

## Isaiah 63-64 • The God of Israel & the Israel of God

### Introduction

Admittedly it is sometimes difficult to understand how the decision was made as to where to place the chapter and verse markings in Scripture. It's absolutely essential to help us navigate, but we sometimes treat chapters as barriers rather than realizing a single teaching crosses between them. In these chapters a single teaching is communicated about the difference between the God of Israel and the Israel of God. We are presented with a view of how God works and how that work is supposed to be received. Chapter 64 is actually a reinforcement and extension of what is presented in chapter 63. And although what is provided has a spiritual application for believers of all ages, it has a literal meaning yet to come exclusively for the nation of Israel.

<sup>1</sup>Who is this who comes from Edom,  
With garments of glowing colors from  
Bozrah,  
This One who is majestic in His apparel,  
Marching in the greatness of His  
strength?  
“It is I who speak in righteousness,  
mighty to save.”  
<sup>2</sup>Why is Your apparel red,  
And Your garments like the one who  
treads in the wine press?  
<sup>3</sup>I have trodden the wine trough alone,  
And from the peoples there was no man  
with Me.  
I also trod them in My anger  
And trampled them in My wrath;  
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My  
garments,  
And I stained all My raiment.  
<sup>4</sup>For the day of vengeance was in My  
heart,  
And My year of redemption has come.  
<sup>5</sup>I looked, and there was no one to help,  
And I was astonished and there was no  
one to uphold;  
So My own arm brought salvation to Me,  
And My wrath upheld Me.  
<sup>6</sup>I trod down the peoples in My anger  
And made them drunk in My wrath,  
And I poured out their lifeblood on the  
earth.”

### [Read 63:1-6]

#### **Q: How are these verses organized? What is their overall structure?**

A: They ask a couple of specific questions and follow each up with their respective answers.

#### **Q: What is the first question in v.1?**

A: It is asking who is the conqueror of Edom, someone who is described from Israel's point of view as a great warrior now coming towards Israel.

#### **Q: What is the significance of specifically referring to the Edomite city of Bozrah?**

A: Literally meaning “fortification”, it was a well-fortified city regarded at the time as impossible to conquer because it was protected by cliffs on three sides. Its location enabled it to control traffic along the King's Highway, a very important trade route which the Bible also associates as an eventual very important spiritual route by which many nations will come to worship the Messiah.

#### **Q: Who is this warrior dressed as a king?**

A: The Messiah.

#### **Q: What is the significance of His “garments of glowing colors from Bozrah”?**

A: It is answered in v.2-3. This is a picture of the Messiah the King dressed as a warrior, the colors actually being the blood stains of Edom whom He has just rendered judgment on.

#### **Q: If this is describing the Messiah as a warrior dressed like a king, how do these verses describe the results of His actions?**

A: He is the victor. He utterly destroys His enemies in “the wine press” a repeated biblical metaphor for the wrath of God's final judgment.

#### **Q: Why is it significant that he “speaks in righteousness”?**

A: This is how final judgment deals with non-believers. The application of God's perfect righteousness is in v.6:

1. “I trod down the people in My anger...”
2. “...made them drunk in My wrath...”
3. “...I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

**Point:** This is the picture of Christ's Second Coming for all those who reject Him. Where they are concerned He is coming exclusively to execute the wrath of God according to His righteousness.

<sup>7</sup>I shall make mention of the  
lovingkindnesses of the LORD, the  
praises of the LORD,  
According to all that the LORD has  
granted us,  
And the great goodness toward the house  
of Israel,  
Which He has granted them according to  
His compassion  
And according to the abundance of  
His lovingkindnesses.  
<sup>8</sup>For He said, “Surely, they are My  
people,  
Sons who will not deal falsely.”  
So He became their Savior.  
<sup>9</sup>In all their affliction He was afflicted,  
And the angel of His presence saved  
them;  
In His love and in His mercy He  
redeemed them,  
And He lifted them and carried them all  
the days of old.

### **[Read 63:7-9]**

**Q: What immediately tells us that these verses speak of something completely different from the previous verses?**

A: Whereas in the previous verses the Messiah “speaks in righteousness”, here He speaks of...

1. “...the lovingkindnesses of the LORD...”
2. “...the praises of the LORD...”
3. “...the great goodness toward the house of Israel.”

**Q: What is the difference in how the Messiah is characterized here with the previous section?**

A: Whereas He was previously pictured as a warrior dressed as a conquering King, here he is “their Savior” (v.8) expressing “His love and mercy”. (v.9)

**Q: With whom is He now dealing with?**

A: It specifically states “My people”.

**Q: So how is this a picture of Christ’s Second Coming where His people are concerned? How is this different from the previous section?**

A: Whereas Christ’s Second Coming is the wrath of God for those rejecting Him, it is salvation and redemption for those embracing Him.

