



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 65

“Jehovah’s Answer to Israel’s Appeal,
A New Heavens, and A New Earth.”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We are grateful for this great prophet Isaiah, who has given us so many magnificent passages under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for the unplumbed depths of the word of God. As we read and study, we are amazed, Lord, at how often we are able to see things that we have never seen before, though we may have studied a passage for years. We are convinced, as we read and ponder the Scriptures of their inspiration, of their authority, and of their relevance to our life in 1984. And we are grateful for the times that we have had in the prophet, and as we draw near the end of our study of the Messianic prophecy. We ask again, Lord, for the help of the Holy Spirit. May our minds and our hearts be open to the word of God, and may we be responsive to the teaching. We ask a special blessing upon each one present. May tonight be a night of spiritual growth, as well as growth in the knowledge of the word of God for us. And this we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] We are turning tonight to Isaiah chapter 65, which is the next to the last chapter of this rather lengthy prophecy by one whom most scholars call the greatest of

the prophets of the Old Testament, and our subject is Jehovah’s Answer to Israel’s Appeal for a New Heavens and a New Earth. As you turn to Isaiah chapter 65, you are reminded of a fatal error to which man is liable, and that is the inclination to overestimate the significance of this life, this present life. We are warned in the Scriptures against this over and over again, but it’s amazing how often we fall into the error of overestimating the present, and underestimating the future. For example the one who wrote Psalm 90 warns us about the nature of our lives. In Psalm 90 in verse 4, Moses the man of God prayed, “For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” And then in verse 5, “Thou carriest them away as with the flood. They are as asleep in the morning they are like grass, which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up. In the evening it is cut down and withereth.” And later on he says that our life is really nothing more than a vapor, and in fact in perhaps the most vivid expression of the shortness of human life, he says, “Our life is like a sigh.” And our life is gone. That is a most vivid way of expressing the fact that the things that really matter in human existence are not the present things so much as they are the future things.

Now, it’s often true that we think about future. We think about the seriousness of human life, but too often our thoughts are just fleeting thoughts. Who has not been to a funeral, for example who has not reflected upon the significance of human life? And as we listen and as we leave the funeral service, the memorial service, there comes home to us just the fleeting induction of the seriousness of human life, and the fact that it will soon be over for all of us who are not believers and if the Lord does not come, or if we are walking among the graves of a cemetery. I often do that because I like to sightsee, and I like to sightsee in Britain, and when you sightsee in Britain, and you see the great cathedrals, and the great churches, and also even the palaces and the castles, there is frequently a cemetery that is by the way, and you stop and look at the names and reflect just fleetingly upon the shortness of life, and of course it’s very much like the things that happen at our sports events. We go out to see a cowboy game, and for example a long

pass is completed. It’s a magnificent display of athletic skill, and we are caught up in the applause and we shout, and then soon the game’s over, and the insignificance of it fades into forgetfulness for many of us.

The Pagans sensed a great of this in ancient times, and they reflected upon the fact that to be born was not necessarily a blessing. In fact some of the Pagans felt that the greatest blessings were not to be born, and if a person was born the next greatest blessing was to die as soon as possible, so they reflected a great deal upon the significance of things like this. Perhaps they were forced to do it. It is said of the Scythians, that famous people that the Romans were so fearful and afraid of, that the Scythians, when a person was born, mourned, and when he died they celebrated because they too had the same idea of the shortness of life and also the inadequacy of our present life.

This psalm, Psalm 90, gives us several attitudes toward life, but one of the attitudes to present life is expressed very well here, and that is to look upon it as a life of misery. That’s one attitude. Verse 10 of Psalm 90 reads, “The days of our years are three score and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is there strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” That’s one of the attitudes that exists with reference to present life. It’s a time of misery. It’s a time of sorrow. And anyone who lives sooner or later has that experience in human life.

