

## Isaiah 65:17-25 God's New Creation: A Place

The problem of evil, particularly how God can create a good world and then allow evil to come in, is still the biggest question for people in this world. As we look around we see wars, destruction from hurricanes, sickness, untimely deaths, etc. In Isaiah's days, even God's people, physical Israel, particularly the Northern Kingdom, were destroyed by Assyria. And just after Isaiah's death the same would happen for Judah and Jerusalem. And many of those folks would have asked the same questions. Those of us who believe in the Word of God and look to IT for answers know that "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**" And, after he was finished creating, He said, "*All of this is very good*" (Gen 1:31). There was no sin, therefore no effects of sin. And we know what happened next. Adam and Eve sinned against God and EVERYTHING changed. And here we are! Now fast forward to Isaiah 65:17. God will not leave things as they are. His answer is found in v. 17: "**BEHOLD, I create new heavens and new earth.**" Brothers and sisters, Here lies the greatest promise that God will create anew this world! And again, just like he did in the first creation, He will "*rejoice in it forever*" (v. 18), expressing what He said in the beginning, "*It is good.*" Is there any greater news? Ponder that question for your entire life and you will not get a better answer! Oh, how we need this text and the truths found within!

Last week, in vv. 1-16 we focused on the creation of a people. Today, we focus on the place where this people will live, and live forever. Vv. 17-25 are divided into 3 sections. First, in v. 17 we see the end product, the new heavens and the new earth. And it will be so different than what we know that "*former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.*" This is hard to even imagine. So, Isaiah, in vv. 18-19, puts it in language the people of Israel can understand. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> section, he speaks of Jerusalem as the new creation. And as we've seen, this is a major theme. And if we move forward to the Book of Revelation we see this "New Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven (Rev. 3:12; 21:2). Now, we must understand something about these descriptions. Isaiah (and us) cannot describe what it will be like precisely because it will be so different. This is why he uses a city, or a mountain, or the place of Zion, as he uses what the people know and understand. And in the 3<sup>rd</sup> section he describes this place again using language everyone understands. Will the wolf and the lamb graze together? Will the lion eat straw like the ox? This is not the point. Isaiah is simply doing his best with what is around him. And that's all we can do to describe God. But there will be total fulfillment of these truths in the new heavens and the new earth. These are only pictures. The ultimate reality will be so much greater! There will be COMPLETE fulfillment! With this in mind, I have 4 principle truths about the new heavens and the new earth: 1) Complete Provision; 2) Complete Joy; 3) Complete Security; 4) Complete Peace.

1. The new heavens and the new earth will be a place of complete provision. We see this truth throughout the passage and throughout Isaiah when he speaks about this in other places. In v. 21, they will "**build houses and inhabit;**" they will "**plant vineyards and eat their fruit.**" If we go back to v. 13, it's inhabitants shall "eat," and "drink." They will never miss a meal. They will never be thirsty or hungry. In this world, I think scores of people, literally starving to death. I always remember the pictures of from the Jewish Holocaust museum and movies that show

thousands of grown men and women weighing no more than what seem no more than 60 or 70 pounds, with all their bones showing through their skin, behind fences, waiting on their next meal and wondering if they will die today. I remember the begging million homeless children in Mexico City, relying on their ability to beg and steal so they can survive. I think of the pictures sent by Wambua of those starving in Northern Kenya. (And, sometimes in our culture we joke about getting “hangry.”) In Isaiah’s context, he knew what war with Babylon would bring and he appeals to their faith in God’s promise to make a place where hunger and thirst will be no more.

I also think of shelter. With the crisis in the Bahamas with the recent hurricane, there are thousands without a roof over their head. I think of WW II (and I) where the inhabitants of a very cold Europe and northern Asia had nowhere to sleep because of the bombs that destroyed their homes and because of invading armies to their cities caused them to flee into the countryside. This will not be so in the new heavens and the new earth!

