

As much as we enjoy the wonder of this created world, we have to acknowledge that it is increasingly marred by sin. Companies pour toxic waste into the ground and water. We have warnings in major cities when it is unsafe to breathe the air outside our homes. As the third world advances, it will only get worse. New illnesses like Zika and Ebola are on the rise. Spiritual pollution, however, is even worse. The Word of God tells us that innocent blood defiles the very land (Psalm 106:38). Doctrines of demons are on the rise, polluting the mind of man (1 Timothy 4:1). Entertainment is increasingly vile, year after year. What hope is there? This chapter gives us the answer. God is going to do a very thorough clean up job.

17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. Isaiah 65:17 The interpreters' dilemma with this verse is that it sounds like Revelation 21 which takes place after the Millennial Kingdom. But this passage describes the Millennial Kingdom when Christ reigns over the nations of the earth after having lifted the curse from the earth (Romans 8:19-21). It could be that Isaiah is seeing both epochs in the distant future and describing both, or perhaps he is using the language in a figurative way. Are the heavens and earth new in the sense that the world was new after the flood, or literally destroyed and recreated? My understanding is that the world of the Millennial Kingdom is the same heaven and earth cleansed by the fire of the wrath of God (2 Peter 3:10-13), but that the eternal kingdom is literally a new creation. Certainly these interpretations are subject to debate.

Any way we look at it, the thought is that what is past will be past. The pain, suffering, inequity, injustice, and every fruit of past sin will never come to mind again. Every tragedy will be swallowed up in the glorious light of the present joy. Every tear will be wiped from our eyes (Isaiah 25:8). Imagine the day we ask, "Do you remember what cancer was? There was that word "terrorism" but I just can't recall what it meant!"

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. Isaiah 65:18 Instead of painful memories that affect our attitudes and behavior, we will be overwhelmed with the joy we experience in God's new creation.

The last two lines are a parallelism. Jerusalem is the people of God. Some interpreters see this as the Jewish people, while others see it as the redeemed of both Jew and Gentile. I believe the latter is meant because of the choice of the word, "redeemed" in Isaiah 62:12. Just as God created the new heavens and earth, so He created the redeemed to be a joy and gladness. God uses the word "create" three times in these two verses. Perhaps it is to remind us of the original creation. His Word creates, and what He creates is good (Genesis 1:31). But when sin marred His good creation, it

Commented [PW1]: Psalm 106:38 (ESV)
³⁸ they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.

Commented [PW2]: 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV)
¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

Commented [PW3]: Revelation 21:1 (ESV)
¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Commented [PW4]: Romans 8:19-21 (ESV)
¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope
²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Commented [PW5]: 2 Peter 3:10-13 (ESV)
¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.
¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,
¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they bum!
¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 25:8 (ESV)
⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

Commented [PW7]: Isaiah 62:12 (ESV)
¹² And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

Commented [PW8]: Genesis 1:31 (ESV)
³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

became necessary to re-create. **The heavens and the earth and the redeemed will all be cause for gladness and joy.** No longer will there be tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:25). No longer will there be division in the body of Christ. Instead of our struggles with problems we face today, our faith will be complete and therefore we will always be filled with joy and gladness.

That cannot come by our hard work as some would claim. At the end of the eighteenth century, some groups taught that missions would transform the world and begin the kingdom of God. Then came World War 1 and 2 along with a hundred years of around the world evangelism. Now that idea remains with only a few. It cannot come by man's effort. It is a creative work of God. It won't come about by politics or even the purest church or the greatest mission efforts. Of course we strive to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and walk in the light and evangelize, but in this world you will have tribulation (John 16:33). We are told to put on the armor of God because we are in a battle, and sometimes the battles are intense and costly (Ephesians 6:11-12). That won't end until the re-creation of heaven and earth and you and me (Philippians 3:21).