The Apostle Paul has another view of this life, and it’s a view that a Christian has, and his view is than life represents a duty, a post in the service of God, we might say. For example in Philippians chapter 1 in verse 20 through verse 23, the apostle wrote to the Philippians,

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I do not know. (In

other words the apostle thinking of the fact that to die for a Christian is gain to enter into the presence of the Lord finds it difficult to make decision about whether to go to be the Lord or to stay here, so in the 23rd verse, he says,) I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:”

That’s a magnificent statement because it’s so empathic in the original text. It’s a case of the use of three comparatives, “For it is more by much better” literally. Not simply better, not simply much better, but “more by much better.” And then he adds, “Nevertheless to abide by the flesh is more needful for you.” So the apostle regarded the present life as a post to which God had assigned him, and therefore he would be faithful, but so far as he was concerned, death was far better, and he really wanted to go be with the Lord. So we, I think, are often liable to the fatal error of overestimating this life, as over against the life that is to come.

There is of course more than just a present with the Lord to encourage us to look toward the future, and the prophet here in the 65th chapter gives us something extra. He says there is going to be a new heavens and a new earth some day. In the 17th verse of the 65th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah writes, “For, behold, (Giving the words of God.) For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

And then Peter, in his second epistle, picking up on this says, much the same thing, and adds that in the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness dwells there. In a sense, it’s Jehovah’s answer to the plea of Israel given in chapter 64, verse 1, where he recorded the prayer. “Oh, that Thou wouldest wren the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence.” And the answer is that there is going to be a new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind.

Now, last Tuesday night, as we were looking at Isaiah chapter 63, and chapter 64, we just noted very briefly at the end of the message that the last three verses of chapter 64 represent a prayer of the believing remnant, which will be prayed in the future. And in verse 10 the prophet wrote, this is Isaiah 64, “Thy holy cities are a wilderness. Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house where our fathers praise Thee is burned up with fire, and all our present things are laid waste. Will Thou refrain Thyself for these things, oh Lord? Will Thou hold Thy peace and afflict us very sore?” In other words, the prophet is thrown forward in prophetic vision, and he sees that nation Israel in the last days in the midst of their sufferings, and then they pray this prayer, and what follows in the opening part of chapter 65 on the part of the prophet is a prophecy that destruction, not deliverance, awaits the greater portion of the people in spite of this prayer of the remnant, so let me read the first sixteen verses of chapter 65 because here we have destruction set out very clearly in the first seven verses and then in verse 8 through verse 16, the blessing of Jehovah’s answer. The prophet writes, again notice that he is putting God’s words in his mouth,

“I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; (And for those of you who have been here other Sundays and you’ve heard in the exposition of Hosea, many references to the children of Israel going after the false gods, the false Bales, this is an illusion to the same thing that was transpiring in Judah too.) A people that provoketh me to anger continually that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, (And evidentially there was some spiritism involved in the nations wickedness too.) Which remain among the graves and lodge

among in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. (Isn't it interesting, when you read Isaiah you notice how many common expressions in the English language are ultimately traceable to the word of God, and we speak of people as being than Thou. We fail often to realize that's a biblical expression. That's how that arose, and it arose because people used to read the Bible, and used to study the Bible.) These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.” (So he talks about judgment and the bane of his answer is expressed in these verses.)

Now, as you read verse 1 notice that in contrast to the Gentiles, the Jews are obstinate in their ejection of him. “I am sought of them that ask not for me. I am found of them that sought me not. Behold me unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good after their own thoughts.” So in contrast to the Gentiles who are refereed to in the first verse here, Israel the nation, is obstinate in its rejection of him, and as I said, even evidently involved in spiritism if the word “graves” in verse 4 suggests that.

Now, again the time is the time of the future, and the prophet is speaking about the way in which Israel has rejected the Lord, but also the way in which others have found him, and obviously these are Gentiles.

Now, notice what is said here, and in the light of that, turn with me to Romans chapter 10, and verse 20. In Romans chapter 10 in verse 20, we have a comment of the Apostle Paul on Israel chapter 65 verse 1 and verse 2, and the apostle interprets these two verses for us, not only accurately of course but very vividly. Look at what he says, “Esaias

is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” That statement “Esaias is very bold and says,” is striking. It’s striking because first of all it lets us know that the apostle regarded Holy Scripture as being the product not simply of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, though of course that is the real source of the word of God and that’s why we call it the word of God, but it’s the word of God given through a human personality. And the Apostle Paul, as he looks at Isaiah and the things that Isaiah says in chapter 65 verse 1 and 2, he senses that this prophet is a very bold prophet, to say in Israel the things that he says about them, and so he interprets this as being a bold utterance on the part of Isaiah the Prophet.

