

3. Does God want men to come to such helplessness as Zion exhibited here?
4. Why does Zion remind the Lord of what is happening to the cities?
5. Did God ever deliver Zion?
6. What was God's ultimate deliverance?

E. REFINING OF ZION, CHAPTER 65

1. CLEANSED

TEXT: 65:1-12

- 1 I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.
- 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts;
- 3 a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks;
- 4 that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of adominable things is in their vessels;
- 5 that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.
- 6 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom,
- 7 your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom.
- 8 Thus saith Jehovah, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

- 9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah and inheritor of my mountains; and my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.
- 10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.
- 11 But ye that forsake Jehovah, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Fortune, and that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny;
- 12 I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but ye did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.

QUERIES

- a. What is the practice of "sitting among graves" (verse four)?
- b. Where is the valley of Achor?
- c. Who is "Fortune"?

PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord says in answer to Zion's complaint: While some seek Me and do not find Me, others who never before sought Me will find Me! I will reveal Myself to a people I have not chosen. However, the rebellious people I have chosen—with whom I have been continually pleading to come to Me—they have chosen to follow their own evil ideas and desires. These people of Mine insult Me continually, and Blatantly to My face, worshiping in the idol-gardens and burning incense to images on heathen altars. They go out at night to the graveyards and other secret places to hold seances and try to contact the dead; they indulge in the pagan rituals of eating swine's flesh and rotten food. These have so completely given themselves over to pagan ritual and mystery-cults they

think they have attained extra-ordinary sanctity and do not wish to associate with their fellow countrymen so they say, Stay away from me, you are not in the same class as I am in wisdom and religion. The Lord says of these, They are as vexatious and repulsive to Me as smoke in the nose from a fire that smolders continually. I have been recording their deeds and I have written down a decree that I will no longer restrain Myself toward these rebels. I am going to pay them with a full penalty for their rebellion. I am going to dump this entire mess of ungodliness they have made right back into their laps. I am going to punish them, not only for their own sins, but also for the sins of their forefathers too, says the Lord, because their forefathers taught them to worship idols on the hilltops and profane My name and insult My name; I will pay them back for the centuries of profanity with which they profaned Me.

But I will not destroy them all, says the Lord; just as one does not want to throw away a cluster of grapes because there are some good grapes mixed with the bad ones, so there are some good people in Zion I do not want to destroy. There are a few in Zion who are My good servants. I will save a small group and these will provide "seed" to form a people who will receive the inheritance and the dwelling I have promised them. This inheritance and dwelling place will be one of prosperity and security like Sharon's plains and the valley of Achor for those who seek Me. But as for the rest of you, who worship the gods of Good Luck and Destiny, and who forsake My temple and forget Me, I will "destine" you to slaughter by your enemy's sword. You are marked for the slaughter because when I plead with you to come to Me you did not answer My pleading; when I commanded, you did not obey. In fact, you deliberately did what I had said was evil and your every desire was what I told you was undesirable to Me.

COMMENTS

v. 1-7 SIN REPAYED: It may have appeared up to this point in Isaiah's prophecy that he was pronouncing doom upon the *whole* nation. However, the prayer in chapter 64 shows that there was a small remnant of people who had turned to the Lord for help. This small group had the testimony of Isaiah "bound up and sealed" among them and were the prophet's disciples. They had turned to "the teaching and to the testimony" (cf. Isa. 8:16-20). Chapter 65 is the verification that Isaiah had been declaring all along the *whole* nation was not to be doomed but that there would be a sifting and God would indeed answer the prayer for deliverance by the remnant. Those who blaspheme the Lord will be recompensed with judgment; those who trust Him will become a "seed" and provide heirs to Judah's promises.