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. Isaiah 65:19 While we rejoice in God's re-creation, He rejoices in us. His bride will be perfected. Remember that He was afflicted in all our affliction (Isaiah 63:9). When that affliction ends forever, God will have great cause for rejoicing. There will be no more sounds of weeping or cries of distress coming from His people. I'm fairly certain that every soul here this morning has had those times of weeping over the pain in their heart. You have more than likely uttered cries of distress. Now multiply that by the millions of believers throughout the ages. We can't imagine the pain our compassionate God has felt. No wonder He will be so joyful when it is finally over forever!

²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. Isaiah 65:20 One of the greatest pains we experience is the loss of a loved one, especially a child (Zechariah 12:10). Oh, how glad God is, how glad we will be, when that will never happen again! Everyone born in that millennial age will live long lives. It sounds like the days before the flood, which may be because the Lord restores the pre-flood conditions. To die at 100 years of age will be like dying in one's youth.

Since there are still sinners present, this can't be the eternal kingdom. The sinner will be accursed at one hundred years of age. I think this is because of man's insatiable appetite for satisfaction. That longing is meant to be filled by the Lord. But when we look for that satisfaction in the creation, we end up increasingly abusing creation and being excessive in our enjoyment of what was meant for good. This lack of moderation

Commented [PW9]: Matthew 13:25 (ESV)

²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

Commented [PW10]: John 16:33 (ESV)

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Commented [PW11]: Ephesians 6:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Commented [PW12]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Commented [PW13]: Isaiah 63:9 (ESV)

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.

Commented [PW14]: Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

harms us. The longer we continue in it the more we indulge in excess and the greater the curse we experience. I like bacon, but if I eat bacon for every meal because I find my satisfaction in food, my arteries are going to clog up and my weight will double. The natural consequence of sin is a curse. So while the curse may be lifted from the earth, those living on it will still be able to choose sin and experience for themselves why God's commands are always for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13).

²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. Isaiah 65:21-22 We live in an age when it is hard to relate to this passage. For most of human history one's labor was often taken from them by force, either by conquerors or by land owners. But in that age to come, the saints will ensure justice and peace throughout the earth. Not only will we enjoy the fruit of our labor, but we will enjoy it for a long time (Ezekiel 28:26). Too often, the joy that comes from the fruit of our labor is taken away by theft, taxation, or decay. That will end. The political solution is Christ the King. He is the only ruler who can't be corrupted by power, for He has always had all power. Maybe we could write Him in on our next presidential ballot?

²³ They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. Isaiah 65:23 Repetition is driving home the point that what you earn or labor for will not be taken away. The Babylonians would come and take away everything the readers had worked hard to possess. Inflation and devaluation of our currency will take away what we labored for to provide for ourselves in old age. But not in that age! Never again will children be stricken with illness, taken as slaves, or killed by an oppressor (Deuteronomy 28:41). Those who have received forgiveness in Christ will have children who will be blessed, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren (Isaiah 61:9).

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. Isaiah 65:24 We often claim this verse for our time, and it is applicable to some extent. In that age prayers will *always* be in line with the will of God and have quick and wonderful answers. That is the blessing of those believers in that age. Isaiah has already said it is true for those who take up the fast of the Lord, which is a fast of looking out for the poor and needy and not being judgmental. *⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'* *If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,* Isaiah 58:9 Because those in that age who belong to the Lord will be sharing God's heart and doing His will, His answer to their prayers will come quickly. James tells us that the prayer of the

Commented [PW15]: Deuteronomy 10:13 (ESV)
¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

Commented [PW16]: Ezekiel 28:26 (ESV)
²⁶ And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God."

Commented [PW17]: Deuteronomy 28:41 (ESV)
⁴¹ You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity.

