

A Prayer of Remembrance and Hope

Isaiah's Prayer as a template for us as we enter the New Year

Isaiah 64

The situation was bleak in Isaiah's lifetime, beginning with a leprous king and progressing through a traumatic and devastating invasion. It seems as though God's promises are dead and his blessing is removed.

After explaining why Israel has found itself in this position through the rest of the book, how will the people respond in their last appearance of the book?

The stage is set for us in chapter 63:15-19.

The people feel abandoned, and they wonder where they should look for the presence of God.

They refer to God twice as father in the hope that this will produce a favorable response.

Their plea begins in chapter 64 and has 3 primary sections:

First, they long for God's presence, for him to come down and reveal himself to them in glory and power, as he did in the days of Moses.

Second, they recognize their failures and recognize that they have separated themselves from God and his silence is well-deserved.

Third, they recognize God's sovereignty and throw themselves on his mercy, pleading for him to act for his name's sake and because of the state of the land and his holy city.

God's response is two-fold.

Wrath

Christ

Questions

1. What are some similarities between the state of Israel during Isaiah's ministry and the state of the Church today, especially in the West (USA)?
2. Read through Isaiah 63. What in verses 7-14 serves as the basis for their prayer?
3. In verses 15-19 their prayer begins, and we see what their mental state is like and the reason for their prayer. Do you find yourself thinking along similar lines? What causes you to think in this way or what do you use as a safeguard against thinking this way?
4. Looking at their prayer in its entirety, can you see how both a faithful Christian and someone Christian in appearance only would pray this prayer? What heart attitudes would each have that would help to explain the difference between them?
5. Read the final two chapters of Isaiah, 65 and 66.
 - a. Do you see the two ways that God responds? Why does wrath come first?
 - b. Analyze God's wrathful response in 65:1-12. What factors lead to inclusion in this group? (Be aware that 8-12 begin to talk of those who will receive mercy as well)
 - c. Now look at God's mercy shown in 65:8-66:24. What characteristics ensure inclusion in this group? How should we develop and/or strengthen these attitudes within ourselves?