

Re-Birth of Planet Earth



SABBATH—JUNE 19

ONE DAY, A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY READ A BOOK ON ASTRONOMY¹ and refused to go to school. His mother panicked and took the child to the family doctor. The doctor asked, “Billy, what’s the matter? Why don’t you want to study or go to school anymore?”

“Because, Doctor,” Billy said, “I read in this astronomy book that one day the sun is going to burn out and all life on earth will be gone. I don’t see any reason to do anything if everything will die out in the end.”

The mother panicked again and shouted, “It’s not your business! It’s not your business!”

The doctor calmed Billy’s mother. Then he turned to the little boy, smiled, and said, “But Billy, you don’t need to worry, because when this happens, we’ll all be long dead, anyway.”

Of course, that is part of the problem: In the end, we are all dead anyway.

Luckily, our life does not have to end in death. Instead, Jesus has offered us eternal² life in a world made new.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON: What final hope does Isaiah give to us? How can Gentiles (non-Jews) become priests and Levites? How is the end of wicked people different from the end of people who are saved?

MEMORY VERSE: “I [God] am making a new earth and new heavens. The events³ of the past will be completely forgotten” (Isaiah 65:17, TEV).

¹astronomy—the study of the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

²eternal—without beginning or end; lasting forever.

³events—things that happen.

SUNDAY—JUNE 20

**“NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH”
(Isaiah 65:17-25).****What kind of restoration does the Lord promise in Isaiah 65:17-25?**

In this wonderful prophecy, God promises to “create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight” (Isaiah 65:18). In the city, there will be no more crying (Isaiah 65:19). People will normally live over a hundred years old before they die (Isaiah 65:20). Their work and children will remain for them to enjoy (Isaiah 65:21-23). God will answer them even before they call to Him (Isaiah 65:24).

Why is Isaiah 65:17-25 not a picture of our final restoration?⁴

Isaiah 65:17-25 gives us a picture of peaceful long lives in the Promised Land. People may live longer. But they will still die. Where is the big change in nature that we expect with the creation of “new heavens” and a “new earth”? Isaiah 65:25 tells us: “Wolves and lambs shall eat together, lions will eat straw, as cattle do, and snakes will no longer be dangerous. On Zion,⁵ my sacred [holy] hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil” (TEV).

For flesh-eaters such as lions to become vegetarian requires far more than a vegetarian cooking class. It re-

quires a restoration of the world to the way it was before sin introduced death.

In Isaiah 65, God is presenting the creation of “new heavens” and a “new earth” as a series of steps. It begins with the re-creation of Jerusalem. Read Isaiah 11:1-5, where the Messiah would bring justice. Then there will be peace on God’s worldwide “holy mountain.” The symbolism used in Isaiah 11 is almost the same as the symbolism in Isaiah 65: “Wolves and sheep will live together in peace. . . . Lions will eat straw as cattle do” (Isaiah 11:6, 7, NIV). God’s “holy mountain” would begin with Mount Zion at Jerusalem. But it was only a symbol of what God promises to do in a new world with His saved people.



Suppose instead of living 60, 70, 90, or even 100 years, most people lived a million years or more. Why would the basic problem of humanity⁶ still not be solved? Why is eternal life the only answer to our deepest human needs?

⁴restoration—people and things will be brought back to their original condition after Jesus comes again; renewal.

⁵Zion—another name for Jerusalem, or the New Jerusalem.

⁶humanity—all the people of the world.

MONDAY—JUNE 21

**GOD AS A “MAGNET”
(Isaiah 66:1-19).**

What is the basic message in Isaiah 66:1-19?

Through Isaiah, God repeats the plea and warning He often gives: He will save and restore⁷ humble people, people who honor His word (Isaiah 66: 2, 5). As in Isaiah 40:1, He will comfort them (Isaiah 66:13). But He will destroy people who rebel against Him. People who rebel are people who are not honest about their religious feelings. God rejects (refuses) their sacrifices (Isaiah 66:3-4; Isaiah 1:10-15). God also rejects people who hate His faithful remnant⁸ (Isaiah 66:5) and who worship idols and do pagan⁹ practices (Isaiah 66:17).

What spiritual principles¹⁰ does Isaiah 66:3 teach us? How can we use the same principles in our worship?

How does God serve as a “magnet” to draw (pull) the nations to Himself? Isaiah 66:18, 19.

