

**Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: Prayer for display of divine power (one of the highlights of the Old Testament): July 29<sup>th</sup>: Some Notes**

Isaiah 63 The Message (MSG)

Who Goes There?

**63** The watchmen call out,  
“Who goes there, marching out of Edom,  
out of Bozrah in clothes dyed red?  
Name yourself, so splendidly dressed,  
advancing, bristling with power!”

“It is I: I speak what is right,  
I, mighty to save!”

<sup>2</sup>“And why are your robes so red,  
your clothes dyed red like those who tread grapes?”

<sup>3-6</sup>“I’ve been treading the winepress alone.  
No one was there to help me.  
Angrily, I stomped the grapes;  
raging, I trampled the people.  
Their blood spurted all over me—  
all my clothes were soaked with blood.  
I was set on vengeance.  
The time for redemption had arrived.  
I looked around for someone to help  
—no one.  
I couldn’t believe it  
—not one volunteer.  
So I went ahead and did it myself,  
fed and fueled by my rage.  
I trampled the people in my anger,  
crushed them under foot in my wrath,  
soaked the earth with their lifeblood.”

All the Things God Has Done That Need Praising

<sup>7-9</sup>I’ll make a list of GOD’s gracious dealings,  
all the things GOD has done that need praising,  
All the generous bounties of GOD,  
his great goodness to the family of Israel—  
Compassion lavished,  
love extravagant.  
He said, “Without question these are my people,  
children who would never betray me.”  
So he became their Savior.  
In all their troubles,  
he was troubled, too.  
He didn’t send someone else to help them.

He did it himself, in person.  
Out of his own love and pity  
he redeemed them.  
He rescued them and carried them along  
for a long, long time.

<sup>10</sup> But they turned on him;  
they grieved his Holy Spirit.  
So he turned on them,  
became their enemy and fought them.

<sup>11-14</sup> Then they remembered the old days,  
the days of Moses, God's servant:  
"Where is he who brought the shepherds of his flock  
up and out of the sea?  
And what happened to the One who set  
his Holy Spirit within them?  
Who linked his arm with Moses' right arm,  
divided the waters before them,  
Making him famous ever after,  
and led them through the muddy abyss  
as surefooted as horses on hard, level ground?  
Like a herd of cattle led to pasture,  
the Spirit of GOD gave them rest."

<sup>14-19</sup> *That's* how you led your people!  
*That's* how you became so famous!  
Look down from heaven, look at us!  
Look out the window of your holy and magnificent house!  
Whatever happened to your passion,  
your famous mighty acts,  
Your heartfelt pity, your compassion?  
Why are you holding back?  
You are our Father.  
Abraham and Israel are long dead.  
They wouldn't know us from Adam.  
But you're our *living* Father,  
our Redeemer, famous from eternity!  
Why, GOD, did you make us wander from your ways?  
Why did you make us cold and stubborn  
so that we no longer worshiped you in awe?  
Turn back for the sake of your servants.  
You own us! We belong to you!  
For a while your holy people had it good,  
but now our enemies have wrecked your holy place.  
For a long time now, you've paid no attention to us.  
It's like you never knew us.

**The Message** (MSG)

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### **Isaiah 64: Can We Be Saved?**

<sup>11-7</sup> Oh, that you would rip open the heavens and descend,  
make the mountains shudder at your presence—  
As when a forest catches fire,  
as when fire makes a pot to boil—  
To shock your enemies into facing you,  
make the nations shake in their boots!  
You did terrible things we never expected,  
descended and made the mountains shudder at your presence.  
Since before time began  
no one has ever imagined,  
No ear heard, no eye seen, a God like you  
who works for those who wait for him.  
You meet those who happily do what is right,  
who keep a good memory of the way you work.  
But how angry you've been with us!  
We've sinned and kept at it so long!  
Is there any hope for us? Can we be saved?  
We're all sin-infected, sin-contaminated.  
Our best efforts are grease-stained rags.  
We dry up like autumn leaves—  
sin-dried, we're blown off by the wind.  
No one prays to you  
or makes the effort to reach out to you  
Because you've turned away from us,  
left us to stew in our sins.

<sup>8-12</sup> Still, GOD, you are our Father.  
We're the clay and you're our potter:  
All of us are what you made us.  
Don't be too angry with us, O GOD.  
Don't keep a permanent account of wrongdoing.  
Keep in mind, please, we *are* your people—all of us.  
Your holy cities are all ghost towns:  
Zion's a ghost town,  
Jerusalem's a field of weeds.  
Our holy and beautiful Temple,

which our ancestors filled with your praises,  
Was burned down by fire,  
all our lovely parks and gardens in ruins.  
In the face of all this,  
are you going to sit there unmoved, GOD?  
Aren't you going to say something?  
Haven't you made us miserable long enough?

**MSG : Isaiah 64**

Maybe these passages don't need commentary, just contemplation. So very short note. 1) This isn't cool calm collected prayer – this is the passion of a man who has swallowed whole the sufferings, triumphs, faithfulness and back-slidings of his own people. Isaiah feels with God and feels with Israel too: a bit like a mother watching as her two children fight each other. 2) There is the age old struggle of religious people with the twin realities of a God who in theory must be able to do anything God wants to do and a God who seems to hold back and let bad things happen.

The vision of blood-soaked Saviour is very powerful, but you can't help feeling that the blood isn't going to be exclusively the blood of very wicked people who are only evil and have always been and always will be only evil. Our blood-soaked Saviour is kind of different – with God intervening decisively in a rather different way.

