

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 138
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Adoration of the Magi by Pieter Aertsen cir 1560

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

One-Hundred-Thirty-Eight

Isaiah's Concern for His People Part II

November 28, 2021

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Isaiah 64:1–12

¹Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence, ²as when fire kindleth the brushwood, and the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! ³When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains quaked at thy presence. ⁴For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, who worketh for him that waiteth for him. ⁵Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned: in them have we been of long time; and shall we be saved? ⁶For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷And 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 by means of our iniquities.

⁸But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. ⁹Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. ¹⁰Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste. ¹²Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore (ASV, 1901)?

ISAIAH PLEADS FOR THE LORD TO RETURN

Isaiah 64:1

¹Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence (ASV, 1901).

Having described at length in the previous chapter the wonders performed for Israel throughout its history, Isaiah concludes with a heartrending prayer that God would once again have mercy on His people, despite their low spiritual state. Isaiah begins with a poetic description of God's awesome power. The passage begins with the pleading for the Lord to *come down* and let the nations realize His presence. He implores the Lord to assert His power over the nations. The full prophetic scope of this prayer looks forward in time which embraces the dark time of the Tribulation. This will be when Israel's enemies (and the Lord's Psalm 2:1-3) attack them and they cry out pleading for help by the Lord. Isaiah pleads for divine help. The remnant's cry was that The Lord would rend (tear

open) the heavens, which had seemed as solidly closed as brass, and come down to deliver them (Exodus 19:18; Psalms 18:9; 144:5; Micah 1:3-4; 3:13). That is exactly what Christ will do at His glorious second advent. This will occur in answer to this prayer (Matthew 23:39), which is the vision in response to their prayer begging Him to make His departure from Heaven with the saints and angels, ready to smash all the Gentile world powers, headed up by the Antichrist (Daniel 2:34-35).

THE BRILLIANCE & HOTNESS OF THE LORD'S SHEKINAH GLORY

Isaiah 64:2-3

*²as when fire kindleth the brushwood, and the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!
³When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains quaked at thy presence (ASV, 1901*

The imagery here is, that the presence of God would cause the mountains to melt, as a fire consumes light and dry brush or stubble. The comparison is a very vivid one, as it depicts the presence of God that would set on fire the mountains, and cause them to flow down as molten rock of a volcano flowing from intense heat. Continuing the imagery of fire, it depicts the fire's heat which raises great bubbles in water when it boils. But the fire, with which God consumes His enemies, in a figurative sense, is represented as most vehement and noisy. Consider dry sticks and branches of trees, which being kindled, *the fire causeth the waters to boil*; as the fire, under the pot, causes the waters to boil in it. The prophet is seemingly making an allusion as to the fire that burnt on Mount Sinai, when the Lord descended on it, and the cloud which flowed with water, caused the smoke: *to make thy name known to thine adversaries*; His terrible name, in the destruction of them; His power and His glory: *that the nations may tremble at thy presence*; as Sinai trembled when the Lord was on it. This continues to prophetically look forward in time when Christ appears the second time and the seven vials of his wrath will be poured out, and the Lord's people will be converted, and the Jews particularly at the national regeneration of Israel.

These two references to fire are good comparisons that help us to understand the brilliance and hotness of the fire that is associated with the appearance of God's Shekinah Glory (Isaiah 60:1-3; Exodus 3:2; 19:18; Ezekiel 1:4, 27). In the past when God caused the brilliant fire of His glorious presence to be seen, He did this for a purpose. This happened "*to make thy name known to thine adversaries*" so that the nations would tremble because of God's presence. This Psalm of Asaph characterizes this text as well.

Psalm 79:1-13

¹O God, the nations are come into thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; They have laid Jerusalem in heaps. ²The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be food unto the birds of the heavens, The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. ³Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; And there was none to bury them. ⁴We are become a reproach to our neighbors, A scoffing and derision to them that are round about us. ⁵How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire? ⁶Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that

know thee not, And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy name. ⁷For they have devoured Jacob, And laid waste his habitation. ⁸Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers: Let thy tender mercies speedily meet us; For we are brought very low. ⁹Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins, for thy name's sake. ¹⁰Wherefore should the nations say, Where is their God? Let the avenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed Be known among the nations in our sight. ¹¹Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee: According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to death; ¹²And render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. ¹³So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture Will give thee thanks for ever: We will show forth thy praise to all generations (ASV, 1901).