God destroys His enemies (Isaiah 14-17). Then He shows His glory so that He becomes a magnet to draw people to Jerusalem (compare¹¹ Isaiah 2:2-4). He sets a “sign” among them. The sign is not in Isaiah 66, but was mentioned by Isaiah earlier in this quarter’s study. The sign is that God gives His people joy and peace and restores their land (Isaiah 55:13). For example, He shows His glory by restoring His people after Jerusalem is destroyed by Babylon.

Read Isaiah 66:5. What does it mean to tremble¹² at God’s word? Why does God want us to tremble at His word? If you do not tremble at His word, what would that maybe say about you?

TUESDAY—JUNE 22

**MISSIONARIES AND WORSHIP
LEADERS (Isaiah 66:18-21).**

What is the meaning of survivors¹³ bringing people from the nations as an offering to God (Isaiah 66:18-20)?

After Jerusalem is destroyed, God sends those people who survived (escaped) to other parts of the earth. They

⁷restore—to make things as they were; renewal.

⁸remnant—a small group of God’s faithful people.

⁹pagan—having to do with worshiping idols and false gods.

¹⁰principles—basic rules that guide the making of other rules and that help us to decide what to do.

¹¹compare—show how things are the same.

¹²tremble—to shake; to fear; to have great respect for something.

¹³survivors—the people who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem.

are to reach people who do not know about God, “and they shall declare [announce] my [God’s] glory among the nations” (Isaiah 66:19). This is one of the clearest Old Testament teachings on missionary outreach.¹⁴ People will be drawn (attracted) to the Hebrew nation, and some of the Hebrew people will go to other nations and teach them about the true God. This is a command that is clear in the New Testament. There was Jewish missionary outreach between the return from prison in Babylon and the time of Jesus (Matthew 23:15). But the early Christians spread the gospel quickly and in large numbers (Colossians 1:23).

The Israelites brought grain offerings to the Lord at His temple. In the same way, the missionaries would bring an offering to Him. But their offering would be the people from other nations. Grain offerings were gifts to God that were not killed. In the same way, the new believers brought to God would be presented to Him as “living sacrifices” (compare Romans 12:1).

What is the meaning of God’s promise to “take some of them as priests and as Levites” (Isaiah 66:21)?

The “them” in Isaiah 66:21 speaks of “your brothers from all the nations” in Isaiah 66:20. These are Gentiles (non-Jews) God would choose to be worship leaders along with the Hebrew priests and Levites. This is a great change. In the

past, God had authorized only children of Aaron to serve as priests, and only other members of the tribe of Levi to help them.

To whom is Peter writing in 1 Peter 2:9, 10? What is he saying? What message does he have for each of us, as members of a “holy nation” today? Are we doing any better than the Israelites (Exodus 19:6)? Explain your answer.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 23

CITY OF FAITH (Isaiah 66:21).

The Israelites were “a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). There were special priests set apart to be worship leaders. But in the future, some Gentiles (non-Jews) would become worship leaders (Isaiah 66:21).

How would Gentiles being worship leaders influence the restored community of faith? Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 26:20; Matthew 28:19.

In God’s “new world,” Gentiles would join God’s people and become equal partners with Jews in a combined community of faith that would be a “royal priesthood.” Then, the difference between Jews and Gentiles would not be important.

When was Isaiah 66:21 fulfilled?

¹⁴missionary outreach—sending missionaries to other people to tell them about God’s love.

Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, preached: “There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles . . . you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants [future children] of Abraham and will receive what God has promised” (Galatians 3:28, 29, TEV).



We are all one in Jesus.

Becoming heirs (receivers) of the promise and a high-class “royal priesthood” did not give the Gentiles the right to be snobbish. The Gentiles were to join the Jews in preaching “the wonderful acts of God who called you out of darkness into his marvelous [wonderful] light” (1 Peter 2:9, TEV; compare Isaiah 66:19).

The promotion of Gentiles did not give the Jews the right to complain that God was unfair in giving the Gentiles the same reward. But the Gentiles did not have the right to treat their Jewish brothers and sisters with disrespect. It

is the same way that workers hired late in the day should not look down on workers hired earlier (Matthew 20:1-16). God had first trusted the Jews with the responsibility of being God’s messengers of the truth (Romans 3:2). Paul wrote to the Gentiles: “Some of the branches of the cultivated [cared for] 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. So then, you must not despise [hate] those [people] who are broken off like branches. How can you be proud? You are just a branch; you do not support the roots—the roots support you” (Romans 11:17, 18, TEV).

