

<sup>1</sup> *Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence*— Isaiah 64:1 Isaiah continues his prayer from the last chapter. He's asking God to manifest Himself in power, as He did in their history, to turn the people back to God and save them from annihilation (Habakkuk 3:2). In Exodus 19:16-18, God came down upon Mount Sinai in a cloud. The mountain was scorched and the smoke went up like a furnace. In the video, The Search for the Real Mount Sinai, a couple of researchers snuck into Saudi Arabia to see a mountain the Arabs call Jabel al Mousa, Moses' mountain. All the tell-tale signs from the book of Exodus are there. The mountain is scorched. The remains of the pillars (Exodus 24:4) that were erected, the split rock (Isaiah 48:21), and the altar are all still there. The whole area is enclosed with barbed wire fencing and guarded. Muslims would rather we did not discover the roots of Judaism and evidence of the truth of the Bible.

The language of Isaiah's prayer reminds us of what happened on that mountain. The whole mountain trembled at the presence of God. There were trumpet blasts along with lightning and thunder. God came down and made a covenant with the people. They were so fearful that they asked Moses to speak with God for them. <sup>20</sup> *Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."* Exodus 20:20

Isaiah continues in prayer describing God's intervention on Sinai. <sup>2</sup> *as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!* Isaiah 64:2 Isaiah wants the manifest presence of God for several reasons. He wants the name of the Lord (His authority and character) to be known to God's adversaries. He wants the nations to tremble at God's presence. But the allusion is to Sinai where it was Israel that feared. That fear did not stop them from building a golden calf to worship just forty days after that encounter with God (Exodus 32:8). Later in the prayer we see that nation of Israel was just as guilty at the time of Isaiah's prayer as they were at Sinai.

We often pray what we hope for but find that God has a better plan. Isaiah was hoping to divert the coming assault by Babylon through intercessory prayer. But in reality, the adversaries of God that needed to know the name of God were the Israelites. It was through the captivity that they would come to know His name again. It was the Israelites that needed to tremble at God's presence (Proverbs 3:7).

We are watching our country sink into the abyss of immorality while mocking God and using His name as a curse, or worse yet to gain the votes of the religious. We could pray with Isaiah against ISIS, Putin, and Al Qaeda, that God would rend the heavens and come down, that they might know God's true name and tremble at His presence. I

**Commented [PW1]: Habakkuk 3:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

**Commented [PW2]: Exodus 19:16-18 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

<sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

<sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

**Commented [PW3]: Exodus 24:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 48:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out.

**Commented [PW5]: Exodus 32:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

**Commented [PW6]: Proverbs 3:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

do pray that. But perhaps we are in the same condition as the nation of Israel in that it is our own people who need the fear of God.

My heart breaks for the increasing number of children of single parents. The statistics tell us those children will have a very difficult time succeeding. Worse yet, how will they understand the love of God, the father heart of God, when they have never experienced a loving father? Many of them will follow the same path as their parent. Only the grace of God can break that cycle. What will wake us up? What can turn us from these destructive sins that grip our nation? Rend the heavens and come down that the fear of God might be before us that we might not sin (Proverbs 16:6). The answer isn't political; it is spiritual.

*<sup>3</sup> When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.* Isaiah 64:3 The Bible is full of the amazing deeds of God. Isaiah is praying, "Do it again!" The armies of the Canaanites gathered to stop the Israelites from taking the Promised Land, but God fought for Joshua (Joshua 10:10-11). King Jabin came against Barak and Deborah with an overwhelming force and superior technology, but God fought for Israel and his army was defeated (Judges 4:15). God had Gideon take just 300 men against a group of armies with so many men they could not be counted. God came down! King Jehoshaphat faced a huge army. God told him to put the singers in front of his army to praise God. The LORD ambushed the enemy and they turned on themselves. The Israelites picked up the spoils for days (2Chronicles 20:22)! Isaiah is pleading for God to do it again.

In our own lives God has done awesome things we did not look for. We never dreamed of the entry to Sedona going by our front door. Two of our sisters had some serious surgery and were up walking around without pain the next day. We project a deficit and God gives us a surplus. But greatest of all the wondrous deeds of God in His sending His only Son to take *our* sins upon the cross. Then, He gave us the grace to turn to Him and be saved. Our God is an awesome God - sing it!

