

Isaiah 65:17-25. ¹⁷ “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. ²⁰ “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. ²³ They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

Our LORD will create the ultimate change in scenery

- 1. He will bring lasting peace and true and eternal relief.*
- 2. He will restore to us a perfect relationship to our God.*
- 3. He will keep us and bless us until that glorious day.*

Southwest Airlines had, for a time, a series of commercials that touted the phrase, “Want to get away”. The type of scenario that was featured in each commercial included someone making an embarrassing blunder that they would like to forget. Southwest Airlines made the connection that getting away on their airline would help you to forget or at least distance yourself from your problems. The airline offered a temporary change of scenery so that you could get away and find relief from that blunder and from everything else, at least for a time.

Around this time of year, many people enjoy different changes in scenery. Some make the move down to Florida or Arizona or Arkansas and winter where its warmer. Some take this season of the year and climb up into a tree stand or go out and enjoy the quiet cool of the early morning as they hunt. Others simply make more time to do more of those inside activities that you might do a bit more this time of the year especially now that it’s dark so soon, and so they curl up with a blanket and a good book. Some of us might prefer to grab some popcorn and watch a movie that whisks us away to another place, or another time. Each little trip away helps people find a little sense of relief for a few minutes, a few hours, a few days, or even a few months. As we think about our own lives I think we all can appreciate how a change in scenery, no matter how simple, may bring some much-needed peace and relief.

Consider the change in scenery that God promises to his people through the prophet Isaiah. One day the LORD would make all things new. He would create the ultimate change in scenery that would bring lasting peace and true and eternal relief. He will restore to us a perfect relationship to our God. And he will keep us and bless us until that day.

Listen to the promises of God, ***“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.*** The LORD God in his goodness and love makes this incredible promise. He will create a new heavens and new earth. And this new creation will provide his people the ultimate get-away from the things that trouble us. ***“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind.***

Consider the immensity of that promise, that declaration of God. An earthly change in scenery might help bring a certain level of relief for us. A few days out hunting, a few hours at the movies, might be a welcome distraction, but the issues that troubled us, the frustrations that plague us, the problems that we had when we left will be waiting when we get back. And in a sense, we can never truly get away from the things that trouble us. Things stick with us, we have a hard time letting go, forgiving those who harm us, forgetting what we have done wrong, mistakes follow and perhaps even haunt us. It takes a long time to distance ourselves from painful memories and frustrations, then of course these things have a way of finding their way back to the surface and forefront of our lives at a moment’s notice. A memory from the past suddenly ruins a decent day. A bad day gets worse when we dwell on a sin from our past, an embarrassing blunder gets thrown into our face for one reason or another. A soldier struggles to forget the painful memories of war and combat, things that remind us just how broken this world is. Wouldn’t it be nice to completely and truly forget those pains and problems? Wouldn’t it be nice to truly and honestly leave all those things behind permanently?

This is the type of promise the LORD himself makes. This is the type of the relief that God offers to his people. One day, he will make all things new and all those ***former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.***

The anticipation of this coming day provides relief and peace. Like the days leading up to a trip, we get excited, the anticipation spills over into the moments and the days before. We are looking forward to that change in scenery and it strengthens us and motivates us to get through the weeks and the days and the hours still left. In a similar way, the knowledge, the reminder, that heaven is waiting, that one day the new heavens and earth will be here; this ultimate change of scenery with all its peace and relief strengthens us and motivates us. It increases our joy and our gladness. For there will be a day that I will serve my God perfectly as I ought and I will dwell with my God in peace and harmony.