In other words, the prophet, when he got this message from the Lord God he didn’t say, “Now, Lord, I think we better file that one because my life might not be worth two cents if I tell this nation which believes that it is the people of God and holier than Thou, that they are in rejection and rebellion against you, and that you have been very patient with them, but they have not responded at all. If I tell them that, my life might not be worth much and after all I am important for what you are trying to do.” He doesn’t do that. He just boldly expresses the word of God, and it’s just as if I were to speak to a group of people, all of whom thought they were Christians, but they really were not Christians, and I should say to them, “You think you are Christians, but you are really in rebellion against the Lord God.” That’s what Isaiah was doing, and he is saying to them,

“I am sought of them.” “Giving the word of God), “I, God, am sought of them that ask not for me, I am found of them that sought me not. I said, behold me, behold me unto a nation that was not called by my name, (In other words to Gentiles.) I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people that walketh in a way that was not good after their own thoughts.”

So he is very bold. And we sense of course immediately the inspiration of the word of God and also the humanness of the word of God. It is a divine word, coming ultimately from the Lord God, just like our Lord is a divine person, but he also possesses a human nature, as well as a divine nature, so the word of God is a word of God, but it is a word of God through human beings who are preserved by the Holy Spirit from error, so “Esaiahs is very bold” you can sense then the humanness of the word, but you can also sense the courage of this prophet, who castigates self righteous people for failure to respond to the word of God.

Our Christian church is filled with this today with individuals who stand in pulpits just like this, and they are really afraid to say that the congregation to which they have been called by the church leaders is really a congregation of unbelievers, and of course often the reason for is that the one who stands in the pulpit is an unbeliever too, but many times there is a very timid believer behind the pulpit, and he is afraid to say what he really thinks about his congregation because he’s dependent upon them, he feels, and therefore he doesn't speak boldly and courageously like the prophets, who didn’t feel any need to depend on Israel for their support, because they weren’t paid any salary, the Lord God supported them, and they looked to him to meet their needs, and therefore they were not dependent on the ones to whom they ministered, and they therefore tended to speak more boldly.

Most of you know that I grew up in the old Scots Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and it’s a very old church with a lot of tradition. It’s over two hundred and fifty years old. And every now and then I go back, and when I am there on a Sunday, I go down and sit in the congregation, and I have seen a string of preachers come thought that particular congregation through the years. Some of them genuine Christian men, some whose testimony is a little cloudy, but most of them have been professing Christian men. Some clear Christians I say.

One man I remember probably was a Christian man, but I heard one of his sermons, and in his sermon, he was talking about Melchizedek. That’s very strange. It was at the Lord’s Table, and he was giving a message on Melchizedek, and he has some rather interesting things to say about it, but when you got through and you asked, “Now, what did he have to say to this congregation in which a large percentage of that congregation were strangers to the grace of God and Jesus Christ, he had not said anything at all that might have caused them to think that they were not acceptable to the Lord God because they were members of that church?” The only thing that he said, and I wrote it down. I still have it in my notes. I wrote it down afterwards. The only thing he said was, “Some of you may not be paying any attention to what I am saying at this point.” [Laughter] That was the only thing that he said, and I don’t remember the look on his face when he said, that. It may have been with a smile, so they didn’t pay that any attention either, but I sat in the Presbyterian Church. And I don’t want to attack of course the Presbyterian Church because if you grew up in another church you’ll probably find a lot of it is true of your church too. But I sat in the church for years and the preachers preached as if every one of us were already believers in Jesus Christ, when we weren’t. Well, I am grateful for prophets, and grateful for the courage of the Prophet Isaiah because it’s really treason against the Lord God to tone down the words of God. The worst of cowards, is the one who does not speak plainly the word of God.

I read something from one of my favorite commentators. His initials are JC, and he lived in Switzerland, and he has a lengthy section or two on what a cowardly thing it is to not speak the word of God when you have the word of God, and how treasonous it is not to speak the word of God as a messenger of God. Well, the prophet goes on and says, “I am sought of them that ask not for me.”