*<sup>4</sup> From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.* Isaiah 64:4 O Lord, help us to wait on You, not to run ahead, or lag behind, but to act when You lead. There is no God like our God. The so called God of Islam is capricious. No matter how you live or how you seek him, he can arbitrarily send you to heaven or hell. Buddhism and Hinduism have no eternal God. The stories of the gods of Hinduism are often more vile than men (Isaiah 37:19). Our God is the Creator of all. He gave you the freedom to choose or reject Him. He loves you so much that while you were rebelling against Him, He died for you (Romans 5:8). He paid your just penalty to reconcile His justice with His love and mercy. He uses the weak and loves the powerless. His most mentioned attribute we

**Commented [PW7]: Proverbs 16:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.

**Commented [PW8]: Joshua 10:10-11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

<sup>11</sup> And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

**Commented [PW9]:**

**Commented [PW10R9]: Judges 4:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot.

**Commented [PW11]: 2 Chronicles 20:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.

**Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 37:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed.

**Commented [PW13]: Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

saw last week, steadfast love (Isaiah 63:7). You can dream a lifetime and not come up with a better God. He is a God who answers prayers, that is, if they are for our good, and His will is always for our good. He longs to be with us forever. He invites us to participate with Him in the earth so He can justly reward us in heaven.

What does it mean to wait on Him? It means to trust that He will answer your prayer in His time. It means to be still and let Him speak to your heart. It is to read His Word and let Him speak to you through it. It means to love and serve Him with all your heart. He acts for those who wait for Him!

*<sup>5</sup> You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?* Isaiah 64:5 Who are these joyful workers of righteousness? They are those who are led by the Spirit of God to participate in God's work in the world (Ephesians 2:10). It may be sharing the gospel with a hungry heart caught in the bondage of sin. It may be feeding a homeless man and telling him of the love of Jesus. It might be serving in your local church. It is joining God in what He is doing in the earth, being His instrument to serve others like Jesus served us (Mark 10:45). The joy we experience is a fruit of the Spirit often most realized in the blessing of service.

Some people have the idea that living for Jesus means sad sacrifices and doing things you don't want to do. **There is nothing more joyful than surrendering yourself to the will of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. That is because you come to realize God loves you and wants to bless you in the process.** Sometimes it costs more than you want to pay, but then you find God blesses you in ways that more than make up for any loss. Those who remember God in His ways are those who strive by the power of the Spirit to act in accord with the nature of God. Moses once prayed that God would show Him His ways so that he could know God and be in His favor (Exodus 33:13). If God is patient, loving, and compassionate, then we should be as well. That is, if you want to know Him and be in favor with Him. If He is just and honest, then that is what we should be as well. Those are the people He meets, whose prayers He hears.

The last half of verse 5 turned to confession. Isaiah is acknowledging that this does not describe the Israel of his day. Instead of righteousness, they sinned. They had been caught up in sin for a long time. He asks if there is any hope for their salvation. *<sup>6</sup> We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* Isaiah 64:6 This verse is often used to declare the sinfulness of mankind. While man is without question sinful, the subject is not man in general but Israel at that particular time just before the captivity. The people were ritually unclean, meaning they were not presentable to God. They had no business coming into the temple. Their so called

**Commented [PW14]: Isaiah 63:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

**Commented [PW15]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Commented [PW16]: Mark 10:45 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Commented [PW17]: Exodus 33:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

righteousness was like a menstrual rag to God. That was considered something that made a person unclean and therefore unable to be with others for seven days (Leviticus 15:19). They still brought offerings, but God did not accept them, for the worshiper was also worshiping idols. The offerings in the temple were efforts to manipulate the God of Israel. "Here, I give you what you want, so now give me my request!" Isaiah is confessing the people's actions were abhorrent to God.

**Commented [PW18]: Leviticus 15:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> "When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.

Sin has repercussions. Isaiah says they were fading like a leaf. They watched the glory of Israel fade day by day, as the natural consequences of their sins. Drying out like a leaf, they were about to be blown away (Psalm 90:5-6).

**Commented [PW19]: Psalm 90:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning:

<sup>6</sup> in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

*<sup>7</sup> There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.* Isaiah 64:7 Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32), but no one called. No one rouses themselves to take hold of the LORD (Isaiah 43:22; 56:4). How do we take hold of the LORD? We do so in earnest, fervent prayer. No one was stirring themselves to get serious with God in prayer. Are we? Are we taking the time with God to cry out to Him for our nation with all our heart? Are we asking God to show us our own sins and not letting go until He speaks to us?

**Commented [PW20]: Joel 2:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

**Commented [PW21]: Isaiah 43:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> "Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel!

Isaiah knew the people weren't taking hold of God because he was watching the decline of the nation. He saw that as God hiding His face from them. And what a description he gives for the consequences of sin, "melt in the hand of our iniquities." I was sitting in the surgery waiting room and couldn't help but overhear the discussions around me. Lust, greed, and selfishness seemed to be the dominant themes from the young adults. They couldn't even see they were melting in the hand of their iniquities. God help us rouse ourselves to lay hold of God in prayer for the younger generations of our nation.

