

A BETTER KING, SERVANT, CONQUEROR

The Book of Isaiah
Isaiah 65:17—66:24

Verse to Remember

*Behold, I will create
 new heavens and a new earth.
 The former things will not be remembered,
 nor will they come to mind.*
 Isaiah 65:17

Day 1 — Read Isaiah 65:17-25.

1. Throughout Isaiah we have seen promises of renewal—both temporary renewal in the near future and eternal renewal in the far future. What cosmic far-future promise does God make in Isaiah 65:17a?

2. When the new has swept in, what will become of the old, the “former things” (65:17)? (Is. 65:17b)

3. These “former things” include curses and judgments that resulted from the fall (if you wish to read the full story, turn to Genesis 3). Use the chart below to see how in describing his new creation, God uses images that are the opposite of the judgments he pronounced in Genesis.

Curse or Judgment: The Old Creation	Blessings: The New Creation
Gen. 3:16a	Is. 66:7–8
Gen. 3:17–19a	Is. 65:21–23a
Gen. 2:16–17; Gen. 3:19, 22–24	Is. 25:7–8; Is. 65:19b–20 (see bubble below)

In Isaiah 65:20 Isaiah uses “poetic understatements [to express] the unending life that will come” in the new creation; “they promise a meaningful and blessed life for all, in contrast to the sickness and early death that resulted from God’s curse.”¹

4. Consider some of the things that trouble your mind or cause you to mourn. Take a moment to write a prayer of thanks to God that in his new creation these things “will not be remembered” (Is. 65:17).

Day 2 — Read Isaiah 65:17–25.

1. Jerusalem is the symbolic focal point of this new creation (Is. 65:18–19; Is. 66:10). What were Jerusalem and its inhabitants like in Isaiah’s time?

Is. 1:21–23

Is. 30:1, 9–11

2. What will characterize the new Jerusalem as Isaiah describes it in this week’s passage?

Is. 65:18–19

Is. 65:25 (📖* Is. 11:6–9)

Days 3 and 4 — Read Isaiah 66:1–24.

1. What point about himself does God drive home yet again in 66:2a? (See also Is. 40:22, 25–26, 28.)

False worship and true worship

In much of his book Isaiah is concerned with worship—the false or hollow worship God’s people offered versus the true worship God desired. We encountered this concern in the first chapter, and we see it again in the last.

It was the Creator’s plan from the beginning of creation to live with the people he created and be in relationship with them. But the fall—humanity’s rebellion against God—ruined that original relationship. Since then, God has been working his plan to defeat sin and restore relationship. He made the Jews his chosen people, and when the time came, the temple was built to be the place where he would be present with them, where they could come and, with the appropriate sacrifices and ceremonies, worship him.

2. Read 1 Kings 8:23–30, the beginning of Solomon’s prayer to dedicate the temple. What did Solomon understand from the outset about the place of worship he had built? (1 Kgs. 8:27; compare Is. 66:1; 📖 Acts 17:22–25)

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3. What pictures do we find in Isaiah of what worship in Israel became?

Is. 1:11–16

Is. 29:13

Is. 57:4–8; Is. 66:17

Is. 66:3–4

4. Whenever people worship anything other than God or put anything else in his place, there are consequences. This is true on both a personal level and a global level. How do you see this play out?

5. Earlier, in chapter 65, Isaiah contrasted two groups of people: the unfaithful ones, who forsook the Lord and worshipped other gods (65:11), and his faithful “servants,” the remnant he promised to rescue (65:8). We see these two groups again in chapter 66.

a. How do the LORD’s “enemies” (66:6) treat the faithful? (Is. 66:5)

b. What end awaits the LORD’s enemies?

Is. 66:4a

Is. 66:6

Is. 66:14c–16

Is. 66:24

6. What characterizes the LORD’s servants? (Is. 66:2b)

What do you think it means to “tremble” at God’s word (66:2, 5)?

7. What end awaits these servants of the LORD?

Is. 66:10–11

Is. 66:12

Is. 66:13

Is. 66:22

Day 5 — Reread Isaiah 65:17—66:24.

God has made it clear all through the book of Isaiah that his promises of salvation and blessing will ultimately be not just for the remnant of Israel, but for those he has chosen from all the nations of the earth. In the past when Isaiah has written about the nations sharing in God’s promises, he has pictured them streaming toward Jerusalem (Is. 2:2–3).

1. Read Isaiah 66:19–20. These verses give us a new picture of the way the nations will be brought in. What does God say will happen?

How do we see this being worked out in the New Testament—and continuing in our own time? (Mt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8;  2 Tim. 4:1–2)

2. What detail does God include that makes it clear that the people he has called from the nations are equal sharers in the blessings of his kingdom? (Is. 66:21)

What images do the New Testament writers use to drive home this truth? (Eph. 2:11–20; 1 Pet. 2:9–10)

3. Solomon understood that God could not be contained in a brick-and-mortar building. The temple that he built was but a shadow of the way God would dwell with his people in the future.
 - a. How does God dwell with his people now? (Eph. 2:19–22)
 - b. How will God dwell with his people in “the new heavens and the new earth” (66:22)? (Rev. 21:3–4, 22; Rev. 22:3–4)

4. What will all those who are saved join together to do?
Is. 66:23

Rev. 7:9–12

5. What has your study of Isaiah taught you about God that you want to carry with you?

Pray that God would help you to retain this new or deeper understanding of him.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*, New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 1188, note on 65:20.