

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NKJV)

17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

20 "No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.

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 as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them.

24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust *shall be* the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

We have an amazing capacity as humans. No matter how much we have, we have an amazing capacity to be **discontent**, to be **dissatisfied**. The richest people on earth are often just as unhappy as the poorest. Ecclesiastes is a real eye opener. It describes life on planet earth as lived **apart from God** and it stamps it with a stamp that says **VANITY**.

I often think that the secret to happiness in our current conditions is having low expectations. That is not the secret to **joy**. But **happiness** depends upon our circumstances. Joy does not. Having good friends, good food, and good health are about the best circumstances you can hope for here, and they are often fleeting. And even when we have those things we seem to be obsessed with that which we do not have. We have an enormous capacity to be miserable.

Part of our problem is where we have set our hearts, our minds, our treasures, our money... all those things reveal our hope.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Many of the problems we have in our Christian lives are the result of expecting **this life** to provide us with the things we think we must have.

Is there something that has you derailed this morning? Is there something you are distraught about? Is there something you just can't get over?

Ask this question.

Has God promised you better in this life?

If you thought you had a week to live, how would your perception of this problem change? This sermon was prepared hours before Mary had her stroke. We need to be reminded that our lives can change on a dime.

So with what you are facing, has God promised you better in this life?

Does God promise you something better in the future that makes going through what you are going through worth the price?

God does not call us to live for **today**, or **tomorrow**, or next **week**, or next month or next year or next decade. Any of those focuses will take us down the wrong path. Any of those focuses will derail our lives and cause us excess misery.

The focus from the beginning of the Bible to the end is beyond the horizon. Every description is one of sojourners making their way through someone else's homeland in order to reach our homeland. And the earth, as it is, is not enough.

This is one of those Sunday school truths that we find so easy to spout and so hard to believe. You and I are to live with eternity in view, every day, all the time, in every decision. Do we live **here** now? Of course. Do we have obligations and things we must think about? Certainly. The person that does not provide for his own is worse than an unbeliever. But none of this is to distract us from where **our hope lies**, from where **our help comes** from. The Christian Life cannot be lived apart from a continual eternal perspective. It is our hope for **what Christ will provide us in the future**, based on **that which Christ has provided for us in the past** that empowers us to live the faith we are to live **right now**.

Isaiah is going to provide us a wonderful glimpse into why living for Christ is worth it. He is going to show us what God has in mind for His people. And it truly is glorious. It is beyond words. It is better than we can hope or imagine.

Our sister Mary is sitting on the verge of the most wonderful event imaginable.

Mr Ortland adds a another perspective as well.

"The life you've always longed for but has always eluded you, always kept just out of reach—that life is what God is preparing for his servants." The place to which is God taking us is *the* human experience that defines the very meaning of joy. C. S. Lewis came to this conclusion: 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.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Behold is intended to be one of those “stop you in your tracks” words. Stop and look. This is the sound that comes right before an emergency alert. God is saying stop and look at what I am about to say. “Look at me while I speak to you. You must get this,” He is saying.

I create new heavens and a new earth

The word for “create” here is the same one used in Genesis. It is interesting that word implies effortlessness. And it points to something fundamentally new.

2 Peter 3:10-12 (NKJV)

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

I have read that some believe the earth’s surface will be vaporized, that the earth will be off-scoured, and that the recreation will happen there. They base it on some scriptures that don’t come to mind right now.

Isaiah seems to say the earth and the atmosphere will be completely destroyed and recreated out of nothing.

I don't know and I don't think it matters. What does matter is that everything we come in contact with will be new.

Now how many beautiful things have you seen on this earth? I've seen the Grand Canyon a couple of times. It is almost impossible to take a picture that isn't majestic in that place. It is amazing. I once got a chance to be at the peak of a mountain in the Rockies. The peaks are somewhat pointed so when you look out you can see both sides of the mountain for what seems like forever. Then there are all the amazing flowers that contain such exquisite beauty and they often live and die without a human ever seeing them and appreciating their beauty.

That is all a reflection of who God is. God loves beauty. It is part of His nature and it is conveyed in His creation. Now when God created the earth the first time, He knew full well what would happen to it. He knew what us savages would do to it. He knew also what he would do to it, with earthquakes and tsunamis. And yet it is still just amazingly beautiful. Can you just imagine what a world will be like that He creates for His people to live in forever? Wow. That will be amazing. We have much to look forward to. And that is the point.

As 2nd Peter says

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God

We are living on a planet that will burn up. This existence is not meant to contain us forever. We should live with the eternal dwelling in mind. That puts all of our temporary suffering in its proper perspective.