Now, isn’t that interesting? They did ask for me, but I am sought of them. How can you explain that? How can you explain that he, God, is sought by those that didn’t ask after him? That is, individuals who weren’t concerned at all. Who didn’t ask at all,

and yet they are seeking him. How can you explain it? Well, the only way you can explain it is that is, is God who have caused these that have not asked after him to seek him. And then he says, “I am found of them that sought me not.” That is those that didn’t bother to seek after me have found me. How does that happen? Well, that only happens by the divine sovereign grace of God. He says they are individuals who weren’t asking about God. They’re individuals who weren’t seeking after God, and yet they are seeking him, and they are finding him.

Now, how can you explain it? You can only explain it by the sovereign grace of God. You see all of these people who write for us in the Scriptures believe the same thing. They all believe the same thing. They all believe in sovereign grace. If you understand it, you can see the tones of it, whether you are reading Moses, or whether you are reading Isaiah or whether you are reading our Lord’s words, or whether you are reading the Apostle Paul. They all believed the same thing. And that is that men are turning to God only because God is turning them to himself. As Jesus said, “No man come to me except the Father, which hath sent me. Draw him.” And Paul says, “There is none that seeketh after God, no not one.” But here are ones who seek after him. How can they do it? Only because God has first worked in their heart. It’s so plain, so plain. Why is it that people do not see this? Why is it? Why is it that in Believer's Chapel so many still have problems with this?

It is so plain. Why? Let me answer. They don’t study the Bible. You don’t study the Bible. Well, you here on Tuesday night, you probably study the Bible a little bit more than some others who attend regularly, the Chapel, but really this a condemnation that probably is true of all of us to some extent. I admit I should study the Scriptures more, but the reason that we have so many problems in life, is because we neglect the study of the Scriptures. They are sufficient for us if we just give ourselves to them. And I will tell you one thing. It will make life whole lot less expensive, and you’ll be able to cut off the psychiatrists, and cut off the physiologists, and cut off the counselors, and all of the others

that you pay money now to go and hear the things that if they are any good, they are found in the Bible, and if they are not in the Bible they are not good. This is a way that those who want to save their money. This is the way that you ought to go. Maybe that’s a new appeal to read the Bible. Read the Bible, it will save you money. [Laughter]

Well, notice how God speaks of himself in verse 1. He says, “I am found of them that sought me. I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.” Can you think of the Lord God in heaven saying, “Look me. Look me.” He’s trying to turn the nation to himself. In a sense he’s the preacher. He’s the text. He’s the sermon. He’s saying, “The answer to your problems are found in me. Look me.” You can see the personality of God in this work of divine grace. He’s the speaker. He’s the theme. He’s pointing them to himself. He’s the great object of faith. So all of our problems have their solution when we turn to him.

I don't know whether you have ever had an experience something like this, but many of you have children, and you know what happens when your little children, go out particularly if they are boys, and it’s been raining. And so they are pestering mom, “Let me go out. Can’t we go out? Can’t we go out and play?” And finally mom, the sun’s out, and while she knows there are some puddles around, still hoping against hope that they will avoid the puddles. The girls generally will, but the boys, they head straight for them, and they start playing and pretty soon, they are filthy dirty, and if you were to ask one of them who’s managed to get filthy dirty, and then he’s managed to fall into a hole and hurt himself, and you ask him, “What do you need?” He’ll always reply, “Mother.” Because mother’s the one who will take him, and wash him, and clean him, and fix him up, and care for him. Never asks for father, [Laughter] but mother. Well it’s kind of like that with the Lord God, when the children of men are in difficulty, it’s to him that we are to go, and so he points us to him.

I think this is probably the shortest preaching of the gospel in the Bible. “Behold me,” because he’s the answer to our sin. He’s the answer to our condemnation. He’s the

answer to our guilt. All of the blessings of spiritual life are found in him, and if we come to him, the Lord God in heaven who is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who has accomplished a work of redemption, we have that which meets all of our needs, so behold me.”

Now then he continues, and you’ll notice that the answer from, oh I should make this comment. Verse 2, God goes on to say, “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good after their own thoughts.” Of course one could talk for a long time about that little phrase, “After their own thoughts,” because the secret of spiritual life is to forget our thoughts and think God’s thoughts after him, but what I would like for you to notice, is that expression, I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, and the Apostle Paul quotes that and the ancient fathers, they noticed that this statement, which the Apostle Paul cited from Isaiah was a very vivid expression of the situation of Israel in the day of the Apostle Paul because in the day of the Apostle Paul the nation Israel is in rejection because they have failed to respond to the messianic king who came into their midst. The Lord Jesus Christ offered the atoning sacrifice.