This Psalm is clearly in the context of the Faithful Remnant's pleading for the Messiah to return and save them from the Antichrist's invading Gentile armies. After recalling the events of the fall of Jerusalem, with the city in ruins, the Abomination of Desolation of the Temple, and the death of two-thirds of the entire world's Jews, they will plead for God to come down, to rescue them and to pour out His wrath on the invading Gentile nations. They will plead for the forgiveness of the sins of their forefathers (as required by Leviticus 26:40) who led the nation to reject the Lord Jesus, their Messiah, and for the forgiveness of their own sins. On the basis of what these Gentile nations have done to Israel, they will ask God to avenge them as He had promised and to save them from their enemies. Then they will give thanks and sing the praise of God forever.

THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT THE LORD

Isaiah 64:4–5

⁴For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, who worketh for him that waiteth for him. ⁵Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned: in them have we been of long time; and shall we be saved (ASV, 1901)?

Isaiah writes that from innumerable days in the past no one in any other nation has ever heard of a God like Israel's God, and no eye has ever seen anything comparable to the God of Israel. The apostle Paul quotes verse 4 in 1 Corinthians 2, and adds, '*Neither hath it entered into the heart of man.*' No one has ever considered a God who interposes so marvelously for those who trust Him, and with a confidence that produces a unique peace from a person's salvation experience. This is what people believe from their experiences of how God interacted with the nation Israel. He proclaims this on the basis of real-life experiences in which God said or did something that was utterly miraculous. He is defining what is real and true based on human observation of experiences that happened to them. Because God came down in a cloud and a pillar of fire on top of Mount Sinai and spoke with an audible voice (Deuteronomy 5:22–27), there is absolute proof from experience that He exists, is a fearful and is terrifyingly almighty God, is powerful enough to shake Mount Sinai, wants to have a covenant relationship with His people, and can speak and communicate to mankind. In all these things God is unique. Other religions may claim that their gods spoke and acted powerfully in their ancient myths. But, can anyone can attest to actually

seeing them say or do anything in their lifetime? The answer is no. Finally, when Moses came and told the people of Israel that God planned to deliver them, the Israelites believed what God said (Exodus 4:29–31).

In a similar manner, Jericho was not conquered by strategy of general Joshua and Israel's elite army. They had to wait and believe that God would defeat the city in His own way, so they marched around it day after day. But, finally, after six days of marching and waiting, God did destroy the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6). These and hundreds of other experiences taught them that if they were obedient, trusted God, and waited for His timing, he would eventually reveal Himself and act on their behalf.

God “meets” with gracious welcome and ready aid whoever joyfully engages in righteousness and serving Him, and those who “*remember thee in thy ways.*” But unfortunately, this is not the present relationship between God and Israel. God is “angry” with them because they must, therefore, “have sinned;” and so they proceed to confess their sin.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ANATHEMA TO GOD

Isaiah 64:6–7

⁶For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷And 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 by means of our iniquities (ASV, 1901)

The people of the remnant confess the following things:

1. Uncleanness. For we are unclean, legally unclean as a leper, and morally and spiritually unclean, which is true of all Israel now cut off from all God's blessings by unbelief and temporally set aside in her national election (Romans 11:25–27). It will also be true of the people of the latter-day remnant until they turn in faith to the Messiah (Isaiah 53:1-10; Zechariah 12:10–13:1).
2. They confess their self-righteousness. All their righteousnesses which is their righteous deeds like their prayers and praises were just expressions of their self-righteousness and the expression of their unregenerate state as rejected God's righteousness and busily going about establishing their own version of righteousness. They created God in their own image and set about to think that what they did was sufficient. The KJV translates the *polluted garment* as filthy rags which literally mean “a cloth of removal,” that is, a “menstruous rag” (Leviticus 15:33; 20:18 Lamentation 1:17). That is how they will view even their best works, apart from faith in the sacrifice of Christ, when they will celebrate their national regeneration (Leviticus 16:30; 23:27) just before the Kingdom Age begins.
3. They confess their frailty and mortality. They confess that their sins have caused their chastening and their periods of exile from their homeland. And our iniquities *like the wind, take us away*, and scattered us to the ends of the earth.

4. They confess their spiritual lethargy and prayerlessness. *And there is none that calleth upon thy name* (Isaiah 59:4; Ezekiel 22:30), *That stirreth up* (arouses) *himself to take hold of thee (God)* and His promises in faith and effectual intercession (Isaiah 27:5).
5. They confess their spiritual bankruptcy and their being cut off from fellowship with God *for thou hast hid thy face from us* (Deuteronomy 31:18; Isaiah 1:15; 54:8).
6. They confess the consequences of their sins. *And hast consumed us by means of our iniquities.* So, thoroughgoing confession and repentance of the remnant open the way for their cleansing and regeneration (Zechariah 12:10—13:1) and the marvelous Holy Spirit falling upon them, initiating the Messianic Kingdom (Joel 2:28-29), of which Pentecost was a foreshadowing illustration (Acts 2:17-21), not a fulfillment. The full and sincere confession is also the basis of God's hearing and answering the remnant's prayer.

