

A Sobering Answer.  
Isaiah 65:1-7  
Sunday evening, May 10, 2009.

I. Involving the Gentiles by way of blessing.

- A. The Lord is answering the cry of the prophet Isaiah and with him the cry of the godly remnant of Israel: “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!”
- B. It was a cry for restoration and revival for the nation of Israel.  
What follows is God’s answer.  
It is comprised of three opening statements showing how God would enfold the Gentile nations in His love through the unbelief and rebellion of His own people.
  - 1. “I was sought by those who did not ask for Me.”  
Literally: “I allowed Myself to be inquired of by those who (by nature) did not ask for Me.”
  - 2. “ I was found by those who did not seek Me.”
  - 3. “I said, ‘here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by My name.”
- C. These three statements show the great grace that God worked in the hearts of the Gentiles in preparing them to embrace the true God and His gospel.
- D. These three statements show us the imperceptible work of the Holy Spirit as He prepares hearts to embrace the gospel.
  - 1. These hearts came to the place of inquiring after the Lord, but they did not even know it. It was kind of all on a subconscious level. A work accomplished by the quiet breezes of the Holy spirit who works when and where and how He pleases.
  - 2. Similarly with the second statement; there was a seeking, but not a conscious active seeking, so that there was a finding without an active seeking.
  - 3. Both statements present a paradox: How can there be an “inquiring after” without asking, and how can there be a finding without seeking. The answer lies in the quiet breezes of the work of God’s Spirit who works below the radar of what is visibly observed, or consciously observed.

Application:

Do not underestimate nor despise the quiet work of the gentle breezes of God’s Spirit.

They form the beginnings of all greater and visible works to follow.

We owe much to these gentle quiet breezes. Most of the greater works of God begin with insignificant seeds and influences sown in human hearts.

Pray for this quiet gentle work.

- E. The Apostle Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:20,21, saying that Isaiah is very bold in answering the Jewish nation thus, and in what follows by way of a description of the Jewish nation in vs. 2.

II. Involving the Jewish nation by way of Judgment.

- A. The Lord continues to answer the cry and plea of the godly with regards to the lamentable state of Israel: “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You

would come down!” Ch. 64:1.

B. The Lord shows the godly that He has not moved; that His hands and His heart stand open to His people continually. “All day long have I stretched out My hands...,” and that even to a rebellious people.

C. It is Israel that has continuously trampled upon the Lord’s grace and goodness. A list of her grievous sins follows:

1. They walk in a way that is not good, even according to their own thoughts.

2. They provoke the Lord to anger continuously, and to His face.

“To My face” is to be understood as a drawing near to him, (as in religious ritual). In other words what is in view is their religious practices.

- “They sacrifice in gardens.” These were planted enclosures whose purpose was the practice of idolatry. Often they had a sacred tree. They were the very opposite of the garden of Eden. These were common things in the pagan world of that day.

- They burn incense on altars of brick.

God’s altars were to be made of unhewn stone. Exodus 20:25. The pagans profaned their altars by carving all kinds of profane imagery on its stones.

Brick was easier to work in that respect, its stone being softer.

Hence the Lord had forbidden to work the stones of His altars with any kind of tools. Israel was set apart from the nations in this regard.

- They sit among the graves and spend the nights in the tombs.

This they did to communicate with the dead, or to appease the spirits of the dead, or to receive some benefit from the dead; (worship of saints with relics etc. is akin to this)

- They eat swine flesh, and the broth of abominable things...

Again in religious ritual; in much the same way they would have eaten the peace offerings in fellowship with the Lord.

- Who say, (to the Lord as He would speak to them through His servants), “Do not come near me, for I am holier than you!” (Holier through their pagan religious rituals.)

D. These are smoke in My nostrils (an irritation); a fire that burns all the day (wrath).

1. Behold, it is written before Me. A record is being kept.

2. I will not keep silent, but will repay. A day of reckoning is reserved.

Application:

Prayers for revival are costly

1. When answered in repentance and restoration they cost us our most treasured idols.

2. When answered in judgment they come in the form of the destruction of the wicked.

3. In the passage before us they come in the form of the Lord giving His gospel blessings to a people that didn’t even know Him or ask for Him, while Israel inherited the judgment, and was bypassed as to any further grace.

Let us never take the patience and longsuffering and the grace of God for granted.

While it is called “today,” let us seek Him out and make our peace with Him.

And let us always seek Him in the way He has appointed for us.