



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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Outline of the Book of Isaiah

- I. Warning of Judgment on Israel (1-39)
- II. The Promise of Future Hope in the New Jerusalem (40-66)
 - A. The Announcement of Hope (40-48)
 - B. The Servant Fulfills God's Mission (49-55)
 - C. The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (56-66)

The New Heavens and the New Earth (65:17-25)

- Out text today (65:17–25) serves as the introduction to God’s final comment on the issues of salvation and righteousness that have dominated this last section of the book (chapters 56–66).
- We were told at the very *beginning* of this last major section (56:1) that the LORD’s servants need to “*keep justice and do righteousness*”.
- Today’s text tells us why: “*For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth!*” (65:17)
- How will humans (ultimately) be able to live out the righteousness of God, and be the evidence to the nations that he *alone* is God?
- Only in *one* way: when God himself intervenes and exercises his creative power to remake us and to remake our world.

The New Heavens and the New Earth (65:17-25)

- In today's text we see a final statement of what we have seen throughout the book: the necessity of divine enabling in order for God's servants to live righteous lives.
- The beautiful picture that is painted in this section partakes of all earlier descriptions of this grand finale of God's sovereign plan (11:6-9; 25:6; 26:15; 35, etc.).
- It uses a ***variety*** of imagery to create an impressionist canvas.
- Although it is sometimes difficult to give a ***precise*** definition of what is being described, there is ***one*** idea in today's text that is ***unmistakable***: our God has the power to banish sin and sorrow forever.

New Creation, New City (65:17-20)

65:17 *For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.* ¹⁸ *But be happy and rejoice forevermore over what I am about to create! For look, I am ready to create Jerusalem to be a source of joy, and her people to be a source of happiness.* ¹⁹ *Jerusalem will bring me joy, and my people will bring me happiness. The sound of weeping or cries of sorrow will never be heard in her again.* ²⁰ *Never again will one of her infants live just a few days or an old man die before his time. Indeed, no one will die before the age of one hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of one hundred will be considered cursed.*

65:17 *For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.*

- With grand solemnity Isaiah introduces the reason why the troubles that we experience in this life will soon be forgotten.
- The introductory phrase, “*For look*”, directs our thoughts to God Himself, who is about to act.
- Isaiah uses the same Hebrew word here for “*create*” (*bara*), that was used in the first verse of Genesis.
- This Hebrew word is **only** used with God as the subject.
- The word implies effortlessness, and points to the production of something fundamentally new.
- What is announced here is something so revolutionary that it can only be the result of God’s creative activity.

65:17 *For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.*

- That almighty power which was displayed at the original creation is ***again*** going to be displayed in a ***new*** work of creation.
- The new heavens and new earth will so ***fully*** show forth the glory of God their creator, and so ***completely*** fulfill every need and desire of his people, that the ***former*** heavens and earth (the one we live in now) “*will not be remembered*”, and “*no one will think about them anymore*”.
- You may recall, the book of Revelation makes a similar statement:
 - *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* (Rev 21:4)

65:17 *For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.*

- Strictly speaking, the words “*former things*” here refer to the former heavens and earth.
- But there is a sense in which the “*new heavens and a new earth*” which we will experience in eternity were *foreshadowed* by the *first* advent of the Messiah and the New Covenant blessings that came at that time.
- Of course, in the eternal state Christ renews the world, and the book of Hebrews speaks of it as “*the world to come*” (2:5).

65:17 For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.

- But it is interesting to notice that in passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15, the Apostle Paul shows how the term “*new creation*” applies to believers who live in the *present* earth:
 - *So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away— look, what is new has come! (2Cor 5:17)*
 - *For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that matters is a new creation! (Gal 6:15)*

65:17 *For look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former [things] will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore.*

- And Peter tells us that the hope that we as believers have for the “*new heavens and a new earth*” should serve as the **basis** of how we ought to be living in our **present** life:
 - *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... Because of this day, the heavens will be burned up and dissolve, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze! But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides. Therefore, dear friends, since you are waiting for these things, strive to be found at peace, without spot or blemish, when you come into his presence. (2 Pet 3:10; 12-14).*
- Likewise in Isaiah, time and eternity, the age of the New Testament and the eternal heaven, are not always sharply distinguished; and believers are, in one sense, already in the heavenly realm. (Eph 1:3)

65:18 *But be happy and rejoice forevermore over what I am about to create! For look, I am ready to create Jerusalem to be a source of joy, and her people to be a source of happiness.*

- Instead of the former things being remembered, the people are commanded to “*be happy and rejoice forevermore*” on account of what God is about to create.
- In particular Jerusalem, the focal point of the new creation and of the kingdom of God, is to be created as “*a source of joy*”, and her people (those who truly belong to her) are to be created as “*a source of happiness*”.

