

# Thank You Lord for **Coming Down!**

Isaiah 64:1-9

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Pastor Jim Rademaker

"Lord, take action. Do something. Come down and take care of things! Let people know how powerful you are! Let them know who's in charge. Put them in their place. Take control of this situation! You've done it before. Do it again!" Ever feel that way? You want God to come down and take care of things? Take action? Do something? We call that what? Prayer. Intercessory prayer. We're asking God to come down and intercede. To do something. Either for us, or for someone else. That's what the prophet Isaiah is doing. Praying. Asking God to come down and do something. Interceding on behalf of His people, Israel.

Isaiah wrote during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian Empire and the decline of Israel. Isaiah warned Judah that her sin would bring captivity at the hands of the future Babylonian Kingdom, which is what eventually happened. Outwardly, it seemed like things were okay. Yet inwardly, things were quickly unraveling. A growing interest in enjoying life, but an increasing indifference to God and the things that matter to Him. This is the danger of any age, including our own. This is a danger for any person, including you and me.

A little context. Isaiah 63:7-19 *I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely."*

*And he became their Savior. 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.*

*But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore, he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, 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, who led them through the depths?*

*... O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name.*

***Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down!***

Can you imagine what that would look like? What kind of terror that would cause? The sky ripping open and something, someone, from another world coming down to earth! The scenes like that we see in so many movies *really happening* ... most notably, when God came and delivered His people from Egypt!

But why want God to come again like that? To get their adversaries, of course. To pay back the nations around Israel for their sins. To consume them like fire. Make them tremble like they've made us tremble! Show 'em who's boss. Show them the God they don't believe in. (James Douthwaite)

***From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways.*** In other words, "You answer the prayers of your children, those who look to You!"

But then Isaiah thinks better of it. *Oh wait*, he says. We're sinners, too. ***Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?***

We've been living in sin now for such a long time. And we're all guilty, every one of us. None of us is as clean as we should be. Our hearts are black with sin. Like a dirty grease rag that can never be made clean again. We're so self-absorbed. So obsessed with ourselves. So self-centered. So into ourselves.

Even the best we have to offer is always tainted by our sin. Compared to You Lord, compared to your goodness, sparkling and white as can be, our dirt always shows. Our cleanliness of heart fades away when it's brought out and exposed to the light of your holiness.

In the end, our sins will catch up to us. We don't ever really get away with anything. Our sins will find us out, and in the end, we will pay the price. Though we think we're something now, sooner or later, we'll fade away. We'll shrivel up and die, like the leaves in Fall, that shrivel up and are blown away, and are no more.

In our sin, you've hidden yourself from us. You've left us all alone with ourselves. And we suffer the consequences.

So maybe not Lord. So no, don't rend the heavens. Not yet anyway. Instead, Isaiah says, humbly changing his tune ... *no, be **our Father***. (Douthwaite) We're nothing but clay. But clay that You love. Clay that you're working on. Clay that You're squeezing, and molding, and shaping. The work of Your hands. If there's any hope for any of us, it's in You. That You're our Father, caring for us, working on us, molding and shaping our hearts, to turn us back to You.

***Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.***

Lord, take action. Do something. Come down and take care of things! Let people know how powerful you are! Let them know who's in charge. Put them in their place.

Isaiah's words are good ones for us to remember. For when we think like that. When we wish God would smite our adversaries - that kid at school who picks on me, that person at work who takes credit for my work, that person who took my parking space even - though I'd been waiting for it with my blinker on! Or those lawmakers trying to take away our religious freedom, those how would persecute us.

Get 'em God! Pay them back, God! Why don't you wipe them out? Because that means He would wipe *us* out, too. The sins we see in others, are the sins that live in us.

So while the day is coming when God will *rend the heavens and come down in judgment*, that's not *really* what He *wants* to do. God doesn't want to judge. Judging holds no joy for God. Judgment is of the law. But God - though He *gave* the Law - is not first and foremost about the law. God would rather love us. He would rather save us. He would rather forgive us and bless us.

God gave the Law, so that we would, like Isaiah, realize our sin, and *turn to Him* as our Father. Turn to Him as our Savior.

So instead of *rending the heavens and coming down* with fire, what happens? The Son of God comes in our flesh and blood. Instead of riding on the clouds of heaven, He rides into Jerusalem, as we heard, on a young colt, a donkey. And instead of consuming sinners, He becomes the sinner. And on the cross, he offers Himself to the consuming fire of His Father's wrath against our sin. That our iniquity, that our sins, not be (as Isaiah prayed) remembered, or held against us. (Douthwaite)

***Lord, do something. Come down and take care of things!***

In the fullness of time, God did just that ... tearing open the heavens and coming down, all the way to the cross ... ***From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.*** For those who believe in Him, who trust in Him. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul uses this verse to marvel at the incomprehensible wisdom "God has revealed" in the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. During Advent, we look back to when He came to earth as a babe. We look ahead to His second coming as the King. And we look to Him today as He desires to come to each of us as Savior and Lord!