

PREFACE

Last Sunday evening Linda and I sampled a new series on the National Geographic Channel, entitled, *The Story of God*. As is so often the case, an intriguing title sparks interest in an otherwise worthless program—a conclusion reached within the first fifteen minutes.

But I was intrigued by the underlying premise of the series; the title suggests a wide sweep: if one were to read or watch a story entitled, *The Story of...You*, for example, one would rightly expect it to cover the span of your lifetime, continuing on to the *effects* of your lifetime. But this series is not really about God, or the effects of God, but solely about *what happens after we die*. In other words it delivers the humanist philosophy that we need only concern ourselves with God (if we choose to believe in Him at all) when we anticipate our approaching death. That is all He is good for. In this series there is no mention of actually *living* with God in the here and now. A more accurate title for the series would be “What Happens after You Die.”

In a sense we are faced with that contrast in our lesson today. It is a variation on our familiar “now—not yet” construct. Naturally our focus in this session is indeed the end times—events that will take place only after most of us—I pray *all* of us—are either deceased or glorified. But before we do that I want to examine another aspect of one of our key passages.

Read Isaiah 65:17.

Before we back up and include this passage in its intended context of the end times, I want to suggest that it has a more immediate, imminently practical application.

JFB: The former sorrows of the earth, under the fall, shall be so far from recurring, that their very remembrance shall be obliterated by the many mercies I will bestow on the new earth.

Our God is not just a God of death; He is a God of *life*—life in the here and now. Yes there will come a day when there will literally be a new earth and new heavens, but in a spiritual—yet very practical—sense, followers of Christ Jesus have that right now.

- Heaven is no longer just a place where we go after we die, but the fact of its existence, its ministrations, its power are very real and active in believers' lives every day. The fact of heaven affects our lives now.
- In Christ, the earth—even the old one—is changed for the believer. In one sense it becomes *less* than it was: less important, since it is no longer our true home. But in another sense it becomes *more* than it was: seeing it now from heaven's perspective we see it afresh, discovering its Creator at every turn:
 - beautiful sunsets are no longer just light and water vapor, but something revealing the glory of God;
 - the eloquent mysteries of the seasons reveal the genius of God;
 - the natural wonders of towering mountains and deep canyons reveal the power and majesty of God.

So, in Christ Jesus God grants us a new and different earth than we had before, and heaven becomes something very much more real and active than it was before. We don't have to wait for the apocalypse.

Now, let's dig into these truths in their intended contexts.

ISAIAH 42, 43

All of our OT passages are conveniently in the book of Isaiah, and we begin in Isaiah 42. In v9, Yahweh tells us what He is *going* to do well before He does it.

Read Isaiah 42:8-9.

The rest of Chapter Forty-two describes the cataclysmic events that will pave the way for the "new things" to come.

Read vv14-16.

In the next chapter, Yahweh again tips us off to what He will be doing.

Read Isaiah 43:18-19.

The writer to the Hebrews mentions this universal upheaval, in the context of the enduring kingdom of the one carrying it out.

Read Hebrews 12:25-29.

ISAIAH 11

We have looked at Isaiah 11 before—especially vv1-2—in the context of Messiah as King in the Davidic line—as a "shoot...from the stem of Jesse." But now let's consider the whole chapter in the context of the end times.

Read vv1-2.

So far this could apply to the incarnation, when Christ came to earth the first time. But in v3 on we see Messiah described in a way that could not apply to His first appearance on earth—only to His second.

Read vv3-5.

Verses 6-9 describe the conditions of His reign—a preview of what things will be like under the new order of the reigning Davidic king.

Read vv6-9.

I want to point out something that is evidence for what we will develop more fully in a moment. Don't miss the fact that under this new order animals do not just get along with each other—traditional hunters making nice with their traditional prey—but that the hunters are now not even carnivores: they are all now vegetarians—just as they (and man) were first created in the garden, before the fall and the flood [Genesis 1:28-30; 9:1-3]. Bears now graze, the lion eats straw, and "they [no longer] hurt or destroy."

More on what this means in a moment.

Note in v10 that the Gentiles (*goyim*) all worship the Davidic king, Messiah.

Read v10.

Finally, in vv11-16, the prophet details how in this day Israel will be restored, brought back to their homeland from all corners of the earth.

Read vv11-12.

All of this that we have read is preparatory to the event that is our main topic: the new heavens and new earth. We find that back where we began, in Isaiah 65.

