

ISAIAH

Chapter 63

The LORD's Day of Vengeance

Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” 2 **Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?** 3 **“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.** 4 **For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.** 5 **I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.** 6 **I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”**

63:1–6 No enemy is able to rob God’s people of their salvation because their redemption simultaneously ushers in the “day of vengeance” on all hostile, demonic foes. Cf 59:17; 61:2; 62:11–12. The final execution of judgment will come when the peoples and kingdoms of this world will appear before the throne of the ascended Lord. Cf Rv 14:18–20. (TLSB)

63:1 *Edom*. Edom here symbolizes a world that hates God’s people. (CSB)

Israel’s inveterate enemy stands for all forces aligned against God and His people (cf ch 34). Cf 11:14; 34:5–15; Gn 25:23; Nu 24:18; Ezk 35; Am 1:6, 11; Ob 10–16. (TLSB)

Bozrah. Key city in Edom. (TLSB)

crimsoned robes.† Cf. Christ’s robe “dipped in blood” (Rev 19:13) at his second coming. (CSB)

A royal hue. (TLSB)

righteousness, mighty to save. This is a description of the reign of Christ: to speak to men, to proclaim salvation, and not to condemn the sinners but receive them, and “I fight for them and protect them.” (Luther)

It is I. Having established His people, the Lord turns to judge the unbelieving nations with a day of vengeance. (TLSB)

63:2 *Why ... ?* Isaiah responds with a question. (CSB)

red. Play on Hbr word for Edom, spelled nearly the same. The Lord’s garments are stained with the blood of His defeated antagonists. The decisive battle took place on Golgotha (cf Jn 12:31–32; 16:11; see the Easter hymn by Thomas Kelly, *TLH* 209). (TLSB)

treads in the winepress. Violent stomping and blood-red juice symbolize God’s wrath. (TLSB)

There you have the land abounding with grapes. He washed His garments in the blood of grapes, because this area abounds in red grapes. Those who tread such grapes bespatter themselves with red. He repeats this personification against the hardened. “Oh, I have seen His strength, that He crushes His enemies, just as some winepress crushes the grapes.” (Luther)

63:3 *trodden the winepress*. A figure of judgment also in La 1:15; Joel 3:13; Rev 14:17–20; 19:15. (CSB)

Treading grapes was normally a festive community event (16:10; Jgs 9:27). (TLSB)

in my anger ... wrath. The day of the Lord. (CSB)

63:4 *day of vengeance ... year of my redemption*. The day of judging the enemy meant at the same time redemption for God’s people. (CSB)

The “day of vengeance” and the “year of redemption” are not at odds but necessarily a union. (TLSB)

63:5 *My own arm brought Me salvation*. Israel’s unfaithfulness left the Lord alone; His victory was His alone. (TLSB)

wrath. In 59:16 “righteousness” is used. God’s righteousness and holiness resulted in his wrath. (CSB)

No one was righteous enough to stand beside the Lord. He alone would judge. (TLSB)

63:6 Continues winepress imagery (vv 2–3). God both crushes His enemies and, here, floods them with His wrath. (TLSB)

made them drunk. They drank the “cup of his wrath.” (CSB)

poured out their lifeblood. Here the battle is compared to a sacrifice, as in 34:6. (CSB)

63:1–6 Just as the Lord acts decisively to bring redemption for His people, His vengeance is also unleashed on every evil foe. On the Last Day, the Lord’s overwhelming power will trample all His enemies, including all who reject the salvation purchased with Jesus’ lifeblood. His crimson garments bear witness to His decisive defeat of sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection. He is indeed mighty to save, giving resurrection life to all who believe. • Lord Jesus, keep us, we pray, marching in the greatness of Your mighty strength, in the way that leads to life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)

The LORD's Mercy Remembered

7 I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 8 For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.” And he became their Savior. 9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 10 But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be

their enemy, and himself fought against them. 11 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, 12 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, 13 who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. 14 Like livestock that 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.

63:7–64:12† A prayer of Isaiah, asking the Lord to bring about the redemption he has promised. It is similar to a national lament (see, e.g., Ps 44). (CSB)

Looking at the contents of 63:7-64:11 Delitzsch says rather aptly that it is “a prayer of thanksgiving, penitence, and petition.” Looking more at the outward form, Westerman calls it “a community lament.” It has much of the flavor of Ps. 77, 78, 105, 135, and 136. Some things are reminiscent of Deut. 32. First the whole of history of the people of God is reviewed (7-10), then the history of patriarchal times (vv 11-14. Verses 7-10 carries echoes of 1:2-3. (Leupold)

Isaiah corrects two misconceptions his hearers are prone to harbor about the way God leads to glory. It is a fatal mistake to think we can “go limping between two different opinions” (1 Kings 18:2). It is just as wrong to doubt God’s willingness to take sinners back when they repent and plead for mercy. (TLSB)