I think of the frailties of our physical bodies in this sinful world. There is a great reliance on doctors and what the medical world can do for us (for which I am very grateful). We also rely upon good foods, vitamins, minerals, etc. to help us combat sickness. And how much energy and effort do we place upon our health; and how much stress comes to our lives because of our worries in these areas. Well, the place God will create anew will be a place where there will be total provision in EVERY area of our lives. Brothers and sisters, we all agree with the words of Job: ***“Life is short and full of troubles”*** (Job 14:1). But there is a coming a day when we will no longer pray, *“Lord, give us this day our daily bread.”*

2. The new heavens and the new earth will be a place of complete joy. Look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of v. 18 and then 19: **“For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. 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.”** There is NOTHING in this place that will cause sorrow or pain. Our picture here is “weeping” or the “cry of distress.” Young people have a harder time with this one because the cares and stresses of this life have not piled up for them yet. The older we get the deeper and more we feel the effects of sin in this world. Parents who lose their children “prematurely” know this cry. Those who lose their spouse at a young age know what this feels like. Children who lose a parent at a young age know this cry of distress. Parents whose children rebel know how this feels. When sickness comes when we least expect, we get this. I think of wartime when a mother hears that two or three of her sons are killed on the same day.

When we recount life’s troubles we weep and cry and distress over many things, short of death and sickness. Divorce, unfaithfulness, broken relationships because of sin, financial worries, depression, etc. And these things are normal in this world. And to many, they pile up daily. And the older we get, the more we KNOW and EXPERIENCE distresses of the heart! And the more we cry out with “weeping.” But, the new heavens and the new earth will not be so! As we see in our passage, there will be no foreign armies invading our land. No infants will die in childbirth or after just a few days. Banks or higher powers will not take our houses away. My wife will not be scared of poisonous snakes as she walks joyfully in all of God’s land.

The new heavens and the new earth will be a place of joy because we will inhabit the place God is preparing for us. And He will say perpetually, *“It is good. In this place and in this people I rejoice.”*

3. The new heavens and the new earth will be a place of complete security. Look at vv. 22-23: **“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. 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.”** I believe in that context Isaiah is looking forward to Babylonian captivity when another nation will come in and take over their sovereignty. When this happens, they will lose their houses and their land. Someone else will move into their house and assume ownership. Someone else will walk out the back door and pick the grapes from the vine and eat them. Such is this world where one nation conquers another and assumes authority and ownership over someone else’s property.

I think of the late 1930s in Germany as WWII approached. One day, you have a fairly wealthy population of Jews. And slowly but surely Hitler and those who followed him, systematically stole Jewish property and goods. And then, the Jews and other ethnic groups found themselves in prison camps while someone else enjoyed the fruits of their labor. Also, at the end of the war, the same kind of thing happens with Germany itself as the allied armies and Russia split Berlin down the middle. We have a hard time with this since we have only really known peace. But such is our world. And Isaiah reminds his readers and us in v. 23 that there is coming a day when we **“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.”**

What a beautiful truth! There is coming a day when there will be COMPLETE security from all physical harms. No more cancer or thyroid issues or diabetes or Parkinson’s Disease, stroke, heart disease, no doctors needed. Foreign armies or hurricanes will not destroy our homes. There is no possibility a drunk driver will hit your car or your child. The blessings you receive from God will always be and, I believe will increase for eternity.

4. The new heavens and the new earth will be a place of complete peace. Look at vv. 24-25: **“Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. 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.”**

I love these pictures. The first says God will answer before they even speak. In other words, this place will be so peaceful that there won’t even be a need to ask God to help. This pictures a God who supplies EVERYTHING we need for peace that there is NOTHING we can think of to ask him for. It is like we begin the sentence, *“God will you heal my . . .”* only to know it has already happened.” *“God will you give me grace to endure . . .”* only to know it has already been done. Husbands, have you ever thought, *“My wife is gone for the day. I think I will surprise her and wash all the dirty clothes and fold every single thing and even match all the socks.”* And then while she is away she calls and says, *“Honey, do you think you might be able to find the time to work on the clothes?”* But, you’ve already done it. You’ve already answered, even before it cem

to her mind. And not only have you answered, you rejoice in the happiness of your wife as you help in this way. Well, in the same kind of way, for all eternity we can try to think of ways to be more safe, but we will find none. For God has already answered! And he rejoices in the work he has done. And he rejoices in these things.