Again, this is a concept that is so wondrously tremendous and almost indescribably terrific. For the very opposite is the unfortunate reality for us who live as sinful people in a sinful world. Instead of harmony, there is discord. It doesn’t take us long to identify how we as individuals walk outside of God’s intended will our lives. There are embarrassing blunders that we can all quickly identify in our day to day lives, but there are also sins that we struggle

with that are much more disconcerting. As sinners, you and I are never in perfect harmony with God and his will for our lives. One that that will change. God describes those who dwell in his new heavens and new earth in this way, ¹⁸ ***But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.*** ¹⁹ ***I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people;*** The description of this coming harmony makes us long for such perfect peace with God, and once again the anticipation of this joy spills over into the days and months and years before this ultimate change in scenery takes place. God gives us the promise of this coming joy so that each day knowing what God has done for us in Christ, knowing of this coming promised peace and relief, we will be strengthened and refreshed and motivated to live in harmony with our God more and more in our day-to-day lives.

When God makes new the heavens and the earth, our relationship with God will be perfect. We will dwell with him in peace. And to add to our joy we will be set free from the frustrations of this world around us. That is an aspect of the LORD's gracious promise that the prophet details in this section of Scripture.

Isaiah writes of some of the frustrations that the people of Judah will experience, some which are common to all, some of which we can relate with so intimately. But in writing of this Isaiah reminds us that God will deliver his people from everyday pain and intense sorrow, from common frustration and individual hopelessness, from future misfortune and present day worry. Isaiah writes, ***the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.*** ²⁰ ***“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years...”*** ²¹ ***They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.*** ²² ***No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands.*** ²³ ***They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.*** God promises relief to his people. He would grant relief and healing to the people of Judah. He promises this to his New Testament Church as well. Blessings in health and safety, security and stability, are welcome gifts from his hand.

Still, as long, as we live in the current status of the earth as a sinful and broken place, things will be difficult. The discord of this sinful world is very evident and it takes its toll on us as human beings. Our personal pains when paired with the dissonance and discontent of the world around us can be overwhelming. Turn on talk radio, watch the news, or log onto social media these days and you will see the evidence of such frustration in our nation and throughout the world. The lack of unity, the hatred, the discord and the lack of harmony with each other and with the will of God is staggering and so painfully evident. God promises that he will hold his people up during such difficult and trying and painful times and he will be our shield and strength. We find great joy and relief and peace in knowing that that don't have to wait a single day for this part of Isaiah's promise to come true: ²⁴ ***Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*** In the midst of all the problems of this world, in the midst of our personal struggles and pains, God in his goodness and grace, in his steadfast love and faithfulness, is with us. He will hold his people up. He will hear your cry.

He will be there to answer your prayer, to hold you up, support you and protect you and strengthen you.

But he also promises that one day, all of this discord, this turmoil of our personal lives and the chaos of this world, the pain, the sorrow, the frustration that is so often the mark of this broken world, all of it will just be gone. The old order of things will be forgotten and left behind. And instead of the disharmony; the social issues and the personal pain of this current world, instead there will be this unprecedented, unparalleled and uninterrupted peace. Isaiah describes this peace in this unforgettable way, ²⁵ ***The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,***” says the **LORD**.

To those who are in need of peace, who have a daily and eternal need for relief, our God doesn't just ask the question, “Do you want to get away?” No, he gives us this promise he will take us away and grant us the ultimate change in scenery: ***“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.*** He promises this to you and to all those who believe in Christ. For in Jesus our Savior he has removed our sins, he has paid for our guilt in full, he has made us right with God and at peace with our Father in heaven. Through his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave Jesus has paid for our trip to the new heavens and the new earth in full. Our crucified and ascended LORD who watches over us, who sustains us through all the problems and trials of life, promises to come back and to take us to be with him in the glories of heaven. And so, this is the coming reality, this is the coming joy which brings with it anticipation that spills over into each day of our lives, this is joy that refreshes, that renews, that motivates and strengthens us to live for our God despite the brokenness of the world around us. We will dwell with God in the new heavens and the new earth because of faith in Christ Jesus. So, dear Christians, dear saints of God made holy by the blood of Christ, lift up your heads and know that in Christ, all the frustration of this life and the problems of this world that are so hard to escape, and so hard to wash clean from thoughts and minds, one day these things will be former things, and they ***will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind - ever again.*** Rejoice and be glad in your LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, who brings you peace and relief like no one else could. Amen.