63:7–14 A recounting of the Lord’s work in the exodus from Egypt. (TLSB)

63:7–9 The prophet intercedes with a psalm that praises the Lord for “the great goodness to the house of Israel” (v 7; cf Ps 89; 111; 145–50). (TLSB)

63:7 *goodness*. A demonstration of God’s unfailing love as he stood true to his covenant with Israel. (CSB)

The shift from Yahweh’s wrath, vengeance, and anger (63:1–6) to his covenant love is striking. But when we come face-to-face with the Warrior God who tramples people in wrath so that their blood spatters his garments (63:3), the only sane response is to recall his Gospel promises. And so the first section of Isaiah’s prayer is a historical recital (63:7–14), which is a recollection of divine kindnesses in the face of the apostates’ rebellion (e.g., 56:9–12; 57:3–13a). (CC)

Though it may seem strange to begin a bitter lament by remembering Yahweh’s ancient salvific deeds, the Gospel acts of yesteryear are intended to stand in stark contrast with the current state of despair. In this way, the lament commences (63:7–9) much like Psalm 106, which also unfolds in the same manner as Isaiah’s prayer. (CC)

In recalling God’s deeds of mercy the writer’s heart grows warm and his tongue eloquent; thoughts gush forth. For certainly Israel’s history was a catalogue of merciful dealings on God’s part. (Luther)

The beginning of v. 7 is translated literally by KJV: “I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord.” Clearly, we would say “deed of loving-kindness” (“steadfast love” here fails to catch the intimacy of the expression). In recalling God’s deeds of mercy the writer’s heart grows warm and his tongue eloquent; thoughts gush forth. For certainly Israel’s history was a catalogue of merciful dealings on God’s part. Seldom has the pen of man captured this truth more fittingly. Especially the deep taproot of his dealing is detected: goodness, mercy and loving-kindness. (Leupold)

great goodness. Cf. Jos 21:45; 1Ki 8:66. (CSB)

compassion. There is a difference between compassion and mercy. רַחֲמִים, “mercy,” we call benefits. חַסְדִּים, “compassion,” is the fatherly feeling of not wanting to take revenge but of sparing. The prophet uses these two words here to show how gracious God is to us. (Luther)

63:8 *my people, sons who will not be false.* But see 1:2–4. (CSB)

Israel. *children.* They disappointed the Lord. Showered with favors, they nevertheless rebelled against Him (v 10; 1:2). (TLSB)

The movement from 63:7 to 63:8–10 is a change in focus from *speech* about Yahweh’s grace to Yahweh’s gracious *actions*. In 63:8–10 Isaiah recounts God’s blessings to Israel much like an exasperated father reminds a wayward child (Is 1:3–6; Hos 11:1–4). In doing so he affirms that this God is the Trinity: he is our *Father* (63:8; see also 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]); the Son (see the commentary on “the Messenger of his presence” in 63:9); and the “Holy Spirit” (63:10). To quote Delitzsch: “Hence Jehovah, and the angel of His face, and the Spirit of His holiness are distinguished as three persons.” Yet these three persons are not three gods, but the three persons of the one and only God (Deut 6:4; “an eye has not seen a god except you,” Is 64:4). (CC)

All the blessings God’s prophet promised were still in the future. In Isaiah’s day, the reality of life in Jerusalem was anything but a glorious, joyful, or triumphant existence. Sin still dogged their lives. Greed, envy, pride, ambition, and rage still clogged all their relationships. Drunkenness and sexual immorality brought temporary pleasure but then returned to bite with the fangs of guilt and misery as these sinful pleasures only wasted lives and potential. Death remained the victor over every human effort. In the world of history and politics, the Assyrian army may have retreated during Isaiah’s day, but eventually a new threat would appear. The Babylonians would come and destroy everything. All these realities sound so contemporary. (PBC)

This verse seems to clash with reality. For Israel was most stubborn and continually going counter to the revealed will of the Lord. None knew that better than the Lord himself. Surely, the Lord was not blindly deceiving himself. Again we have a striking instance of anthropomorphic speech. Love might induce a man to put the better construction on all that the nation does. Strict reasoning is not going to fathom the depth of divine love. This verse surely says with emphasis that the Lord’s favors toward the nation were utterly underserved. The last statement of the verse may be a reference to what God did in Egypt and wilderness. (Leupold)

Savior. See 43:3 and note (Who delivers from the oppression of Egypt or Babylon and from the spiritual oppression of sin.). (CSB)

During the exodus. Cf Ex 14:13; 15:2. (TLSB)