The apostle Paul helps us understand that these final verses of Isaiah's book have to do with the Messiah's kingdom (the church) for he quotes 65:1-2 in Romans 10:20-21 as fulfilled at the preaching of the gospel and its reception by Gentiles. Isaiah is predicting that a refining, sorting, culling process is going to take place as a consequence of the Babylonian captivity and the subsequent centuries of the Jewish "indignation" (cf. our comments Daniel, College Press, pages 343-353 and 429-435). From the Babylonian captivity, through the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth, through the Seleucid domination and the Maccabean revolt, and through the early Roman domination the Jewish nation would undergo a *spiritual sifting* until thoroughly prepared (with a remnant of godly servants like Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, etc.) for the *new creation* (Isa. 66:18-24) (the Messiah's Zion). This sifting must take place because of the abominable rebellion of a majority of Israel in Isaiah's day. Many of these rebels will never find Jehovah even though He has plead with them (through prophets and leaders) for century after century. They would not give up their idols. So it is predicted that God *will* have a people turn to Him in the future who had never inquired

about Him before. This will be the *goiy* (singular of *goiym*). Isaiah 65:1 substantiates Ephesians 3:1-6 that Jehovah did not in ancient times make known to the Gentiles the messianic program as He did to the Jews. But Isaiah 65:1 predicts a time when the Gentiles would *find* Him; the Gentiles *will* behold Him and they *will* be called by His name. The time will come, says Isaiah, when God will reveal Himself and invite the Gentiles, "behold Me, behold Me!" That invitation will be through the preaching of the gospel of Christ says Paul in Romans 10:14-21.

But until the time comes for Jehovah to open the messianic kingdom to the Gentiles, He "spreads out His hands all the day to a rebellious people." Jehovah was more than patient, more than merciful, more than just with Israel. Century after century He plead with them through His prophets (cf. II Chron. 24:18-19; 36:15-16; Jer. 7:13; Lk. 11:50, etc.). But they would not listen (cf. Hosea 11:1-2; 12:10-14; Micah 2:6-11; Isa. 30:8-11; Jer. 5:3; 6:16-19; 7:27-28; 8:5-6, etc.). The Hebrew word *soorer* is translated *rebellious* but is more specifically, *stubborn*. They have their own ways and their own ideas and they stubbornly refuse God's thought and ways. With centuries of evidence behind them that God's ways result in good and man's result in evil, they still reject God's ways! The Hebrew phrase in verse three, *ha'am hammake'isiym*, is literally, "the people, the ones *angering* me" to My face continually. The Hebrew word is actually stronger than *provoke*—it emphasizes *anger*! The sin of Israel here depicted is insensitive and blatant. Knowing it angers Jehovah, they persist; not only do they persist, they invent *new* ways to provoke Him.

1. Sacrificing in gardens: making the ritual offerings in the groves of trees and flower gardens dedicated to pagan idols (see comments 57:1-8).
2. Burning incense upon bricks: incense is usually associated with prayer. They were praying to idols by burning incense upon brick altars.
3. Sit among graves, and lodge in the secret places:

apparently this refers to the practice of trying to contact the dead. The Hebrew word *loon* is translated *lodge in in secret places* but means simply, *lodge all night*. They were practicing the common pagan ritual of necromancy which was strictly forbidden by their scriptures (cf. Dt. 18:11; I Sam. 28:3; Isa. 57:9). Jerome refers to a practice called "incubation" in the temples of the idols "where they were accustomed to lie upon the skins of the victims stretched upon the ground, to gather future events from their dreams."

4. Eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things: Swine's flesh was offered by the heathen in sacrifice to their idols and then eaten as a ritual of dedication and holiness (cf. II Maccabees 6:18-22; 7:1-2). It was forbidden for the Hebrews (cf. Lev. 11:7ff; Dt. 14:8). The Hebrew word *pigguliyim* is translated *abominable things* and according to Ezek. 4:14; Lev. 7:18; 19:7 it is things that are legally unclean. Young calls it "rotten" things; Keil and Delitzsch says the word means "a stench, a putrefaction, broth made either of such kinds of flesh or such parts of the body as were forbidden by the law." It was a disgusting and revolting practice evidently a part of pagan cultic worship.

