

# ISAIAH LESSON 60

Come Down<sup>a</sup>  
(Isaiah 63:15-64:12)

## Isaiah 63:15-64:12 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

### God's Mercy Remembered<sup>b</sup>

**63**<sup>7</sup> I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord<sup>c</sup>,  
the praises of the Lord,  
according to all that the Lord has granted us,  
and the great goodness to the house of Israel  
which he has granted them according to his mercy,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For he said, Surely they are my people,  
sons who will not deal falsely;  
and he became their Savior.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In all their affliction he was afflicted,  
and the angel of his presence saved them;  
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>10</sup> But they rebelled  
and grieved his holy Spirit<sup>g</sup>;  
therefore he turned to be their enemy,  
and himself fought against them.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Then he remembered the days of old,  
of Moses his servant.

Where is he who brought up out of the sea  
the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them  
his holy Spirit,<sup>i</sup>

<sup>12</sup> who caused his glorious arm  
to go at the right hand of Moses,  
who divided the waters before them  
to make for himself an everlasting name,<sup>j</sup>

<sup>13</sup> who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in the desert,  
they did not stumble.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Like cattle that go down into the valley,  
the Spirit of the Lord<sup>l</sup> gave them rest.

So thou didst lead thy people,  
to make for thyself a glorious name.<sup>m</sup>

### A Prayer of Penitence<sup>n</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Look down from heaven and see,  
from thy holy and glorious habitation.

Where are thy zeal and thy might?

The yearning of thy heart and thy compassion

are withheld from me.<sup>o</sup>  
16 For thou art our Father<sup>p</sup>,  
though Abraham does not know us  
and Israel does not acknowledge us;  
thou, O Lord, art our Father,  
our Redeemer<sup>q</sup> from of old is thy name.<sup>r</sup>  
17 O Lord, why dost thou make us err from thy ways  
and harden our heart<sup>s</sup>, so that we fear thee not?  
Return for the sake of thy servants,  
the tribes of thy heritage.<sup>t</sup>  
18 Thy holy people possessed thy sanctuary a little while;  
our adversaries have trodden it down.<sup>u</sup>  
19 We have become like those over whom thou hast never ruled,  
like those who are not called by thy name.<sup>v</sup>

**64** O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down,  
that the mountains might quake at thy presence—<sup>w</sup>  
2 as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—  
to make thy name known to thy adversaries,  
and that the nations might tremble at thy presence!<sup>x</sup>  
3 When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for,  
thou camest down, the mountains quaked at thy presence.<sup>y</sup>  
4 From of old no one has heard  
or perceived by the ear,  
no eye has seen a God besides thee,  
who works for those who wait for him.<sup>z</sup>  
5 Thou meetest him that joyfully works righteousness,  
those that remember thee in thy ways.  
Behold, thou wast angry, and we sinned;  
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?<sup>aa</sup>  
6 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.<sup>bb</sup>  
7 There is no one that calls upon thy name,  
that bestirs himself to take hold of thee;  
for thou hast hid thy face from us,  
and hast delivered us into the hand of our iniquities.<sup>cc</sup>  
8 Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father;  
we are the clay, and thou art our potter;  
we are all the work of thy hand.<sup>dd</sup>  
9 Be not exceedingly angry, O Lord,  
and remember not iniquity for ever.  
Behold, consider, we are all thy people.<sup>ee</sup>  
10 Thy holy cities have become a wilderness,  
Zion has become a wilderness,  
Jerusalem a desolation.<sup>ff</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Our holy and beautiful house,  
where our fathers praised thee,  
has been burned by fire,  
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.<sup>eg</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> Wilt thou restrain thyself at these things, O Lord?  
Wilt thou keep silent, and afflict us sorely?<sup>hh</sup>

**Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

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**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

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<sup>a</sup> **Come Down.**

<sup>b</sup> **God's Mercy Remembered.** The Lord's steadfast love (\_\_\_\_, chesed) for His people was shown most clearly by His bringing them out of Egypt during the Exodus. The story of God's people is a story of exile and return, exile from Eden (Gn 3:\_\_\_\_) and a promised return to Eden, Captivity in Egypt (\_\_\_\_) and Exodus to the Promised Land (\_\_\_\_), Exile to Babylon (\_\_\_\_) and Return to Jerusalem. This theme is one of the overarching themes of the Book of Isaiah.

