

Isaiah 3

if it explains why they don't get the answer that they might want, then surely this means that the prayer is unsatisfactory, that there is something wrong with it, and as we have noticed, while the prayer recognizes the fact of sin, it does not show any contrition for sin. There is in the prayer no suggestion that we are responsible, it is our sin, we are getting what we deserve. There is no call that we might have a new heart, a renewed heart; there is no call that we might turn from sin and turn to God with our whole heart. That is not the nature of the preceding prayer. The preceding prayer is based upon this: "We are God's people. God has promised blessing and mercy to us; therefore, why doesn't God treat us as he treated us before? Why doesn't He cleanse us of our iniquities so that we can stand before Him and receive His blessing? Why does God not recognize that we are much better than these other people and they ^{never} were His people. Why should His mercy go to them? Why does it not come to us?" And God says, "I said, 'Behold me, behold me' to a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all day to a rebellious people." This passage here, 65:1&2, is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 and 10 as evidence of God's attitude toward the Gentiles of calling them into the kingdom and His attitude toward rebellious Israel and he says, "Why is it", Paul says, "that the Gentiles which did not seek righteousness have found it, and that the Jews who sought it have not found it?" He says, "Because they did not seek it through faith." And so, Paul uses this as one of His great passages dealing with the turning to the Gentiles and it seems to me that we are then justified in saying that in the prayer which preceded that the prayer is not the statement of the prophet Isaiah, that it is not the prayer of godly Israel seeking that God will turn His mercy back to them, but that this prayer is a presentation of the attitude which is characteristic of the nation as a whole, an attitude which God rebukes in the next chapter where He says, "These people who say, 'Stand by thyself; come not near to me for I am holier than thou'; these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all the day."