

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2021: *Isaiah: “Comfort My People”*
Lesson 13 “Rebirth of Planet Earth”

Read for this week’s study

Isaiah 65:17–25; Isaiah 66:1–19; Isaiah 66:19–21; Isaiah 66:21; Isaiah 66:22–24.

Memory Text

“ ‘For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind’ ” (Isaiah 65:17, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. New Heavens and a New Earth (*Isaiah 65:17–25*)
- III. Divine “Magnet” (*Isaiah 66:1–19*)
- IV. Missionaries and Worship Leaders (*Isaiah 66:19–21*)
- V. Community of Faith (*Isaiah 66:21*)
- VI. So Shall Your Seed and Your Name Remain (*Isaiah 66:22–24*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Fortunately, our existence doesn’t have to end in death. On the contrary, we have been offered life, eternal life, in a world made new.” (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. This lesson brings us to the conclusion of our study of the book of Isaiah. The final section of the book, chapters 56-66 concludes by describing two ways people will respond to the work of the suffering Servant (52:13-53:12), who is also the Divine Warrior (59:15b-21; 63:1-6).
3. Some people will respond with humility and turn away from their sins and accept what God’s servant did on their behalf; these people are called “the servants” (mentioned 11 times in 56-66). They will experience the blessing of the messianic kingdom and will inherit God’s eternal kingdom. But there are also others who are called simply “the wicked”, who reject both the Servant and his servants.
4. What is Isaiah talking about in 65:17-25? (Sunday’s lesson) What is the original context and message? How does this show that salvation is not mere “sin

management”, renovation, but transformation? What is the difference between Isaiah’s perspective and Revelation’s perspective (Revelation 21 & 22)? Why is it that we cannot read Revelation back into Isaiah?

5. Just like the introductory chapters, the concluding section (66:1-17) (Monday’s lesson) combines judgment (1-4; 15-17) and hope (5-14), showing that hope for sinful people comes through judgment. How is this different from our cultural perceptions of judgment today?
6. What serves as a magnet to draw the nations to Jerusalem? (66:18, 19; Monday’s lesson) What is the role people play in this? (19-21; Tuesday’s lesson) Why does God “select some of them to be priests and Levites”? How is this a paradigm shift? What kind of community is God trying to establish (cf. Matthew 21:13.14)?
7. Israel has a mission to bear God’s light to the world because God intends to restore to himself not only Israel, but all people (cf. 56:3-5, 7-8; 66:18, 23; Galatians 3:28). Are there areas in which we still need to grow in order to make God’s dream a reality?
8. “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure.” (66:22) What is the significance of the fact that in this new community no identity is lost or marginalized? (Thursday’s lesson) Why is this not a new empire?
9. Why does Isaiah spoil such a marvelous ending of his book with mentioning “new moons” and the “dead bodies” (66:23-24)? What can we learn from the final end of sin and sinners?
10. “Ultimately the re-creation of His community would lead to the re-creation of Planet Earth, where His presence would be the ultimate comfort of His people.” (Friday’s lesson) How is this different from the classical Christian perspective throughout the centuries influenced by Greek dualism?
11. What was most valuable for you in studying the book of Isaiah for 13 weeks? Are there ways in which your life will be different as a result? What needs to change if our community is to be part of God’s transformation that he is accomplishing in our days?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

By the way, speaking of Sabbath, what did you do when you got to the very end of Isaiah? Our question being about God as always. The wonderful verses of Isaiah 66:22, 23:

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath [I like that; we’ll keep Sabbath in the New

Earth. Think of all there'll be to remember], all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD.”

Do you wish Isaiah stopped there? I mean, what a wonderful ending to this book. But that's not the end. Here's the end. On your way home from worship on Sabbath in the New Earth, if perchance your little boy has not behaved too well, you can point him to this scene. Maybe it will help him to be good:

“And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

What do you think of that? I thought the second half of Isaiah was all good news. That's worse than anything in the first half. And then you add to that, over here in 65:17. But let's start with 20, to save time now in the end of our period:

No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

Well, the good news seems to be evaporating rapidly here at the end of Isaiah. What do you do with those verses that I've just read? Does your version have various, apparently interpretive, renderings of 65:20 about the child dying a hundred years old? There are some very bold renderings here that seem to clear up the problem, but it doesn't help with the Hebrew.