Commented [PW18]: Isaiah 61:9 (ESV)
⁹ Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16). That is because they pray the heart of God. Their prayers are not self-centered, but God centered.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD. Isaiah 65:25 This famous verse has been interpreted as the peace that will prevail in the earth between aggressive and passive personalities, the powerful and the weak. We should remember that the Hebrews don't separate the physical and spiritual. While it is pictorial language, I believe it will literally be the case in the animal world too (Isaiah 11:6-7). The re-creation will make it possible. One thousand years of peace will be an amazing thing. Has the world ever seen a decade of peace from war? It certainly has not had a second of peace from strife between individuals.

The serpent eating dust implies that Satan will not have influence (Genesis 3:14). The sin the world experiences will come from within the heart of man choosing to disobey God (James 1:14-15). Satan is bound for all but the very end of those thousand years (Revelation 20:7-8). Then when he is released, he immediately gathers the world to try to wrestle the throne from Jesus.

The holy mountain is Zion, but it also represents God's kingdom. Remember that in the vision in Daniel the stone from the mountain struck the earth and became a mountain that filled the earth (Daniel 2:35). Jesus will reign over the whole earth, so the animals will not hurt or destroy, nor will Satan have influence. All of mankind will see the world as God intended it to be. Everything man needs will be available to us if he is willing to do a little enjoyable work. Justice will prevail in every situation because God's servants will see that it is so. Man will have no excuse at all for turning against Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem.

I've been discussing the justice of eternal punishment with a brother. I think it is something we should all wrestle with, not because we question God's fairness, but because we would not wish hell upon our worst enemy. We should understand that God does not want to send a single soul to hell. Souls are eternal and must dwell with or without God, and there is only one way to dwell with God, which is by accepting the forgiveness He freely gives us through what Jesus did for us on the cross. By refusing that, we condemn ourselves to separation from Him and His goodness.

What the Millennium will illustrate is that even if man lived in the perfect environment with complete understanding of right and wrong and who their Creator is, even after a thousand years they would still choose not to accept His forgiveness and rather live without Him. They would be miserable in heaven. I don't believe they would ever change their minds. A hardened heart filled with hatred can grow so hardened it will not be changed. We must guard ourselves from this condition by being quick to forgive and

Commented [PW19]: James 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Commented [PW20]: Isaiah 11:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Commented [PW21]: Genesis 3:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

Commented [PW22]: James 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Commented [PW23]: Revelation 20:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison

⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

Commented [PW24]: Daniel 2:35 (ESV)

³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

refusing to mull over past injustices and evil done to us. We must never blame the evils of this world on God, but always on this fallen world, our flesh, and the devil. In the age to come they will only have their evil hearts to blame.

I wonder if the torment of hell is mostly from the fact that everyone there is as selfish and demanding as those who surround them. There will be no caring people in hell. There will be no one who would change their mind had they only known. What one sows, throughout eternity they will reap. They will sow and reap from one another again and again and again. It grieves the heart of God that they would choose that course. It should grieve our hearts as well, but also cause us to be grateful for what God has saved us from.

There is a glorious future for those in Christ, even greater than that thousand year reign. We will be filled with overwhelming joy and gladness for all that God has done for us and for our greater understanding of the depths of His love (Ephesians 3:17-20). What a contrast is set before mankind! How eager we should be for every opportunity we are given to share our hope with those who will listen.

C.S. Lewis wrote, *If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.... I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.* (from Mere Christianity p. 106)

Jesus endured for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). Part of that joy was our redemption, the end of suffering and sorrow, and the joy and gladness of His bride when He makes all things new (Revelation 21:5). Let us follow the example He set and endure for the joy that is set before us.

Questions

- 1 Why do we need a new heaven and earth?
- 2 Why won't we remember the past?
- 3 What will we be joyful about?
- 4 What will be the Lord's joy? Why?
- 5 What are some of the things that will be no more?
- 6 How can verse 24 be for us today?
- 7 What is the picture in verse 25?
- 8 Why should we take it as physical and spiritual?
- 9 Why is hell eternal?
- 10 What does the contrast encourage us to do?

Commented [PW25]: Ephesians 3:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Commented [PW26]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Commented [PW27]: Revelation 21:5 (ESV)

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."