65:18 *But be happy and rejoice forevermore over what I am about to create! For look, I am ready to create Jerusalem to be a source of joy, and her people to be a source of happiness.*

- “*Happy*” (translated “glad” in most translations) and “*rejoice*” are paired together **three** times in this and the following verse to emphasize the exuberant elation which is the only appropriate response to the new world the LORD has begun to create.
- The **old** Jerusalem was the city of the temple where the LORD was present in their midst, and the city whose life centered round his worship.
- But in the **new** Jerusalem the LORD’s presence will be enjoyed in a **new** way and it will become the LORD’s supreme “*source of joy*”.
- And the worship of the LORD by “*her people*” will become a “*source of happiness*” to the LORD.

65:19 *Jerusalem will bring me joy, and my people will bring me happiness. The sound of weeping or cries of sorrow will never be heard in her again.*

- The supreme aspect of the gladness and rejoicing in the new creation is the ***pleasure*** that it gives to the ***LORD***.
- Specifically the LORD takes pleasure in “***Jerusalem***” – ***not*** its architecture or its economy, but its ***spiritual integrity***.
- “***my people***” here are the LORD’s servants who are genuinely characterized by the holiness and perfection that the LORD wants to see in them – those whom he, without reservation, acknowledges as his own.

65:19 *Jerusalem will bring me joy, and my people will bring me happiness. The sound of weeping or cries of sorrow will never be heard in her again.*

- So the LORD himself participates in the general exultation (cf. 62:5).
- Zephaniah was probably echoing this verse when he foretold of the LORD's delight in his redeemed people: "*he shouts for joy over you.*" (Zeph 3:17).
- In this flawless creation which the LORD wills into existence all traces of "*weeping*" and "*sorrow*" will be removed (cf. 25:8; 35:10; Rev 7:17; 21:4).
- Sin will be ***excluded*** and everything that might spoil our life will be ***done away with***, so that eternal bliss can ensue.

65:20 *Never again will one of her infants live just a few days or an old man die before his time. Indeed, no one will die before the age of one hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of one hundred will be considered cursed.*

- Here examples are provided of how “*her*” (the new Jerusalem’s) weeping and sorrow (referred to in the previous verse) will be eliminated.
- It pictures a return to the longevity of the generations after Adam before the full impact of living in a degraded environment had taken its toll upon mankind.
- This is the initial part of a description of the new heavens and new earth that continues through verse 25, in which those entering into the new heavens and new earth are moving back towards an existence like Adam had in paradise – though the blessings that they experience will be beyond even that.

65:20 *Never again will one of her infants live just a few days or an old man die before his time. Indeed, no one will die before the age of one hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of one hundred will be considered cursed.*

- In a number of earlier passages, Isaiah has already made it clear that those who live in the final eternal kingdom of God will ***never again*** have to face death.
 - *[The LORD] will swallow up death permanently...* (Isaiah 25:8a)
 - *Your dead will come back to life; your corpses will rise up. Wake up and shout joyfully, you who live in the ground! For you will grow like plants drenched with the morning dew, and the earth will bring forth its dead spirits.* (Isaiah 26:19)
- But that is not Isaiah's focus here.

65:20 *Never again will one of her infants live just a few days or an old man die before his time. Indeed, no one will die before the age of one hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of one hundred will be considered cursed.*

- What is portrayed here is the rolling back of the consequences of sin so that there are no more untimely deaths.
- Infant mortality will drop to zero and the aged will complete the full quota of their years (and beyond).
- How much sorrow in our present world would be avoided by these changes alone!
- Furthermore “*no one will die before the age of one hundred*”.
- The last line of the verse is difficult, but may suggest that in this situation of extended lifespans one who “*fails*” to “*reach the age of one hundred*” would be accounted as being under a divine curse.

Life in the New City and World (65:21-25)

65:21 *They will build houses and live in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.* ²² *No longer will they build a house only to have another live in it, or plant a vineyard only to have another eat its fruit, for my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will enjoy to the fullest what they have produced.* ²³ *They will not work in vain or give birth to children that will experience disaster. For the LORD will bless their children and their descendants.* ²⁴ *Before they even call out, I will respond; while they are still speaking, I will hear.* ²⁵ *A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake's food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy [in all my holy] mountain," says the LORD.*

65:21 *They will build houses and live in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.*

- In the law it had been prophesied that due to the nation's disobedience it would not be able to enjoy the houses it had built nor the fruit of its labors (cf. Deut 28:30; cf. also Zeph 1:13 and Micah 6:15).
- In the **new** age, however, the very **opposite** situation will prevail.
- Israel had long suffered from the invasions of outsiders
- But now they will themselves be able to build their houses and to dwell in them without interruption, and they will also be able to eat the grapes **they themselves** have planted.
- It is a picture of tranquility, of a man laboring and enjoying the fruit of his labors.
- The blessing of labor characterizes the Messianic age.