They crucified him. As a result of this they are abiding in unbelief, and under the judgment of God, and it won’t be long before they are sent to four corners of the world, but nevertheless in the period of time, from the time of our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, to 70 A.D. when the destruction of Jerusalem came and Israel was scattered to the four corners of the earth, God, through the apostles and others, was pleading with the nation even after their sin against our Lord to turn to him, and remember as you read thorough the earlier chapters of the Book of Acts, Peter and others, appeal to the nation Israel. The apostle goes into the synagogues first, and then when they reject him, he turns to Gentiles, and the early church fathers, noticed that this text, “I have spread out my hands all the day long to a rebellious people was very much like God pleading as our Lord hung upon the cross at Calvary, as he plead with him, one could sense in the

physical posture of this figure, the Lord God on the cross, and that, they felt was one of the reasons why the apostle used this text. “All the day long, I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious and disobedient people.” And down through the centuries the figure of the Savior of the world hanging upon a cross as the one who has offered that sacrifice that saves sinners, that still hangs as an expression of the love and pleading of God for the children of men.

The rest of the verses, we’ve read them. Pardon me while I take off my coat. It’s getting warm in here. Maybe not for you, but for me, and the rest of the verses through verse 7 are verses that express further judgment upon the nation, but now in verse 8 through verse 16, the prophet goes on and speaks in a sense of the blessings that flow from the Lord’s answer upon the faithful. There is mingled here, some of the bane of faithlessness, but you’ll notice that he has a word for his elect ones. Reading at verse 8, “Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. (He’s looking on to the days, now future, when Jerusalem shall be the crown the glory of the Lord God in the earth, and when the Kingdom of God shall be in session with the Lord Jesus on the throne. Verse 10,) And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me. But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty:

behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: (His servants and his elect are the remnant.) Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.”

The expression, “The God of truth” is one of the great expressions of the Prophet Isaiah and expresses of course the fact that God is the source of truth. In fact, all truth is ultimately related to the Lord God. In the Hebrew text, it’s literally “The God of the amen.” The God of truth, the vivid contrasts that he makes between the great mass of the people who have rejected him, and his servants, his elect ones, characterize this particular section.

Now, in verse 17 he talks about the blessing of the new heavens and the new earth. “For behold I create new heavens and a new earth, done the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind.” He had just said in verse 16 that he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from mine eyes.” And now when he says, “I create new heavens, and new earth, and the former shall not remembered nor come to mind.” He thinks not simply about the former earth and heavens, but the things that characterized it as well.

This question of the new heavens and the new earth raises some interesting things, and what I would like you to do is to turn with me, first of all to the 66th chapter of Isaiah and we read the other reference in Isaiah to the new heavens and the new earth. Isaiah chapter 66, verse, did I say verse 20? Verse 22. Isaiah 66, verse 22, “For as the new

heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain” And here of course he is talking about those who are faithful to him, and looking forward to a time when a remnant shall return to him.

Then let’s turn to the New Testament to 2 Peter chapter 3, and let’s read verse 10 through verse 14. 2 Peter chapter 3, that’s after 1 Peter. 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 10,

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

And then finally in Revelation chapter 21 in verse 1 and verse 2, we read. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Now, when one, in the light of these passages that refer to the new heavens and new earth, reads verse 17 and verse 18 of Isaiah 66, you notice an immediate connection. “For behold I create a new heavens and new earth and the former shall not be remembered nor come to mind, but be ye glad, and rejoice forever in that which I create for behold I create Jerusalem are rejoicing and her people a joy.” In other words we have

here a reference to new heavens and new earth and at the same time a refurbished Jerusalem on the face of the earth. And then in 2 Peter chapter 3, we find the same thing, and probably the same thing is referred to in the Book of Revelation, so when you look at this it seems to me perhaps a more supportable interpretation to take this expression, “For behold I create new heavens and a new earth” as a reference to the millennial time. That is when, after the fire, that renews the present earth at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ as set out in 2 Peter 3, and also in Matthew 24, and 25 there is a renewal of the heavens, and the earth, and a fulfillment of these prophecies. If that is so, all of these prophecies would be speaking of the same thing, so that the order of things would be the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, the cleansing by fire. The creation of the new heavens and new earth, the restoration of the nation, the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of the earth, the blessing of the Gentiles, for in this passage as well as others, that is set out in connection with it.

