

## God's Kingdom of Peace

**Y**ou must be living right," the man said to Kelley as she walked past the service reception desk. She responded with, "Yes, sir. I sure am!"

Kelley took a seat in the sparse waiting area of the tire and auto center. For some time, she had been meaning to have her tires checked out. She had made it through the winter and skated through the spring, by the grace of God.

"Ma'am, your tires were holding on by a wing and a prayer," the mechanic had just told her. "Your two back tires could have blown out at any time, and you could have had an awful accident, let alone done a lot of damage to your car."

"You would have been calling on the name of the Lord, if your tires had blown out!" came the reply text from Kelley's friend, Robyn.

"Right!" texted Kelley.

"Girl, God was taking care of you even when you weren't calling on Him!" Robyn texted.

"My tires blowing up would have messed up everything I need to do today and next week," replied Kelley. Then she accepted the incoming call from Robyn.

"God is so good to us, girl," Robyn said. "God takes care of us here, but wait until we get to heaven! That will be an awesome time."

"Right, my sister," Kelley smiled. "Eyes haven't seen, and ears haven't heard."

"It will be perfect," added Robyn.

- 1.** *What future plans have you set your hope on?*
- 2.** *What role does God play in that future?*
- 3.** *How does the future you desire compare with the future God has promised?*

## New Heavens and a New Earth

*Isaiah 65:17-19, KJV*

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

*Isaiah 65:17-19, NIV*

<sup>17</sup>“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

<sup>18</sup>But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

<sup>19</sup>I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

In Isaiah 65:1-16, God said through Isaiah that He was ready to be sought by His people. He made Himself known and available to them, but they did not respond. They continued to provoke Him, to rebel and to worship other gods. So God would distinguish between those who serve Him and those who serve other gods. Those who turn away from God will be judged; those who seek God will experience His coming new world.

Isaiah 65:17-19 is all about that new creation—new heavens and a new earth. We hear echoes of Genesis 1—2 here, starting with the very first line: “I will create.” The Israelites during this time would immediately have thought of Genesis and recognized the weight of what God was announcing. The God who originally created heaven and earth is going to make new ones. From chapter 40 on, God reminded His people that He is Creator of all: the heavenly host (40:26), the ends of the earth (40:28), the heavens and the earth (42:5), and His people (43:1).

The new heavens and new earth will be a delight to His people. The “former things” (vs. 17), namely suffering and death, will be forgotten. God desires for His people to “be glad and rejoice forever” (vs. 18)! They will delight in what God has done. On top of this, God will delight in them. He will rejoice over His people. This new heavens and new earth will be a place without the sadness and tears that are so common in the present.

**4.** *What is a prominent theme in this passage?*

**5.** *What chapters in Genesis does this passage refer back to? What are some similarities?*

## A New Jerusalem

*Isaiah 65:20-25, KJV*

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of

*Isaiah 65:20-25, NIV*

<sup>20</sup>“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,  
or an old man who does not live out his years;

the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child;  
the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

<sup>21</sup>They will build houses and dwell in them;  
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

<sup>22</sup>No longer will they build houses and others live in them,  
or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree,  
so will be the days of my people;  
my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.

their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

23 They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Verses 20-23 elaborate more on why the people of Israel needed a new creation. Before and after the exile, they were accustomed to death and tragedy. They knew what it was like for loved ones to die—from infants to the elderly. Because of the reality of death, they often built houses only for someone else to live in them and planted a vineyard only for another to eat its fruit. Death and invasions cut short their lives and prevented them from enjoying the fruits of their labor. This section is a reversal of the curses in Deuteronomy 28, which say in verses 30 and 33, "You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit . . . A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days." God was promising to reverse the judgment of exile they just endured.

This section in Isaiah is about life. In this new heavens and new earth, there will be long life for people of all ages, so much so that a hundred years will be considered young. Death will not cut short anyone's life; death will not keep them from enjoying the houses they build and the food they plant. In contrast to the toil of work in Genesis 3, overcome with thistles and thorns, the work of their hands will produce good for them to enjoy and none of it will be in vain. No infant will die, but every child will live. Because of the Lord's blessing, each person will flourish, and so will their children and grandchildren.

Verses 24-25 describe the peace of the new heavens and the new earth. God's people will continue to have a relationship with Him, and nothing will prevent their prayers from being heard by Him. There will be perfect harmony in God's relationship with His people. Instead of the relationship being tainted by sin, there will be peace. He will hear and answer even while they are still speaking.

The peace in the new creation will even extend to the animals. No longer will animals kill and feed on each other—rather they will eat together in harmony. Isaiah 11 is echoed here, which describes predator and prey lying down beside one another. The entire ecosystem He made will be put back into order.

Verse 25 continues, "and dust will be the serpent's food." This is a clear allusion to Genesis 3:14 where God curses the serpent: "You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life." Some commentators believe that this verse means the serpent will continue to be cursed. The serpent will be defeated once and for all, just as it was promised in Genesis 3.

**6.** *What would be different about this new heavens and new earth?*

**7.** *How far does God's restoration extend in this passage?*

**8.** *What animals are mentioned in this passage, and why are they significant?*

## Suffering Then Glory

Everyone conceived in this broken cosmos experiences darkness. Suffering varies from person to person, but no one escapes death, shattered dreams, nor the pain that weakens a soul. What believer has not deeply felt, if not cried, “My God, why have You forsaken me?”

Finite humans cannot make sense of their circumstances in light of God’s promises. As the Israelites marched from Jerusalem into the desert in chains, odds are God heard the refrain, “What about your promise to Abraham, Lord? What about your oath to David?” As believers trudge through their trials, they’ll likewise wonder, “How in the world does this make me more like Christ? How does sharing in His sufferings help me enjoy Him more?”

Into our darkness, God speaks. His words do not instantaneously end the sound of mourning. Life might get worse. And yet, God reaffirms His promise that, no matter how defeated we feel, no matter how much darkness we see, “There will be light.”

How can we be certain? Our confidence is this: Light has already entered the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The eternal Son of God clothed Himself in fragile flesh to be bruised with us. Paul says, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

God gave Isaiah visions of the unfathomable, that wolves and lambs will feed together. How much more mind-blowing is the promise that sinners and the Lamb will feast together (Rev. 19:9)?

Today, set your hope fully on this perfect future God has planned for His people.

**9.** *What would change in the present if we believed in our heart what God says about the future?*

**10.** *When have we been tempted to doubt God amid suffering, and what word of comfort does the Cross of Christ speak to us in those moments?*

## Praise Our Creative God

How would you have responded to God's promise if you were Isaiah hearing it for the first time? How do you think you should respond now? Psalm 79, which Asaph also wrote in the aftermath of the Jewish exile, concludes with, "Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give praise to you forever; from generation to generation we will proclaim your praise" (vs. 13).

► *Pray to the Father that, amid the darkest moments of your week, His Spirit would empower you to set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming (1 Pet. 1:13).*

### KEY VERSE

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

—Isaiah 65:25, KJV

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

—Isaiah 65:25, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of June 12 through June 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Isaiah 50:4-9—The Confidence of God's Servant.

**Tues.** Isaiah 52:13-53:12—God's Servant Will Make Many Righteous.

**Wed.** Mark 10:17-27—Forsaking All for the Kingdom.

**Thurs.** Mark 10:35-45—The Greatest Must Be a Servant.

**Fri.** Psalm 113—Who Is Like the Lord?

**Sat.** Mark 14:1-9—A Humble Act of Love.

**Sun.** Ezekiel 37:15-28—God's Servant David Shall Be King.