At the exodus, Israel was designated Yahweh’s firstborn son (Ex 4:22; Is 1:2–4; Hos 11:1; cf. Gal 4:4–7), and he became their Father (e.g., Is 45:11; 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10). To be outside this relationship is to suffer divine judgment (e.g., Deut 32:19). Only God’s “sons/children” who call him “Father” are saved from divine wrath (Rom 8:15–16; Gal 4:6; cf. Phil 2:15; 1 Jn 3:1, 10). (CC)

63:9 *In all their affliction...afflicted.* The suffering in Egypt and during the period of the judges is probably in view (see Jdg 10:16). (CSB)

God is not a heartless tyrant. When He disciplines, He feels pain in His own heart (cf. Hen. 4:15). (TLSB)

In the exodus event Israel was designated as God's people (Ex 6:7), and this led to a "honeymoon" with Yahweh. Jer 2:2–3; Ezek 16:7–14; and Hos 2:16 (ET 2:14) express similar thoughts. Israel had "anguish" (Is 63:9) at this time, but most of it was not from Yahweh. It came from Edomites (e.g., Num 20:14–21) and Amorites (Num 21:21–26). (CC)

But Israel's enemies are Yahweh's enemies (cf. Gen 12:3). When Israel suffers, Yahweh suffers. He is not detached from the pain of his people. Whoever strikes Israel strikes the apple of Yahweh's eye (cf. Zech 2:12 [ET 2:8]). This same line of thinking continues into the NT where Jesus tells his disciples, "He who rejects you reject me" (Lk 10:16), while he asks Paul, who was ravaging the church, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?" (Acts 9:4). (CC)

Hence we dare not dismiss the statement "in all their anguish he had anguish" (Is 63:9) as merely anthropomorphic or anthropopathic. Such a move discounts God's suffering with and for his people. In Hos 11:8 he cries out, "My heart is turned within me; together my compassions grow warm." Yahweh is not an unmoved mover, but the God whose heart is warm with tender love and mercy. Following this OT trajectory, Jesus takes divine suffering to the ultimate limit on Good Friday when he, God Incarnate, bleeds and dies for the sins of the world.(CC)

There is something touching about the manner in which the Lord identified himself with his people's sufferings. This is divine empathy at its best. (Leupold)

Every child of God treasures this verse. We can apply it first to the history of God's dealing with His OT people. The Lord was touched by their affliction in Egypt. Moses wrote: "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (Exodus 2:23-25). He brought them out of Egypt and carried them through the wilderness and all throughout their history. While these thoughts fit the situation of an OT believer, they apply as well to every believer of any generation at any time. We are comforted in knowing that the Lord shares our distress and pain. He is not distant, detached, or remote from any of His people. In all our afflictions, God Himself is afflicted. There's more. He has redeemed us by the blood of His own Son and delivered us from sin, death and hell. But there is still more. As we trace the steps we have walked through life, we can also say that the Lord has lifted us up and carried us all along the way. Our prayers flow from the deep faith in what the grace and mercy of God has already done for us. (PBC)

angel of his presence. See Ex 23:20–23; 33:14–15. (CSB)

A long-standing Christian interpretation is that when God appears tangibly in the guise of his Messenger/Angel in the OT, this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.⁴⁶ "The Messenger of his presence" (Is 63:9) first appears in Gen 16:7. After Hagar's brief conversation with this Messenger, Moses abruptly writes: "So she called the name of Yahweh who was speaking to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Have I really seen after the one seeing me?'" (Gen 16:13). Thus to see the Messenger is to see God (Gen 16:13; Ex 3:2–4; cf. Jdg 6:22). In Gen 22:11–14 Yahweh's Messenger commands Abraham not to sacrifice

Isaac, for there will be a substitute offering (cf. Rom 8:32). Then the Messenger calls to Abraham a second time and says, “ ‘I swear by myself, the utterance of Yahweh” (Gen 22:15–16). He also appears to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:2). Yahweh promises to send this Messenger before Israel to lead his people into the promised land, and they are to obey the Messenger’s voice, for, says Yahweh, “My name is in his midst” (Ex 23:20–21). He is one with Yahweh (e.g., Judg 6:11–23; Zech 12:8; cf. Jn 10:30), for he is revered and worshiped as God (Ex 3:6; Judg 6:24; 13:3–22). (CC)

If all this sounds complex, it is! God does not fit into simplistic categories or facile theological systems. He is sovereign over all, while also demonstrating solidarity with his people through his Messenger, the preincarnate Christ. (CC)

Though Yahweh’s Messenger and Yahweh himself might seem to be distinguishable, through the former we meet the latter (cf. 1 Chr 21:15–16; 2 Chr 3:1). Paul asserts that God’s glory is made known “in the face of Christ” (ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, 2 Cor 4:6), who is the “image” (εἰκὼν) of the invisible God (Col 1:15), for “in him all the fullness of the Deity dwells *bodily*” (σωματικῶς, Col 2:9; cf. Col 1:19). (CC)

