

God Restores
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Isaiah 65:17-25

Opening: As the year draws to a close we tend to reflect on where we've been. It's also important to look ahead to what God has in store for us.

We all know the old saying that the windshield of a car is so much bigger than the rearview mirror. It's a great word picture of our need to spend more time anticipating what's ahead than reliving what's in the past. We need to learn from, honor, and even be a little sentimental about the past but we shouldn't live there. Some things about the past should truly be left in the rearview mirror. Back in Isaiah 43:19, God assures His children: *"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* We could ALL use a dose of that today!

As our study in Isaiah comes to a close (and as this crazy year 2020 comes to a close) we all need a vision that anticipates the future with hope. That's where the people of Judah were at the end of their seventy-year exile in Babylon. Make no mistake, though their captivity was coming to an end, deliverance from their ordeal didn't mean complete deliverance from their troubles. It's the same for us. We don't know what 2021 and beyond will look like but we know it won't be trouble-free. Still, the fact is that the hearts of the people of Judah then, and our hearts now need hope about God's plans for His people in the future.

Our curriculum writers began with a great reminder: *"Life's challenges can cause us to lose hope. If we are not careful, we can begin to believe all is lost and our best days are behind us...[t]he Bible teaches that the future should impact how believers live in the present."* Then they made a great statement: *"Hope in the future gives strength in the present."*ⁱⁱ Let that sink in! The exiles that were soon to leave Babylon needed that. Those who have been held captive by the challenges of 2020 need it too.

Big Idea: When our circumstances cause us to long for the past or lose hope for the future, we need to remember we serve a God who promises His people exciting things to come. They are plans to restore what sin has stolen. As Jeremiah wrote, God has “plans for a hope and a future.”

“Hope in the future gives strength in the present.”

In this next to the last book of Isaiah’s prophecy, God spent the first sixteen verses reinforcing judgment for Israel’s rebelliousness. Beginning in verse thirteen he contrasts the future for the rebellious with the future for the remnant (described as “My servants”) that would trust in Him. Then he turns a corner in verse seventeen of this chapter and takes on a hopeful tone about the future to come.

Isaiah 65:17–25 (NLT)

¹⁷ “Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. ¹⁸ Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy.

- Verse seventeen reminds me that God is the Creator of the Universe so He can easily create a new heaven and earth! We will be so blown away by this future creation that we’ll hardly recall what the old one was like.
- The “new heavens and new earth” God described could be the future “millennial Kingdom” when Christ returns to earth for His one thousand year reign, or the “eternal Kingdom” after that.
- These verses make it clear the focus is on Jerusalem. The mention of sin and death still being in the picture might argue for the “millennial” theory.
- So, what should we know about the “millennial Kingdom?”

One Commentator writes, *“The Bible tells us that when Christ returns to the earth He will establish Himself as king in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David ([Luke 1:32–33](#)). The unconditional covenants demand a literal, physical return of Christ to establish the kingdom. The Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel a land, a posterity and ruler, and a spiritual blessing ([Genesis 12:1–3](#)). The Palestinian*

Covenant promised Israel a restoration to the land and occupation of the land ([Deuteronomy 30:1–10](#)). The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David’s line who would rule forever—giving the nation rest from all their enemies ([2 Samuel 7:10–13](#)).

At the second coming, these covenants will be fulfilled as Israel is re-gathered from the nations ([Matthew 24:31](#)), converted ([Zechariah 12:10–14](#)), and restored to the land under the rule of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of the conditions during the millennium as a perfect environment physically and spiritually. It will be a time of peace ([Micah 4:2–4](#); [Isaiah 32:17–18](#)), joy ([Isaiah 61:7, 10](#)), and comfort ([Isaiah 40:1–2](#)). The Bible also tells us that only believers will enter the millennial kingdom. Because of this, it will be a time of obedience ([Jeremiah 31:33](#)), holiness ([Isaiah 35:8](#)), truth ([Isaiah 65:16](#)), and the knowledge of God ([Isaiah 11:9](#), [Habakkuk 2:14](#)). Christ will rule as king ([Isaiah 9:3–7](#); [11:1–10](#)). Nobles and governors will also rule ([Isaiah 32:1](#); [Matthew 19:28](#)), and Jerusalem will be the political center of the world ([Zechariah 8:3](#)).^{xiii}

- In verses nineteen to twenty-five God describes what will be different:

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. ²⁰ “No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young!

