

A New Planet Earth



SABBATH—MARCH 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 65:17–25; Isaiah 66:1–19; Isaiah 66:19–21; Isaiah 66:22–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Look, I will make new heavens [skies] and a new earth. And people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things’ ” (Isaiah 65:17, ICB).



“So, why should I go to school if everything will die in the end?” Billy asked the doctor.

BILLY was a 12-year-old boy. He finished reading a book about the stars. Then he refused to go to school anymore. His mother took him to the family doctor. The doctor asked, “Billy, what is wrong? Why do you not want to study or go to school anymore?”

Billy said, “Because, Doctor, I read a book about the stars. It says that the sun will burn up in the future. Then all life on earth will die. So, why should I go to school if everything will die in the end?”

The mother shouted, “That is not for you to worry about!”

The doctor smiled at Billy. He said, “But, Billy, you do not need to worry about that. By the time that happens, we all will already be dead for a long time.”

Of course, that is part of the problem: in the end, we will all be dead.

But death does not need to be the final thing that happens to us. God offers us everlasting life on an earth that He will make new.

NEW SKIES AND A NEW EARTH (Isaiah 65:17–25)

Read Isaiah 65:17–25. What does the Lord promise to do in these verses?

God promises to make everything new. He says, “ ‘Look, I will make new heavens [skies] and a new earth. And people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things’ ” (Isaiah 65:17, ICB). The Lord promises to “ ‘make a Jerusalem that is full of joy, and I will make her people happy’ ” (Isaiah 65:18, ERV). In the city of Jerusalem, no one will cry anymore (Isaiah 65:19). People will live longer than 100 years before they die (Isaiah 65:20). Their work and their children will be around for a long time for people to enjoy too (Isaiah 65:21–23). God will answer them even before they call to Him (Isaiah 65:24).

This is a very nice picture. But is it the life that God promises to give us? No, it is not. Why not?

So far, we see a picture of the long lives of peace and joy that the people of God will live in the Promised Land. Yes, they live longer. But they also will die. Where is the promise of the big change that we expect to happen to everything on the earth? The next verse tells us: “ ‘Wolves and little lambs will eat together. Lions will eat hay like cattle, and snakes will eat only dust. They will not hurt or destroy each other on my holy mountain.’ This is what the LORD said” (Isaiah 65:25, ERV).

Lions eat meat. For lions to stop eating meat, they will need more than a cooking class that uses only plants! God will need to make the earth new again as it was in Eden before sin.

In Isaiah 65, God shows us a picture of the new earth in parts. First, He will make Jerusalem new. Compare Isaiah 11, where we learn that the Savior will make things right (Isaiah 11:1–5). Then, at a later time, there will be world-wide peace on the mountain of God. The word pictures that Isaiah uses in Isaiah 65 to show us that future time are much the same as the ones we read in Isaiah 11:6, 7. The promise of a new earth will start at Jerusalem. But that beginning is only a taste of what God promises to do. He will make a new earth for His saved people.



“Wolves and little lambs will eat together” (Isaiah 65:25, ERV).

AN INVITATION FROM HEAVEN (Isaiah 66:1–19)

Read Isaiah 66:1–19. What is the message in these verses?

God gives Isaiah a message to give to His people. He invites His people to come to Him. He warns them not to turn away from Him. We see this invitation and warning in the whole book of Isaiah. God will save the ones who do not have any pride in their hearts. God will give them new lives. These people trust in His Word (Isaiah 66:2, 5). As we saw in Isaiah 40:1, God will comfort His people who turn to Him (Isaiah 66:13). But He will destroy the ones who fight against Him. God will destroy the ones who act as if they love God in public. But in secret, these people do not obey God (Isaiah 66:3, 4; compare Isaiah 1:10–15). God also will destroy the ones who hate and turn against the people who are loyal to Him (Isaiah 66:5). This group of evil people also includes the ones who worship false gods (Isaiah 66:17; Ezekiel 8:7–12).



God gives His people a “sign.” In the same way, God gave Noah the sign of the rainbow after the Flood (Genesis 9:13–17).

Look at Isaiah 66:3. What is this verse saying? What spiritual rules do you see here? What do they teach us about ourselves and our worship of God today?

How is God the same as a magnet? That is, how does He “pull” the people from other countries to Himself? For the answer, read Isaiah 66:18, 19.

After God destroys His enemies (Isaiah 66:14–17), God shows His glory. His glory acts the same as a magnet. His glory has the power to “pull” or draw people to Jerusalem (compare Isaiah 2:2–4). God gives His people a “sign.” Isaiah does not show us the sign. But we can guess that it is the last sign that Isaiah talked about: God will give His people joy and peace. God will give them back their land too (Isaiah 55:12, 13). When God shows His glory by doing these things for His people, this is a sign. It shows that God gives His favor to His people again in the same way, God gave Noah the sign of the rainbow after the Flood (Genesis 9:13–17).

Read Isaiah 66:5. What does it mean to “shake in fear at His [God’s] word” (NLV)? Why does the Lord want us to do that?