Those who became initiates into the pagan mystery cults did so through secret rituals and orders. They went out in the dark of night to the groves and hilltops; they talked in a cryptic language about mysterious rites and ceremonies; they glanced and smiled knowingly when asked about their worship. All of this made the cult worshipers consider themselves the "in" group, the "wise" people, and religiously above everyone else. Any person not a member of the cult was considered ignorant, unsophisticated and not one with whom to be associated. Therefore, they said (literally), "Be off to yourself," that is, "Stay away from me, you do not know all the secret things I know and we just are not in the same class of people." Such arrogance by men who have rejected goodness and purity for

wickedness and rottenness vexes Jehovah (The absolutely righteous One) like the smoke smoldering from a garbage heap in the nostrils of a man.

The Hebrew word *shillameti* comes from the root *shalam* which primarily means *complete, entire, finish, make good, repay, or requite*. It is translated in verse six *recompense*. The Hebrew *kheygam* is from *khoog* which means *lap, or bosom*. Jehovah has written down in His heavenly books the "bill of goods" on these profane, blasphemous people and He is going to pay them back and dump the whole mess into their laps. Sin pays wages (Rom. 6:23). Jehovah has ordered His moral creation so that man and nature may "receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:28). When men plow iniquity, they reap injustice; when they sow falsehood, they eat the fruit of lies (cf. Hosea 10:13). God is not mocked, what a man sows, that shall he reap (Gal. 6:7-10). Generations of men reap the fruit of lies because they follow willingly in the lies of their ancestors (cf. II Chron. 33:9; II Kings 24:3; Jer. 15:4 for the classic illustration of this in Manasseh). The idolatry and blasphemy characterized by Isaiah here was practiced by the Hebrews from the days of Solomon (cf. Hosea 4:13; Isa. 57:7; Jer. 2:20; 3:6ff; 17:2, etc.). Those who "dance" must "pay the fiddler." Israel and Judah paid the consequences of their idolatrous indulgence with sword, pestilence and famine for centuries and centuries until they finally filled up the cup of their iniquity by rejecting Jehovah's Servant, the Messiah, and forfeited their birthright, lost their national identity and surrendered their only salvation.

v. 8-12 SEED REPLANTED: Out of the captivities Jehovah will refine a small remnant. When the husbandman of a vineyard gathers clusters of grapes he does not throw away a whole cluster if he sees some good grapes in it. So Jehovah saw in this rotten nation a few good people who would be a blessing to the world and form the messianic remnant. The Lord did not destroy the whole nation, (cf. Jer. 46:28). Many died of famine, pestilence and the sword during the Babylonian attacks (606, 597, 586 and 582). Many fled into the hills and

caves of Palestine from the Babylonian attacks and died there of starvation. Jeremiah says there were approximately 4,600 Jews taken back to Babylon as captives. The number is 10,000 in II Kings 24:14 plus some additional ones later (II Kings 25:8-17). A few of the very poor and physically infirm were left in Judea to farm the land. In addition, some whom the emperor of Babylon gave special favors, such as Jeremiah, and roving bands of deserting soldiers also remained (see comments *Old Testament History*, by Smith & Fields, College Press, pgs. 665-676, and *First and Second Kings*, by James E. Smith, College Press, pgs. 733-755). Altogether, about 15,000 were deported to Babylon from Judea. The Assyrian emperor, Sargon, noted on an inscription (discovered in 1842 by Botta) that he took 27,290 Jews captive from the northern ten tribes (Israel) when that nation fell in 722 B.C. About 42,000 people were taken captive between 722 B.C. and 582 B.C. (140 years). Some 50,000 returned at the release of the captives granted by the edict of Cyrus (536 B.C.). From the fall of the northern ten tribes (Israel) to the return to Palestine was 186 years. The Hebrew nation was begun at the exodus with approximately 2,500,000 people (see *Old Testament History*, Smith & Fields, College Press, pg. 155). After its purging through Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, it was begun again with 50,000. That is about a two-percent remnant!

