

Isaiah 63:7–9 (ESV)

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.

Preceding this is language of judgment in very picturesque and vivid terminology (overview)
This passage was used by Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon, *Sinners in the hands of an angry God*. This passage has everything to do with recounting the steadfast love of God. It follows that picturesque view of judgment. We cannot neglect the fact that the grace and mercy of God is magnified in light of the severe and absolute judgment of God.

Recount the steadfast love of God

Recount (expound)

Steadfast love of God (many acts which cannot be numbered—would need to take off our shoes to count and more). In context, points back to Exodus—as that is the monumental event in the life of Israel to which everything points.

To stabilize us as we wait for Christ to come with his final intervention, Isaiah invites us to look back at the faithful love of God thus far.¹

8 For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.” And he became their Savior.

He became their Savior. This marks a specific point in history. The Exodus. It was a Jeshurun that He became their King: Dt. 33:5

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.

In their affliction he was afflicted. Exodus 3:7, **Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,**

A statement of His character and lovingkindness. He’s faithful to His covenant and fulfilled his promise to deliver them and make them a people in the land He would give them. They were enslaved and had been in bondage for 400 years.

What saved them? The angel of His presence. Not an angel like Michael or Gabriel, but more akin to the Angel of the Lord.

¹ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. and R. Kent Hughes, [*Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 426.

John Gill, “not Michael, as Jarchi; but the Messiah is here meant; the Angel of the covenant, the Angel which went before the Israelites in the wilderness, Exod. 23:20–23 not a created angel, or an angel by nature, but by office; being sent of God, as the word signifies, on the errand and business of salvation; called *the Angel* of God’s *presence*, or *face*, because his face was seen in him; his name, and nature, and perfections were in him; he is the brightness of his father’s glory, and the express image of his person;”²

That is, the presence of God. The presence of God is a major motif in First testament writings. From the garden to the ark to the temple. We see this in Moses in his conversation with God in the pillar of cloud. We see the importance of the presence of God (Exodus 33:12-15: **Moses said to the Lord, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”**)

The one Moses was speaking to at the burning of the bush. The one to whom Abraham was speaking during the Sodom saga. The one whom Isaiah spoke to in His vision in the temple. We see, in John 12:41—the one who is the Word of God, the express revelation of the God who can’t be seen. In the immediate context, it’s talking about the Exodus based on what’s in v. 8 and also afterward (the rebellion and subsequent renewals).

This angel of His presence is likely a reference to the Shekinah Glory in Exodus 13:20-22: **And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.** Without the presence of God among His people, they are lost. And we see, that in terms of life in the land, He did depart from them for the covenant of do this and live, rooted in law, could not be kept as it was a restatement of the terms of that universal covenant under which all men are conditioned to enter into God’s eternal life: do this and live.

We also see that God carried them: he bore their weight. This, like other passages in Isaiah, is a direct assault on the idols to which they were tempted to turn. He showed pity, he was their strength.

We see that this is an act of His love—remember recounting the lovingkindnesses of God.

² John Gill, [*An Exposition of the Old Testament*](#), vol. 5, The Baptist Commentary Series (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 371.

Now, we must look at this as looking forward to something even greater as the Exodus is a type that foreshadows something even greater: the coming of Christ to save His people from their sin.

What is he called: Immanuel: God with us. He is the presence of God for us. We have in Christ God with us—God made flesh in the perfect union of the human nature to the divine nature. We see in John 12:36-41 that it was the second person of the Trinity, the Son, the Word that Isaiah saw in His vision. **“While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.”**

If we are in Christ, we have the presence of God with us. God, in Christ, pitied us, was afflicted according to His humanity, and by His presence, saved us.

Further, by His presence he is saving us (the Spirit at work in us). Because we have Immanuel, God with us.

Further, we will be saved by His presence

How do we know He’s with us and where is His presence to be found

Often seek it in grand experiences, pilgrimages, etc. Or we seek to create extra-biblical structures so we can have certainty of His presence. Where is He—right here in our fellowship with each other. Right here in the word read and preached. Right here in our love and service to each other. Right here, present to our faith, in the elements of the Lord’s Supper. Right here, by faith in the living God in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

Like the people in Isaiah, we may say, “Where are you?”