<sup>c</sup> **Lord - Yahweh, or Jehovah (יהוה), YHWH**, written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears three times in this verse and in verses 63:16, 63:17, 64:8, 64:9, 64:12

<sup>d</sup> (63:7) Is 41:8-9, 51:2, 54:8, 55:7; Ex 34:6-7; Nu 14:18-19; 1Ki 8:66; 2Ch 7:10; Ne 9:7-15, 9:19-21, 9:25-31 9:35; Ps 51:1, 63:3, 78:11-72, 86:5, 86:15, 105:5-45, 107:8, 107:15, 107:21, 107:31, 136:1-26, 147:19-20; Lam 3:32; Ezk 16:6-14; Hos 2:19; Zec 9:17; Rm 2:4, 5:20; Eph 1:6-7, 2:4; 1Tm 1:14; Ti 3:4-7

<sup>e</sup> (63:8) Is 12:2, 41:8, 43:3, 43:11, 57:11; Gn 17:7; Ex 3:7, 4:22-23, 6:7, 19:5-6, 24:7; Dt 33:29; Ps 78:36-37, 106:21; Jr 14:8; Hos 13:4; Zep 3:7; Jn 1:47; Rm 11:1-2, 11:28; Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; 1Jn 4:14; Jude 1:25

<sup>f</sup> (63:9) Is 46:3-4; Gn 22:11-17, 48:16; Ex 3:7-9, 14:19, 19:4, 23:20-21, 33:14; Dt 1:31, 7:7-8, 32:11-12; Jdg 10:16; Ps 78:38, 106:7-10; Hos 1:7, 12:3-5; Zec 2:8; Mal 3:1; Mt 25:40, 25:45; Lk 15:5; Ac 7:30-38, 9:4, 12:11; 1Co 10:9; Ti 2:14; Heb 2:18, 4:15; 1Jn 4:9-10; Rv 1:5, 5:9

<sup>g</sup> **Spirit - Ruach (רוח)** usually translated as **Spirit**, can mean spirit, wind or breath. It is here combined with **qodesh (קודש)** meaning holiness or sacredness for the equivalent of "Holy Spirit". See Note on the Names of God in the Introduction to this Study. Appears here and in verses 63:11 and 63:14.

<sup>h</sup> (63:10) Is 1:2, 65:2; Ex 15:24,16:8, 23:21, 32:8; Lv 26:17-46; Nu 14:9-11, 16:1-35; Dt 9:7, 9:22-24, 28:15-68, 32:19-25; Ne 9:16-17, 9:26-29; Ps 51:11, 78:8, 78:40, 78:49, 78:56, 95:9-11; Jr 21:5, 30:14; Lam 1:18-20, 2:4-5; Ezk 2:3, 2:7, 6:9, 20:8, 20:13, 20:21; Mt 22:7; Ac 7:51; Eph 4:28-32

<sup>i</sup> (63:11) Is 51:9-10, 63:15; Ex 14:22, 14:30, 32:11-12; Lv 26:40-45; Nu 11:17, 11:25, 11:29, 14:13-25; Dt 4:30-31; Ne 9:20; Ps 25:6, 77:5-11, 77:20; Ps 89:47-50, 143:5; Jr 2:6; Dn 4:8; Hag 2:5; Zec 4:6; Lk 1:54-55

<sup>j</sup> (63:12) Is 55:13; Ex 14:16-17, 14:21, 15:6, 15:13, 15:16; Jsh 3:16; Ne 9:11; Ps 78:13, 80:1, 114:5-7, 136:13-16; Rm 9:17

<sup>k</sup> (63:13) Ps 106:9; Hab 3:15

<sup>l</sup> **Spirit - Ruach (רוח)** usually translated as **Spirit**, can mean spirit, wind or breath. It is here combined with the Tetragrammaton for the equivalent of "Holy Spirit" or "Spirit of God." See Note on the Names of God in the Introduction to this Study.

