

Isaiah 63:7 begins a unified section which runs perhaps to the end of the book, at least to the end of chapter 64. It is easy to see that 63:7 begins with praise to God and chapter 64 continues with a prayer that God will do something for His people. "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down that the mountains would tremble before you" (64:1). The chapter ends, "after all this, O Lord, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish as beyond measure?" (64:12). They are asking for an end of affliction. They are asking the Lord to do something. What is it they want done? The preceding verses (vs. 10-11) indicate they want their temple rebuilt. They want their situation changed from one of ruin and devastation to restoration and blessing. Chapter 64 is a prayer that God will return His blessing to His land. The people envisage the time when the land will be needing to be rebuilt following the exile into Babylon and they ask God for help in this situation.

However before making their prayer for God's help they recall His past goodness to them as a ground on which to hope for future blessing. They say, "I will tell of the kindness of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us . . ." (63:7) They are saying, "We remember how good you have been to us in the past, and we have reason to hope you will again be good to us." They remember God's mercy to them as the basis for a prayer for present and future help. They recall how good God has been to their ancestors in saying, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me" ~~(63:8)~~; and so he became their Saviour. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." (63:8-9). God did all these things for the Israelites bringing them out of Egypt into the Promised Land and blessing them. God has been good to them. Why then are they now suffering? Why the change? The change has come about because they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit (63:10). "So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them."

Nevertheless they recall what God did for them in the past (63:11-14) and the implication is, "We wish you would do something like this now and in the future." "Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne . . . Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us." Why don't you do something, Lord, like you used to?