THEIR GENUINE RELATIONSHIP TO GOD IS REALIZED

Isaiah 64:8

⁸But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand (ASV, 1901).

Instead of relying upon any supposed merits of their own, they appeal to their very dependence upon God as a reason why he should have mercy on them. *We are the clay, and thou our potter;* respecting their original formation out of the dust of the earth, and so expressing humility in themselves, and yet ascribing greatness to God, who had formed them, as the potter out of the clay forms vessels for His use. *And we all are the work of thy hand;* and therefore, regard us, and do not destroy us. Just as men don't usually destroy their own works, please do not destroy us. Clay, refers to what is lowly, and God as potter has sovereign choice over the clay. From this clay He has molded His people, who now confess that He is their Father. Even though God has molded the people to Himself through His punishment for their sins, nevertheless they address Him as their Father. He is not a Father that finds satisfaction in their sinful condition, but in spite of that condition He will show mercy. The grace and mercy shown to mankind is when Christ died for us yet in our sinful condition.

Romans 5:8

⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (KJV).

The actual prayer they will speak at the time of their national regeneration when they realize that Jesus is their Savior and Messiah.

Isaiah 53:1–12

¹Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? ²For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. ³He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? ⁹And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth (ASV, 1901).

¹⁰Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (ASV, 1901)

GIVE US FORGIVENESS AND NOT ANGER

Isaiah 64:9

⁹Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people (ASV, 1901).

Isaiah pleads with God saying, “May Your rage at our sins not become more intense than it already is, and may it not endure forever.” At the time of the Babylonian captivity God was very sore (Lamentations 5:22). His anger was hot against the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 74:1). But they had suffered, they had been afflicted many years. Might He not now relent, and remit somewhat from His fierce anger? God had already made a promise by the mouth of Isaiah, “*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins*” (Isaiah 43:25). The Babylonian captives lay hold, as it were, on this promise, and plead that their “iniquity” may be not only forgiven, but forgotten (Jeremiah 31:34). *We are all thy people*, the people whom Thou hast chosen to Thyself, and over whom Thou hast watched for so many centuries. Surely this consideration, if no other, will cause Thee to forego Thy wrath and forgive our iniquity.

THE PLEA TO GOD FOR HIS PEACE ON THEM

Isaiah 64:10–12

¹⁰Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste. ¹²Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore (ASV, 1901)?

This is a second reason why God should not be angry forever. There is a contrast between describing the ownership of the ruins. The text starts describing the land as the Lords. *The cities of THY holiness (THY holy cities)*. Which quickly changes to the people's possession; and *the house of OUR holiness (OUR holy house)*. God is thus reminded that His holy cities are *a desolation*, so it is incumbent upon Him to reclaim them. These cities are not different parts of Jerusalem, but all the cities of Judah the Southern Kingdom, which belong to God's royal and holy kingdom. Zion and Jerusalem are singled out, for Jerusalem was the chief of all the holy cities.

From cities in Judah the southern kingdom to Jerusalem to the Temple, the prayer has step by step approached the essence of the tragic condition of Jerusalem. The people speak of the Temple with pride. Since the Temple *has become a burning of fire*, i.e., has been burned by fire, God's people cannot worship Him in His holy house as their fathers had done. In fact, all the objects of their desire had *become a desolation*. The reference is to the historical burning of the Temple and a prophecy of the future Tribulation Temple. *These things* refers to the conditions just described, the holy cities and the Temple in ruins. They ask "*wilt Thou hold thy peace* so as to restrain Thyself from showing mercy?" Keeping silence implies a refusal to hear the prayers of the people. God had throughout manifested goodness and love toward Israel. Will His present afflictions therefore continue? (Isaiah 49:15, 16; Exodus 34:6; Jeremiah 31:20). The questions are of course to be answered with a decisive negative, but the answer is not given in this verse. At the same time it is important to realize that God's people must often due to their sins, be brought to the place of such heartfelt prayer before He will hear them, for when they pray so fervently as this they truly have a sense of their sin and misery. The New Testament gives us this same teaching.

James 5:16b

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (KJV).

Next message: THE JEW'S PLEA FOR JESUS TO RETURN

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