**Commented [PW22]: Isaiah 56:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,

*<sup>8</sup> But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.* Isaiah 64:8 Isaiah's prayer now turns to a plea for mercy. He is reminding himself and God of the covenant. God had promised to be a Father to the nation (Isaiah 63:16). But remember, fathers exercise discipline (Hebrews 12:7). We are the clay and God is our potter. God molds us. We are the work of His hands. But when the clay on the wheel becomes out of round, unstable, the potter has to remove it from the wheel, pound it into one lump, beat all the air bubbles out of it, slap it on the wheel and start spinning it again. The other options is to discard that clay. The readers of the prayer would have known that.

**Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 63:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

**Commented [PW24]: Hebrews 12:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

*<sup>9</sup> Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.* Isaiah 64:9 Isaiah is beginning the portion of this prayer in

the prophetic perfect tense. While Babylon has not yet come, Isaiah can see what will happen as if it had already taken place. Remember, he has lived under a good king and some very bad ones. He watched his nation decline. He longs for the days when the nation was under the favor of God. But now the clay has rebelled against the Potter. No one seeks God. Idolatry is rampant. He knows what God is about to do in His anger and tries to intercede. "Remember not iniquity forever! Look, look! We are all your people."

Isaiah is asking for God to remember the covenants and reshape them. He knows when God looks, He sees with eyes of mercy. However, the only solution was captivity. Isaiah had already predicted it as a sure thing (Isaiah 5:13). We should note however that the traditional view is that captivity did not take place for another one hundred years. His intercession may have held off the judgment of God, but it wouldn't hold it off forever.

*<sup>10</sup> Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.* Isaiah 64:10 Here is what Isaiah prophetically sees. The cities are desolate. Everyone is taken captive to live as slaves, or at best as subjects of a foreign power. The hill where God's house was is turned into a wilderness (Isaiah 1:7). Jerusalem, where throngs once came for the holy feasts, is desolate. How heart breaking it must have been. But then I wonder about the great cathedrals of Europe. They were once full of worshipers of Jesus. Did they see the same kind of decline Isaiah saw? Did they foresee these days when those great cathedrals are merely wonders of architecture. Some have even been turned into mosques.

*<sup>11</sup> Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins.* Isaiah 64:11 Isaiah had witnessed wonderful worship in the temple, the lights at the Feast of Tabernacles, the throngs that sacrificed the paschal lambs at Passover and songs of the Levite choir. Now in a vision he sees the glorious temple stripped of its glory, burned, vacant! It would become simply a heap of ruins.

How could that be? How could the God who had done such wonderful deeds for His people, who had come down and intervened for them, putting fear in their enemies and making His name known in the earth, how could He let it become a pile of ruins?

**No people, denomination, or movement will last without a living relationship with our Creator.** Every one will devolve into methods and routines if each generation does not seek God with their whole heart. Jesus warned us in the parable of the sower that the weeds that choke the plant and keep it from becoming fruitful are the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches (Matthew 13:22). If we do not disciple the next generation, the same will happen here. Are you sharing with your children and grandchildren the importance of a living relationship with Jesus? Does your life demonstrate that joyful life of righteousness, walking in His ways, a person God meets?

**Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 5:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

**Commented [PW26]: Isaiah 1:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

**Commented [PW27]: Matthew 13:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

*12 Will you restrain yourself at these things, O LORD? Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?* Isaiah 64:12 "God, is this really unavoidable," the prophet asks? Will You sit back and watch this happen and not act. Will you allow such a devastation to occur? Isaiah has roused himself to lay hold of God, but the people will not turn from their iniquity. That day of desolation would come, but desolation was not the end. The Potter was remolding His clay through captivity. He was preparing a people for the coming of Messiah, the final solution to sin. He was preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to descend at Pentecost so that we might be changed (Luke 24:49; Titus 3:5).

Have you allowed Him to change you? We have this treasure in earthen vessels of clay. What Israel lacked to persevere in the faith, we have available to us. The Holy Spirit has been poured out (Acts 2:38). If you lay hold of Him and let Him lay hold of you, your fruit will remain (John 15:16). There will be no need for those cycles in your life. There is victory in Christ. God will turn His face toward you, for you will live in the victory we have through the blood of Jesus.

#### Questions

- 1 What was Isaiah asking God to do? Why?
- 2 What amazing things has God done?
- 3 What's so special about our God?
- 4 What is "waiting on God"?
- 5 Who does God meet?
- 6 Why do we need to know the ways of God?
- 7 Does verse 7 speak to you? How?
- 8 What is the picture in the potter and clay?
- 9 Why does Isaiah ask God to look on them?
- 10 What does Isaiah see coming? What does He ask?

#### Commented [PW28]: Luke 24:49 (ESV)

<sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

#### Commented [PW29]: Titus 3:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

#### Commented [PW30]: Acts 2:38 (ESV)

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### Commented [PW31]: John 15:16 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.