

“Imagining Your Destiny”

Isaiah 65:1-25

Context: The sinner’s question to God, “Shall we be saved?” is answered amidst the backdrop of the ruins and rubble of Ezra’s post-exilic Jerusalem. These last two chapters of Isaiah provide the grand finale to the entire book’s theme of salvation. The redeemed Remnant’s ongoing struggles, hopes, successes, and failures in the world conclude and their eternal reward in the Messiah’s newly created universe is revealed. Juxtaposed to their salvation theme is the conclusion of the theme of judgment and eternal punishment of God-mockers, the Remnant’s oppressors, and the disobedient toward God,

Life Principle: Our habits of imagination determine the paths we walk in the moment as well as our eternal destiny in the future, whether it be blessed or cursed by God (cf. Isaiah 65:2; 14-16).

1. The Lord’s Judgment of Israel – Isaiah 65:1-7

God heard and took great care to ‘dis-close’ Himself to post- Exilic Israel. They responded by following their own imagination, creating their own gods, following their own abominations, and making their own rules for holiness. Like the earthly punishment of their fathers for similar sin, God promised that the fire of their incense to idols would be their burning destiny, only this destiny lives in their memories and emotions for eternity.

2. The Lord’s Salvation of the Remnant – Isaiah 65:8-16

“Who shall be saved?” God answers Isaiah’s question by describing those saved in terms of “the *remnant* of new wine,” “heirs of My mountain,” “offspring of Jacob,” and “the chosen.” The primary characteristics that separate them from the damned are that they look for their destiny and fortune by taking care to seek, hear, delight, follow, and remember the Lord.

3. The Eternal Destiny of the Remnant – Isaiah 65:17-25

God answers Isaiah’s appeal to rend the heavens and shake the earth by promising something better, the creation of a new heavens and new earth. God establishes a moral order unshackled from the curse, rather than restoring righteousness under the old order. The changes are symbolized by the vanquishing of sorrow, increasing health and longevity, a deepening spiritual relationship with God, and a growing productivity and peace on earth,

Further study:

- The interpretation of the “nation” in Isaiah 65:1 refers either to post-exilic Israel (Ezra 9:1) or to the Gentiles. The interpretation is widely disputed, especially because of Paul’s use of this verse regarding the Gentiles in Romans 10:20. As a **Bible study method**, determine what makes the most sense in the context of Isaiah’s prayer. Is the term used for ‘gentile’ ever applied to Israel (cf. Isaiah 1:4; TWOT #326e)? Is Paul interpreting the Isaiah passage or applying a principle of the passage in Romans 10:20? Which interpretation do you favor?
- Using a dictionary, study the meaning of the words “seek, hear, follow, delight, and remember.” What does “taking care to do each” of these words with the Lord look like in Scripture and as they influence the life you live in your thoughts every day (i.e. Matthew 2:1; Luke 10:21-24; 5:1-11; 17:12-19)?
- Isaiah 65:17-25 has been interpreted literally by millennialists as Christ’s reign on earth, beginning at His second coming and prior to the inception of the age of ages. Others interpret it figuratively as the inception of the age of ages. I interpret it as a symbolic earthly prolegomena expressing the first age in the ‘age of ages.’ Our doctrinal statement is most compatible with pre- or amillennialism (cf. ‘**On Lasts Things**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org). Use *Wikipedia* or Erickson’s *Christian Theology* to determine the meaning of pre-, a-, and postmillennialism. What differences in interpretational method lead to differing opinions? Are any of these views essential for salvation? What is your view? What does this teach you about acceptance of others in the faith who have different views?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 65:2; 14-16. Think about what you are thinking about when prayers are said at meals, when you are being entertained, and when you are about to drift off to sleep. Do your mental images take care to “seek, hear, follow, delight, or remember” the Lord?