With those statistics in mind, one is much more impressed with the promise of Jehovah to Isaiah concerning the "holy seed" (cf. Isa. 6:13). Jehovah is going to bring forth a *seed* out of Jacob (65:9) and this seed shall be replanted in the land and it shall *produce servants* to inherit the spiritual blessings which shall come through the messianic kingdom. Isaiah has a goal in mind for the seed of Jacob *beyond* the physical return of the Jews to Judea because the *seed* is to consist not only of Jews but of Gentiles as well (65:1)! Those who came to Jesus, the Messiah, inherited the *rest* God had promised His chosen (cf. Hebrews 3:1—4:13). Those who came to *Zion*, the N.T. church, inherited Jehovah's mountain (cf. Hebrews 12:22-29). Jehovah promised to multiply the *seed*

to inherit the messianic promises (cf. II Sam. 7:12-17; Isa. 44:3; 54:3; 59:21; 66:22; Jer. 33:19-22, etc.). And the *seed* was multiplied and did include the *Gentiles* (cf. Rom. 4:1-23; 8:12-17; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:16; 3:28-29).

The restful, prosperous pastoral scene is figurative of the spiritual rest and prosperity that will be inherited by the people of the Good Shepherd (cf. Ezek. 34:1-31; Jer. 33:14-26; Hos. 3:5; Joel 3:1-3; Amos 9:11-15; Obad. 17:21; Micah 5:2-4; Zeph. 3:9-20; Zech. 12:1—14:21). Sharon's plain was well known for its fertility and Achor is probably the same as the Wadi Kelt which descends through a deep ravine from the Judean hills and runs between steep banks south of the modern Jericho to the Jordan river. In all the five places where it is mentioned it is described as the '*emek*, the arable valley of Achor. Hosea pictures the comforting aspect of the terrible event for which the valley is famous (Achan's execution, Josh 7:24-26); it was a doorway of *hope* for chastened Israel (Hos. 2:15).

Gesenius identifies Fortune (Heb. *gad*) and Destiny (Heb. *meniy*) with Jupiter and Venus, the Greater and Lesser Good Fortunes of the astrologers. However, the ISBE (Vol. I, pg. 299) says, ". . . it is more probable that they are the two beautiful starclusters that stand on the head and the shoulder of the Bull at the old commencement of the zodiac . . . the Hyades and Pleiades . . . Both groups were considered traditionally as composed of seven stars; and the two names . . . taken together give the meaning of the 'Fortunate Number,' i.e., seven . . . The . . . spreading of the table and mingling the wine to *Gad* and *Meniy* at the beginning of the year to secure good fortune throughout its course, were therefore held about the time of the Passover, as if in parody, if indeed they were not a desecration of it; heathen rites added to one of the most solemn services of Jehoavh."

Jehovah will save a *seed* through the process of refining and purifying (cf. Mal. 3:1-4), but as for those who make a mockery of His commandments and think they can blaspheme Him by adding heathen rites to their worship, He will arrange for their destiny to be the slaughter of war. There is a very obvious

sarcasm in the use of the word *meniy* (destiny) in verse 12. The people worshiped and trusted in the god Destiny; Jehovah will show them who controls destiny! They will receive a *destiny* which they deserve, for when Jehovah called, they did not answer and when He commanded they did not (*shama'* hear) obey. It is well to note here that God came to His people by *words* (a propositional revelation, not mystical and subjective) and those words were to be *obeyed*, not merely noticed or felt. It is also well to note that those to whom the revelation came had the freedom to choose and *chose* to disobey. The Hebrew syntax is interesting in the last phrase of verse 12; the construction (“ . . . that which I delighted not in, you chose”) puts emphasis on that in which Jehovah delighted not! The Lord is justified in His rejection of these people for they have, in fact, rejected, mocked and deliberately chosen against Him.

QUIZ

1. Who are those who found Jehovah having not sought Him?
2. Who are the rebellious people being sought by Jehovah?
3. Name the abominable practices of the rebellious people.
4. Why did they consider themselves holier than others?
5. How does God recompense them?
6. What is the figure of the “new wine” in the cluster?
7. Who were the “seed” brought forth?

