

Isaiah

Rebirth of Planet Earth

Lesson #13 for March 27, 2021

Scriptures: Isaiah 65 & 66.

1. Isaiah 63-66 are chapters in which Isaiah not only saw or heard from God about the future return of exiles from Babylon but also the elimination of sin and the final return of God to live with humanity. What will God do with the righteous and with the wicked at that time?

Isaiah 65:17-25: ¹⁷ The LORD says, “I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten. ¹⁸Be glad and rejoice for ever in what I create. The new Jerusalem I make will be full of joy, and her people will be happy. ¹⁹I myself will be filled with joy because of Jerusalem and her people. There will be no weeping there, no calling for help. ²⁰Babies will no longer die in infancy, and all people will live out their life span. Those who live to be a hundred will be considered young. To die before that would be a sign that I had punished them. ²¹⁻²²People will build houses and live in them themselves—they will not be used by someone else. They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine—it will not be drunk by others. Like trees, my people will live long lives. They will fully enjoy the things that they have worked for. ²³The work they do will be successful, and their children will not meet with disaster. I will bless them and their descendants for all time to come. ²⁴Even before they finish praying to me, I will answer their prayers. ²⁵Wolves and lambs will eat together; lions will eat straw, as cattle do, and snakes will no longer be dangerous. On Zion, my sacred hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Isaiah 65:17–25). New York: American Bible Society.† [Compare Isaiah 11:6-9.]‡

2. This passage can be confusing. Verse 25 seems to be talking about a time when all sin will be gone; animals will be transformed, and we will be living in a world made new. However, not everything is completely new. People are apparently still dying, even though at a very advanced age. So, what are we supposed to conclude from this passage?

Isaiah 65:17: The LORD says, “I am making a new earth and new heavens. **The events of the past will be completely forgotten.**”—*Good News Bible.**†

3. How does that statement fit with the fact that there are many passages in the writings of Ellen White, suggesting that the plan of salvation will be studied for the rest of eternity?

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. **When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the**

paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* December 30, 1889, par. 4; 5SDABC* 1132.8-9.† Compare TA 205.3; OHC 45.4.

4. What kind of transformation will be necessary for lions to eat straw like cattle or the ox? This will have to be a complete transformation. (Isaiah 65:25; 11:6-7)
5. In effect, Isaiah was giving us a step-by-step introduction to how things will be in the future. We do not know exactly at what time during his life Isaiah wrote these passages. The fact that they are located at the end of the book of Isaiah suggests that they came later in his ministry. Remember that when Isaiah was about 45 years old, the Assyrians overran the northern kingdom of Israel and surrounded Jerusalem after having conquered all the rest of the nation and told the people in Jerusalem that it was just a matter of time before they would be destroyed. (Isaiah 37)
6. If you had lived through that kind of experience, would the language we read here seem more appropriate? What would you do with 185,000 dead bodies? (Isaiah 37:36)
7. But, God lamented that things were not going the way they should have been going.

Isaiah 66:3-19: ³ [The LORD said:] “The people do as they please. It’s all the same to them whether they kill a bull as a sacrifice or sacrifice a human being; whether they sacrifice a lamb or break a dog’s neck; whether they present a grain offering or offer pigs’ blood; whether they offer incense or pray to an idol. They take pleasure in disgusting ways of worship.”⁴ So I will bring disaster upon them—the very things they are afraid of—because no one answered when I called or listened when I spoke. They chose to disobey me and do evil.”

⁵ Listen to what the LORD says, you that fear him and obey him: “Because you are faithful to me, some of your own people hate you and will have nothing to do with you. They mock you and say, ‘Let the LORD show his greatness and save you, so that we may see you rejoice.’ But they themselves will be disgraced! ⁶**Listen! That loud noise in the city, that sound in the Temple, is the sound of the LORD punishing his enemies!**

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¹² **The LORD says, “I will bring you lasting prosperity; the wealth of the nations will flow to you like a river that never goes dry.** You will be like a child that is nursed by its mother, carried in her arms, and treated with love.

¹³I will comfort you in Jerusalem, as a mother comforts her child. ¹⁴When you see this happen, you will be glad; it will make you strong and healthy. Then you will know that I, the LORD, help those who obey me, and I show my anger against my enemies.”

¹⁵ **The LORD will come with fire. He will ride on the wings of a storm to punish those he is angry with. ¹⁶By fire and sword he will punish all the people of the world whom he finds guilty—and many will be put to death.**

¹⁷ The LORD says, “The end is near for those who purify themselves for

pagan worship, who go in procession to sacred gardens, and who eat pork and mice and other disgusting foods. ¹⁸**I know their thoughts and their deeds. I am coming to gather the people of all the nations. When they come together, they will see what my power can do ¹⁹and will know that I am the one who punishes them.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

8. What is God through Isaiah trying to tell us in these verses? Read superficially, it might sound like God was becoming upset and was determined to wipe out His enemies.
9. But, we know from the rest of Scripture, that **God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus, leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices.**
10. But, in these passages, we do see God's love for those who obey Him in contrast to those who are still evildoers.