God’s empathy led him to delegate a notable messenger of his to appear on the scene again and again, “the angel of his presence,” about whom the generation of the Exodus seems to have had an understanding which went farther than our speculations can reach. God appears to have manifested his presence through this uncreated angel in a kind of incarnation before the Great Incarnation. He was the nation’s best gift from God. His mere presence was a deliverance (Exodus 33:15). (Leupold)

The angel who is in His presence must preserve him, as Matt. 18:10 says that the angels who are in the presence of God see us. So does Ps. 91:11: “He will give His angels charge of you.” (Luther)

redeemed. See 41:14; 43:1 and notes (Deliverer from Babylonian exile (in a new exodus). The Hebrew for this word refers to an obligated family protector and thus portrays the Lord as the Family Protector of Israel.). (CSB)

Where the prophet might have dwelled on the Lord’s obligation toward the people whom he has chosen for his own, he goes deeper into the warm and affectionate heart of God and ascribes all “to his love and pity.” (Leupold)

lifted ... carried. Like a father (see Dt 1:31; 32:10–12). (CSB)

Is 63:9 concludes with the endearing description “he took them up and carried them.” Yahweh did this, like a father carrying his child (Deut 1:31; Hos 11:3), and it brought him great pain and distress (Amos 2:13). Shouldering Israel refers especially to the exodus when, for example, Yahweh says, “I bore you on eagles’ wings, and I brought you to myself” (Ex 19:4; cf. Deut 32:11–12; more generally, Is 40:29–31). In his Suffering Servant Jesus, God climactically bears not only the burden of Israel, but also the sin of the whole world (1 Jn 2:2). Jesus was laden with our sins (Is 53:4–6) when he bore them in his body on the cross (1 Pet 2:24) so that all might be declared righteous by grace and through faith alone (Is 53:10; 54:17; 60:21; 61:10; 2 Cor 5:19–21). (CC)

That is, forever, as stated in Deuteronomy: Remember that the Lord your God carried you as an eagle carries its young (cf. Deut. 32:11). The expression is also in the Book of the Acts (cf. Acts 9:15). (Luther)

He concludes this approach by likening God to a compassionate father who “took them up” when they fell down and “carried them” till they forgot their hurt. Here we find ourselves almost at the point of the NT approach of “our Father.” The prophet, and the nation speaking after him, ascribe this attitude not merely to a few exceptional cases but to “all the days of old.” What a delightful way of recalling the past! (Leupold)

63:10 *rebelled*. † In the desert and later. (CSB)

The Israelites rebelled despite the Spirit among their leaders (Nu 11:17–30; cf Ps 51:11). (TLSB)

This verse interrupts the historical overview of Gospel gifts as the harmonious picture is rudely broken by the confession of Israel’s rebellion. The stark disconnect is highlighted by the first word in the verse הִקְדָּוּ, “*but they ...*” Covenant grace was not met with covenant loyalty. Israel’s conduct was incongruent with God’s saving mercy. This verse, along with passages such as Deuteronomy 32; Psalm 106; and Nehemiah 9, maintains that Israel’s relationship with Yahweh can be summarized in two words: stubborn unbelief. The nation’s greatest enemy was not Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. Israel defeated itself through its own persistent idolatry. (CC)

So many divine kindnesses were not grasped by the Israelites’ fickle faith. They shunned Yahweh’s goodness and rebelled against his ways (e.g., Exodus 32; Numbers 11; Deuteronomy 1–2). Psalm 106 reviews Israel’s response to grace. The people sinned, forgot, rebelled, craved wickedness, became jealous, worshiped other gods, despised the promised land, murmured, provoked Yahweh to anger, mixed in with the nations, sacrificed their children, and played the harlot. No wonder Ezekiel frequently calls Israel “a house of rebellion” (בֵּית מְרִי). (CC)

Any review of Yahweh’s mercy (63:7–9) is not honest without acknowledging human sin. Is 63:10, then, is central to the lament in 63:7–14. It serves to connect Yahweh’s Messenger (63:9) with his Holy Spirit (63:10–11). The three verse passage (63:9–11) is framed by the expression “the days of old” (63:9, 11). (CC)

Normally in these kinds of litanies Yahweh’s spokesmen level the accusation that Israel has despised the Sinaitic covenant (e.g., 2 Ki 17:15). Instead Isaiah employs language of a more personal nature. “They grieved his Holy Spirit” (Is 63:10; cf. Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, force, concept, or idea. *He is a person*. He is inseparable from Yahweh, as is Yahweh’s Messenger (Is 63:9). The three persons of the Trinity are the one true God. All three, then, appear in 63:9–10. (CC)

