

## EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #92

Isaiah 63:7-19

Last year when I went to the funeral of Mr. Miles, I drove up from Preston, Idaho to Pocatello where we used to live. In fact, Sherry and Hollie Fritts and Deb Barber have just returned from a vacation in that part of the United States.

Naturally I was interested in driving by our old homes. We lived in three different places in the eight years in Pocatello. The last place we lived was to us a very palatial home in quite a prestigious neighborhood, Buckskin Valley. It is an amazing story of God's sovereignty as to how we even got it. Anyway, when I drove by that home I could not believe my eyes. It was pathetic. The yard was grown up into weeds and the house looked like it belonged in a slum.

I was shocked, so I drove to the top of the mountain to a friend of mine and asked him what happened to our gorgeous home. He said the first family that bought it from us left and the second family, who bought it from them, lost it. That home was a complete disaster. It had no beauty. Both the home and beautiful barn looked like it had been totally abandoned.

That is exactly the way God sees Israel right now. He sees a nation that at one time reflected His beautiful glory, but not anymore. Truth is, when you look at Israel today, it is almost as if she has been completely abandoned by God. Nothing about her looks nice to God or to the world. She has no glamour or beauty and in God's view right now she is a disaster.

Isaiah knew it and that is exactly what this passage is all about. What Isaiah actually does in these next couple of chapters is to appeal to God to ask that He would bless all Israel again. God basically says, "No, not just yet." God says I will not bless Israel again for a long, long time. The message of this text is clear:

**JUST BECAUSE GOD DID SOME WONDERFUL THINGS FOR ALL ISRAEL IN THE PAST DOES NOT MEAN HE WILL KEEP HER IMMUNE FROM HORRIFIC THINGS IN THE FUTURE.**

It is possible to go bankrupt spiritually and that is exactly what has happened to Israel. Contextually what prompted Isaiah to think in these terms was the realization that Jesus Christ is coming to pour out the wrath of God (Isaiah 63:1-6). Isaiah thought in view of that we better get right with God because we sure aren't now. Isaiah prophetically reveals the state of Israel just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. **It is true that God will always preserve a remnant from Israel, but not every Israelite is destined for these blessings.**

You and I can learn an important principle from this ourselves. Just because we have seen God do some wonderful things for us in the past does not mean He will keep doing those things in the present or in the future. Truth is, we can rebel against His Spirit like Israel did and actually make God angry to the point that He stops blessing us. If He did this to an entire nation, He is certainly capable of doing this to an individual.

As we come to this part of the text of Isaiah, we may analyze it from two dimensions. Actually there are three dimensions but we are only going to look at two today. The three are: look back (63:7-14); look down (63:15-19); and come down (64:1ff). Dr. Warren Wiersbe said this prayer in Isaiah 63-64 is one of “the greatest revival prayers found in Scripture” (*Be Comforted*, p. 160).

**DIRECTION DIMENSION #1** – Isaiah asks God to look back . **63:7-14**

Here is an amazing journey down memory lane in the history of Israel. He starts by reminding God of His lovingkindness and by offering Him praise. There are **three past memories** that Isaiah presents in this text:

**(Past Memory #1)** - He praises God for wonderful things God did in the past for Israel. **63:7-9**

God is the same yesterday, today and forever, so these praise items are not only true pertaining to Israel but to us as well.

**Praise Item #1** - He praises God for His lovingkindness . **63:7a**

This word shows up twice in this verse. The Hebrew word (*hesed*) speaks of the benevolent mercies and pity that God has on those who are helpless (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 293-294). It is certainly a good thing for us to think about all of the times that God has extended His mercies to us when we were helpless.

**Praise Item #2** - He praises God for all God has granted to Israel. **63:7b**

That word “grant” is one that refers to all of the things God has given to His people (*Ibid.*, p. 175).

**Praise Item #3** - He praises God for His great goodness to Israel. **63:7c**

That word “goodness” refer to the beautiful and positive things that God has done that cause His people to be cheerful (*Ibid.*, p. 319).

**Praise Item #4** - He praises God for His compassions which He showed to Israel. **63:7d**

This refers to the merciful things that God does because He has the tenderest affection for His people. This refers to gracious things God does for those because He has a soft spot in His heart (*Ibid.*, p. 765).

**Praise Item #5** - He praises God for His multitude of lovingkindnesses to Israel. **63:7e**

This is the same word and the emphasis here is on the multitude of mercies God has displayed to us when we were helpless.

**Praise Item #6** - He praises God because He declared Israel was His people. **63:8a**

These were His true sons who would not deal falsely. There was a time when God approved of the nation Israel because she would not live a lie. However, Israel has rejected Jesus as the Christ and as the Messiah and she lives a constant lie before God (I John 2:22).

**Praise Item #7** - He praises God because He became the Savior of Israel. **63:8b-9**

When Israel was afflicted, God was afflicted. He sent His angel, the Angel of the LORD, to save them time and time again. He loved Israel. He showed mercy to Israel. He redeemed Israel. That word “redeemed” means God bought that nation out of slavery. He lifted this nation up and He carried this nation.

One of the real advantages of a believer being in adversity is that he gets to see God work.

W. E. Vine said that these praise items should flow from the lips of every believer, not only for the heavenly blessings we have enjoyed but also for the earthly blessings (*Isaiah*, p. 207).