Through the prophet, God reiterates the appeal and warning that permeates the book: God will save and restore the humble, who tremble at His Word (*Isa. 66:2, 5*). As in Isaiah 40:1, He will comfort them (*Isa. 66:13*). But He will destroy those who rebel against Him. These include hypocrites of ritual, whose sacrifices He rejects (*Isa. 66:3, 4; compare Isa. 1:10-15*), as well as those who hate and reject His faithful ones (*Isa. 66:5*). They also include those who practice pagan abominations (*Isa. 66:17*) such as those practiced at the temple in Jerusalem (*Ezek. 8:7-12*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Monday, March 22.[§]

11. However, once again, **we need to remember to put all of these statements by Isaiah and Ezekiel in the historical context in which they took place.**

2 Kings 17:18-20: ¹⁸The LORD was angry with the Israelites and banished them from his sight, leaving only the kingdom of Judah.

¹⁹ But even the people of Judah did not obey the laws of the LORD their God; **they imitated the customs adopted by the people of Israel.** ²⁰The LORD rejected all the Israelites, punishing them and handing them over to cruel enemies until at last he had banished them from his sight.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [What does it mean to be “handed over”? Romans 1:24,26,28][‡]

12. So, what were the people doing? Look again at Isaiah 66:3. What do you think God should have done with people who were behaving like that?
13. Is it still true that people worship whatever they want to worship? And do it in any way they please? What are we worshipping? Are we still worshipping whatever we want to worship?
14. Isaiah 66:18-19 suggest that not everything will be evil. Is it possible that God will actually draw people as if He were a magnet? See also Isaiah 2:2-4.

Isaiah 2:2-4: ² In days to come

the mountain where the Temple stands
will be the highest one of all,
towering above all the hills.

Many nations will come streaming to it,

³ and their people will say,

“Let us go up the hill of the LORD,
to the Temple of Israel's God.

He will teach us what he wants us to do;
we will walk in the paths he has chosen.
For the LORD's teaching comes from Jerusalem;
from Zion he speaks to his people."

⁴ He will settle disputes among great nations.

**They will hammer their swords into ploughs
and their spears into pruning knives.** [Contrast Joel 3:10.]

Nations will never again go to war,
never prepare for battle again.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

15. But, look at Isaiah 55:12-13:

Isaiah 55:12-13: ¹² [The LORD said:] "You will leave Babylon with joy;
you will be led out of the city in peace.

The mountains and hills will burst into singing,
and the trees will shout for joy.

¹³ Cypress trees will grow where now there are briars;
myrtle trees will come up in place of thorns.

This will be a sign that will last for ever [*sic*] ["forever" in the print edition of
Good News Bible],

a reminder of what I, the LORD, have done."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

16. This passage seems to be clearly referring to the return from exile in Babylon.

17. We might be able to guess that while there were some who will remain faithful to God or who remained faithful to God among the people of Judah, those who choose/chose to worship in all of those other ways would mock them and make fun of them.

Isaiah 66:5: Listen to what the LORD says, you that fear him and obey him:
"Because you are faithful to me, some of your own people hate you and will
have nothing to do with you. They mock you and say, 'Let the LORD show
his greatness and save you, so that we may see you rejoice.' But they
themselves will be disgraced!"—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

18. Are those who worship God faithfully and follow biblical principles being mocked and derided in our day? How many people take seriously the first 11 chapters of Genesis?

19. But, God has grand plans for His people.

Isaiah 66:19-21: ¹⁹ "But I will spare some of them and send them to the nations and the distant lands that have not heard of my fame or seen my greatness and power: to Spain, Libya, and Lydia, with its skilled archers, and to Tubal and Greece. **Among these nations they will proclaim my greatness.** ²⁰ They will bring back all your fellow-Israelites from the nations as a gift to me. They will bring them to my sacred hill in Jerusalem on horses, mules, and camels, and in chariots and wagons, just as Israelites bring grain offerings to the Temple in ritually clean containers. ²¹ I will make some of them priests and Levites."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

God sends survivors of His destruction out to the ends of the earth, to people who do not know about God, "and they shall declare my glory among the nations" (*Isa. 66:19, NRSV*). **This is one of the clearest Old Testament**

statements on the theme of missionary outreach. In other words, not only are people to be drawn to the Hebrew nation but also some of the Hebrew people will go to other nations and teach them about the true God—a paradigm that is explicit in the New Testament. Though there was Jewish missionary outreach between the time of return from exile and the time of Christ (*Matt. 23:15*), the early Christians spread the gospel rapidly and on a massive scale (*Col. 1:23*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Tuesday, March 23.^{†§}**

20. Does this remind you of anything? Might these words be referring to what happened with the disciples and apostles after Jesus ascended to heaven?