When the Isaiah scroll, the Dead Sea scroll, was discovered more than thirty years ago, I wondered if maybe the Hebrew was not as difficult as this, so I sent for a photographic copy. And when the Hebrew arrived, it's exactly the same. So the solution is not in the Hebrew. And that's a thousand years' older copy of Isaiah than had been known before. So what do you do with these verses? Hardly the ones to go home with tonight! Do you like the thought that in the hereafter we can go and look into hell after all? And you'll see those worms working; you'll see that fire burning. And you can say to your son, “Look, that's what happens when you're bad. Next Sabbath will you behave?” That would produce the obedience that springs from fear, wouldn't it? And God's trying to eliminate fear from his universe. What to do with that? Maybe we should have gotten to this a little sooner tonight. Anybody have a remedy you've been very satisfied with? Can I make a suggestion, since time is so late? One thing is always to read around this. Read more of it. Look back to Isaiah 65:17. This is one of the several places where God describes how wonderful it's going to be:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in

Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.”

Now, what causes weeping and the cry of distress? Isn't it when babies die too soon and old men don't live out their full span? So, carrying the picture through, he says:

“In the hereafter, no more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days [that's something that has made you very sad many times], or an old man who does not fill out his days, for [to give a very dramatic picture], the child shall die a hundred years old [a very dramatic way of saying it], and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.”

Now that's the difficult phrase. Some versions have it, “and if anybody should die after a hundred years,” it would suggest that he got in there by mistake. It must be a sinner got in here. Because will saints ever die? See, it's made very plain they'll never die. So, I think on the basis of many other passages to put with this, it's dramatic ways of saying all will be well. For read on in Isaiah 65:21:

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their children with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

And he's picturing very vividly how everything's going to be all right. Lions eating straw like an ox? Look back quickly at 11:6 about these lions. And I think this serves to illustrate the method that's being used. Here it is again:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Again, the lions are eating straw like an ox. But look now at 35:9, about the new earth: “No lion shall be there.” Oh now, I thought it was lovely. We were going to see lions there with children leading them, and they were eating straw like an ox. But 35:9 says no lion shall be there. Now, will there be lions there or not? I've never seen artists choose this verse. They like the other two. And it's a male lion with his mane, you know, with a little child leading. It's a beautiful picture. This one says there won't be any lions there.

Well, the next line explains: “Nor shall any ravenous beast come upon it.” Now, isn’t it saying the same thing? If there are lions there, they’ll eat straw like an ox; or there will be no lions there. Either way, it will be safe. I have never been threatened by a lion. To us modern people, it would be more encouraging to read, “There shall be no drunk drivers there.” Or maybe there will be no terrorists there. There will be nobody blowing up planes there. It will be safe. All this is saying is, in terms that the people could understand, and they were often threatened by lions, were they not, that it will be safe. I think that would take care of those passages.

All we’re left with is that dreadful passage at the end. Is that talking about hell? I’ve heard it explained that the worm is the worm of life which will live forever. No, I read, what condition are their bodies in? Are they living to suffer? They’re dead, aren’t they? The dead bodies will be there. And what are the worms doing? Well, to a Jew, this was just as vivid as the picture of vines and fig trees and lions, and so forth. As you approached Jerusalem, or looked out over the walls in the right direction, you saw the city garbage dump known as Gehenna. And they all knew what was going on out there. The refuse, that which was discarded, was either consumed by the worms, which were not eternal, they kept reproducing themselves until the job was done, or they were consumed by the fire. And so long as there was anything to consume, the worms had something to eat and the fire had something to consume. What would cause the worms to cease their labor and the fire to go out? When there’s nothing more to be destroyed. I think this is just God ending on a serious note, as he began the book.

“I have wonderful things in store for you, my people. But I must warn you. If you are rebellious, if you will not listen, I will not be able to heal you. I will have to let you go. And I’ll give you a serious picture to remind you of it every time you look out there, you look at that garbage dump.”