2. CHARACTERIZED

TEXT: 65:13-16

- 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be put to shame;
- 14 behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall

- cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for vexation of spirit.
- 15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; and the Lord Jehovah will slay thee: and he will call his servants by another name:
- 16 so that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

QUERIES

- a. Who are Jehovah's servants?
- b. How will Israel's name be a curse?
- c. What is the other name?

PARAPHRASE

On account of the fact that there are a few good people who have chosen to serve Me while the majority of Israel has deliberately chosen to do evil, I will fill My servants with spiritual nourishment and satisfaction but those who rebel against Me will suffer spiritual starvation and shame, says Jehovah. Indeed, those who choose to serve Me will express their joy in singing, but those who disobey Me will weep, moan and wail with sorrow and confusion. The name of this disobedient nation will be forever after used as an illustration of rebellion, mockery and blasphemy by those who are really My chosen people. Jehovah is going to deliver a deathblow to Israel's status as the elect people and He will choose obedient people from every nation on earth and call them by a new name which will characterize their new nature and blessedness. I will so completely and certainly fulfill My promises, the people who are chosen will invoke My name as the source of all truth for those who are My servants will be pardoned forever from the guilt and penalty of sin.

COMMENTS

v. 13-14 NURTURED: Continuing the idea of a refined Zion and the contrast between the "good grapes and the bad grapes" the Lord now pictures the different consequences of the refining process. Those (even of the *goiym* who were not called by His name) who do find Him and call upon Him and become obedient servants, He will fill with spiritual nutrition growth and satisfaction. Of course, Isaiah is using "times coloring" here, i.e., writing of future spiritual things in physical terminology. The New covenant scriptures make it plain that God's richest blessings are spiritual (cf. Eph. 1:3, etc.). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled (Mt. 5:6); those who seek the Bread of Life shall have it (Jn. 6:52-65); those who thirst for the Water of Life shall drink of it (Jn. 4:13; 7:37-39, etc.); those who declare joy shall have it abundantly (Jn. 15:1-11, etc.). Eating, drinking, feasting, celebrating and singing merely *symbolize* the blessings God's servants will receive (see comments Isa. 25:6ff). The kingdom of God is essentially *character*, not food and drink (physical things) (cf. Rom. 14:17). Those who rebel and disobey will find their souls and spirits starving and dying of spiritual nourishment. They will suffer sorrow and vexation (cf. Amos 8:11-12). There is no torture more excruciating than spiritual torture (cf. Lk. 16:24-31).

v. 15-16 NAMED: Those of the chosen nation who rebelled against their messianic destiny and their God left their name to the world for a curse. God promised Israel she would become a *proverb* and a *by-word* among the nations if she was rebellious and disobedient (cf. Dt. 28:37; I Kings 9:7; II Chron. 7:20; Psa. 44:14). The Jewish nation became the chief illustration for Christians of the consequences of rebelling against the Lord (cf. Mt. 21:33-43; 22:1-10; Lk. 13:34-35; I Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 3:1—4:13, etc.).

The Lord will slay the former Israel and create a new Israel (Gal. 6:15-16). Jehovah delivers the deathblow to the former Israel when He cancelled her covenant and nailed it to the

cross of Christ. It was definitely prophesied that He would do away with the election of physical Israel (cf. Jer. 3:15-18; 31:31-34, etc.). These verses (Isa. 65:13-16) clearly show that the genetic nation of Israel as such is not synonymous with God's chosen (cf. also Rom. 2:28-29). In the light of this precise statement that God is going to slay the disobedient nation and call His servants by another name, what scriptural reason is there for expecting a future resurrection of genetic Israel? Ezekiel 37 undoubtedly refers to the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. Certainly the nation that was restored then cannot be the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:13-16; neither can the present-day Israel! See our comments on Isaiah 62:2 for a discussion of the *new name*.