So God is going to create a new heaven and earth. The heaven referred to here is probably the atmosphere and maybe extending to the galaxy. It isn't intended to convey that where God lives will need to be remodeled.

Now back to Isaiah.

And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Are you ever going about your day and something happens that reminds you of something terrible that happened. Maybe it is something you did. Maybe it was something done to you. Or maybe it is something that happened to you or someone else. But it instantly hurts you or grieves you or embarrasses you or humiliates you.

My life is full of those things. I assume that everyone my age has them. I don't know. But I do know that the promise here is for something better.

Will this “not remembering or coming to mind” happen in an instant or will it be as a result of gradual healing? I don’t know. I hope it is in an instant. The tree of life is for healing of the nations. So maybe healing is needed in eternity. Whatever the case, we will one day be free of the burden of our history. And that is a very wonderful thing.

Do you ever watch the news? No news channel could exist in eternity. There is no dissension, no crime, no moral failures, no government waste, no opposing parties, no one in power that does not deserve to be there, no injustice, no disease, no suffering. Nope those are part of the things that will not come to mind. Wow. And amazing kindness will rule the day every day. It won’t be news worthy.

Maybe we will have documentaries that will play about all the places in each other’s lives where we exhibited virtue in a world that can’t even spell the word. Maybe we will get to see what Mark or Jeremiah or Sarah did in their work world that was different because they loved Christ. Maybe we will see documentaries of all the mothers who didn’t care what the world thought of them. They chose to devote themselves to the welfare of the children at an economic loss to the family income and their personal status in the world. Or maybe we will see those selfless acts of service that were done in our body that we never knew about. Those are just examples, but those acts of faith are true in all of our lives, no matter what path God has chosen for us. Those may all be the crowns we throw at Christ’s feet.

There is a lot about this life I want **to forget**. I want it to never **surprise me** again. And that is the kind of eternity we are promised.

Now one more thing. It is the earth that will be recreated, along with its surrounding heaven. And that **new earth** is where we will live. Randy Alcorn’s book was very helpful in this. The existence we will have for eternity is not so different than the one we have now that we cannot imagine what existence will be like. Our bodies will be different, our environment will be different, our sin natures will no longer exist, Christ will rule, and there will be no sin present. Those things are hard to imagine. But we will exist in bodies that are **similar** to the ones now. We will have things to do like we do now. I suspect we will even get satisfaction from our work like we do now. This will be like the best of planet earth with none of the down side.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

The verb tense is present. Isaiah is telling these people, **because of what is in the future**, be glad and rejoice **now** and continue doing that into eternity.

What joy that must bring God when He sees people who **really believe** what He says. They may be in the midst of awful circumstances, but they are rejoicing because they believe **these things God promises** like they are really true and worth the wait.

Then Isaiah tells us that God is creating both **the environment** that believers will live in for eternity and **the people** who will be living there. And they are a joy to **the believers** and they are a joy **to God**.

Scripture constantly reorients us to this idea that God is doing things primarily for His glory and His pleasure. Fortunately for us, because He is loving, it **gives Him pleasure** to love His children. But we cannot, at any step in the way, start getting the idea that it is because God owes us something or because we are so lovely, or that we have earned something from God. No. This is all about God.

We are called to rejoice, to express our great joy about what God promises to do for us. And God rejoices that He is doing it.

One of the problems with sin and rebellion in a Christian's life is that God deserves better. There is no reason that we should disturb God's joy in His people. But scripture tells us we do have that ability. We can grieve the Holy Spirit. We can take the **rejoicing** out of God's experience in loving us and replace it with **grief**. Have you ever loved someone and their decisions have caused you grief? Then you know exactly how the sins **you** have chosen to do have affected **God**. We need to think about this. We need to use this as fuel to deeply **repent** of those things. We need to fully understand the seriousness of choosing to live in disobedience to God. Ultimately **He will fix us**, but faith gives God pleasure **now**. It allows Him to freely rejoice in His people like He promises to do in eternity.

And oh how wonderful these verses end.

The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

Weeping speaks of mourning and humiliation and **crying** refers to a cry of distress.

Notice, the end of weeping is not promised in this life. If that is what we expect from God we will be disappointed with God. That is not the deal. That is not the promise. In fact, some of our life's tears may be **caused by God** as He disciplines our unwillingness to listen to Him or as He causes us **to process** just what a big deal our sin is. He may drive us, by His mercy and grace, to tears.

Sometimes these things are actually a **cost** of following Christ, of being faithful to Him.

Matthew 5:3-10 (NKJV)

³ "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

There is crying here. It is an existence that warrants tears. Tears are expected.

But God holds out to us as a divine inspiration an existence where these things are absent.

²⁰ "No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.

