

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide  
Isaiah 64:1-9

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Isaiah, we find the remnant (God's people) pleading with the Lord to deliver them from bondage at the hands of the Babylonians. In these verses in chapter 64, they are pleading for God to show His power over their enemies.

In verses 1-3, the remnant of God's people are pleading for God to " ...burst from the heavens and come down!" They are petitioning for God to come and demonstrate His power the same way He did on Mount Sinai, as we read in verse 3 (see Exodus 19:16-20).

Verses 4-7 points out to us that God is unparalleled (v. 4), and yet v. 5 says, "You welcome those who gladly do good, who follow godly ways." However, our sinful nature makes us unclean and separates us from God. Verses 5-6 say, "You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself, we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." A "filthy cloth" is used here to show something to be ritually unclean (see Leviticus 15:19-24).

Verses 8-9 say, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people." The section concludes with the remnant pleading with God, their Creator and Father, to forgive and forget their iniquity and restore them. On God as "Father", see Isaiah 63:16. On God as a "Potter", see Isaiah 45:9-10.



Questions to Consider

1. After reading Isaiah 64:1-9, with a focus on vv. 5-6, how can we be saved if we are so impure?
2. Where else have the Israelites experienced God's presence up to this point (see Exodus 19)?
3. Since our best efforts are still tainted by our sinful nature (v.6), where does our hope lie (see Romans 3)?
4. Why do you think people today do not fear God the same way we read in Isaiah? How can we change this?
5. How can we individually, and as a church, be the clay for God the "Potter"? What does this look like to you?