21. Repeatedly, Paul appealed to his believing Christian friends to reach out to those around them. Of course, that was what Paul himself did.

Romans 12:1: So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.—*Good News Bible*.*

22. Another surprising thing that God said is found in Isaiah 66:21.

Isaiah 66:21: “I will make some of them priests and Levites.”—*Good News Bible*.*

23. Who were the people being referred to in this verse? There seems to be some confusion about who was involved. The previous verses talked about bringing “your kindred” or “your fellow Israelites” back from other nations. But, notice that the *Bible Study Guide* says:

The “them” in Isaiah 66:21 refers to “your kindred from all the nations” (*NRSV*) in the previous verse. These are **Gentiles**, some of whom God would choose as worship leaders, along with the priests and Levites. This is a revolutionary change. God previously had authorized only descendants of Aaron to serve as priests and only other members of the tribe of Levi to assist them. Gentiles could not literally become descendants of Aaron or Levi, but **God would authorize some to serve in these capacities**, which had previously been forbidden even to most Jews.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, March 23.^{†§}

24. As recorded in Exodus 19:5-6 and at God’s instruction, Moses told the children of Israel:

Exodus 19:5-6: ⁵ “Now, if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own people. The whole earth is mine, but **you will be my chosen people**, ⁶a people dedicated to me alone, and you will serve me as priests.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

25. But, in 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter expanded that calling to include many more.

1 Peter 2:9-10: ⁹ But you are **the chosen race, the King’s priests, the holy nation, God’s own people**, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light. ¹⁰At one time you were not God’s people, but now you are his people; at one time you did not know God’s mercy, but now you have received his mercy.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

26. Was Isaiah seeing in prophetic vision the spreading of the gospel to the whole world? That would be quite remarkable as a statement from Old Testament times.

27. But, these ideas fit perfectly with many passages in the New Testament.

Matthew 28:19: [Jesus said:] “**Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make**

them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

Acts 26:20: “First in Damascus and in Jerusalem and then in all Judea and among the Gentiles, I preached that they must repent of their sins and turn to God and do the things that would show they had repented.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Galatians 3:28-29: ²⁸**So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus.** ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Colossians 3:11: **As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

1 Timothy 3:16: No one can deny how great is the secret of our religion: He appeared in human form, was shown to be right by the Spirit, and was seen by angels. He was preached among the nations, was believed in throughout the world, and was taken up to heaven.—*Good News Bible*.*

28. Doesn't this suggest that all men and women were created equal in God's sight and that all are called to be a part of the royal priesthood? Barriers have been broken down, and everyone is living in love and fellowship. So, when will this prophecy of Isaiah be fulfilled?
29. Did any of the Jews living in Jerusalem complain about these ideas when they first heard them from Isaiah? Remember what Paul said in Romans 11:17-18.

Romans 11:17-18: ¹⁷Some of the branches of the cultivated olive tree have been broken off, and a branch of a wild olive tree has been joined to it. **You Gentiles are like that wild olive tree, and now you share the strong spiritual life of the Jews.** ¹⁸So then, you must not despise those who were broken off like branches. How can you be proud? You are just a branch; you don't support the roots—the roots support you.—*Good News Bible*.*†

In light of the Cross, in light of the gospel commission, why is any kind of spiritual or ethnic or even political elitism so abhorrent in the sight of God? Look closely at yourself; are you harboring any sense of spiritual or ethnic superiority? If so, repent!—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, March 24. [Don't we sometimes say, “We have the truth”?]†

30. What are the *New Moon Festivals* mentioned in Isaiah 66:23 (*GNB**)? There are no new moon celebrations mentioned in the Scriptures as legitimate days of worship. But, we know that in the earth made new in the New Jerusalem, there will be a tree of life, or perhaps trees of life, which will yield a new form of fruit every month. Is that the context in which there will be new moon celebrations?

Revelation 22:2: And flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.—*Good News Bible*.*

31. For many years, Seventh-day Adventists have rightly used Isaiah 66:23 as an argument against eternally-burning hell. But, read the full three verses surrounding it.