**Q: Do God’s people earn this because of something they did?**

A: This is a clear picture of the working of God’s grace. He grants it “according to His compassion”. (v.7)

### **Summary**

*All signs and wonders have a dual purpose where believers and non-believers are concerned, and the Second Coming is no exception. For non-believers they are the inevitable conclusion of a lifetime of rejection of God’s Word and ways, signaling that time has run out; for believers they are a confirmation of living by faith according to His Word and ways and no other. What is the ultimate benefit to believers at Christ’s Second Coming is the ultimate consequence for non-believers.*

<sup>10</sup>But they rebelled  
And grieved His Holy Spirit;  
Therefore He turned Himself to become  
their enemy,  
He fought against them.

### **[Read 63:10]**

**Q: Whereas the previous sections discussed the God of Israel, who is the focus of the discussion going forward?**

A: God’s people.

**Q: What is their defining characteristic and what is the consequence?**

A: They rebelled so He had to punish them to get them to see the error of their ways.

**Point:** *Some people believe it’s enough to raise your hand and “vote” for Jesus. Biblically what is required after acknowledging Him is to live forever changed going forward according to His Word and ways. The Bible characterizes people who acknowledge Him but don’t live like Him as “rebellious”.*

<sup>11</sup>Then His people remembered the days  
of old, of Moses.

Where is He who brought them up out of  
the sea with the shepherds of His  
flock?

Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in  
the midst of them,

<sup>12</sup>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,

<sup>13</sup>Who led them through the depths?

Like the horse in the wilderness, they did  
not stumble;

<sup>14</sup>As the cattle which go down into the  
valley,

The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.

So You led Your people,

To make for Yourself a glorious name.

### **[Read 63:11-14]**

**Q: How did God's people respond to His punishment for their rebelliousness?**

A: They "remembered the days of old". (v.11) In other words, God's past faithfulness served as a testimony and assurance of His faithfulness to come. Their primary response might be characterized as "reflection".

**Q: What are the specific things they reminded themselves of?**

1. "...He brought them up out of the sea..." (v.11) The crossing of the Red Sea is symbolic of baptism. Going under represents death, coming up and out represents resurrection and new life.
2. "...He put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them..." (v.11) Whether there is a visible outward display or an invisible inner working, baptism for a believer is followed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
3. "...divided the waters before them...led them through..." (v.12) From the initial salvation experience expressed by baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit, from that point forward believers are led through life personally by God, no longer following their own path or desires.

**Point:** Just as God was faithful to lead the nation Israel out of the old life in Egypt and deliver them to His promised new life in the Promised Land, so the same total work of salvation is at work in all believers' lives.

**Q: How do the references to "the horse" and "the cattle" in v.13 & 14 relate to what is being taught here?**

A: "Wilderness" can also be translated as "a plain". It is comparing God's working of salvation as being no more difficult or dangerous for His people than it is for a horse to walk across the plain or for cattle to walk down a hill into a fertile valley.

**Application:** After we are saved we find that life is a "wilderness" between the old life of Egypt and the one to come in heaven represented by the Promised Land, and God's leading easily overcomes all the potential obstacles in the wilderness. In Israel's case there was never a single physical need that went unaddressed. So too in for all believer's where this life is concerned.

<sup>15</sup>Look down from heaven and see from  
Your holy and glorious habitation;

Where are Your zeal and Your mighty  
deeds?

The stirrings of Your heart and Your  
compassion are restrained toward me.

<sup>16</sup>For You are our Father, though  
Abraham does not know us

And Israel does not recognize us.

You, O Lord, are our Father,

Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.

<sup>5</sup>You meet him who rejoices in doing  
righteousness,

Who remembers You in Your ways.

Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,

We continued in them a long time;

And shall we be saved?

<sup>6</sup>For all of us have become like one who

### **[Read 63:15-16 & 64:5-8]**

**Q: After the rebellious took the time to properly reflect, what is it that they finally realized in v.15-16?**

A: That although they have not lived in the manner they know they should ("though Abraham does not know us"), God is not just "our Redeemer" but "our Father".

**Point:** For non-believers God is always at work as a righteous King and ultimate Judge; for believers He is at work as Father and Redeemer. The same situation may be judgment for those rejecting Him ending in final destruction, but for His people it is correction and discipline to reconcile them back to Him.

**Q: In v.5-7, what is their next realization?**

A: "You...have delivered us into the power of our iniquities". (v.7) What they are experiencing is not actually the result of earthly enemies but the consequences for their own actions.

is unclean,  
And all our righteous deeds are like a  
filthy garment;  
And all of us wither like a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us  
away.

<sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on Your name,  
Who arouses himself to take hold of You;  
For You have hidden Your face from us  
And have delivered us into the power of  
our iniquities.

<sup>8</sup>But now, O LORD, You are our Father,  
We are the clay, and You our potter;  
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

<sup>17</sup>Why, O LORD, do You cause us to stray  
from Your ways

And harden our heart from fearing You?  
Return for the sake of Your servants, the  
tribes of Your heritage.

<sup>18</sup>Your holy people possessed Your  
sanctuary for a little while,  
Our adversaries have trodden it down.

<sup>19</sup>We have become like those over whom  
You have never ruled,  
Like those who were not called by Your  
name.

<sup>1</sup>Oh, that You would rend the heavens  
and come down,  
That the mountains might quake at Your  
presence—

<sup>2</sup>As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire  
causes water to boil—

To make Your name known to Your  
adversaries,  
That the nations may tremble at Your  
presence!

<sup>3</sup>When You did awesome things which  
we did not expect,  
You came down, the mountains quaked at  
Your presence.

<sup>4</sup>For from days of old they have not heard  
or perceived by ear,  
Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,  
Who acts in behalf of the one who waits  
for Him.

**Q: What is important about the specific use of the term “iniquities” instead of “sins”?**

A: The word translated into English as “iniquities” literally means “lawlessnesses” in Hebrew. Whereas any person regardless of their relationship to God can “sin” or “miss the mark”, “iniquities” can only be committed by someone who is supposed to be in a right relationship with God at one time but later chooses to rebel and go their own way.

**Q: But what do they even further realize where they have, at times, lived according to God’s Word and ways?**

A: “And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment”. (v.6)

**Application:** Sporadic faithfulness does not make up for times of unfaithfulness. What we’ve done in the past is rendered ineffective to address present unfaithfulness.

**Q: So what is their ultimate realization?**

A: “...We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand”. (v.8)

**Application:** The work of the Father, even in the course of disciplining us for our iniquities, is to be formed according to His original plan of salvation.

**[Read 63:17-19 & 64:1-4]**

**Q: Whereas God’s people rebelled, reflected, and subsequently had realizations concerning their standing and status before God, what “R” describes what they are doing in these verses?**

A: They are making requests.

**Q: How would you summarize and characterize the request in v.17-19 from that in v.1-4?**

A: In v.17-19 they are requesting God to return and save them from their enemies. It’s a request for physical rescue. In v.1-4 they are requesting corresponding spiritual rescue.

**Q: When spiritual revival comes to God’s people, what is supposed to be the main effect on the non-believers around them?**

A: “To make Your name known”. (v.2) Christ’s working within believers is supposed to testify that no “eye has seen a God besides You, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him”. (v.4) Therefore seeing Christ’s work in God’s people, non-believers see the benefits of becoming one of His people.

**Application:** How well do we realize that repentance and faithfulness aren’t just a requirement for our own personal relationship with Christ, but that it has a direct effect on all those around us who do not have such a relationship? How well do we understand that our failure to achieve spiritual reconciliation may actually be hindering the acceptance of the Gospel for many others around us?

<sup>9</sup>Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,

Nor remember iniquity forever;  
Behold, look now, all of us are Your people.

<sup>10</sup>Your holy cities have become a wilderness,

Zion has become a wilderness,  
Jerusalem a desolation.

<sup>11</sup>Our holy and beautiful house,  
Where our fathers praised You,  
Has been burned by fire;

And all our precious things have become a ruin.

<sup>12</sup>Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD?

Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?

### **[Read 64:9-12]**

#### **Q: How does this final request apply to believers in general?**

A: It's a picture of someone who has reached rock bottom and finally turns back to God. Whereas such a situation might be permanent and unaddressable for non-believers who never come to such a realization, for believers God is always able to bring them back. Think of the example of Job from whom everything was taken but ultimately restored.

#### **Q: How does this final request apply to literal Israel specifically?**

A: The real sign of the Last Days is not merely the physical return to the land of Israel, but the spiritual return of Jews to their Messiah. God's repeated promise throughout Scripture is that when they return to Him from the heart and only from the heart will He completely restore the physical things such as the Temple, Jerusalem, and the nation. God is not through with literal Israel yet.

### **Overall Application**

*In terms of the Second Coming, the same work of the God of Israel is going to work differently for believers versus non-believers. For one it is destruction and final judgment, for the other it is reward and salvation.*

*For the Israel of God, that is those who are properly and exclusively devoted to His Word and ways alone, the events of this life are intended to change them from intrinsically rebellious to consistently faithful. In this way they are properly prepared when the dual-edged sword of His Second Coming arrives. And in the mean time it serves to draw non-believers to Him as they witness what He does through us.*