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<sup>m</sup> (63:14) Is 63:12; Nu 14:21; Jsh 22:4, 23:1; 2Sm 7:23; 1Ch 29:13; Ne 9:5; Lk 2:14; Eph 1:6, 1:12; Heb 4:8-11

<sup>n</sup> **A Prayer of Penitence.** God's people, likely speaking through the watchmen of Is 62:6, or perhaps through Isaiah himself, or both, confess their sin and rebellion, as a child might confess to a loving human father, admitting their guilt and asking for forgiveness, and for God to hear them in their distress and come to their aid. The people admit that because of their sin which has rendered them unclean, any righteous deeds they attempt are themselves useless and polluted. [Insert discussion of Lutheran concept of sanctification/good works] The watchmen recite the past blessings that God has poured out upon them, and ask God for His tenderness and compassion to them. In the fullness of time, God Himself, in the person of His Son, the Messiah, came to Earth to answer these prayers, and to pay the price for sin and thus redeem the people and make them clean. This brings to mind the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) in which the starving younger son who had wasted his inheritance came back to his father asking merely to be treated as a servant, but who was welcomed back with open arms and celebration as a son, and the parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7) who was lost but now is found.

<sup>o</sup> (63:15) Is 49:15, 51:9-10, 57:15, 59:17, 63:9, 66:1; Dt 26:15; 1Ki 8:27; 2Ch 30:27; Ps 25:6, 33:14, 77:7-9, 80:14, 89:49, 102:19-20, 113:5-6, 123:1; Jr 31:20; Lam 3:50; Hos 11:8; Zec 1:14; Lk 1:78; Php 2:1; 1Jn 3:17

The watchmen ask God to look down (נָבַט, *nabat*) from Heaven (שָׁמַיִם, *shamayim*) and see (רָאָה, *raah*) what is happening to His people on Earth from the place or habitation (זְבוּל, *zebul*) of His Holiness (קִדְשׁ, *qodesh*) and glory (תִּפְאָרָה, *tifarah*). The watchmen say that God's zeal (קִנְיָה, *qinah*), likely for His people, His might (גְּבוּרָה, *geburah*), the yearning, literally tumult or growling, (הַמּוֹן, *hamon*) of God's heart, or literally bowels, (מֵעָה, *meeh*) and His compassion (רַחֵם, *racham*) are being withheld (אֶפְהָק, *aphaq*) from "us" likely meaning the watchmen as representatives of God's people. The literal meaning of the Hebrew of "tumult of your bowels" is metonymic, referring to the way in which a person's digestive system reacts when feeling pity and compassion toward another. The LXX reads, "Turn from heaven, and look from Your holy habitation and from Your glory; where is Your zeal and Your strength? Where is the abundance of Your mercy and of Your compassions, that You have withheld Yourself from us?" In effect God is being asked to look down from the glory of Heaven at the muck in which we find ourselves in this life. The watchmen are asking God, do you care about us anymore?

<sup>p</sup> **Father – Ab (אָב).** See Note in the Introduction to this Study. אָב is used twice here and in verse 64:8. The use of this Name for God emphasizes the intimate nature of the relationship.

<sup>q</sup> **Redeemer – Gaal (גָּאֵל),** see note on the Names of God in the Introduction.

<sup>r</sup> (63:16) Is 41:14, 43:14, 44:6, 54:5, 63:12, 64:8; Ex 4:22; Dt 32:6; 1Ch 29:10; Jb 14:21; Ec 9:5; Jr 3:19, 31:9; Mal 1:6, 2:10; Mt 6:9; 1Pt 1:18-21

God is the Father of Israel even though Abraham does not know (יָדַע, *yada*) them and Israel (the Patriarch Jacob, not the nation; Gn 32:24-28) does not acknowledge (נָכַר, *nakar*) them. The speaker repeats that God is the nation's father and is named (שָׁם, *shem*) the nation's redeemer from of old, or everlasting, (עֹלָם, *olam*). Just as a father is necessary for the conception as a child, so was God present in the origins of the Jewish people (Ex 4:22-23). And just as a father is important (in those days essential) for the support and protection of a child, God was Israel's protector and redeemer. God was the Father of the nation, greater than any of their ancestors, the Patriarchs (Mt 6:8-9, 6:18; Jn 6:44-47, 8:38-44). The LXX makes an express petition to God to come to His people's aid, a people who was from the beginning clearly identified (by having His Name upon them) as His people, "For You are our Father; for though Abraham knew us not, and Israel did not acknowledge us, yet do You, O Lord, our Father, deliver us; Your name has been upon us from the beginning." The *Targum of Isaiah* explains that it was not Abraham or Jacob who saved the people from slavery in Egypt, but God, "For Thou art He, whose mercies towards us are as many as a father's towards his children: for Abraham hath not brought us up out of Egypt, and Israel hath not wrought for us wonderful works in the wilderness; Thou art the Lord; Thy mercies towards us are many, like a father's towards his children, O, our redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting." The ancient Patriarchs, long dead, could not help, and had not helped in the past when the people were slaves in Egypt. They were as useless as fathers who would not acknowledge their children. Only God, their Heavenly Father, could provide hope, and in the end redemption, as He had in Egypt and Sinai. Indeed, this was the role, and obligation, of the *Gaal*, the Kinsman Redeemer, to protect the family of his deceased kinsman. This is not an appeal to God based upon anything the people have done, or any righteousness of their own, but simply an appeal to their Father for mercy.

