

**Isaiah 63** Note: Isaiah 63:1-6 begins with a city watchman questioning an unknown person (the Lord) whose splendid garments are covered in blood.

1. The watchman asks the Lord a question. What was the Lord's answer? (Is 63:1)
2. The watchman asks a second question. (Is 63:2)
  - a. How does the Lord use the metaphor of crushing grapes to indicate that he has been crushing cities and nations? (Is 63:3-6)
  - b. What was the Lord's motive for crushing cities and nations? (Is 63:3-4)
  - c. Why was the Lord surprised/appalled? (Is 63:5)

**Note: The rest of Isaiah 63:7-15 is a song of praise as well as a lament that ends in a prayer. Isaiah is aware of the difference between his proclamations of a future glorious city and the overwhelming daily problems that will be faced by the first small community of returning exiles standing amid Jerusalem in rubbles.**

3. Isaiah 63:15-19 is presented as a prayer of petition and a lament by the Israelites.
  - a. What are the various petitions they present to the Lord? (Is 63:15-16)
  - b. How do they describe their problems? (Is 63:17-19)

**Isaiah 64** Note: This entire chapter is a plea to the Lord to show his mighty power on behalf of a beleaguered people. It is reminiscent of images in Psalm 18:7-15.

4. Compare and contrast the images in Isaiah 64:1-5 with those of Psalm 18:7-15.
5. The Israelites are asking God to "rend (tear apart) the heavens and come down." (Is 64:1)
  - a. Why would God have to break apart the heavens in order to help the Israelites?
  - b. How did the Israelites understand and picture the separation between the two places, Heaven and Earth?
6. The Israelites profess their faith in the Lord. (Is 64:4-5)
  - a. Describe how they profess their faith.
  - b. How did this act of faith reestablish their relationship with the Lord?
7. The Israelites acknowledge their sinfulness, despite their trust in God. (Is 64:5-7)
  - a. What poetic image does Isaiah use to describe the Israelites state of sinfulness? (Is 64:6)
  - b. *Reflection:* In what ways do you acknowledge your faults and failures before you make prayers of petition to God?
  - c. How does the community liturgically express their faults and failures at the beginning of Mass?
8. Very seldom in the Old Testament is God referred to as "Father." (Isaiah does it in two places: Is 63:16; 64:8.) In what familiar prayer do we address God as "Father"? (Matt 6: 9-14; Luke 11:1-4)
9. Isaiah uses an image of clay and the potter to describe the Israelites' relationship to the Lord. (Is 64:8)
  - a. Describe the power and appropriateness of this image in action.
  - b. *Reflection:* How do you see God acting as a potter today in your own life, the church, and society?
10. The image of God as a potter suggests that God can take what comes out wrong in our lives and reshape it into something good. We are a creative work of art in progress.
  - a. Does Isaiah believe this? (Is 64:8-12)
  - b. Do you ever feel like wet clay still spinning on the potter's wheel, not yet fully formed?