We notice also that in this passage reference is made to longevity of men, but nevertheless the occurrence of death, and then following that the post millennial revolt described in Revelation 20, after he refers to the saints reigning and ruling upon the earth, and in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 the handing over of the kingdom by the Lord Jesus Christ to God that God might be all in all because the mediatorial kingdom ends with the end of the millennial kingdom and finally the return in the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation in the new heavens and new earth to a state very similar to the state of paradise to which the story of the Bible begins. So what we then would have would be a kind of picture from the time of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ that moves through the events of the kingdom and even the rebellion at the end of the kingdom and on into the new heavens and the new earth.

Now, implicit in this of course is the fact that millennial kingdom is merged into the eternal state, and in fact the millennial kingdom in which the promise is given to Abraham and David and the new covenant promises are, as the Scriptures say, eternal

promises so that the eternal kingdom is a kingdom that begins with the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus and continues as the kingdom through the millennial kingdom on throughout the eternal state that shall follow.

It appears to me that the identification of these passages in the New Testament contexts with the context in Isaiah chapter 65, lead to that kind of reconstruction. For those of you who are interested in a fuller discussion of that, I would suggest that you refer to that most unusual three-volume work by George N.H. Peters, called “The Theocratic Kingdom” probably the greatest most extensive treatment of the Kingdom of God in existence. It’s not an easy thing to read. The three volumes each have about seven hundred pages. They are not in big print. About half of the volumes are in ordinary print, and about half in small print. So it’s really the equivalent not of about twenty one hundred pages, but probably about thirty one hundred pages, in which almost every aspect of the Kingdom of God is discussed. Not everything will satisfy you, but I suggest sometime if you have some time that you look up that work and read a few chapters in it. I am sure that you will find it very, very interesting. It’s written in the form of propositions, and so there are about two hundred propositions in the three volumes, and each of these propositions has to do with the Messianic kingdom or the theocratic kingdom.

There have been other interpretations. For example in the Scofield Bible, Mr. Scofield takes verse 17 here to refer to the eternal state “Behold I create a new heavens and new earth.” And then in verse 18 through verse 25, he takes that to refer to the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It seems difficult to that although of course it is possible. We do know this, that when the prophets wrote of the future, they often merged in one general picture, things that had to do with the fulfillment of events that were separated when they were fulfilled by many hundreds of years.

And the ancient illustration that one of the early Bible teachers, I think it was John Christenson who first use it of a person looking off at a mountain range, and seeing

several peaks in the mountain range. As you look at it you do not notice the distance that may exist between one peak and another, and you all have had the experience, I know of approaching mountains, and finally getting on top of the first peak and looking and there is a lengthy valley of many miles before the next peak, which you saw at the same time. It’s not an unscriptural illustration because many things in the Old Testament are like that. Let me give you one illustration. The Prophet Zechariah says, “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.”

Now, you might think that the looking upon him, and the piercing of him would be events that would occur at the same time, but in the New Testament when our Lord hangs upon the cross, John says that that was a fulfillment of the Scripture, they shall look upon him whom they have pierced. In other words, the piercing is the thing that he is particularly interested in then. But then this same John writing the Book of Revelation, now nineteen hundred plus years after the time of his crucifixion, we read that when he comes at his Second Advent, he shall come with the clouds of heaven and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced. In other words, the looking referred to in the prophecy is distant from the piercing by nineteen hundred plus years, which you would not know if you simply had the Old Testament. So of course it’s possible that in verse 17, we have a reference to the eternal state, and then in verse 18 through verse 25, we have reference to the millennial or kingdom age.

Franz Delitzsch the great German commentator, points out that in the Old Testament prophets they often did not distinguish prophecies of heaven and the kingdom since the distinction between the kingdom and heaven was unknown to them. Heaven was not open to them yet, so the prophecies of heaven coincide with those of the kingdom. That is Delitzsch and he was one of the finest of interpreters of the Book of Isaiah. With that in mind, let’s read now beginning at verse 18 and you ask yourself is this a reference to the millennial age or is it not.