<sup>s</sup> **Hardening Hearts.** Gruber, in one of his annotations in the Messianic Writings, discusses the use of this phrase in the Scriptures, giving particular attention to its use in the case of Pharaoh. In Exodus the Scriptures tell that Pharaoh "hardened" his own heart using two different Hebrew words meaning strengthen (חָזַק, *hazakh*) and give weight to (כָּבַד, *kaved*; and by extension to glorify or honor). Both words are translated into English as "harden" perhaps because in both the LXX and the Messianic Writings the Greek word used (σκληρύνω, *sklérunō*) commonly means to harden. But the Greek word can also mean "to make stubborn" or "to be obstinate." Thus, following the LXX, Pharaoh might better be described as "becoming obstinate" as he made his own desires weighty, glorifying them and glorifying his own heart rather than listening to God. In only one instance, Ex 9:12,

do the Scriptures say that God hardened, *hazakh*, Pharaoh's heart. Yet He did not put anything in Pharaoh's heart that was not already there (Rv 22:11), but merely strengthened it so that Pharaoh would proceed with what was already there, thus using the evil in Pharaoh's heart to free the Hebrews. God also used the evil already in Judas' heart to free all believers from sin (Jn 13:27). In a similar way, the Apostle Paul describes how mankind denied the obvious truth of God and instead worshipped idols and, as a consequence, God abandoned them to their sin (Rm 1:\_\_\_) which was already within them, at least since their first parents (Gn 3:\_\_\_). While the Hebrew here uses a different, more specific word, for harden (קָשָׁה, *qashach*), the same Greek word is used in the LXX thus suggesting the same interpretation.

<sup>t</sup> (63:17) Is 6:10, 29:13; Nu 10:36; Dt 2:30; Jsh 11:20; Ps 74:1-2, 80:14, 90:13, 119:10, 119:36, 141:4; Ezk 14:7-9; Zec 1:12; Jn 12:40; Rm 9:18-20; 2Th 2:11-12

