

WEEK 12

ISAIAH 66

Read Isaiah 65:17-66:24 | God rewards the true worshippers with a glorious and abundant future and punishes the false worshippers.

Preface

In the previous weeks, we learned about God's sovereignty and mercy in how He deals with His people – both the faithful and the unfaithful. **Last week**, we discussed the prophecy of the future Messiah who will suffer and sacrifice Himself for the redemption of many.

This week, we will read **Isaiah 65:17-66:24** where God promises a glorious future for those who fear Him and an impending judgment for those who are irreverent.

Context: Isaiah 56-66 contains prophecies concerning a distant future from the actual time of writing. The overarching theme of Isaiah 56-59 discusses the human inability to attain salvation without God's help and mercy. Isaiah 60-62 displays God's holiness, emphasizing our need for salvation, and reveals future glory. Isaiah 63-66 explores the themes of God's divine ability to restore and redeem creation, promising a new creation for those who revere Him while warning of impending judgment for those who reject God. These final chapters tie together the overarching themes of the book, providing a powerful and hopeful conclusion.

Final Summary: The Book of Isaiah conveys enduring lessons about the existence of God, His imminent return, and the significance of our response to Him in determining our eternal destiny. The major theme of Isaiah is the holiness and salvation of God, emphasizing humanity's need for and provision of salvation through the Servant of the LORD.

Side note: This passage is commonly used to describe the period of tribulation (Isa. 66:7-9) and the millennium (Isa. 66:10-14) before the second coming of Jesus (Isa. 66:15-16) within the dispensationalist view of the end times. However, scholars and theologians hold varying interpretations of these events. Our study will not delve into specific interpretations of this passage but will instead focus on the warnings and promises of God, pertaining to the overall theme of Isaiah.

Observation

1. How was the future glory of the New Heavens and a New Earth described? (Isa. 65:17-22)
2. How would God treat and judge those who rebelled against Him? (Isa. 66:3-6, 15-16, 24)
3. Who are the people that God looks on with favor and who are those that God treats harshly? (Isa. 66:1-6, 18-24)
4. What was the people's response to God's redemption? (Isa. 66:10-14)
5. What would be the task of those who would come and see God's glory? (Isa. 66:18-24)

Interpretation

1. Building upon Observation question number 3, what does God desire from His people?

*Leaders' note: God desires His people to have **true reverence** (Isa. 66:5) that will lead them to **true worship**, the opposite of what was described in Isa. 66:3-4.*

2. Based on Isaiah 66:17-21, what should those who have witnessed God's glory do?

*Leaders' note: The "sign" in Isa. 66:19 can be interpreted as the resurrection of Christ, signifying the birth of the Church, or as a miraculous manifestation of Christ, the Son of Man (Mat. 24:30), before His second coming. Regardless of the interpretation, a "sign" will be set upon those who have witnessed God's glory and they are called to **proclaim God's glory** among the nations, inviting **people from all nations to come and worship Him**.*

3. What does the description of the New Heavens and the New Earth tell us about God's original intention for humanity and the world? What does it tell us about God's nature?

*Leaders' note: People are meant to **delight in God and His creations**, and to **enjoy the work of their hands**. The world and creations are meant to exist in a state of **peace** and **complete harmony**. This question may raise the issue of whether God intends punishments. While punishment is necessary for God to uphold justice given the present reality of sin (rebellion against God), we can take a leap of faith knowing that God is loving and merciful as much as He is just. We need to be cautious not to impose our own understanding on this matter.*

Application

1. Looking at the way we live, does it show our reverence for God and His Word? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. How can we presently respond to this promise of the New Heavens and the New Earth?

Optional Follow-Up Exercise: Serve and Go on a Mission!

As Christians, we are called to worship God with our lives and to become co-laborers with Him by actively engaging in the work of the Kingdom. Take some time as a group to consider and participate in activities that proclaim God's glory among the nations, inviting people from all nations to come and worship Him. This can be achieved by going on a mission trip together or by serving the community, where we can interact with individuals of all nations or ethnic groups and extend God's hope to those who are in need, especially those who are poor and powerless in our city.

Consider these four aspects of mission, take inventory of how your group is doing, and keep each other accountable to practice these disciplines together:

- **Go** = going outside of the church communities, it can be in Hong Kong or overseas—short-term or long-term
- **Give** = financially supporting world missionaries
- **Pray** = praying for people around the world who need Jesus and for world missionaries
- **Welcome** = inviting others and welcoming them to receive our hospitality, love, and care