The Lord will so completely and evidently fulfill His promises in Christ, those who choose to obey Him will invoke His name as the source of *all truth*. They will pray to Him for every need and they will proclaim Him as Infinite answer to man's finiteness. He, Himself will become "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn. 14:6). Those who become His disciples will know the truth and be set free from falsehood (Jn. 8:31ff). The Incarnate Son of Jehovah will become an oath demonstrating in time and space the veracity of Jehovah's promises once and for all (cf. I Cor. 15:1ff; II Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17-20; 9:1ff, etc.). Whoever wishes to be blessed from henceforth must be blessed in the name of Jehovah and His Son; whoever wishes to verify the truthfulness, value, reality or meaning of anything must henceforth verify it in the character and will of Jehovah and His Son as revealed in the written record (the scriptures).

The "God of truth" is an extremely significant proposition. Jehovah is the truth. In the Person of Jehovah (and His Incarnate Son) is the whole of truth! There is no source of truth outside the character and will of God. He is truth absolute, ultimate, eternal in contradistinction from all that is relative, derived, partial and temporal. All that is true is relative to His character. When we speak of the sanctity of truth we must understand that underlying such a phrase is the sanctity of His character (His love, power, faithfulness, holiness, etc.).

He is the God of truth and all truth derives its sanctity from Him. This is why all untruth or falsehood is wrong; it is a contradiction of what God is! This is why God cannot lie or change His will. To do so would contradict Himself and He cannot deny Himself and be God! The devil's attack upon man was first an attack upon the veracity of God. He accused God of deliberate falsehood and deception in telling Eve that she should not eat of the tree because God knew if she did her eyes would be opened and she would then know something only God knew. Furthermore, the devil said God lied when He told Eve she would die if she ate of the tree. The devil openly assailed the integrity and veracity of God. And here is the important point; in convincing Eve that God was less than faithful, the devil very subtly destroyed Eve's integrity when he seduced her into doubting God's integrity. The only reference point upon which man may build his own integrity, veracity, truthfulness and faithfulness (his own character, as it were) is in unreserved commitment and belief in God's integrity and faithfulness. All of man's unfaithfulness (indeed, all of man's sin) has its affinity with that lie by which Eve was seduced—that God is untrustworthy. Man has only the power to believe or disbelieve. Truth is not in man, but in God. Truth can only be in man when man believes and trusts and obeys God! Therefore, if men are to be formed into the image of God it can only be done by preaching the objectively revealed (in the Bible) character of God (His faithfulness, love, and power). All preaching to convert must center on who God is and what He has done—not in what man feels, or thinks or is able to do. It is not in man to be faithful or to love or to be holy. Man can only be faithful and love and be holy when he believes God is absolutely faithful and absolutely loving and absolutely holy.

All that is false and standing against man has been forever conquered and eliminated through the Son of God. The power, the guilt and the penalty of man's rebellion has been atoned for and truth, ultimate saving truth, is resident in Him. Man can be in Him by faith. That is where God chooses His servants—in Him Who is Truth! This is the new, refined Zion.

QUIZ

1. What kind of eating and drinking is to be given the servants of Jehovah?
2. What did God promise about the name of the Jews if they rebelled?
3. What happened when God slew the rebellious Israel?
4. What is meant about people blessing themselves by the God of truth?

3. CREATED

TEXT: 65:17-25

- 17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.
- 18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.
- 19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and there shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying.
- 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.
- 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.
- 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
- 23 They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for calamity; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them.
- 24 And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer;

and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Is this a prediction of the end of time?
- b. Why speak of longevity of life in verse 20?
- c. Does verse 25 mean the same as Isaiah 11:6-9?