The watchmen ask God, in their impertinence, why He caused, or perhaps allowed, the people to stray (תָּעָה, *taah*) from God's ways (דֶּרֶךְ, *derek*), and hardened (קָשָׁה, *qashach*, to harden or treat roughly; LXX σκληρύνω, *sklérúnō*, to harden) their hearts, minds or will (לֵב, *leb*) as He did to Pharaoh (Ex 9:12), so that they did not fear or revere (יָרָא, *yirah*) God. They pray that God will return or repent (שׁוּב, *shub*) for [the sake of] His servants (עֲבָד, *ebed*), the tribes (שֵׁבֶט, *shebet*, also referring in other contexts to a rod, scepter, spear or club) of His inheritance (נַחֲלָה, *nachalah*). The Hebrew of the initial phrase can be rendered both as God causing people to sin (Is 3:12, 9:15, 30:28; Gn 20:13; 2Ki 21:9; Jb 12:24-25; Pr 12:26; Jr 23:13, 23:32; Hos 4:12; Am 2:4; Mi 3:5) or allowing them to do so (Jr 50:6). God hardens (LXX \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, translated \_\_\_\_) Israel's heart, but how direct this hardening has been is not clear. The watchmen may envision direct action by the Lord. The Lord had caused the exile in judgment of Israel's sin, and perhaps now keeps the people distant from Him, blinding them spiritually (Is 64:7). Or this verse may represent a hyperbolic, poetic lament in which tragedy is attributed to God though no direct involvement is implied (e.g., Naomi lamented that God brought her calamity (Ruth 1:20-21), and Psalm 88 attributes its author's horrible suffering and loneliness to God (Ps 88:6-8, 88:16-18)). In these laments, and perhaps this verse, the "hardening" is more indirect, and as with the causality for sin, permissive. In any case, the watchmen see it as one of the effects of Israel's rebellion against the Lord (Is 64:5-6) only God can remedy by putting a new heart within them (\_\_\_). God can be thought of as being asked to return to His people after being absent, or to repent of His anger for their sakes, depending on the meaning attributed to *shub*. The *Targum of Isaiah* which reads, "Why hast Thou cast us off, Lord, that we should go astray from the paths which are right in Thy sight, as the nations which have no part in the instruction of Thy law? Our heart is not turned away from Thy fear: return Thy Shekinah unto Thy people, for the sake of Thy righteous servants, unto whom Thou hast sworn by Thy Word to make the tribes amongst them Thine inheritance" thus has the sense of God abandoning His people so that they fall into sin (Rm 1:\_\_\_) just like the nations around them, that is, that their righteousness depends upon the active work of God in their lives. Rather than God hardening their hearts, the watchmen of the *Targum* deny that their hearts are turned away from God. They ask that God return His Shekinah Glory, which had departed the Temple (Ezk 10:18-19, 11:23; Ac 7:48) to Israel for the sake of His servants, Israel, because He has sworn to make them His inheritance. There is a sense in which the Exile of Israel continues (see note in Lesson \_\_, verse \_\_) and that it will not be until the Eschaton that the Shekinah will return to Zion (\_\_\_) and God and His people reunited in an intimate way (\_\_\_). In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the Muslim rulers of Jerusalem walled in the Eastern Gate to Jerusalem, and established a Muslim cemetery in front of it, to prevent the predicted return of the Messiah through that gate (Ezk 43:1-12). However, centuries later, the shepherds saw the glory of the Lord appear in the sky (Lk 2:9). Indeed, God, through the Messiah, the Anointed One, came to dwell among men (Mt. 1:23; Jn 1:1, 1:14). After His death and resurrection, God would again do so through the Holy Spirit living within His people (\_\_\_; Ac 2:\_\_\_; 1Co 6:19; 2Co 6:16; Eph 2:19-22). The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was accompanied by some of the signs predicted by Ezekiel including wind and fire (Ezk \_\_\_; Ac 2:\_\_\_). And at the Eschaton, He will come again in Glory (\_\_\_) to establish a New Jerusalem in which to dwell (\_\_\_).

<sup>u</sup> (63:18) Is 62:12, 64:11-12; Ex 19:4-6; Dt 4:25-26, 7:6, 26:19; 2Ki 25:8-9; Ps 74:3-7, 79:1; Lam 1:10, 4:1; Dn 8:24; Mt 24:2; 1Pt 2:9; Rv 11:2

God's holy (קֹדֶשׁ, *qodesh*) people (עַם, *am*) possessed (יָרַשׁ, *yarash*; can also mean dispossess) His sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ, *miqdash*) a little while (מִצָּעַר, *mitsar*; or small part; LXX \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, meaning bit or small part), but their adversaries (צָר, *tsar*) trod (בִּוֶּס, *bus*) it down. The Hebrew here is difficult in light of the possible opposing meanings of *yarash* and the fact that *miqdash* only appears once, as the thing trodden down. It's insertion as the thing possessed is not explicit in the text. Also, the Greek word in the LXX can only mean small part, a rendering implying "a bit of your holy mountain" which does not seem to make sense in the context. Perhaps it means, as implied by the *Targum*, that for a comparatively short time the Jews had possessed the entire Promised Land. Because of sin, Rebellion after Solomon's death, and Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, led to division, the loss of territory and, ultimately, the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple itself. Or perhaps, following the LXX, if God were to return to His people, and end their exile from Him, granting them His favor, they would again have a small portion or share in Zion, the location of the trampled Temple. In light of the disposition of the Temple Mount after the 1967 war, this seems less far-fetched as Jewish possession of the Mount is limited to its Western, "Wailing," Wall while the remainder is occupied by Muslims.

<sup>v</sup> (63:19) Is 65:1; Ps 79:6, 135:4; Jr 10:25, 14:8; Am 9:12; Ac 14:16,15:17; Rm 9:4; Eph 2:12

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The Watchmen, as representatives of the entire people, have become like people over whom God has never ruled (מַשָּׁל, *mashal*) [lit. “not ruled forever (עֲלָם, *olam*)”] and are not called (קָרָא, *qara*) by God’s name (שֵׁם, *shem*; also meaning renown, fame or memorial). The Hebrew of this verse is also difficult, but its meaning appears to be that only someone who has never been ruled by God or called by His Name could trample on the Temple, yet Israel acts like it has never been ruled by God perhaps by trampling on the temple in their own way (cite to Isaiah passage about true and false worship). Or perhaps, during the time of conquest and exile Israel appeared not to have the special protection of God for his Chosen People. The *Targum of Isaiah* notes that the other peoples never received the Law as did Israel, “We are Thy people that were of old: not unto the Gentiles hast Thou given the doctrine of Thy law, neither is Thy name invoked upon them; not unto them hast Thou inclined the heavens and revealed Thyself; the mountains quaked before Thee.”

