

# San Juan church of Christ

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## What Does God's Word Say About... Promise of the New Heavens and a New Earth

A passage in the Old Testament containing this promise can be found in Isaiah 65:17: "For behold, I create news heavens and a new earth; and the former things [Old Testament Law] shall not be remembered or come to mind." What sometimes is forgotten is that every passage has a context. In Isaiah chapter 65 God answers the complaints that are made in Isaiah chapter 64. God tells Isaiah that He had called and had rejected the Jews only because the Jews had first rejected Him. God points out that He will not utterly destroy the Jewish people, but that those who will repent may now be saved on the same terms as the Gentiles. Like a father pleading with his children, so God pleads with His people [Jews] even when they are rebellious to Him.

Isaiah was a 7th century B.C. prophet. His work was just before the destruction of Judea by the Babylonians. Much of the book of Isaiah has to do with the Jewish people's sin, which was the cause of their coming destruction. But there are also many prophecies in Isaiah that foretell of the coming Messiah and the "new order" that would be under Christ and under His new covenant (Hebrews 9:15-17).

In reference to the rebellious Jews Isaiah wrote, "You will leave your name for a curse for My chosen ones, and the Lord God will slay you" [This was a prophesy fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed and over a million Jews perished at the hands of the Roman army]. "But My servants will be called by another name" (Isaiah 65:15). This was fulfilled in Acts 11:26 when the servants were called Christians.

Isaiah, like Jeremiah, foretold of the end of the old Jewish Law, and the new provisions that would be ushered in under Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Remember, in a very dark time in the history of the Jews, shortly before the Babylonian captivity, and during their captivity, Isaiah offers hope in the future. God is not giving up on His people and His people are now defined as Jew and Gentile, which is different from what the Jews expected (Romans 3:21-22; Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

If we are to understand the meaning of "the new heavens and a new earth" of Isaiah 65:17, we should not think of it as our eternal home in heaven, or a kingdom that Jesus will establish in Jerusalem after His return. Isaiah is prophesying of what will take place after the death of Christ on the cross during the Messianic Age, or last days that we live in now (Hebrews 1:2). God will have joy in His people when Christ comes (Isaiah 65:18-19). The power of death will be destroyed in Christ (Isaiah 65:20; 1 Corinthians 15:54-56). The curses of the old covenant will be nailed to the cross when Christ comes (Isaiah 65:21-22; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:10-14). Our prayers will be heard by God in spite of our sinful nature (Isaiah 65:24; Philippians 4:4-7). Satan has been defeated and subdued (Isaiah 65:25; Revelation 12:7-9).

The best way to explain the meaning of verse 25 would be to break it down into 3 parts so we can better understand this verse. First, the wolf and the lamb imagery was used earlier by Isaiah in Isaiah 11:1-10, describing the peace and tranquility in God's holy mountain, the kingdom of God will bring. Secondly, "the lion will eat straw like the ox" would mean that the lion's nature has been changed so that he no longer acts as he did before. When one becomes a Christian, his old nature is changed (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 2:10, 4:24). Thirdly, "They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain" refers to the same mountain in Isaiah 2:2-4, which spoke of the mountain of the Lord's house that would be established in the latter days which was ushered in on the day Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17, 41-47). The mountain that was spoken of is identified as spiritual Mount Zion; it is "the general assembly and church of the first born..." (Hebrews 12:23). This is without a doubt the meaning of Isaiah's prophesy in Isaiah 65:17.

To sum it all up, "the new heavens and a new earth" prophesied in Isaiah 65:17 can be explained by the apostle Paul when he said, "Therefore if anyone is IN Christ [baptized], he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul said, "we have been buried with Him through baptism INTO death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in a newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The writer of Hebrews warned the Jewish Christians who were wanting to go back to the Old Law, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him [Moses] who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven [Christ]. And His voice shook the earth then [when the Ten Commandments were given], but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.'" "This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things [the Old Law] which can be shaken, as of created things [the creation of the Old Law by God], so that those things which cannot be shaken [the new heavens and a new earth which is the church, the kingdom of God] may remain" (Hebrews 12:25-28).

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