**(Past Memory #2)** - He reminds God of the bad things Israel did in the past to God. **63:10**

It is a shame that Israel as a nation today does not think like Isaiah did. He faced up to the fact that Israel had not been faithful to God. There were two bad things Israel did that caused God to turn against Israel and actually become her enemy instead of her ally:

**Bad Action #1** - Israel rebelled against God. **63:10a**

Now the Hebrew word “rebel” is not the word (*pasa*) that refers to revolting or rebelling against a specific covenant stipulation, but rather (*marah*) it means that Israel had a contentious and rebellious spirit against God. God had provided a sacrificial system that could take care of specific transgressions against God’s Word, but Israel was always in contention and in rebellion against God. After God had done so much for Israel, she rebelled against Him. Her whole attitude was one of rebellion.

**Bad Action #2** - Israel grieved God’s Holy Spirit. **63:10a**

Here is the only place in the O.T. where this statement is made. Paul warned us from doing the same thing in the N.T. (Ephesians 4:30). J. Vernon McGee said that he thought the Holy Spirit gets rather tired of us at times, but thank God He is patient with us.

No matter how much we have seen God do in our lifetime and no matter how many blessings we have received from the hand of God, do not be deceived; it is possible for us to rebel against God and grieve His precious Holy Spirit to the point where God says, “I am fed up with you.”

**(Past Memory #3)** - He reminds God of the repentance of Israel in the past before God.  
**63:11-14**

At various times in Israel's history when she would find herself at odds with God, she would remember past times, specifically what God did back in the days of Moses. The Exodus was one of the shining moments for Israel in her history. Frankly, she needs to remember back to that time and reminisce and think about all the things God did in the past.

**Mosaic Thought #1** - God delivered Israel out of the Red Sea. **63:11b**

**Mosaic Thought #2** - God put His Holy Spirit in Israel's midst. **63:11c**

**Mosaic Thought #3** - God worked with His special man Moses to make a glorious name for Himself. **63:12**

**Mosaic Thought #4** - God led them through the wilderness and they did not stumble. **63:13**

**Mosaic Thought #5** - God used His Spirit to give Israel rest. **63:14**

Twice it is stated that God did this for His own name.

The tragedy of this is that Israel had so much and lost it.

**DIRECTION DIMENSION #2** – Isaiah asks God to look down. **63:15-19**

In the first section Isaiah appeals to God to look back, and in this section He asks God to look down. What Isaiah was trying to get God to do was look back at all the gracious things He had done for Israel in the past and then look down at Israel today and see what is going on.

I want us to observe from **verse 15** that God's heaven is a "holy and glorious habitation." I believe that one of the things that God wants us to do in moments of adversity is to turn to Him and call out to Him. The writer of Hebrews says that negative things that come into our world are there to produce holiness in us (Hebrews 12:10).

Now there are **three questions** that Isaiah asks as he appeals to God to look down:

**Question #1** - Where are God's zeal and mighty acts for Israel today? **63:15-16**

There are a couple of observations that Isaiah makes:

**(Observation #1)** - God's heart stirrings and compassion are restrained toward me. **63:15**

**(Observation #2)** - God is Israel's Father and Redeemer even though Israel doesn't recognize that. **63:16**

Isaiah pleads with God to look at Israel again because of her connection to Abraham and Jacob (Israel).

**Question #2** - Why does God harden Israel's heart and cause her to stray from His ways?  
**63:17a**

Isaiah says, look, you are Almighty God; why don't you sovereignly touch the hearts of our nation and cause it to reverence you. Isaiah assumes the sovereignty of God here. It is God who can make your heart tender to Him and it is God who can harden your heart. God can and will shut people down in their relationship with Him. Dabble around with sin long enough and develop a hard heart of rebellion, and God can harden a nation's heart and an individual's heart.

**Question #3** - Would God please return to Israel and bless her now. **63:17b**

Now in **verse 17** Isaiah asks God to do one thing, "Please, God, think all of this over and return Your blessings and Your power to Israel.

Isaiah appeals to God on the basis of some key realities:

**(Reality #1)** - We are your servants . **63:17**

**(Reality #2)** - We are your tribes . **63:17**

**(Reality #3)** - We are your heritage . **63:17**

**(Reality #4)** - We were a holy people who possessed your sanctuary for a while. **63:18**

What is actually interesting here is that when Isaiah wrote this prophecy, it was still about 100 years before the Temple would be trodden down. But Isaiah saw what would happen and He knew why it would happen. The adversaries had trodden it down because of Israel's sin. What Isaiah wanted was everything to be right with God again with the place of worship in place, so that Israel would be seen and known as the nation of God.

**(Reality #5)** - We are now like those who never had a relationship with God. **63:19**

This is an impressive prayer that is offered to God, but as you will see, God's answer for the nation is "no" (Is. 65:6-7). **He will preserve a remnant of Israel, but for those who forsook Him and forgot Him, He will slaughter with a sword (Is. 65:11-12).**

Israel proves you can so depart from God that your life is a disaster. It is possible to reject God too long. It is possible to be able to testify of all of the amazing things you have seen God do in the past and never have Him do one more positive thing for you in the present.

N.T. believers need to give serious thought to the ramifications of departing from the Word of God and the Will of God. If we depart from a focus on God and His Word to a focus on being conformed to this world, we put ourselves on a dangerous path.

We who live in the Church Age may look at this and say, well that's a shame what has happened to Israel, but we are Spirit-indwelt believers of the Grace Age who could never have anything like that happen to us. The Apostle Paul who was the apostle to the Church said you think again (I Corinthians 10:1-12). He said you think very carefully about how Israel threw away the blessings of God because we can too.