- No one will die prematurely and living to be 100 won’t be unusual.
- Because physical death is mentioned we believe this describes physical life on earth for those who are living during the millennial reign.
- In the future eternal Kingdom death will be no more. This first Kingdom appears to mean instead long life for those who have trusted Christ and a shorter earthly life for the “cursed” who have not.

- Verses twenty-one through twenty-three would have been music to the ears of these captives who had been conquered by foreign armies:

²¹ In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. ²² Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. ²³ They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed.

- He just described the desire and prayer for every loving parent: ...“they AND their children, too, will be blessed.”
- That’s why it’s so important to be sure that our evangelism begins with our own children and grandchildren.
- It’s never too early to start teaching them about Jesus and it’s never too late to make sure they understand how to trust Him as Savior and Lord.
- Verse twenty-four is a great promise!

²⁴ I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers!

- This is a promise that followers of Christ can claim TODAY. Before we’ve finished articulating our needs, God is at work for our good and His glory!
- Verse twenty-five: God will restore His creation to peaceful perfection.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

- In Isaiah chapter eleven we see similar language about the animals:

Isaiah 11:7-8 (NLT)

⁷ The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. ⁸ The baby will play safely

near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm.

- Verse ten explains that this peaceful, perfect future is all about Jesus:

¹⁰ In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

- The point: Only those who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord can anticipate this perfect, productive, peaceful new heavens and new earth. That's why sharing the gospel to everyone we can is so important.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- This is interesting Biblical information but what does it mean for us?
- *"Hope in the future gives strength in the present."*
- When our circumstances cause us to long for the past or lose hope for the future, we need to remember we serve a God who promises His people exciting things to come. He has plans to restore what sin has stolen.
- Our group is at a stage in life where we're losing parents and grandparents and beginning to think about our own aging and mortality.
- We can become melancholy thinking about what is behind us.
- I've observed that older folks who focus on the here and now and the future (kids, grandkids, the hope of Heaven) rather than the past seem to be happier and more joy-filled. That's a lesson for all of us!
- We can't avoid being confronted with the challenges of life, but it's important to be intentional about recalling God's promises and plans for Christ-followers in the future. It's a good practice to take a look at God's big picture for His children with the "eternal lens" provided by our Bibles.
- Now, I realize some who are more "type A" will be tapping their feet saying *"This all seems far into the future after we leave this*

life, I want to know what's going to happen next week, next month, next year!"

- God's word is filled with promises to take care of us every day of our earthly life. *"His eye is on the sparrow..."* so I know he'll take care of 2021.
- We can receive the strength to toil along in the present by remembering what He has planned for His children for eternity.
- I'm reminded of an old gospel song lyric by Stuart Hamblin:

*My heart can sing when I pause to remember
A heartache here is but a stepping stone
Along a trail that's winding always upward,
This troubled world is not my final home.*

*The things of earth will dim and lose their value
If we recall they're borrowed for awhile;
And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble,
Remembered there will only bring a smile.*

Chorus

*But until then my heart will go on singing,
Until then with joy I'll carry on,
Until the day my eyes behold the city,
Until the day God calls me home.^{iv}*

- This week, let's spend time looking through the windshield of God's plans instead of the tiny rearview mirror of our past. Let's gather strength from His plans for a perfect, peaceful, eternal future for His children.

ⁱ The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Is 43:19). Wheaton, IL:

ⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Bible Leader Guide – Lifeway 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Bible Leader Guide – Lifeway 2020

^{iv} https://hymnary.org/tune/until_then_hamblen