The familial nature of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel continues in the prophet’s lament with the term “Father” (Is 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]). The close ties binding the Father to his children compound his divine suffering. Within the book of Isaiah, the initial oracle sets this stage for Yahweh’s pathos. “Sons I raised and reared, *but they* [דָּוּ], just like הִקְדָּוּ in Is 63:10] rebelled against me” (Is 1:2). Heschel writes: “The speech that opens the book of Isaiah, and which sets the tone for all the utterances by this prophet, deals ... with the sorrow of God. The prophet pleads with us to understand the plight of a father whom his children have abandoned.” The tone in 1:2 is not of a military general who has a difficult time handling acts of insubordination or of a professor who is frustrated with an unresponsive student. Rather, it is that of a long-suffering

father who is in great anguish over what his children have done. Yahweh's parental pathos is shown most vividly in Hos 11:1–9. (CC)

As confident as we may be of the Lord's grace, we are just as sure that our sins have grieved Him. The human spirit is perverse. When it notes all the blessings that flow from the grace of God, it rebels against God. Illustrations of that basic persistent flaw can be found on the pages of Israelite history as they wandered through the wilderness. They complained about the bread that God miraculously gave them. At the foot of Mount Sinai, they made and worshiped a golden calf. The human spirit has not improved over the centuries. Sin still throttles our joy and turns us away from God to ourselves. We claim to achieve and succeed by our own power. We want to bask in the glow of our own achievement and imagine that they are good enough to deserve God's notice and reward. Yet our behavior reveals the depth of sin and stranglehold it has on our hearts and minds. (PBC)

How faithful are we in simple things like worship, prayer life, reading and studying His Word? How many times do we go days on end without thinking about our Lord? Does the Savior also say of us, "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 15:8). And then suddenly, a bit of trouble comes into our lives, and we remember. Back to church we go. We remember how to pray. We ask His forgiveness and promise to do better, if only He'll get us out of trouble this one more time. And the Lord hears and does! How many times? Only you can answer that! But is it not also a sad truth that once the trouble or problem has been taken care of, all too often we slip right back into our former ways, and the cycle is repeated over and over again. (LifeLight)

grieved his Holy Spirit. See Ps 106:33; cf. Isa 11:1–2; 42:1. (CSB)

Though he is the Holy One of Israel and is absolutely transcendent, God is not so far above the fray that he is unmoved by human sin and suffering. On the contrary, he chooses to become engaged in the mess of this world, so much so that, even if he must suffer for it—as he does in Christ—he will not pull back (Is 50:5–6). It is therefore wrong to conceive of God as emotionless or unfeeling. This is a human assumption, based upon what we perceive as God's indifference to our plight, coupled with Greek thought. It is a mistake to think that God only responds to sin with rational reflection and critical analysis. His people "grieved his Holy Spirit" (63:10). (CC)

Yet many interpreters continue to propose that Yahweh is utterly remote and aloof. They use the label "anthropomorphism" as their vehicle to marginalize texts that depict his pathos. For instance, Rowley calls texts like 63:10 "mere accommodations to human speech, or vivid pictures used for their psychological effect rather than theological in significance." God is anything but detached. Rather, he is torn apart by human pain and burns with a loving desire to be in a relationship with all people. No wonder biblical writers employ images of husbands and wives, parents and children, so as to describe God's pain, loss, and grief. In one case Yahweh laments, "Because of the shattering of my daughter people, I am shattered; I mourn, and horror has seized me" (Jer 8:21). He cries out, "Would that my head would be waters and my eye a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain ones of my daughter people" (Jer 8:23 [ET 9:1]). While some believe that Jeremiah is the speaker here, elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah it is Yahweh who most often employs the terms "my people" (e.g., Jer 8:7, 11; 9:6 [ET 9:7]; 15:7; 23:22) and "my daughter people" (e.g., Jer 8:19, 21; 8:23 [ET 9:1]). He is anything but a stoic power, unmoved by tragedy and hardship. (CC)

The relationship between the OT and the NT in this regard is not simply a contrast between prophecy and fulfillment, shadow and substance. There is also continuity. The God who suffers in

the OT all the more suffers in the NT in the person of his Son, Jesus, the Christ. Moreover, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and into the ages [forever]” (Heb 13:8). Therefore the sufferings of Christ, which historically took place in the NT era during his earthly ministry, cannot be dismissed as irrelevant for the depiction of God in the OT era; indeed, the OT prophets foresaw his sufferings and subsequent glories (e.g., Is 52:13–53:12; see 1 Pet 1:11). (CC)