“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. 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. 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. (Now the Authorized Version has but, it should read, because the Hebrew has the simple *wow*, which means and, and in this case I think that’s the rendering.) And the sinner being an hundred years old shall be cursed.”

So here, let’s stop for a moment. You’ll notice he says, he creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and then he talks about an infinite of days, and it seems plain from this that death and sin do exist in this time when Jerusalem is created a rejoicing a her people a joy, but nevertheless people live for a long time. “There should be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall day an hundred years old.” So longevity does exist, but under severe restraint. Christ is reigning and Satan is bound, many scholars field and one hundred years old is youth, so we have something of a return to conditions that characterize the early days. “The sinner being an hundred years old shall be cursed.” In other words he shall not come unto judgment of death before one hundred, or perhaps if he dies at a hundred, then an early death is a curse from God because of his sin. That’s probably a more likely interpretation. The kingdom age is not the perfect age yet, as the Book of Revelation after describing the kingdom and the kingdom rule in the first part of Revelation 20. After that then there’s a final rebellion before the judgment of the great white throne.

Now, continuing in verse 21,

“And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 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 their hands.”

Well, oaks live for hundreds of years, so we are told. Olives live even older. My trees don’t live that long, but other trees do. Mine seem to live considerably shorter period of time. Maybe because they are sinful trees, I don't know. But at any rate the point of this figure of course is that people will have longevity then.

“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 their hands. 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. (He referred to seed back in verse 9.) And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Then the saint’s prayer, which they have often prayed when they have prayed the Lord’s Prayer. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” reaches a measure of fulfillment.) 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.”

This is a compendious abridgment of Isaiah chapter 11, verse 6 through verse 9 in which the prophet describes again the Kingdom of God upon the earth. And he lays great stress in that chapter in that the earth upon which the kingdom exists is the same earth that has been promised to in the Old Testament. And finally, “Dust shall be the serpent’s meat.” That, of course is an illusion to the fact that the curse brought upon man through the agency of Satan in the Garden of Eden shall lead ultimately to the judgment of God upon Satan, and “Dust shall be the serpent’s meat.” The prophet’s not fanatical. These are not beautiful dreams. When do they occur? Well, certainly not in our lives beyond the grave in the heaven of the future, when there is no sin because there is

presupposed here, a mixture of the sinner and of the righteous, and one concludes, at least I conclude, that he is talking about a Kingdom of God upon the earth, what we might call the theocratic kingdom.

It seems to me that all of the prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly those from the days of Abraham and then the Davidic promises reiterated over and over so many times, and the promises of the new covenant as well find their consummation in the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It’s not a vain hope. It’s a glorious hope. It also is the fulfillment of the plans of God in a very vivid and historical way. Sin occurred in history on the earth, redemption from sin has occurred in history, and it will be seen to have its ultimate affects in the earth. There is a very, very good reason why we should expect a Kingdom of God upon the earth, so that we shall see the full affects of redemption in man’s spirit, in man’s body, through the resurrection, and then in the creation about him in the creation of a new heavens and new earth. And since our Lord’s sacrifice is a sacrifice by an infinite individual and has obtained for those who believe in him an infinite redemption it’s very fitting that the theocratic kingdom should be an eternal kingdom and ultimately shall exist forever.

Do you have a place in it? Do you look forward to it knowing that even though certain aspects of it may be somewhat hazy to you, you know because of your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ that you shall live in this kingdom, that that’s a legitimate hope, which you have? It is very simple to settle the question. Our Lord has offered the atoning sacrifice. The Messiah has come. He has shed his blood. He has been pierced, and if by the grace of God you are enabled to see yourself as needing him and what he has done, and if by the grace of God you desire to have the forgiveness of your sins, and assurance of a future, you may have that right now by asking the forgiveness of sins be yours in faith. May God help you to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ that you might be saved? Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful prophecies of the prophet Isaiah and we recognize, Lord, that there are things that are not easy for us to understand, but we thank Thee for the hope that we have and for the assurance that the promises should be fulfilled as they are written in Holy Scripture, and Lord, if there should be some here, who have not yet believed in Christ, may tonight be the night in which they turn to him. We pray in his name. Amen.