<sup>w</sup> (64:1) Is 63:15; Ex 3:8, 19:11, 19:16-19; Jdg 5:4-5; 2Sm 22:10; Ps 18:7-15, 46:6, 68:8, 114:4-7, 144:5-6; Am 9:5, 9:13; Mi 1:3-4; Nah 1:5-6; Hab 3:1-13; Mk 1:10; 2Pt 3:10-12; Rv 20:11

The watchmen wish that God would rend (קָרַע, *qara*) the heavens (שָׁמַיִם, *shamayim*, or sky) and come down (יָרַד, *yarad*), and that the mountains (הָר, *har*, or hills) would quake, flow down or be made insignificant (זָלַל, *zalat*; the only other place the particular form of this word, נָזַלְוּ, *nazollu*) is Jdg 5:4-5 where it describes how God’s appearance to do battle causes the mountains to shake) at God’s presence (פָּנָה, *paneh*). God appears to have abandoned His people who now ask that come down from Heaven to demonstrate His power to the nations. Or perhaps the watchmen are saying that if God had come down when He was needed, things would not be as bad as they are. God’s appearance is so overwhelming that it exceeds our power to express it. When Moses met with God to be given the Ten Commandments (Ex 19:16-19) there was thunder, smoke and earthquake, or something that would look like that to a mortal observer, and the people themselves trembled. Who can look at the Lord and live? (\_\_\_). How can any man or woman, impure and depraved as we are, be saved? The LXX refers to melting mountains evoking erosion or mud slides, “If you would open the heaven, trembling will take hold upon the mountains from You, and they shall melt, as wax melts before the fire.”

<sup>x</sup> (64:2) Is 37:20, 63:12; Ex 14:4, 15:14-16; Dt 2:25; Jsh 2:9-10; 1Sm 17:46-47; 1Ki 8:41-43; Ps 9:20, 46:10, 48:4-6, 67:1-2, 79:10, 83:13, 98:1-2, 99:1, 102:15-16, 106:8; Jr 5:22, 33:9; Ezk 38:22-23, 39:27, 28; Dn 4:1-3, 4:32-37, 6:25-27; Jl 3:16-17; Mi 7:15-17; Rv 11:11-13

The watchmen compare the coming down of God from heaven to the kindling (קָדַח, *qadach*) of brushwood (הֶמֶס, *hemes*; or crackling, melting) with fire (אֵשׁ, *esh*), that in turn causes water (מַיִם, *mayim*) to boil (בָּעָה, *baah*), thus making God’s Name or reputation (שֵׁם, *shem*) known (יָדָע, *yada*) to God’s enemies (צָר, *tsar*), and making the nations (גּוֹי, *goy*) tremble (רָגַז, *ragaz*) at God’s face or presence (פָּנָה, *paneh*). The LXX says, “and fire shall burn up the enemies, and Your name shall be manifest among the adversaries; at Your presence the nations shall be troubled . . .” The *Targum of Isaiah* views the events as an historical reference to 1Ki 18:20-40, “When Thou didst send forth Thine anger like fire in the days of Elijah, the sea was melted, the waters were flames of fire, to make Thy name known to the enemies of Thy people, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence.”

<sup>y</sup> (64:3) Is 64:1; Ex 34:10, 15:11; Dt 4:34, 10:21; Jdg 5:4-5; 2Sm 7:23; Ps 65:5-6, 66:3-5, 68:8, 76:12, 105:27-36, 106:22; Hab 3:3-6

The watchmen remember that when in times past God did terrible or awesome (יָרָא, *yare*) things which the people of Israel had not expected (קָוָה, *qavah*), God came down (יָרַד, *yarad*) and the mountains (הָר, *har*) quaked or flowed down (זָלַל, *zalat*) at His presence (פָּנָה, *paneh*). Thus they look for this sign again that would portend God’s action to rescue His people, as indeed hundreds of years later the ground would shake when the Messiah died on the Cross (\_\_\_). Among past events, the quaking of mountains may refer to the events surrounding the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:10-11, 19:16-19, 20:18-19) which struck fear into the Israelites. While God’s voice sometimes comes in earthquake, wind or lightning, sometimes it comes in a still, small voice (\_\_\_).

