

The Remnant Prays

Isaiah 64:1-12

By Scott Huckaby

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Isaiah 64:1-7 – Remembering God’s works (NIV)

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ²As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! ³For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. ⁴Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. ⁵You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? ⁶All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. ⁷No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins.

v1 – What plea does the remnant make?

Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down: The prayer of the remnant continues from Isaiah chapter 63 here, the plea is for God to intervene from heaven.

- The praying one here is probably Isaiah praying on behalf of his people Israel.

What does asking the Lord to come down bring to mind?

This is reminiscent of:

1 Corinthians 16:22 – *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!*

Some Bible translation leave the original Aramaic phrase for “Come, Lord” as *Maranatha* !

- When I consider the disturbing trends in the news, it only reminds me how sorely this word needs Jesus to return

When did the mountains shake at the Lord’s presence?

The praying one also remembers how the LORD shook Mount Sinai when Israel camped there on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus 19:17-18).

- Earlier in this prayer (Isaiah 63:11-13), the praying one remembered God’s great work for Israel in the days of the Exodus.

v2 – What else should shake at the presence of the Lord?

God’s adversaries; the praying one wants even those who do not know the Lord to know Him.

- The reference to fire here is an acknowledgement that God’s judgment is both destructive and beneficial.

How has the world been shaken figuratively if not physically?

The World Wars shook the world. The terrorist attack on 9/11/2001 shook both this nation and the world. The COVID pandemic shook the world. Do you notice a trend here? World shaking events are increasing in frequency and intensity.

When will God’s adversaries shake at His presence?

All the shakings of our world are but foreshadows of the final shaking of the world which God will do...

Haggai 2:6-7 – *For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts.*

This shaking that Haggai talks about refers to God pouring out His righteous wrath on this world which has been corrupted by sin. There is nothing in this world that will not be shaken. But those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, God’s provision for salvation, cannot be shaken...

Hebrews 12:28-29 – *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.*

v3 – When did the mountain shake at the presence of the Lord?

At Mount Sinai...

Exodus 19:18 – *Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.*

v4 – How is it that the Creator-God is the only deity people have seen?

Idols do nothing and do not speak. Only God has spoken through the creation and His representatives...

Hebrews 1:1-2 – *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*

How does God act for the one who waits for Him?

There is a special blessing associated with waiting for the Lord. We miss out on God's blessings when we get ahead of Him in working on a problem ourselves when there is no clear action on our part needed.

v5 – Who does God help?

Those who “*rejoices and does righteousness*” and remembers God's ways. This implies having a relationship with Him. You have to know Him in order to do righteousness and act in His ways.

- The more we can be like Christ the more the Lord will act on our behalf.

What is the greatest need for everyone?

Salvation from the consequences of our sins. This is clear from the Law of Moses, and even before that, the Law God has written on the hearts of everyone...

Romans 2:14-15 – *for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)*

v6 – What does it mean to be like an unclean thing?

Our sin makes us unacceptable and unworthy before God. Under the Jewish law an unclean person could not go up to the house of the Lord to offer a sacrifice. The unclean person had to be ritually cleansed before he would be acceptable before God.

How are we made acceptable before God?

By having a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ...

1 John 1:7 – *if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

How is it our righteousnesses are like filthy rags?

If we are unclean before God, even the good we try to do is unacceptable and unclean before Him. God knows why we do what we do and if our motivation is not out of gratitude for what He has done for us, it is of no eternal value to ourselves.

- Filthy rags is ‘a garment of menstruation’; bodily discharges were considered a defilement because they were the ‘outflow’ of a sinful, fallen human nature.

What does it mean, we all fade as a leaf?

Our sinful condition has made us weak and unstable, with no lasting power before God. If we remain in our unclean state before God when we die, we will be separated from Him.

How do our iniquities take us away like the wind?

Our sins carry us further from God the longer we persist in our unclean condition before Him.

v7 – Why did no one call on the Lord?

Those in an unclean condition before the Lord didn't even think to call on Him.

- And those who are caught up in the cares of the world in the midst of the consequences of their sin didn't think of calling on the Lord either.

What are the consequences for those who do not call on the Lord?

You have hidden Your face from us: This is the first of two reactions God makes to the sinful condition of man. First, fellowship is broken, or at the very least, damaged. Second, the LORD has consumed us because of our sin.

- Our sinful condition has invited, even demanded, the righteous judgment of God.

Isaiah 64:8-12 – A plea for the mercy (NIV)

⁸ Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people. ¹⁰ Your sacred cities have become a wasteland; even Zion is a wasteland, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹ Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins. ¹² After all this, Lord, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

v8 – What does the praying one invoke here in his appeal to the Lord?

But now, O LORD, You are our Father: The praying one is desperate; he needs the mercy of God because the justice of God condemns him. In his appeal for mercy, he first reminds God, “*You are our Father. Please, LORD, have mercy on us as a loving Father.*”

Why does the praying one admit we are like clay in the hands of God, the Potter?

The praying one appeals for God’s mercy because of God’s sovereign power over each life. It is like saying, “*LORD we are like clay in Your hands. Deal gently with us, and mold us according to Your mercy.*”

A father is always a father; he can never truly disown his children. A potter cannot disown the pot; it is only there because he made it. This is Isaiah’s way of saying, “*You’re stuck with us LORD!*”

v9 – What case does the praying one make for God not to continue to be angry with them?

The praying one asks for mercy on account of “time served.” It is as if he prays, “*LORD, You had a right to be furious with us for a time. You had a right to remember our iniquity for a while. But please, LORD, do not remember iniquity forever.*”

Indeed, please look — we all are Your people: The praying one makes his final appeal for mercy on the simple grounds that “*LORD, we all are Your people. We are sinners, and deserve Your judgment, but we are still Your people. In a sense, LORD, You are stuck with us.*”

v10-11 – What does the praying one see as the consequence of Judah’s inequity?

Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation: In his appeal for mercy, the praying one asks God to look closely at the terrible condition of His holy cities. As he draws attention to our holy and beautiful temple, he notes that it is burned up with fire. It is an eloquent and powerful way of pleading with God to act.

v12 – How does the praying one conclude his prayer?

The praying one concludes the prayer with a great question... The praying one asks, “*LORD, You know very well our sinful condition. Please show mercy! Will you always give us what we deserve?*”

What is the impossible problem this prayer reveals?

- Because of our sin (Isaiah 64:5b-7), we are in a desperate state and need the LORD’s salvation.
- But the LORD only answers the prayers of a righteous man (Isaiah 64:4-5a) — and a righteous man wouldn’t be in the place we are!

What is the answer to that dilemma?

Ultimately, the answer is found in the New Covenant, where a righteous Man stands in our place and prays for us. This is why Jesus invited us to pray in His name (John 14:13-14). When we pray in Jesus’ name, He is the righteous Man who appeals to God for us.

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- This world sorely needs the return of Jesus. Maranatha!
- God shakes the world so that we may know Him; you don’t want to be around for the ultimate shaking.
- Self-righteousness is abhorrent to God; instead appropriate the righteousness of Christ
- Never forget, God is the Potter, we are the clay.