And this has enormous ramifications for how we live. If we think of God as utterly remote and disconnected from human pain and agony, then we will fashion ourselves in like manner. Such people are defined by self-reliance and aloofness, while they make their goal in life the avoidance of all commitments that bring with them pain and suffering. The Bible objects to this conception of God and people; Christ calls us to suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him (e.g., Acts 9:16; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29; Rev 2:10). This is the baptismal life (Rom 6:3–11). (CC)

To this stubborn rebellion the divine reaction was that he “was grieved.” Divine love was wounded. The Holy Spirit enters into the unexpectedly. He does not often appear in the OT. He is more than a potency; more than an attribute. For he can be grieved, which is a purely personal reaction. His reaction was more than a mood of temporary displeasure. (Leupold)

Grief is an emotion of God. It is when God is sorry, as in Gen. 6:7, “I am sorry that I have made them.” If He treats them well, He will spoil them; if He smites them, it is not right either. Such an emotion is attributed to God, not as though He was thus moved, but the holy prophets, Moses, and Noah conceived of Him in this way. (Luther)

Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

The Holy Spirit is grieved not only when people choose to deny Jesus Christ but also when Christians choose to disregard or disobey the Spirit’s counsel in the Word. Most of us can recall a time from our childhood or teenage years when we did something very wrong. With the memory of the offense comes the recollection of our parents’ faces as we looked at them without guilt. They were grieved, terribly disappointed in us. One does not forget that look. Paul describes the Holy Spirit as grieved by our sin. (Ephesians LifeLight)

fought against them. Jerusalem suffered destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (2Ki 25:8–9) because of idolatry. (CSB)

When Israel rebels something of extreme value and importance has been despised and rejected, causing a powerful and stern reaction: “he turned to be their enemy; he even fought against them.” This is a strong reaction. When he fought against them that was apparently done through the world powers: God gave Israel over into the hands of nations greater and mightier than themselves and let them be subjugated. It is an evil thing to have God go on record as hostile to a nation, Egypt and Assyria being their lords. All this is recorded against a background of sincere repentance. (Leupold)

Hebrews 10:31, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

63:11 *then he remembered* – When we stray, God calls us to return to the loving arms that have guided us, redeemed us, and delivered us. (PBC)

The exodus is esp remembered as the time God shepherded His people through the ministry of Moses. (TLSB)

Is 63:10 is a disruptive condemnatory bump in the Gospel road. Now the lament picks up where it left off in 63:9, with the recital of Yahweh's great acts of salvation. In doing so, 63:11 presents several questions. First, who is the subject of the first verb, "he remembered"? Is it Yahweh or Israel? Earlier Isaiah recalled Yahweh's covenant kindnesses (63:7). But here, Yahweh, the subject in the preceding two lines of 63:10, likely remains the subject. Yahweh does not just remember vague generalities, but rather specific historical events involving "Moses" and "his [Yahweh's] people." When the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, Yahweh "remembered" his covenant with their patriarchs (Ex 2:24), and this led to Israel's exodus deliverance ("bringing them up from the sea," Is 63:11). The implication of Isaiah's recital of that saving act is this: since Yahweh "remembered" then, why doesn't he do it again now and initiate a new act of salvation for the prophet and his contemporaries? (CC)

Affliction set Israel thinking time and again. In the good sense of word they remembered "the good old times." This was wholesome because it was done penitently. The Mosaic Age in particular seems to be rich in comfort and instruction. (Leupold)

sea. The Red Sea. (CSB)

The second question prompted by 63:11 is this. When did Yahweh place his Holy Spirit in Israel's midst? During the wilderness generation, the Spirit dwelled within Bezalel (Ex 31:2–5) as well as Moses and the elders (Num 11:16–17, 25). Yet the immediate context is about the Red Sea ("sea," Is 63:11; "waters," 63:12; "depths," 63:13). Therefore Isaiah may be alluding to Yahweh's visible presence in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud leading up to the crossing (Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–24) and then afterward (Ex 33:9–10; Ex 40:36–38). The prophet also may have in mind Yahweh's promise to dwell in the midst of Israel (Ex 29:43–46), which took place visibly when the consecrated tabernacle was filled with Yahweh's glory (Ex 40:34–35). (CC)

shepherd. Moses. (CSB)

The exodus is especially remembered as the time God shepherded His people through the ministry of Moses. (TLSB)

Holy Spirit. The Spirit rested on Moses and 70 elders (Nu 11:17, 25). See also v. 14. (CSB)