Isaiah 66:22-24: ²² “Just as the new earth and the new heavens will endure by my power, so your descendants and your name will endure. ²³On every New

Moon Festival and every Sabbath, people of every nation will come to worship me here in Jerusalem,” says the LORD. ²⁴ “As they leave, they will see the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me. The worms that eat them will never die, and the fire that burns them will never be put out. The sight of them will be disgusting to the whole human race.”—*Good News Bible*.*

32. When Isaiah wrote Isaiah 66:24, was he remembering what had happened to the Assyrians outside Jerusalem? What was done with 185,000 dead bodies? (Isaiah 37:36)
33. Is that what Isaiah was thinking about when he wrote his final message to God’s people about the final end of the wicked and the final reward of the righteous? Notice that in Isaiah 66:22, he had already said that the righteous will continue forever!
34. Why do you suppose Isaiah ended with that awful passage in Isaiah 66:24?
35. Did the people of Jerusalem try to go out and bury those 185,000 Assyrian soldiers? Or, was this picture with worms eating them and fire burning them a very real picture in their minds? In any case, it is important to notice that what is being destroyed are not people who are alive but dead corpses.
36. And we need to remember that at the end of time, the wicked will be separated from God and die in His very presence; the fire that consumes the wicked will be God’s glory which is poured out for the destruction of sin, sinners, death, disease, evil, etc., in the process of remaking this earth into a new Garden of Eden. God’s glory will be life for the righteous.
37. So, how do you understand Revelation 20:9-10? [Compare *DA* 107 and *DA* 600.]
Revelation 20:9-10: ⁹They spread out over the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people and the city that he loves. But fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. ¹⁰Then the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown; and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.—*Good News Bible*.*
38. Seven hundred years before Jesus came to this earth, Isaiah had given us a promise of eternal life. The second coming and, ultimately, the third coming of Jesus as spelled out in much more detail in the New Testament is the Christian’s great hope. **Remember there was no reason for Jesus to have come the first time if He is not planning to come back again and take the righteous to live with Him forever.**
39. Compare 2 Peter 3:10-14 with what we have learned from the last verses of Isaiah 66.
2 Peter 3:10-14: ¹⁰ But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. ¹¹Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, ¹²as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon—the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. ¹³But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home.
¹⁴ And so, my friends, as you wait for that Day, do your best to be pure and faultless in God’s sight and to be at peace with him.—*Good News Bible*.*
40. Here in Isaiah we find God not only restoring the kingdom to His people but also expanding it to include the entire earth. This is much more than just a return from Babylonian captivity.
41. In Isaiah 64&65, we see that God reaches out to us as His children: “Oh LORD, You are our

Father.” (Isaiah 64:8, *NASB**) He goes even further in Isaiah 65:1: “I permitted Myself to be sought.... I permitted Myself to be found....” Then, God Himself stated: “I said, “Here am I, here am I,”... I have spread out My hands all day long.” (Isaiah 65:1-2, *NASB**)

42. In all of these chapters, it seems clear that God is pictured not only as the One who saves His faithful children, but also as the One who punishes or destroys His enemies.

Isaiah 66:15-16: ¹⁵ The LORD will come with fire. He will ride on the wings of a storm to punish those he is angry with. ¹⁶By fire and sword he will punish all the people of the world whom he finds guilty—and many will be put to death.—*Good News Bible.**

43. Is this a case of righteous and justified retaliation against God’s enemies? Does God, finally, become so upset that He just burns His enemies? No!

44. Isaiah 63 also seems to picture the idea that vengeance will affect the wicked while redemption will be the reward of the righteous. How will that actually play out?

Revelation 6:15-17: ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth, the rulers and the military chiefs, the rich and the powerful, and all other people, slave and free, hid themselves in caves and under rocks on the mountains. ¹⁶They called out to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the eyes of the one who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb! ¹⁷The terrible day of their anger is here, and who can stand against it?”—*Good News Bible.**

Isaiah 25:9: When it happens, everyone will say, “He is our God! We have put our trust in him, and he has rescued us. He is the LORD! We have put our trust in him, and now we are happy and joyful because he has saved us.”—*Good News Bible.**

45. **We are the ones who choose which side we will be on in that final day!**

46. In conclusion, in these chapters God is clearly represented as a Re-Creator of both heavens and earth.

47. One of the major concerns for the Israelites when they were taken into Babylonian captivity was the idea prevalent among people in those days that gods were assigned to territories. Some believed that the God of Israel would only hear their prayers if they were living in Palestine. So, what were they supposed to do while in Babylonia? Of course, the Babylonians wanted them to worship their gods. But, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel made it very clear that God was fully capable of answering prayers offered from Babylonia.

48. We know that Isaiah never got near Babylonia. The Babylonian exile was still almost 100 years in the future.

49. So, what do you picture the new heavens and the new earth to be like?

50. See Revelation 21:1-4 and 22:1-5. But, no matter how beautiful we might imagine the new earth to be, we must remember that:

1 Corinthians 2:9: [Similar to Isaiah 64:4.] “What no one ever saw or heard, what no one ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him.”—*Good News Bible.*‡*

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Last Modified: January 24, 2021

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