WORSHIP LEADERS AND WORKERS FOR GOD
(Isaiah 66:19–21)

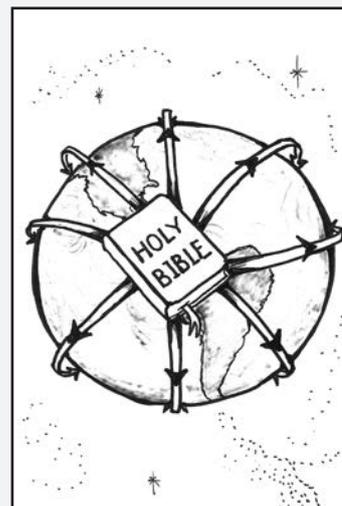
Read Isaiah 66:19, 20. In these verses, we read about the people of God who bring people from other countries to God as an offering. Why are the people of God doing that?

God sends His saved people out to all parts of the earth. He wants His people to share the good news about Him with the people who do not know about God. “The saved people will tell the nations [people groups] about my glory” (Isaiah 66:19, ERV). This is one of the best examples in the Old Testament that shows the plan of God for His people. He wants His people to share His teachings with people living in other countries. Isaiah already showed us that people from other countries will come to the Jews. Now Isaiah also shows us that the Jews must go to other countries and teach the people there about God. This is exactly what happens in the New Testament. Matthew 23:15 shows us that the Jews shared Bible truth with other people. But not the way the first Christians did. The first Christians shared the Good News about Jesus very fast and in a big way in a short time (Colossians 1:21).

The Hebrews in Old Testament times brought offerings of their crops to the Lord at His temple. In the same way, the Jews will bring an offering to the Lord too. But their offering is not food. What will their offering be? God tells all His people that His chosen workers “‘will bring all your brothers and sisters from those other nations [countries] to my holy mountain Jerusalem’” (Isaiah 66:20, ERV). These new people will be the same as a “living sacrifice [gift]” to God (compare Romans 12:1, ERV; also read Numbers 8:11).

God says, “I will also choose some of these people to be priests [holy leaders] and Levites [Jewish religious leaders]” (Isaiah 66:21, ERV). What does this verse show?

Who are the “some of these people” that Isaiah 66:21 talks about? These are the Gentiles or non-Jews. God will choose some of them to be worship leaders. Wow! This is a big change. It goes against everything the Jews have been taught about who can serve God. Only the sons of Aaron can serve as priests. Only the Levites can help them. No other Jews can do this work. But now God is saying that He will allow non-Jews to serve Him as the priests and Levites did.



God sends His saved people out to all parts of the earth.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH (Isaiah 66:21)

The Lord tells the people of Israel, “ ‘You will be my kingdom of priests [holy leaders]’ ” (Exodus 19:6, ICB). God also chooses some of these men to be the holy leaders for all of His people. But in the future, some Gentiles, or non-Jews, will become worship leaders (Isaiah 66:22).

The decision of God to allow non-Jews to become worship leaders is a big change. How will this new rule change the community of faith in the New Testament? For the answer, read Matthew 28:19; Acts 26:20; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; and 1 Timothy 3:16.

In the new plan of God for His people, Gentiles or non-Jews will join the people of God. Gentiles also will be equal partners with the Jews. Together, Jews and Gentiles will become a kingdom of royal priests or worship leaders. This shows us that the separation between Jews and Gentiles will no longer matter.

When will this new plan of God happen?

Paul is the servant that God chooses to share the Good News about Jesus with the Gentiles. Paul announces, “Now, in Christ [Jesus], it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or free, male or female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus. You belong to Christ, so you are Abraham’s descendants [future children]. You get all of God’s blessings because of the promise that God made to Abraham” (Galatians 3:28, 29, ERV).

What does this announcement mean for the Gentiles? Does their becoming holy leaders mean they can brag or think they are better than other people? No. This announcement is an invitation. God invites the Gentiles to join the Jews in announcing the Good News about Jesus (read 1 Peter 2:9; compare Isaiah 66:19).

And what about the Jews? Are they allowed to complain that God is not fair because He lets the Gentiles become priests or holy leaders? Of course not. At the same time, the Gentiles must show respect to their Jewish brothers and sisters (read Matthew 20:1–16). God gave the law first to the Jews (Romans 3:2). So, Paul warns the Gentiles not to brag about being better than the Jews who did not accept the truth about Jesus (Romans 11:17, 18).



“You are all the same in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, ERV).

**YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN SHALL LIVE FOREVER
(Isaiah 66:22–24)**

Read Isaiah 66:22. What is this verse saying to us? What hope does the promise give us?

In Isaiah 66:22, we read one of the most wonderful promises in the whole book of Isaiah. Read this promise carefully. In the new earth, we and our children shall live forever. This verse is a promise of everlasting life in a new earth. God will destroy sin forever. Death will no longer hurt us. We will not suffer anymore. This promise is the final reward that God has promised us.