PARAPHRASE

And when this refining takes place I will also create a whole new age or order of things; the former order or age will be considered by the Lord and His new people as no longer valid. None of the Lord's people will regret the passing away of the old; they will be eternally grateful for His new creation. The Lord says, I am going to create a new Jerusalem which will be characterized by and inhabited by a people filled with joy. This new Jerusalem and her joyful people will bring Me joy, too, says the Lord. There will be no more occasions for sorrow and mourning in My new Jerusalem. There will be no more limited life in My new Jerusalem—neither among the very young nor the very old. Every citizen of new Zion will live in eternal joy. The sinner is also going to live forever, but in accursedness and not in new Zion. The citizens of new Jerusalem will no longer labor in vain; whatever they do will prosper and they shall know eternal satisfaction in their service to Jehovah. Nothing shall be able to separate them from their heavenly Father; they shall be the children of God and enjoy eternal fellowship with Him. They shall live in eternal dependence upon Him and He will hear and answer their requests before they even make them! In new Zion man and his environment

will be at harmony with one another. There will be nothing to harm the citizen of new Zion—all will be safe and secure. The devil, that old serpent, will be ground into humiliating defeat, and peace shall reign supreme.

COMMENTS

v. 17-19 PERSONALITY: In verse 16 Isaiah promised new Zion, "the former troubles are forgotten." Now the prophet shows why the former troubles will be forgotten; Jehovah is going to create an entirely new order. The Hebrew verb *bara* is translated *create* and is used in the Hebrew *qal* stem only with God as the subject, because it means bringing into existence something absolutely new. This creation is not speaking of a literal, physical new heavens and earth, but of a new era, a new age or a new order in which God will create His spiritual kingdom on the present earth. Young puts it, ". . . heaven and earth are employed as figures to indicate a complete renovation or revolution in the existing course of affairs." It is the *new Jerusalem*, the *new covenant*, and the old will not be remembered (cf. Jer. 3:15-17). In Hebrews 2:5-9 we are told that Christ came to restore man to the dominion over "the world to come" which man lost when he sinned in Eden. God cursed that creation because of man's sin. But Jesus, partaking of human nature, conquered sin in the flesh and has potentially given man's dominion back to him. This was done at the *first* advent of Christ (not the second). What God has done by Christ's redemptive work and establishment of the church is, therefore, the new creation. Hebrews 12:27 indicates that the *old order* (Judaism, or Mosaic covenant) was "shaken" (destroyed) "in order that what cannot be shaken may remain." That which "cannot be shaken" is the *new order* or the kingdom of Christ (Heb. 12:28) which is the church. Paul indicates that *the new covenant relationship is the new creation* (cf. II Cor. 5:16-21; Gal. 6:15-16, etc.). The Bible also teaches a *consummation* of the new creation at the *second* advent of

the Messiah (cf. I Thess. 4:13—5:11; II Pet. 3:7-18, etc.).

The Jewish Apocrypha (see our comments on chapters 53 and 61); especially those works written after the Maccabean era, speak of the *new age* as being *ushered in* by cataclysmic events, brought about by supernatural powers, taking the form of a cosmic drama in which divine and demonic forces are at work, and involving a remaking of the heavens and earth to form a new beginning free from the corruption which had all along affected creation. It was, of course, to include the judgment of most of the Gentiles and the reign by power and wealth of the Jewish nation over the world. The apocryphal writers were interpreting the prophetic passages of the new order (such as we have here in Isaiah 65) colored by and relative to the persecution and oppression the Jews were having to endure at the hands of Gentile empires. Thus they pictured the messianic age beginning with a great supernatural deliverance of the Jewish nation from its oppressors involving cosmic warfare between God and Satan and demons, followed by creation of a new world order with headquarters in a new Jerusalem. It is easier, in the light of this materialistic interpretation of the prophets, to understand why the Jewish rulers kept insisting that Jesus show supernatural "signs and wonders" to verify His claims to be the Messiah!