Why is prejudice¹⁵ so disgusting to God? Look closely at yourself! Do you think you are better spiritually or culturally than other people?

THURSDAY—JUNE 24

**“SO SHALL YOUR SEED [FAMILY] AND YOUR NAME REMAIN”
(Isaiah 66:22-24).**

**What is Isaiah 66:22 saying to us?
What hope can we find in this verse?**

One of the most wonderful promises in Isaiah is found in Isaiah 66:22. In the new heavens and the new earth,

¹⁵prejudice—hating people because of their skin color, religion, or sex; not liking people because they are different from you.

our family and our name shall remain forever. No more changes will be made. Everything will remain the same forever. We have a promise of eternal life in the world made new. This world is without sin, without death, without suffering. It is a new heaven and a new earth. It is the final and complete fulfillment of our Christian faith. It is the fulfilled goal of what Jesus has done for us at the Cross.

Why are there new moons along with Sabbaths in the description of the new heavens and the new earth (Isaiah 66:23)?

There are several different ways to understand Isaiah 66:33. One way is this: God created the Sabbath before He created the sacrificial system¹⁶ (Genesis 2:2, 3). Sabbaths were honored by the sacrificial system. But Sabbaths are not dependent upon the sacrificial system. Sabbaths continue through the Second Coming and into the new earth. There is nothing in the Bible that says new moons were legal days of worship separate from the sacrificial system. But perhaps the new moons will be worship days (but not necessarily rest days like weekly Sabbaths) in the new earth. Probably they will be connected with the monthly growth cycle of the tree of life (Revelation 22:2).

We do not know exactly what Isaiah 66:23 means. But the important point seems to be that God's people will be worshipping Him throughout all eternity.¹⁷

Why does Isaiah end with the negative picture of saved people looking at the corpses (bodies) of rebels destroyed by God (Isaiah 66:24)?

As a strong warning to the people of his day, Isaiah shows a sharp difference. This difference is between faithful believers who would escape Jerusalem being destroyed by Babylon and rebels, who would be destroyed. This is not everlasting¹⁸ suffering: The rebels are dead. They were killed by "fire" (destruction) that did not stop burning until it had finished its job. Then the re-creation of Jerusalem could begin.

Isaiah's warning points to the fulfillment of the final prophecy in the book of Revelation: the destruction of sinners, Satan, and death in a lake of fire (Revelation 20). After this, there will be "a new heaven and a new earth," a holy "New Jerusalem," and no more crying or pain, "for the old things have disappeared" (Revelation 21:1-4, TEV; compare Isaiah 65:17-19). Then there will be a new, eternal life for all people who were saved from the earth.

¹⁶sacrificial system—sacrifices of animals, including lambs, that were to remind the Israelites that God would send them a Savior who would sacrifice His life in order to save them from sin.

¹⁷eternity—life without end.

¹⁸everlasting—lasting forever; eternal; without beginning or end.

FRIDAY—JUNE 25

ADDITIONAL STUDY: On the final cleansing of planet Earth from sin, read Ellen G. White, “The Controversy [War] Ended,” in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662–678.

“And the years of eternity roll by. These years will bring richer and still more glorious examples of God and of Jesus. As knowledge grows, so will love, respect for God, and happiness grow. The more people learn of God, the greater they will admire His character. Jesus will open before them the riches of salvation and the wonderful victories in the great controversy with Satan. Then the hearts of the saved people will thrill with more devotion. And with more joy, they will play the harps of gold. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to sing the powerful chorus (song) of praise.

“ ‘And I [John] heard every creature [living thing] in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea—all living beings in the universe—and they were singing: “To him [God] who sits on the throne and to the Lamb [Jesus], be praise and honor, glory and might [power], forever and ever” ’ ” Revelation 5:13, TEV.

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. Peace and gladness spread throughout the vast (big) creation. From Jesus, who created all, flow life and light and gladness everywhere in unlimited space. From the most tiny

atom to the greatest world, all things, living and nonliving, in their full beauty and perfect joy, announce that God is love.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the promise of eternal life in a new heaven and a new earth so important to our Christian belief?
2. How do 2 Peter 3:10-14 show the same idea given in Isaiah 66?

SUMMARY: Isaiah offers a great vision. God would make clean and restore His city of faith. And He would enlarge its borders to accept people from all nations. Finally, the re-creation of His city will lead to the re-creation of planet Earth. There God will make His home with His people.