In v. 25 we see more pictures of peace as the wolf and the lamb graze together. The lion no longer eats his prey, but instead eats straw with the ox. With these two examples we also see a transformation of natures as all enemies are gone. With the example of the serpent, Eden is restored to its rightful place. In all of these pictures given in our text today, the new heavens and the new earth will be a place of total and complete peace for God's people. It is hard for us to imagine such a place: Total provision, total joy, total security, total peace.

With these truths before us, let's spend the remainder of our time thinking about WHO will go to this place? I think most of the world believes there is such a place, or at least there will be at some point. And which of us does not want to go there? So, WHO will be there? Well, the answer is clear in v. 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."** And v. 19: **"I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people . . ."** So who are God's people? It those who have a special relationship with God the Father. Notice in v. 23 that our security is not only dependent on a safe place. Our security is linked to a relationship. **"For they shall be the offspring of the blessed Lord, and their descendants with them."** This is a picture of God's covenant with Abraham. The Sovereign Lord of the Universe chose Abraham and his offspring. And in Gen. 22:17 God says, **"I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . ."** Isaiah is simply explaining the result of God's covenant with Abraham, God's promise to bless his special people. In Heb. 11:10 we read that by faith Abraham did everything he did as he looked **"forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."**

So when we come to the NT we see clearly that the sons of Abraham are those who have faith in Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile. Gal. 3 26-29 says: **"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."** In pictures and types and shadows, this is exactly what Isaiah has been saying! This "New Jerusalem," this "Mt. Zion," is the new heavens and the new earth, the place where God will dwell with his people forever. And the way to heaven is through the person Jesus Christ! This is why he says, **"I am the way, the truth the life . . ."** (John 14:6). And, **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live . . ."** (John 11:25).

Brothers and sisters, the reason faith in Jesus is so crucial is because only in Jesus are ALL barriers and obstructions to this city are taken away. This is why Isaiah often says things like this: **"A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill**

**be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together . . .”** (Is. 40:3-5).

We must ask, “*What must be made straight?*” “*What must be made low?*” “*What must be leveled?*” It is SIN! Sin is what obstructs anyone from entering this city; specifically, it’s PENALTY, it’s POWER, and its PRESENCE! If we take care of these things, there is complete provision, joy, security, and peace in God’s city. There is no wall or barrier when these things cease to be. The penalty of sin is death and separation from God. The power of sin is evident everywhere especially we search our own hearts, and we are so pulled as we fight against it. Everywhere we look we see its presence (as we’ve made clear throughout this sermon).

Well, in the death of Christ, the penalty of sin is paid in full, the righteous ONE for the unrighteous. “**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” (Rom. 8:1). What about the power of sin? Paul says, “**The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Cor. 15:56-57). This is why, in Christ, we say, “**O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?**” (v. 55). As for the presence of sin, we still wait. But one day in the new heavens and the new earth, there will be NO SIN. This means that for the one who believes in Christ, ALREADY both the penalty of sin and the power of sin has been defeated. This is why we say now, “**If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation**” (2 Cor. 5:17). In him, the new creation has begun Already. But, we still wait for the final consummation.

This means for God’s people today, in Christ, complete PROVISION has begun. Complete JOY has begun. Complete SECURITY has already begun. Complete PEACE has already begun. It is interesting that in Rev. 21:2 the “New Jerusalem” is also called the bride of Christ. This is the church: NOW. These are the days Isaiah prophesied in the Gospel of Christ. And the completion of these days will be the consummation, the new heavens and the new earth where God will dwell FOREVER with his people.” If you like good endings, there is none greater. All the movies that end well (which is what everyone really wants) are simply pictures of the great ending when God will say again, “It is good!” What is our response? V. 18: “**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.**”