

Shaken By The Lord

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INI – SDG

Isaiah 64:1-9

Isaiah 64 is a prayer by the prophet Isaiah. The prophet desires that God would remove those barriers which keep him hidden from us and come and make his home in our hearts. He prays that the Lord would shake us and shape us until we are God's people.

Isaiah 64:1-3 Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence-- 2 As fire burns brushwood, As fire causes water to boil-- To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence! 3 When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, The mountains shook at Your presence.

It might not surprise us that Jesus' coming is described as shaking the mountains. What might surprise us is that this shaking of the mountains is not a picture of his coming in judgement on the last day. This shaking of the mountains is instead a picture of his coming in grace when he came as child and died for our sins. The shaking of the mountains is commonly used in scripture as a picture of the coming of the Messiah.

We see an example of this in Haggai chapter two.

Haggai 2:6-9 6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: `Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 `and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 8 `The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 9 `The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. `And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

We also see this when the prophet John comes to prepare the way in the wilderness. Luke tells us:

Luke 3:5 Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth;

In all these passages the shaking of the mountains is a measure of the greatness of God's power. If the mountains are shaking, you know that something very powerful is at work. A little stick of dynamite isn't going to shake the mountains. For this reason, this picture is used to describe Jesus coming with power.

In Isaiah the word "shake" is the word for a drunkard who can't stand up. He topples over. So, the mountains cannot stand at the coming of Jesus. In Haggai the word used implies an earthquake. God takes hold of the mountains and shakes them like a saltshaker. In either case the point is the great power that Jesus brings

What is Jesus going to do with such great power? For what purpose does he bring power that can shake the mountains? The prophet answers this question in verse two: **"to make your name known."**

This is the purpose for which Jesus came. This is what he used all that power for, to preach God's name.

In his high priestly prayer Jesus told his disciples: John 17:6 **"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me."**

Again, in John 1:18 we read, **"The only begotten Son¹, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."**

Through the preaching of the God's name Jesus destroyed not the Himalayans or the Rookies. Rather the power of God was present in his word to tear down the mountains of our hearts and every will or force which opposed his coming.

Luther reminds us in his small catechism **"God's will is done when He breaks and stops every evil will and plan of those who do not want us to hallow His name or let His kingdom come. "**

This is the preaching of the gospel which destroys the mountains of our sin. That is everything within us which exalts myself and opposes the coming of Christ to my heart. The Lord tears down every selfishness, every act of self-pride, every stubborn thought, every unwillingness to forgive, every conceited notion.

This is the best thing that can happen to us. That Jesus would come with his power. The power that can melt the mountains and melt our arrogant and prideful hearts. This is what the prophet is earnestly praying for, the God would shake us by his power and remove our sinfulness.

We may be tempted at this point to think of others who need God's power to work in their hearts. The truth is that such thoughts only prove that we need this power at work in our hearts. It is our hearts which need breaking and melting. When God's power removes the mountains in our hearts then our relationships with God and one another will be restored.

This is our great and fervent wish that such power would come to us. Because he desires this the prophets says, "rend the heavens." Let nothing stand between God and us. If the heavens are in the way, then tear them apart. Better that the heavens should be removed than that Jesus should not come to me.

4 For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. 5 You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways.

Paul teaches us how to correctly understand verse four in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Like the prophet we greatly desire the coming of the Lord. He has prepared a gift for us that is beyond our imagination, and we want to receive it for ourselves. No one has ever imagined the gift that God has prepared for us.

Verse five tells us what that gift is: "You meet him."

This gift is that he meets us himself. Immanuel, God with us. He has come down from heaven to dwell with us.

But there is a problem with this present. Verse five tells us who it is for. The name on the tag says, "**him who does righteousness.**" We are not righteous. How can we receive this gift? Only when the power of God enters our hearts to tear down our sinful mountains and make us righteous.

This is why the prophet begins with such an earnest prayer for the coming of the Messiah with power. If we want to receive this gift, we have to go back to verse one. When the Messiah comes with his power and destroys the high mountains in our hearts and makes us righteous through his blood and forgiveness then and only then can he also make his home in our hearts. At that time, he becomes our Immanuel.

You are indeed angry, for we have sinned-- In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved. 6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. 7 And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities.

Throughout scripture the garment is a symbol of either righteousness or unrighteousness. The high priest had to enter the presence of God in clean white garments. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus garments shone whiter than any laundry could make them. In the parable of the King's son's wedding feast the man who is without the garment is thrown out of the feast. In revelation the saints wear the white robes which have been washed in the blood of Jesus.

Here however we are under the wrath of God because we appear before him in filthy rags. We are the man at the wedding feast without the garment.

Because of His anger we fade like a leaf. Psalm 1 reminds us that the righteous are like a tree planted by the waters. Here the prophet says we are not like the green tree but like the dead leaf which has fallen off the tree. There are none left who call on the name of the Lord.

But why is this? Why are there none left? The reason comes in verse seven, because "**you have hidden Your face.**"

God's word is not being preached. God's name is not being proclaimed. Without the preaching of the word, it is impossible for any to come to faith. With that power of God that shakes the mountains we are left in our filth and without God's righteousness.

This is the curse that God himself pronounced upon the people of Israel. When they would not listen to his word, he took his word from them. They no longer knew his name. The power of God was no longer among them.

This is why the prophet so earnestly prays that God would rend the heavens and reveal himself, that he would come with his power. Without his coming in his word the people are lost, and we are in our sin.

8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. 9 Do not be furious, O LORD, Nor remember iniquity forever; Indeed, please look-- we all are Your people!

The prophet confesses that despite everything he still trusts God, as a child trusts his father.

God is both our father and our potter. These two thoughts must always go together. If God is not our loving father, it would be a terrible thing that our lives are so completely in his hands.

A child will go into many dangers and dark places if his father holds his hand. So too we can walk in dark places, we can allow God's power to break down the mountains in our hearts, we can accept being reshaped by him, because we know him to be our loving father. We trust our father to shake us by his power and reshape us to be his people.

The last verse of our text does not at first sound anything like the first verse. There we talked about mountains melting. Here we talk about forgetting our iniquity. Yet the two have the same meaning. Both verses pray that God would by his power remove our sin and make his home with us. We pray that God would no longer hide his face from us.

Why should God do this? There is no other reason than because we are his people, and he is our father.

Once again, we see that baptism is not a thing which we do for God but rather a precious gift that God gives to us. Our baptism is a promise, a cord which ties us to God. We can hold God to his promise. We can take this cord and pull God to us.

We can even demand of God, "You have made me your child in baptism, just as you made the Israelites your people. Therefore, O Lord, come to me with your power to melt the mountains of my heart. Do not forsake me or hide your face from me but shape me with your hands that I might be your servant."

Like the prophet we ought to earnestly pray and desire this above all things, that Jesus would stir up his power and come to us. So that by the power of his word we might be shaken and remade into his people. Even so stir up your power and come Lord Jesus. Amen.