65:22 *No longer will they build a house only to have another live in it, or plant a vineyard only to have another eat its fruit, for my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will enjoy to the fullest what they have produced.*

- Isaiah strengthens the promise given in the previous verse through a denial of its opposite.
- The people will not build houses that others will thereafter enjoy, while they themselves are carried away into exile.
- Nor will they plant vineyards that will be enjoyed by others after they themselves have been taken away (cf. 62:8, 9).
- The comparison with the longevity of trees here seems to be based upon the fact that to the Palestinian the tree was a symbol of permanence and endurance.
- Isaiah does not necessarily mean that just as a tree lives for many days, so also will the people, but rather that their life will have the ***permanence*** of a tree (cf. Ps 1:3; Jer 17:1–8).
- Furthermore, God's chosen ones will enjoy to the full the work that their own hands have performed.

65:23 *They will not work in vain or give birth to children that will experience disaster. For the LORD will bless their children and their descendants.*

- This verse continues on the note that the new earth shall not be marked by disappointments and frustrations.
- Common, everyday toil shall not be marked by futility, and be done “*in vain.*”
- One striking example of major disappointments in life could be to have children, whose life would be shortened by an accident or “*disaster*” and who never come to realize the promise “*that you will live a long time on the earth*” (Eph 6:3 cf. Exodus 20:12).
- Instead, God’s faithful will be blessed, they and “*their children and their descendants.*”
- God’s enduring blessings shall extend over generations.

65:24 *Before they even call out, I will respond; while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

- In chapter 64 the people had complained that God did not **hear** them when they cried out unto Him.
- In the Messianic age, however, He will **abundantly** hear them.
- In fact, in the Messianic age, God will answer when the people have not yet even called upon Him.
- What is prominent here is God's readiness to answer prayer, for He has a love and concern over His own that they cannot begin to appreciate.
- In fact, while the people are yet speaking God will hear, in the sense of hearing favorably and answering.
- What greater privilege than to have a God whose love is so great that He answers before one calls to Him!

65:25 *A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake's food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy [in all my holy] mountain," says the LORD.*

- The final concrete example that Isaiah uses to convey the character of God's new creation is one he used in the description of the messianic kingdom in chapter 11.
- These verses seem to be a condensation of 11:6–9, using many of the same words.
- Its appearance here serves to make plain that although the Servant/ Messiah is not given prominence in this passage like he was in chapter 11, it is the same kingdom that is being spoken of, and the blessings that are being spoken of here are those that have been made available ***because of*** the Servant/ Messiah's coming.
- The final example of the removal of that which causes weeping in this world is the establishment of ***harmony in nature***.

65:25 *A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake's food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy [in all my holy] mountain," says the LORD.*

- The effects of the Fall have reached to the world of nature, making nature a dangerous place for the man and woman who were **originally** given rule **over** nature.
- This danger is exemplified here by the “*wolf*”, the “*lion*”, and the “*snake*”.
- These animals symbolize all the devouring, ravaging, poisonous aspects of our world.
- But in God's kingdom, all that will be **changed**.
- The point is that no warnings will have to be posted in that world, and no one will weep over a snakebitten child, or over a wife devoured by a lion.
- Nature will no longer be our enemy, nor will we be enemies of nature.

65:25 *A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake's food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy [in all my holy] mountain," says the LORD.*

- The one element here that is *not* present in 11:6-9 is “*a snake's food will be dirt*”.
- This is an allusion to Genesis 3. All the sources of weeping that have been detailed in vv. 20–25 are ultimately the result of the snake's interference in Eden.
- There God announced that the snake would crawl in the dust forever, and that although he would bite the heel of Eve's child, that child would crush the snake's head (Gen 3:15).
- Here the snake is finally condemned not only to crawl in the dust but to eat only dust forevermore.
- When that happens, the curse will be truly broken, and as the Lord says, there will be none to “*injure or destroy in all my holy mountain*”.
- May God grant it!

Next Time

- I plan to cover the *Final Judgment and Glory of the LORD* (66:15-24)

No Class Discussion Time!

- I am setting aside our discussion time today and instead would like to ask you all for a favor.
- I have prepared an evaluation survey that I would like to ask you all to fill out during our remaining class time.
- I would like to ask that you be ***totally honest*** on this survey. If leaving your name off the survey will make you feel more comfortable in giving honest answers, then please do so.
- I would like to ask ***everyone*** here to fill out a survey – including wives and young people.
- Most of the questions are multiple choice, but there is always an option D (“other”) where you can answer in your own words.
- If making a slight modification to one of the suggested answers would make it accurate for you, then do so. It is also fine to choose more than one option if more than one are true.
- I plan to aggregate the answers that I receive on these surveys and share them with the elders and with the class.