since the beginning of the world [men] have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, [what] he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

"Ear ... eye":

God's judgmental manifestations are unique.

No one has witnessed the likes of His awesome works on behalf of His own.

Paul adapts words from this verse to speak of direct revelation of God imparted to His apostles and prophets and pertaining to mysteries hidden from mankind before the birth of the church (See 1 Cor. 2:9).

This has a companion Scripture in the following.

1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

All of the idols, and the false gods, do nothing to help their people, but God takes care of His own, for He is a living God.

He is a very present help to His own.

Isaiah 64:5 "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, [those that] remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved."

"And we shall be saved":

Direct exposure to the awesome character of God's judgment brings a realization of sinners' need of salvation (Acts 16:26-30).

We see in this, that they admit they have sinned, and they repent, and ask for forgiveness.

They, also, know why God has been angry with them.

God is always ready to help those who are trying to live the righteous life, and look to Him for aid.

They must continue in their righteousness and not turn again to idols, as they had done so many times in the past.

Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

"Unclean ... filthy rags":

As (in 53:6), the prophet included himself among those confessing their utter unworthiness to be in God's presence.

Isaiah employed the imagery of menstrual cloths used during a woman's period to picture uncleanness (Lev.15:19-24).

This is true of the best behavior of unbelievers (Phil. 3:5-8).

These Israelites are very much like the heathen around them.

If they were depending on their own righteousness to save them, they would fall very short.

Their righteousness was but filthy rags.

Jesus gives all who will believe in Him, His righteousness.

The Christians have taken on the righteousness of Christ, which puts us in right standing with God.

Verses 7-9

"None that calleth":

The prophet finds no exception among a people whose iniquities had separated them from God.

Such seeking and calling on the Lord as Isaiah describes (in 55:6-7), cannot occur apart from the powerful conviction and awakening of the sinful heart by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the prayer recognizes God as a potter in control of the clay and pleads for Him to do a saving work (verse 8).

Such a work is what God promised to end His fury (54:7-8), and His memory of sin (verse 9; 43:25).

Isaiah 64:7 "And [there is] none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."

The very first step in receiving Jesus as our Savior, is to admit our sin.

This is what these Israelites have done here.

In a sense, they are saying, we deserved the punishment, because of our iniquities.

They are even afraid of Him not hearing them now, because He has turned His face from them.

This is a lack of understanding on their part.

God hears and answers prayers, especially when they, or we, are trying to repent and receive Him as Savior.

Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O LORD, thou [art] our father; we [are] the clay, and thou our potter; and we all [are] the work of thy hand."

Now, they are recognizing God as their Creator.

They are saying we are like putty in your hands.

You can make us into whatever you want us to be.

This is a cry, actually, for God to reshape them into a vessel of honor.

Isaiah 64:9 "Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we [are] all thy people."

This is a plea to God to let them start all over again.

God had rightly been angry with them over the sin in their lives.

I see in this, they are asking for a new spiritual birth in Him.

That is just what happens when we come to Christ.

We are born again not of flesh, but of His Spirit.

Isaiah 64:10 "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation."

This was the sad condition of these lands then.

I am sad to say it is pretty well the condition of our land today, from the spiritual standpoint.

Some of us are crying to the Father in the name of Jesus today for a restoration to take place in the church.

Our land is sinful.

If we are to survive, our nation must repent and return to the God of our fathers.

Isaiah 64:11 "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

“Burned up with fire ... are laid waste”:

Through prophetic revelation Isaiah uttered these words many years before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (in 586 B.C.).

Yet, he lamented over the fallen state as though it had already occurred.

God's people were in desperate straits and their prayers urgent and persistent: "How can You stand by when Your people and Your land are so barren?"

The temple in Jerusalem had been a beautiful place.

It had been a place, where they could come and meet with the presence of God.

Now, this is all in disarray.

This pretty much is the state of our churches today.

We somehow need to get God back in the church.

The church must be a beautiful place to come and commune with God.

In many churches today, God is on the outside looking in.

True holiness in our worship will bring Him back into our midst.

Our churches need to cease being a place of entertainment, and become a house of prayer and praise again.

Isaiah 64:12 "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these [things], O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

In all the desolation of them, as a person and in their temple, will God not come and help them?

This is the strongest of pleas for the help of God in their trouble.

They are asking, will God continue to afflict them, or will He forgive them, and start them again?

Isaiah Chapter 64 Questions

1. What are they asking God to do in verse 1?
2. This chapter is a continuation of what?
3. How did God manifest Himself to man soon after this?
4. What does "rend the heavens" mean?

5. When is it an automatic thing for water to boil?
6. God's presence, in the past, had been a _____ thing.
7. What did the people feel, when God spoke to them from Mount Sinai?
8. What is verse 3 expressing?
9. What Scripture in the New Testament, is companion to Isaiah 64:4?
10. What are they saying to us?
11. An idol cannot help them, but God can, because He is a _____ God.
12. What are they doing in verse 5 that might help them with God?
13. What righteousness puts them, or us, in right standing with God?
14. Why do they believe God will not hear them?
15. What is the very first step in receiving Jesus as Savior?
16. God hears and _____ prayers.
17. What are they recognizing God as in verse 8?
18. What are they crying out for God to do for them?
19. What happens when we come to Christ?
20. What was the holy city like?
21. What lesson can we take from that today?
22. What had happened to the holy and beautiful house?
23. What will bring God back into our churches today?
24. Will God help them, or continue to afflict them?