Ah, it’s a terrible thing, but God had to do this to impress them. Now how God feels when he gives up his children and there’s no remedy, there’s no way of healing, that’s very clear in scripture. We have Hosea coming up very shortly. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

There immortal minds will study with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There is no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {SR 432.2}

And as the years of eternity roll, they will bring richer and more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. {SR 432.3}

Sin and sinners are no more, God's entire universe is clean, and the great controversy is forever ended. {SR 433.2}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in "the beauty of the Lord our God" (Psalm 90:17). {AG 223.3}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

The grace of God takes men as they are, and works as an educator, using every principle on which an all-sided education depends. The steady influence of the grace of God trains the soul after Christ's methods, and every fierce passion, every defective trait of character is worked upon by the molding influence of the spirit of Christ, until new motive power becomes filled with the Holy Spirit of God, after the likeness of the divine similitude. {UL 89.4}

There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Jesus, the power of divine grace makes him a new creature. Christ's love transforms, sanctifies him. {SL 55.1}

The Lord has His eye upon every soul that is seeking Him. He is interested in every soul needing help, and He will not leave one in the darkness of error, but step by step will lead him into the full light of the truth that is shining from every page of the Scriptures. . . . The Lord sees our every act. He knows just what progress we have made in the Christian pathway. How kind, how tender, our Great Shepherd is! With intense interest He looks down from His exalted throne upon the sheep of His pasture, and gives them grace and strength. . . . {HP 322.3}

The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world

cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. {SC 28.1}

Our life-work here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity,—ever progressing, never completed. More and more fully will be revealed the wisdom and love of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour, as He leads His children to the fountains of living waters, will impart rich stores of knowledge. And day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended. Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now we know in part; but then we shall know even as also we are known. {SD 337.2}

Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know. . . . {DA 21.1}

All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, ... that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. {TMK 99.5}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {AG 54.6}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His “little ones,” dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human. {DA 327.2}

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly

be. It is immeasurable. Then if earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? {COL 142.1}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of the gifts of heaven, and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {RC 27.2}

During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets. {AA 19.2}

The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition" between Israel and the other nations—the truth that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" with the Jews and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. This truth was revealed in part at the time when He rewarded the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and also when He preached the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar. Still more plainly was it revealed on the occasion of His visit to Phoenicia, when He healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. These experiences helped the disciples to understand that among those whom many regarded as unworthy of salvation, there were souls hungering for the light of truth. {AA 19.3}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

The angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome, and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperiled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created. {DA 639.1}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed

who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. {PK 377.1}

There will be open to the student, history of infinite scope and of wealth inexpressible. Here, from the vantage ground of God's word, the student is afforded a view of the vast field of history and may gain some knowledge of the principles that govern the course of human events. But his vision is still clouded, and his knowledge incomplete. Not until he stands in the light of eternity will he see all things clearly. {Ed 304.2}

All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's children. With unutterable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. We shall share the treasures gained through ages upon ages spent in contemplation of God's handiwork. And the years of eternity, as they roll, will continue to bring more glorious revelations. "Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) will be, forever and forever, the impartation of the gifts of God. {Ed 307.5}

Then we shall enjoy with Him all the glories of the world to come throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. . . . There is nothing in the kingdom of God to disturb or annoy. This is the life that is promised to the overcomer—a life of happiness and peace, a life of love and beauty.... There is no sin, no distracting care, nothing to mar the peace of the inhabitant. {ML 350.4}

The earth mightily shook as the voice of the Son of God called forth the sleeping saints. They responded to the call and came forth clothed with glorious immortality, crying, "Victory, victory, over death and the grave! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Then the living saints and the risen ones raised their voices in a long, transporting shout of victory. Those bodies that had gone down into the grave bearing the marks of disease and death came up in immortal health and vigor. The living saints are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up with the risen ones, and together they meet their Lord in the air. Oh, what a glorious meeting! Friends whom death had separated were united, never more to part. {EW 287.1}

Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed. {Mar 363.3}

Every right principle, every truth learned in an earthly school, will advance us just that much in the heavenly school. As Christ walked and talked with His disciples during His ministry on this earth, so will He teach us in the school above, leading us beside the river of living waters and revealing to us truths that in this life must remain hidden mysteries because of the limitations of the human mind, so marred by sin. {Mar 363.4}

The history of the inception of sin; of fatal falsehood in its crooked working; of truth that ... has met and conquered error—all will be made manifest. The veil that interposes between the

visible and the invisible world will be drawn aside, and wonderful things will be revealed.
{Mar 363.5}

Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {Mar 363.6}

Recommended Reading: *The Story of Redemption*, Chapter 67 – “The New Earth”
Education, Chapter 35 – “The School of the Hereafter” <https://egwwritings.org>