

OH THAT THOU Wouldest REND THE HEAVENS

TEXT: ISAIAH 64

Introduction:

1. Isaiah 64 continues without interruption from Isaiah's prayer in 63:15.
2. In Isaiah 63:15, the prophet prays, "Look down from heaven." Here in 64:1, he cries out, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down..."
3. In 63:15, Isaiah asked the Lord to "look down from heaven." Now he is asking the Lord to "come down."
4. Note the first word in chapter 64 – "Oh." The great 18th century Shakespearean actor David Garrick said he would pay a large sum of money to be able to say "Oh" like the evangelist George Whitefield.
5. George Whitefield was one of the greatest preachers of all time, and I am sure it was a wonderful thing indeed to hear him say, "Oh."
6. But how much more to hear the prophet Isaiah?
7. And how much more to hear our Lord Himself? "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,** thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).
8. The situation in Isaiah's day was not all that different from our situation today. The need that existed in BC 700 is similar to our desperate need today.
9. There was a great deal of open sin (64:5, 6). Even their "righteousnesses were as filthy rags" (64:6). And today?

10. There was prayerlessness (64:7). Prayerlessness is a sin that is seldom preached against. The great man of God, Samuel, said, “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you” (I Samuel 12:23).
11. There was the impending judgment of God (64:9, 12).
12. The holy city of Jerusalem was in a state of desolation, and the “beautiful house” (the temple) was “burned up with fire” (64:10, 11).
13. The prophet Isaiah is using the past tense, though the temple was not destroyed until much later (64:11). This is referred to as the “prophetic tense.” Prophets spoke of future events as if they had already happened.
14. Isaiah’s prophecy looks ahead to the dark days of the coming tribulation. In that sense, Isaiah represents Israel in the future tribulation, crying out for God’s deliverance.

I. AN INTENSE DESIRE FOR GOD’S PRESENCE

1. Many students of God’s Word see here a great cry for revival. Three times Isaiah refers to the “presence” of God (64:1-3).
2. In verse 7, Isaiah says, “For Thou hast hid Thy face from us.”
3. Revival is seeking God’s presence, seeking His face.
4. Duncan Campbell (1898-1972) experienced revival from 1949-1953 in Hebrides Islands off the northwestern coast of Scotland.
5. Duncan Campbell said, “The presence of God is the supreme characteristic of a God-sent revival.”
6. Years after the revival in the Hebrides Islands, Duncan Campbell gave a lecture to students at a Bible college in Edinburgh, Scotland.
7. This is what he said, “First, let me tell you what I mean by revival. An evangelistic campaign or special meeting is not revival. In a successful evangelistic campaign or crusade, there will be hundreds or even

thousands of people making decisions for Jesus Christ, but the community remains untouched, and the churches continue much the same as before the outreach. In revival, God moves in the district. Suddenly, the community becomes God conscious. The Spirit of God grips men and women in such a way that even work is given up as people give themselves to waiting upon God. In the midst of the Lewis Awakening, the parish minister at Barvas wrote, 'The Spirit of the Lord was resting wonderfully on the different townships of the region. His Presence was in the homes of the people, on meadow and moorland, and even on the public roads.' This presence of God is the supreme characteristic of a God-sent revival. Of the hundreds who found Jesus Christ during this time fully seventy-five per cent were saved before they came near a meeting or heard a sermon by myself or any other ministers in the parish. The power of God, the Spirit of God, was moving in operation, and the fear of God gripped the souls of men – this is God-sent revival as distinct from special efforts in the field of evangelism."

8. Notice, Duncan Campbell said, "there will be hundreds or even thousands of people making decisions for Jesus Christ, but the community remains untouched."
9. We are not seeing hundreds or even dozens of people making decisions for Christ, and of course "the community remains untouched."
10. If the Christians needed revival back in Duncan Campbell's day, how much more do we need revival today?
11. But there must be a great desire for God's presence. There must be a great desire to pray and seek God's face (cf. Isa. 64:7).

II. A WILLINGNESS TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

1. The Jews in Isaiah day rebelled against God and “vexed” His Holy Spirit (63:10).
2. In Isaiah 64:5 and 6, Isaiah (representing the people of Israel) confesses several things:
 - Their uncleanness – “But we are all as an unclean thing” (64:6). This refers to their moral uncleanness and their spiritual uncleanness. Israel will be cleansed when they repent and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1).
 - Their self-righteousness – “and all our righteousneses are as filthy rags.” Their prayers and their worship were like filthy rags (menstrual rags – cf. Lamentations 1:17) because they were not right with God. They were self-righteous hypocrites (cf. Rom. 10:3, 4). The LORD said in Isaiah 1:15, “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.”
 - Their weakness and frailty – “and we all do fade as a leaf” (64:6).
 - Israel will acknowledge that their “iniquities” were the cause of their dispersion and other troubles (64:6; cf. 64:7b).
 - They will confess their prayerlessness (64:7a).

- Israel will acknowledge that God had to hide His face from them because of their wickedness (64:7).
- “Afflict” them “very sore” (64:12) does not just refer to Israel’s suffering during the Babylonian exile, or their future sufferings throughout history (e.g., during WWII). It refers specifically to their suffering during the coming tribulation. Isaiah represents the Jewish remnant during the tribulation (cf. 63:1ff).
- The LORD answers the question of 64:12 in 65:1ff.

III. FAITH THAT GOD WILL MOVE

1. Isaiah prayed on the basis that he represented God’s people (Isa. 64:8, 9).
2. Today we pray on the same basis. Jesus said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9).
3. Our Lord said we are to pray in His name. He said in John 14:13 and 14, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”
4. Because of our union with Christ, we can pray to God in His name, and have the confidence and assurance that God will hear our prayers and answer our prayers.

5. Oswald Chambers said, “Jesus never mentioned unanswered prayer, He had the boundless certainty that prayer is always answered. Have we by the Spirit the unspeakable certainty that Jesus had about prayer, or do we think of the times when God does not seem to have answered prayer? ‘Every one that asketh receiveth.’ We say – ‘But . . . but...’ God answers prayer in the best way, not sometimes, but every time, although the immediate manifestation of the answer in the domain in which we want it may not always follow. Do we expect God to answer prayer? The danger with us is that we want to water down the things that Jesus says and make them mean something in accordance with common sense; if it were only common sense, it was not worthwhile for Him to say it. The things Jesus says about prayer are supernatural revelations” (*My Utmost For His Highest*, May 26).
6. Faith in God can move mountains (Isa. 64:1). Our Lord said in Matthew 17:20, “For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”
7. Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory in Judges 5. In Judges 5:5 they sang, “The mountains melted from before the LORD.”

CONCLUSION:

1. In Isaiah 64:4, Isaiah said, “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.”
2. The apostle Paul quotes this Scripture in I Corinthians 2:9, where we read, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”
3. By comparing these two Scriptures, we see that those who love God will wait on Him. Furthermore, we know that while we are waiting on God, He reveals Himself to us by the Holy Spirit.
4. Notice Paul says, “But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit...”
5. I quoted Oswald Chambers, “The things Jesus says about prayer are supernatural revelations.” These “supernatural revelations” can only be revealed to us through the Holy Spirit.