ISAIAH 65, 66

Here is the first mention in Scripture of “new heavens and a new earth.” Before we push on, however, we need to examine this word “new.” There is a Hebrew word for something brand new, something created from nothing, something—as William Wilson puts it—that is a “creation, a thing created or formed of God, especially new and unheard of.”

Read Numbers 16:30.

new = *beriah* = feminine from <H1254> (bara'); a creation, i.e. a novelty :- new thing.

The word translated “new” in Isaiah 65:17 is not this word, but

hadash (khaw-dawsh') = from <H2318> (chadash); new :- fresh, new thing.

chadash (khaw-dash') = a primitive root; to be new; causative **to rebuild** :- **renew, repair;**

It is not for us to say—perhaps even to know, or understand—what will be the *extent* of this “newness.” But from the prophet’s inspired choice of words to describe it, we can safely conclude that this does *not* mean that the old earth and heavens (i.e., the universe) will disappear and be replaced by an earth and heavens totally new, created by God from nothing. It does not refer to God once again speaking into existence a brand new universe.

One commentator uses the word “renovation” for what will take place.

Sometimes when Linda and I visit in Marshalltown we swing by the house of my birth. Today that house is a different color, with different siding; it has a new metal roof; the owners have enclosed the front porch; and the landscaping is different. It looks very different from when I was a young boy—but I still recognize it as the home of my childhood.

That, I believe, is what the new earth and new heavens will be like: different, but recognizable. They will have been renovated, freshened up.

Read Isaiah 65:17-18.

The apostle Peter mentions this event in his second epistle.

Read 2 Peter 3:10-13.

The rest of Isaiah 65 describes how people's lives will be different—specifically life expectancy. As I read the passage, see if you can spot a "problem."

Read Isaiah 65:19-23.

Did you spot the problem? If Isaiah speaks here of the same "new heavens and new earth" described in Revelation 21, then there is an apparent discrepancy. In Isaiah the people will live much longer than now, but they will not be immortal, whereas in Revelation 21:4 it says "there will no longer be any death."

We will probably address this deeper in our next study of the Thessalonian letters. For the time being the best answer is that Isaiah speaks of *millennial* conditions, while the Revelation text speaks of post-millennial conditions.

Now, as I read the last two verses in the chapter, see if you can spot the one thing that will *not* change in this new earth.

Read Isaiah 65:24-25.

What does not change? The serpent is still eating dust—an allusion to Genesis 3:14, where Yahweh declares to the serpent/Satan, "On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life."

In the next chapter Isaiah mentions again the new heavens and new earth, adding one more quality to them.

Read Isaiah 66:22.

I don't mean to super-irrigate this word translated "endure" or "remain" in our versions, but I want to point out that the idea here is more than just chronological—i.e., eternal—but foundational.

endure, remain = amad = a primitive root; **to stand**, in various relations (literal and figurative, intransitive and transitive) :- abide (behind), appoint, arise, cease, confirm, continue, dwell, be employed, **endure, establish**, leave, make, ordain, be [over], place, (be) present (self), raise up, **remain**, repair, + serve, set (forth, over, -tle, up), (make to, make to be at a, with-) **stand** (by, **fast**, firm, still, up), (be at a) stay (up), tarry.

The Lord's new universal economy will not just last forever, but it represents the place where He will take His stand, where He will stand firm.

REVELATION 21

Let's close by reading John's account of the (still future) fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies.

Read Revelation 21:1-8.

Prophecy

Christ in the OT

Fulfillment or Reference

Isaiah 42:8-9

8 "I am the Lord, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.
9 "Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."

Isaiah 43:18-19

18 "Do not call to mind the former things,
Or ponder things of the past.
19 "**Behold, I will do something new,**
Now it will spring forth;
Will you not be aware of it?
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert."

Isaiah 11:3-9

3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.
6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.
7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.

Everything New! (1)

Hebrews 12:25-29

25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking.
For if those did not escape when they refused him who
warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn
away from Him who warns from heaven.
26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has
promised, saying, "**Yet once more I will shake not only**
the earth, but also the heaven."
27 **This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the remov-**
ing of those things which can be shaken, as of created
things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may
remain.
28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot
be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer
to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Prophecy

Christ in the OT

Fulfillment or Reference

Isaiah 65:17-25

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

18 "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing And her people for gladness.

19 "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.

20 "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed.

21 "They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 "They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat;

For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.

23 "They will not labor in vain, Or bear children for calamity; For they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, And their descendants with them.

24 "It will also 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 will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the Lord.

Everything New! (2)

Revelation 21:1-8

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."