Now I have seen three interpretations of this.

The first is that this passage is limited to the Israelites returning to their land and everything is talking in exaggerated tones about just how good it is. Then this makes sense because there is still death.

A second is that this is often seen as a passage about the time of the Millennial reign of Christ where believers and non believers coexist with Christ ruling. This is certainly a possibility, but then the creation of a new heaven and new earth are out of order.

The third is that the language here is not meant to be seen in its negative form but only in its positive. It is poetic language about people living long and the faithless having no life at all.

Could this also be one of those typical Isaiah passages that part of it speaks of one time period and another speaks of another?

I don't pretend to know for sure. But if we keep it in context it seems to better fit a poetic kind of meaning.

The emphasis is that people will keep living. We know in other scripture that believers will live for an eternity. Now that is impossible for our finite minds to grasp. Basically the mornings never stop coming where we wake up.

Don't we need to protect our minds? Don't we need to prepare them. If there is someone we love, we must consider what we will do when they die. If we don't, we have failed to think rationally and are setting ourselves up for

mental destruction. We live in a world where stuff breaks, things wear out, things crash and people die. There are all kinds of moth and rust. We have got to understand that Christ is worthy of our lives no matter what he allows to enter our lives. If there is anything that we will be unfaithful to Christ if He takes it away, that thing is an idol. We live in danger. We live amidst suffering and loss. This world is made of that stuff. Isaiah is holding out to us the only remedy in our thinking that will allow us to **reconcile ourselves** to that loss and suffering. The fact is, it is all temporary. It will end one day and every obedience and faithfulness in this life will be seen to have been wise and reasonable and every faithless disobedience will be seen to have been foolish and selfish.

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 as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For *they shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them.

Now again, this passage has difficulties. Will there be children born in the new earth? Will we need to build houses? Maybe this is referring to a different time.

But we can be certain that there will be no vanity in eternity. Every work will last. There will be no moth and rust to destroy there. There will be no curse. Carla, we won't need to lay down plastic for the weeds there. Of course, we will no longer be married so you probably won't care so much what I do.

No labor shall be in vain.

Wow, what an adjustment.

Some of you helped me to put on new shingles on a roof on the N Street house. I just drove by and they are starting to curl. That is vanity. Fortunately it is not my problem. But that is how life is. But that is not how it **always will be**. I don't know what meaningful work we will have for eternity besides praising God. But whatever it is, it won't be like the work I do every day. It will last. Every effort will bring forth good fruit.

And then look at this.

24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like

the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

Have you ever prayed for something for a long time and God did not answer it? But you felt that you were praying for something that He wanted? That is good for us now. And it is something we can expect. Even if we are correct about **God's will**, we are often wrong about **God's timetable**.

But that is not how eternity will be. When we ask, it will be like McDonalds but better. Our orders will always be right and on time.

Before we call, we will get what it is we were going to ask for. That is the ultimate in customer service.

Delays are necessary now. Sometimes it is so we will grow. Sometimes it is because the other person is not ready yet. Sometimes it is because the answer could have unintended consequences that we do not foresee.

But in eternity those are no longer obstacles. God can give us what we ask for and it will not be asked according to fleshly desires. It will not be asked according to the harm of someone else. And God is free to answer immediately and positively. That is just like God.

And verse 25-

The bad news, Diane might be that there will be serpents in eternity. The good news is they will no longer bite people. The curse is over. Maybe we will all be vegetarians at that point? But it is so wonderful that we can roam anywhere on the new earth and we are never in danger.

Carla had pulled over to check a tire in a remote parking lot. She called me and as we talked she said that she did not feel safe and she moved to the nearest town so she would be in a public place. This reminded me that this world is never safe. And it is particularly not safe for women and children. There are predators of all kinds roaming about. But in this world that Christ has prepared for us, there are zero predators of any kind. If there are Rockies in this new earth, we will be able to backpack to our hearts content without any fear of a bear attack. And we might not even need the backpack as food may be as close as the next tree.

I do not pretend to know how to take every verse of this passage. But I am confident to proclaim that God's goodness rings out in every verse. We can trust Him that He will make whatever He has us facing right now worthwhile. He is infinitely good and good to His children. We do well to obey Him, even if it means giving up what everyone else seems free to have. Even if it means paying prices that others do not seem to have to pay. We are just visiting this planet. We are passing through. This world has no lasting treasure. But Jesus.... Now that is a whole different story.

I want to close with a few words from brother Ortland.

Every day you and I are tempted to throw this hope away. But what for? This broken-down, fifth-rate world? It isn't worth it. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him..." ([1 Corinthians 2:9](#))—*that's* what we're living for.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word - Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.