Yet another option is made possible by the multivalence of the noun רוּחַ, which can mean "Spirit" (as here in Is 63:11) or "wind" or even "breath." During the Egyptian plagues Yahweh brought and then removed the locusts by means of a "wind" (רוּחַ, Ex 10:13, 19). The miracle of parting the waters was also accomplished by Yahweh by means of a "wind" (רוּחַ, Ex 14:21). When רוּחַ, *ruach*, recurs twice in the Song of the Sea (Ex 15:8, 10), it might again simply mean "wind," but the phraseology in those verses connects it to Yahweh personally: "by the *ruach* of your nose" (Ex 15:8); "you blew with your *ruach*" (Ex 15:10). Especially in Ex 15:10, the association of this *ruach* with the "sea" and the "waters" may recall "the Spirit of God" hovering over the face of the deep in Gen 1:2. Could this be the way in which Yahweh set the Holy Spirit in the midst of Israel? Could this be what St. Paul means when he uses the sacramental language of Holy Baptism: "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2)? (CC)

63:12 right hand. See 51:9 and note (Symbol of God's power.); Ex 15:16. (CSB)

Besides the fire and the cloud, the Lord accompanied Moses and the people with His powerful arm. (TLSB)

The figure employed is unusual but clear. As Moses, the shepherd, strode along, there was, visible to the eye of those who believed in the Lord, the “glorious arm (51:9; 52:10; 62:8) (going) at the right hand of Moses.” (Leupold)

divided the waters. See Ex 14:21; cf. 11:15; 51:10. (CSB)

Isaiah’s description of Yahweh’s salvific acts continues with more participles. He hopes that the participles, which normally accent current action in progress, will awaken Yahweh to act now. In 63:11 the prophet employs participles to write about “the one bringing them up” (הַמַּעֲלֶם) with “the shepherds of his flock” (רֹעֵי צֹאֲנוֹ) and “the one setting in his midst his Holy Spirit” (הַשֵּׁטֶחַ בְּתוֹכָם). Now he adds to the list “the one causing . . . to go” (מוֹלִיֵךְ) and “the one dividing” (בּוֹקֵעַ). “Moses” is also repeated from 63:11, while “his [Yahweh’s] beautiful arm” is added. Yahweh did all of this not because Israel deserved it, but to make for himself “an everlasting name” (63:12; cf. 55:13). Will he show forth the power of his name again? (CC)

It might said that God’s omnipotent power at every point sustained and upheld Moses, enabling him to do the impossible, like dividing the waters (Ex. 14-16) before the nation and removing an insuperable barrier to their escape. (Leupold)

everlasting name. Similar to God’s fame in the exodus. (CSB)

This act enhanced the “name,” i.e., the renown and reputation of the Lord (cf. 55:13; 56:5; 64:2) with an undying luster. (Leupold)

63:13 depths. Of the Red Sea (see Ex 15:5, 8; Ps 106:9). But the crossing of the Jordan may be intended as well. (CSB)

Isaiah’s penchant for participles continues with “the one causing them to walk [מוֹלִיֵךְ] through the depths,” another reference to the Red Sea miracle. Then Israel’s exodus through the waters is compared to a horse smoothly and effortlessly walking in the wilderness. Contrast this perambulatory ease with Isaiah’s description of those in the community who “stumble in midday as if [in] the twilight” (59:10). (CC)

A level plain, encumbered by no obstacle, makes the passage of the cattle swift and safe. – Bible story books try to illustrate this event, but pictures cannot do justice to the greatness of this miracle. Imagine two million people (2 cities the size of Indianapolis) with all their livestock and baggage p[ass] through a large sea in a time interval of one night! The space of dry land on which they walked must have been at least one-half mile wide; if not more. (PBC – Exodus 14)

not stumble – An insuperable obstacle becomes not even the least bit of an obstacle. (Leupold)

In rescuing his people from the clutches of Pharaoh and bringing them to Canaan, Yahweh employed plagues to judge the Egyptian gods (Ex 12:12). By his Spirit-wind and water he drowned Egypt’s crack military units (Ex 15:8, 10; see the commentary on “Spirit” in Is 63:11). He provided manna and quail (Exodus 16), brought water out of a rock twice (Ex 17:1–6; Num 20:1–13), and even turned Balaam’s curses into blessings (Numbers 22–24; see Neh 13:2).

Nothing can obstruct Yahweh's plans for his people (cf. Rom 8:38–39). So why doesn't he enact them now? (CC)

63:14 *go down into valley.* To find pasture and water. (CSB)

Destination of the shepherd, the imagery used in v 11. Cf Jsh 1:13; Ps 23:1–2. (TLSB)

Isaiah continues to employ animal imagery. Does the analogy between Israelites and cattle going down into a valley continue the motif of the Red Sea crossing? Or does this refer to the conquest of the land, the place where “Yahweh's Spirit gave him [Israel] rest” (63:14)? Since the gift of rest is often connected with Joshua's victories over enemies in the land (e.g., Josh 1:13; 22:4), it seems more likely that the prophet is comparing Israel's conquest of the land to cattle that have been led to quiet places of respite (cf. Ps 23:2). (CC)