<sup>z</sup> (64:4) Is 25:9, 43:10; Gn 49:18; Ps 31:19, 62:1, 130:5; Lam 3:25-26; Mt 25:34; Lk 2:25; Jn 14:3; Rm 8:19, 8:23-25; 1Co 1:7, 2:9-10; Eph 3:5-10, 3:17-21; Col 1:26-27; 1Th 1:10; 1Tm 3:16; Heb 11:16; Jas 5:7; 1Jn 3:1-2, 4:10; Rv 21:1-4, 21:22-24, 22:1-5

The watchmen, speaking to God, say that throughout history (לְבָרַע, *olam*, meaning ancient, everlasting, eternity, or to a vanishing point) no one has heard (שָׁמַע, *shama*) [or perceived by the ear (אָזַן, *azan*, to broaden the ear as by cupping one’s hand over the ear)] and no eye (עֵינַי, *ayin*) has seen (רָאָה, *raah*) any god (אֱלֹהִים, *elohim*) but You, who is a god who will work, accomplish or prepare, (עָשָׂה, *asah*) for he who waits, or terrifies, (חָכָה, *chakah*) for Him. The LXX, rather than waiting for God’s arrival, indicates blessings for those who wait for God’s mercy (ἔλεος, *eleos*), “From of old we have not heard, neither have our eyes seen a God besides You, and Your works which You will perform to them that wait for mercy.” The *Targum of Isaiah* interprets the verse as meaning that God’s people saw things, including the Shekinah Glory of God, that no other people have seen, “And since the world was, ear hath not heard the report of such mighty deeds, nor hearkened to the speech of rapture, nor hath eye seen, what Thy people saw, the Shekinah of Thy glory, O Lord; for there is none besides Thee, who will do such things for Thy righteous people, who were of old; who hope for Thy salvation.” The Jewish people heard God’s voice at Mount Sinai and saw

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physical manifestations of His presence (Ex 20:1, 20:18-19; Dt 4:32-36). The Apostle Paul likely refers to this verse at 1Co 2:9-10 as he marvels over the inconceivable Wisdom of God demonstrated in the Gospel of salvation for mankind.

<sup>aa</sup> (64:5) Is 26:8-9, 56:1-7, 63:10; Ex 20:24, 25:22, 29:42-43, 30:6; Ps 25:10, 37:4, 90:7-9, 103:17, 112:1; Pr 3:1-2, 4:10-13, 4:20-22, 9:10-11; Jr 31:18-20; Hos 6:3, 11:8; Mal 3:6; Ac 10:2-4, 10:35; Php 3:13-15; Heb 4:16

Again speaking to God, but in a sense, combined with the end of verse 4, giving God's answer to the implied question in verses 1-2 of why has He not come down yet (Rv 6:9-11), the watchmen say that He meets (פגוע, *paga*) those who work (עשה, *asah*) righteousness (תְּדֵבָרִים, *tsedeq*) with joy or rejoicing (שׂוֹשׂוּ, *sus*) and those who remember (זָכַר, *zakar*), or have a relationship with, Him. They, on behalf of the people, confess that God was angry (קָצַף, *qatsaph*) because the people had sinned (חָטְאוּ, *chata*) for a long time or continuously (עוֹלָם, *olam*). They exclaim that, in light of this long history of sin, how could this people possibly be saved (יִשָּׁע, *yasha*)? The LXX, leaving out the final question, reads, "For these blessings shall happen to them that work righteousness, and they shall remember Your ways; behold, You were angry and we have sinned; therefore we have erred," The *Targum of Isaiah* turns the final question into a statement that they will be saved because of the righteousness of their ancestors, "The works of our righteous fathers were acceptable in Thy sight, who rejoiced to do Thy will in truth and in righteousness: in the way of Thy goodness and mercy they remembered Thy fear whenever Thy wrath from Thy presence was upon us, because we had sinned: on account of the works of our righteous fathers, we have been saved." Jesus tells the parable of the rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-26; Mk 10:17-27; Lk 18:18-27) who asks Jesus to tell him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus first tells him to obey the commandments, which the young man says he has done. Jesus then tells him to give away all that he has and to follow Jesus in response to which the young man goes away sorrowful because he had great possessions. Jesus tells His disciples that it is difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, to which they answer, "Then who can be saved?" The implication of the question is that if this rich man who has obeyed the commandments cannot be saved, then who can? Jesus response was that while salvation for man is impossible, for God nothing is impossible. That is, salvation does not come by the works of man, but by God's Grace. The difficult Hebrew of this verse may be translated as a statement, a question or a hope, but the fundamental cause of the people's distress is clear, they have sinned. Taken together with verse 4, God will come down to aid those who wait for the Lord (have faith), those who do the right things not begrudgingly but with joy, and those who remember, that is have a relationship with, Him.