What Jehovah is going to create will be eternal because Isaiah exhorts, " . . . be ye glad and rejoice *for ever* in that which I create . . ." Jerusalem, the focus of the new creation, is characterized as both a subject of rejoicing and an object of joy. The *new* Jerusalem (the Jerusalem that is from above, i.e., the church in Gal. 4:26 is *ano* in Greek which means pre-eminent) will be filled with rejoicing as opposed to the sorrow and mourning which will fill old Jerusalem (the physical city). The *new* Jerusalem will also be the exclusive object of God's rejoicing. Calvin wrote, "So great is his love toward us, that he delights in our prosperity not less than if he enjoyed it along with us." Thus the personality of God's newly created Jerusalem is characterized as joyful (cf. comments on Isa. 35:10).

v. 20 PERPETUITY: This verse is portraying in figurative language the *immortality* of the citizens of *new Zion*. It is not as clear as the statement in Isa. 25:8, but nevertheless, in context, is teaching the concept of immortality. The idea of eternal life is taught in the Old Testament (cf. comments Isa. 25:8), but vaguely and gradually. Actually, immortality for both the believer and the sinner is taught here; the believer will enjoy eternal blessedness, the sinner eternal accursedness. The basic idea is, on a level of spirituality commensurate with their immaturity, greatly increased longevity of life will be one of the blessings of the *new Jerusalem*. As we have it in our paraphrase, "There will be no more limited life in My new Jerusalem—neither among the very young nor the very old. Every citizen of new Zion will live in eternal joy. The sinner is also going to live forever, but in accursedness and not in new Zion."

v. 21-25 PROSPERITY: The Lord kept telling His people that when they disobeyed Him, everything they attempted (physically or psychologically) would not reach full fruition or bring them satisfaction (cf. Dt. 28:30; Zeph. 1:13; Micah 6:14-16; Amos 8:9-12, etc.). But in the *new order* (the messianic age of man's reconciliation to Jehovah) the exact opposite will prevail. Everything the citizen of new Zion does, as he conforms to the image of Christ, will produce fruit to Jehovah's glory and satisfaction to the heart of the doer (cf. I Cor. 15:58; Rom. 8:28, 37; II Cor. 9:8-11; Eph. 3:20; I Thess. 1:2-10; 4:9-12, etc.). The picture is one of security, satisfaction and enjoyment. Whatever the citizen in God's new kingdom labors at will glorify God (cf. Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:17; 3:22-25; II Thess. 3:6-13). Anything done honestly and within the will of God will be honored by Him and rewarded. Nothing the Christian does (if God can be thanked for it, I Tim. 4:4) will be in vain; nothing he does will be destroyed. The works of the citizen of new Jerusalem "follow after him" (cf. Rev. 14:13).

Those who have been refined and recreated as God's new Israel will call upon Jehovah and He will hear them. In fact, new Israel will be such a joy to Him He will eagerly answer

their prayers before they are uttered! Daniel exemplified the faith that such a member of the new Israel would have. While he was still praying (Dan. 9:1-19), the Lord sent an angel to answer his prayer (Dan. 9:20-23). Daniel had hardly begun his prayer before the Lord answered it! Old Jerusalem complained (Isa. 64) Jehovah was not listening to their prayers. It will not be so in the new Jerusalem. He will not only send His angels to minister to new Zion (Heb. 1:14), He will give His Spirit to utter prayers for new Zion when she cannot find adequate ways to express herself to God (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). He knows before we ask what we need (Mt. 6:8). If men know how to answer the requests of others, how much more does a divinely-caring Father know how to answer His children (cf. Lk. 11:5-13; 18:1-8).

Verse 25 is a fitting summation to this chapter. Nothing hurtful will be permitted in new Zion. In God's "holy mountain" (Zion, cf. Heb. 12:22), the place where He dwells, there will be peace, joy and festivity (cf. our comments Isa. 11:6-9; 25:6-9).

QUIZ

1. Is there N.T. teaching to substantiate the interpretation here that the first coming of the Messiah brought a "new creation"?
2. How, according to Jewish apocrypha, did many of the Jews interpret the "new creation" passages in the prophets?
3. How much teaching is there in the O.T. concerning immortality?
4. What will be the end of the labors of citizens of new Zion?
5. What will be the reaction of God to the prayers of citizens of new Zion?