Cattle having grazed on a hillside drift down easily into the valley, where water may be found and thirst slaked. (Leupold)

gave rest. They found a home in Canaan, the promised land (see Dt 12:9; Jos 1:13; 21:44). (CSB)

Like a shepherd, Yahweh guided his flock into the valley of green pastures and abundant waters. There Israel found peace (Deut 3:20; 11:9; 25:19; Josh 21:44; 23:1; Ps 95:11). He led his people “in all these ways, with all that power, out of all that love, in spite of all that offence.” These great deeds bring beauty or glory to Yahweh's name. In a greater way Jesus gives us rest (Mt 11:28), which one day will be absolutely perfect (Hebrews 3–4). (CC)

The chief point at issue is that time and again, where there might have been distress and trouble, God's Spirit “gave them rest.” Many are the instances where God thus helped His people in what might have been grievous trouble. (Leupold)

63:7–14 The Lord's steadfast love for His people is beautifully epitomized in the exodus from Egypt. Just as surely as Israel rebelled against the Lord and grieved His Holy Spirit, we have done the same by our sins of thought, word, and deed. His steadfast love is given for us in Jesus Christ. He was afflicted for our sins. Through the gift of His Holy Spirit in the waters of Holy Baptism, the Lord is pleased to lead us as His people. • “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:10–11). Amen. (TLSB)

Prayer for Mercy

15 Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. 16 For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. 17 O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. 18 Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. 19 We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name.

63:15–19 Isaiah petitions the Lord to act among His people again. (TLSB)

63:15 *stirring of Your inner parts.* God's desire for Israel seems to be hidden. (TLSB)

compassion. Cf. Hos 11:8. (CSB)

held back. At times God does appear to be remote and distant from human troubles. He does not always reveal Himself, nor does He always explain to us what He does in our own personal history or why. Nevertheless, His love for sinners has been clearly revealed to us in Christ and the blessings we have in Christ. Faithful believers cling to the promises of God. They know that the way of God is always good and that He will make everything work out for the best. (PBC)

63:16 *Father.* See 64:8; Dt 32:6. (CSB)

As a father is needed for a child to be conceived, so Israel owes its existence as a nation to the Lord (cf Ex 4:22–23). As children must rely on their father to keep them alive, so Israel pleads with the Lord to be their Redeemer. (TLSB)

Abraham ... Israel. The Lord is the Father who is greater than their ancestors (Mt 6:8–9, 18; Jn 6:44–47; 8:38–44). (TLSB)

Abraham and Israel were dead and resting securely in the heavenly home they both expected (Hebrews 11:13–16). Once believers die, they know the joys of heaven, but they do not know the affairs of the loved one they leave behind. Both Abraham and Jacob (Israel) could not help the people of Isaiah's day or any of the people of any age. God reveals the profound truth that the saints in glory do no influence the affairs of humans on earth. Only God does that. He alone is the Father of believers. (PBC)

Abraham does not know.† Even if their human fathers are unable to help them, God will. (CSB)

Though their physical ancestors are dead and gone, the Lord's fatherly love and power to redeem are constant. (TLSB)

Redeemer. Isaiah's confidence comes from God's own nature as a loving Father. Years before, Moses described God as Israel's Father: "Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?" (Deut 32:6). (Luther captured this profound truth in his comments on the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer: "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children.") Years later Christ invited his disciples to speak to God as "Abba," Father (cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 6:9; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

63:17 **WHY O LORD** – The whole prayer reflects an intimate relationship. Isaiah is bold to ask his Father a tough question. The question is not an accusation, but only a plea for understanding in a moment of desperation. The prophet lays everything before the Lord, who will hear and answer according to his mercy. He will get his answer in 64:7. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

make us wander. When Israel went astray (see 53:6), God let them wander. (CSB)

harden our heart. The people's hearts were hard (see 6:10; Ps 95:8), and the Lord confirmed that condition. (CSB)

The appeal dares to complain that God is treating His people unfairly, as if their resistance to His mercy has provoked Him to harden their heart as He did Pharaoh's. See note, Ex 4:21; cf Rm 1:24, 26, 28. (TLSB)

servants. True believers. (CSB)

63:18 *a little while*. If the sanctuary is to remain destroyed forever, the period during which Israel worshiped in it was short indeed. (TLSB)

adversaries. The Babylonians. (CSB)

trampled down your sanctuary. Graphically described in Ps 74:3–7; cf. Isa 64:11. Since it was God's sanctuary, his honor was at stake (cf. 48:11). (CSB)

63:19 *called by your name*. The Lord's name was a common element of Israelite names (e.g., in Isaiah, "iah" comes from Yahweh. (TLSB)

This is a Hebraism. To be named by God's name means that we belong to God and become worthy by His name and are marked by it. Thus the church is called by God's name. (Luther)