<sup>bb</sup> (64:6) Is 6:5, 40:6-8, 46:12, 53:6, 57:12, 57:13; Jb 14:4, 15:14-16, 25:4, 40:4, 42:5-6; Ps 1:4, 51:5, 90:5-6; Jr 4:11-12; Hos 4:19; Zec 3:3, 5:8-11; Rm 7:18, 7:24; Eph 2:1-2; Php 3:9; Ti 3:3; Jas 1:10-11; 1Pt 1:24-25; Rv 3:17-18, 7:13

Sin makes us so unclean that we cannot approach God (Rm 3:23) and His holiness. Our only hope is in Messiah who can cleanse us and bring us into God's presence (Rm 3). We cannot come to God based on our own efforts or conduct, but only based on the work of the Messiah, and our repentance and faith. The word used in this verse for unclean is also used for lepers, and the dirty rags are a reference to menstrual rags which cause anyone who touches them to become ritually unclean (\_\_\_). Even our righteous deeds are only dirty rags. We are like a dead leaf because of our sin because sin ultimately leads to death.

<sup>cc</sup> (64:7) Is 27:5, 50:2, 56:4, 57:17, 59:2, 59:16; Dt 31:17, 32:19-25; Jb 8:4; Ps 14:4; Jr 9:7; Ezk 22:18-22, 22:30, 24:11; Hos 5:15, 7:7, 7:14

God has hidden his face or presence from us because of our sin which constitutes a break in the relationship with God. We have so fallen away that cannot even call upon God. Yet even in that pit of despair, God can find a way to reach us.

<sup>dd</sup> (64:8) Is 29:16, 43:7, 44:21-24, 45:9, 63:16; Ex 4:22; Dt 32:6; Jb 10:8-9; Ps 100:3, 119:73, 138:8; Jr 18:2-6; Rm 9:20-24; Gal 3:26-29; Eph 2:10

The watchmen again call upon God as father asking for mercy, reciting that God is our father, our potter (that is he shaped us) and our creator and that we would not be here except for God. Surely He does not want to see us in our current bondage to, in the immediate context, Babylon, but in a larger sense, to sin (Rm \_\_\_).

<sup>ee</sup> (64:9) Is 63:19; Ps 6:1, 38:1, 74:1-2, 79:5-9, 79:13, 119:94; Jr 3:12, 10:24; Lam 5:20; Mi 7:18-20; Hab 3:2; Mal 1:4; 2Pt 2:17; Rv 20:10

The watchmen beg God not to be angry beyond measure, to forgive their sin, and to restore the relationship with God, which is precisely what Jesus was able to accomplish on our behalf.

<sup>ff</sup> (64:10) Is 1:7; 2Ki 25:9; 2Ch 36:19-21; Ps 79:1-7; Lam 1:1-4, 2:4-8, 5:18; Dn 9:26-27, 12:7; Mi 3:12; Lk 21:21-24; Rv 11:1-2

<sup>gg</sup> (64:11) 1Ki 8:14, 8:56; 2Ki 25:9; 2Ch 6:4, 7:3-6, 29:25-30, 36:19; Ps 74:3-7; Jr 52:13; Lam 1:7-11, 2:7; Ezk 7:20-21, 24:21-25; Mt 24:2

<sup>hh</sup> (64:12) Is 42:14; Ps 10:1, 74:10-11, 74:18-19, 79:5, 80:3-4, 83:1, 89:46-51; Zec 1:12; Rv 6:10

The watchmen end this poem by again asking God to look down and help those in bondage upon the Earth. In Chapters 65 and 66 God will answer and tell us just how He will take care of things. When we ask, "where are you God?" it is not because God has

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gone away, but because we have. God will restore that relationship if we wait for Him (have faith), have joy in doing what God asks of us, and remember Him and His ways. Our task in this life is then to wait, enjoy, and know God.