Read Isaiah 66:23. Why are there new moons along with Sabbaths in this picture of the new earth that Isaiah shows us?

Isaiah 66:23 is not the easiest verse to understand. But here is one possible explanation. God made the Sabbath before He commanded His people to bring Him any offerings (Genesis 2:2, 3). This shows that the Sabbath is separate from the offerings humans made to God. So, the Sabbath continues to be a part of life in the new earth. Nowhere in the Bible do we see any proof that God commanded His people to worship Him on new moons. But maybe in the new earth, new moons will be worship days (but not a rest day the same as the Sabbath). Or maybe the new moons are connected in some special way to the tree of life. In Revelation 22:2, ERV, we learn that the tree of life grows “fruit every month, twelve times a year.”

We may not know exactly what Isaiah 66:23 means. But the most important thing this verse shows us is that the people God saves will worship Him forever and ever.

Why does Isaiah end his book with an awful picture of saved people looking at the dead bodies of evil people destroyed by God (Isaiah 66:24)?

Isaiah wants to warn his people to not turn against God. So, Isaiah shows them what will happen to the saved and to the people that God will destroy. Do you see that the evil people are dead? This shows us that God will not burn the bodies of evil people forever. The fire will burn only as long as it needs to burn. After the fire does its job, it will end. Then God can make Jerusalem new again.



Isaiah 66:22 is a promise of everlasting life in the new earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Controversy Ended,” in *The Great Controversy*, pages 662–678.

“Time in heaven will pass. Year after year there, we will see more beautiful truth about God and Jesus. Our knowledge will continue to grow. Love, respect for God, and happiness will grow too. The more people learn about God, the more they will love Him. Jesus will show us more about the beautiful truth about the plan of God to save us. Jesus will show us everything God did to win the war against Satan. Then our hearts will fill with more love and respect for God. We will touch our harps of gold with joy. Many voices will join to sing praises to God.

“ ‘Then I heard every created [made by God] being [person] that is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in all these places, saying, “All praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever to the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” ’ ” (Revelation 5:13, ERV).

“The worldwide war between God and Satan has ended. Sin and sinners are destroyed. Heaven and earth are clean. Peace and joy fill everyone and everything. God is the One who made everything. He gives life, truth, and joy to everything He makes. Everything from the smallest thing He made to the largest planets are perfect in their beauty and joy. The beauty of all these things announces that God is love.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 678, adapted.



“Many voices will join to sing praises to God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Why is the promise of everlasting life in a new heaven and a new earth so important to our Christian belief? What good is our faith without this promise?
- 2 Read 2 Peter 3:10–14. How do these verses teach the same idea shown in Isaiah 66?

Summary: Isaiah shows us a powerful and wonderful vision of the future. God promises to clean His people from sin and heal them. God also will invite all the people of the earth to join His people. The work God does to heal and make His people new shows the work that God will do to make planet Earth new too. Then God will live forever with His people. He will comfort them always with His love.

TIRE TROUBLE

Ilya Koltuk is a pastor. He also is one of the leaders in charge of the male students at Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia. He and his wife get into their car to drive to the Black Sea for a vacation.

After about ten hours, the car starts having tire trouble. Ilya is not sure what is wrong. Ilya stops the car and gets out. He looks carefully at the tires. But he cannot see any problem. Then Ilya prays with his wife.

“Dear God, we are having trouble with the tires,” Ilya prays. “Please help us.”

Ilya gets back into the car and drives on. Soon, the tires start making an awful noise. The noise gets louder and louder. Ilya and his wife have traveled 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) already. They cannot easily turn around and go back home now. They still have 250 miles (400 kilometers) to go to get to the Black Sea.

Ilya prays in his heart. Then he hears the voice of a man say, “Stop at that car-repair shop. Ask the mechanics for help.”

Ilya is surprised. He looks out the car window and sees a car-repair shop. He stops there and sees two men sitting and talking.

“Can you help me?” Ilya asks. “I am having tire trouble.”

The mechanics check the car. They take off the tires and switch them around. They put the front tires in the place where the back tires were. Then they put the back tires in the place where the front tires were. The mechanics also do a few other repairs.

“Get in,” one of the mechanics says at last. “You can go.”

“Thank you,” Ilya says. “How much do I owe you?”

“Two hundred rubles,” the mechanic says. In Russian money, 200 rubles is about 3 U.S. dollars.

Ilya gets the 200 rubles and a small Gospel of John. It is small enough to fit in a pocket. Ilya puts the money in the book and hands it to the surprised mechanics.

“What is this?” one of the mechanics asks.

“The Good News about Jesus,” Ilya says.

The mechanics become more surprised. “Are you a pastor?” one of the mechanics asks.

Ilya nods.

The mechanics’ faces fill with joy. They take the 200 rubles out of the book and hand the money back to Ilya. One of the mechanics holds up the book.

“God sent this book to us,” he says. “We were just talking about God when you arrived.”

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**“God sent this book to us”
one of the
mechanics says.**



