

**“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.**

<sup>18</sup> **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. <sup>19</sup> 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.**

<sup>20</sup> **“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. <sup>21</sup> They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.**

<sup>22</sup> **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.**

<sup>23</sup> **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.**

<sup>24</sup> **Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. <sup>25</sup> 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. (NIV84)**

Theme: Our Home in the New Jerusalem:

1. The old will be forgotten
2. The new has yet to be understood

Going on vacation is great. Everyone loves to get away for awhile—to go on a trip to some exotic location, or to go camping, or to visit family you haven’t seen for awhile. Vacations are nice; but it’s also nice to get home. By the end of your vacation you are tired and worn out. It’s nice to be home and sleep in your own bed.

In a way, that is what it’s like living on this earth. This life is only temporary. It’s like one long extended vacation. It’s nice. It’s fun. But it also takes its toll. Eventually you just want to get home.

Today we see that our true home is in the New Jerusalem. The old will be forgotten; yet the new has yet to be understood.

Isaiah started prophesying 18 years before the Northern Kingdom of Israel would be destroyed. As he prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, he used Israel as a warning. For the most part the people of Judah were committing the same sins as the people of Israel. They committed idolatry. They made gods out of gold or wood and actually worshiped them like they were real. Or when they worshiped the one true God, they were simply going through the motions. They were saying all the right words and doing the correct actions, but their hearts weren’t in it. It was an empty worship, which is really no worship at all.

So God threatened them. If they didn’t turn from their evil ways they would be destroyed. If they didn’t start obeying the Lord they would be taken from their country and forced into exile. Jerusalem would be destroyed. And the temple torn down. But as the years went on it became clear that the people weren’t listening to God’s warnings through Isaiah. The exile became all but a certainty. In fact, in the second part of the book, Isaiah changes his tune. He changes course from warning them about being taken into exile, to comforting them that they will eventually return from exile. Eventually God would bring them back to the Promised Land and rebuild Jerusalem.

It is under this backdrop that our text for today is given. Isaiah is looking ahead to the return from exile. He is telling God’s children that they will return to the Promised Land. They will dwell in a New Jerusalem. But at the same time, Isaiah is looking past the return. He ties in this great future event with two other future events: Christ first coming as a baby in Bethlehem, and his second coming as a righteous king on the Last Day. As we read through these verses we can see elements of each period of time.

Just think what life would have been like for the Jews living in exile. They were forced from their home. Made to travel about 700 miles away. Living in a foreign land. Speaking a foreign language. Forced to obey their enemies. They didn’t have a temple so they could make sacrifices. Laws were passed that made it illegal for them to worship

the Lord. It would have been hard and difficult. For 70 years they longed to return to the Promised Land. They just wanted to be home.

Our life on earth is similar. It's like we are living in a foreign land. It's like we are in exile. As we sing in that great hymn, "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." At times it's not pleasant living in this world. We get beaten down and abused. We have to work hard—often for someone else. Unbelievers mock and ridicule us. We are persecuted because of who we believe in or what we believe is right or wrong. And then there is death. Loved ones get sick and die. No one is immune. At some point we'll all breathe our last.

And yet, for some reason, we cling to this earth. We are consumed with our life in the here and now. It seems all we care about is how to make our life on earth better. We act as if this is our only home. That this is the only chance we have to have fun—so we better not waste it. So we do whatever we want and don't even bother worrying about the consequences. We often act as if this life is all there is. We concern ourselves with the things of this world instead on what is above.

But then the wickedness of the world comes. When we face the hardship and difficulties of this life it leads us to look elsewhere. They serve as reminders that our time on this earth is only temporary. It's like one long extended vacation. Sure it's fun—God blesses us greatly. But this life gets old. At times it seems to be too much. Soon you realize that you would rather be at home.

So you long for heaven—a new and improved Jerusalem. There you will find rest for your soul. And rest from your labors. You realize that this life is only temporary. What happens to you, what you do, what you have only lasts a short time. So this life isn't what matters. What truly matters is eternal life in the New Jerusalem. So we look forward to heaven, we long to be home. This makes us different than the rest of the world who is concerned only with the here and the now. Paul makes this point in Philippians chapter 3, **Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

And when we finally get home, we won't care about what happened before. We'll forget all about being in exile. We won't care what happened to us. All the sorrow will be forgotten. The pain and

anguish we felt on earth will gone. The despair that we face when death rears it's ugly head will no longer consume us. Isaiah makes this point in verse 17, **I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.** The former things, or the things that happened on this earth, we will not be remembered in heaven.

Why? We'll be too busy to think about them. We'll be too busy to worry about what it was like living in this sin filled world. We'll be only concerned with praising our God. Singing the praise of and glorifying our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For without his perfect life and innocent suffering and death, we would be condemned. We wouldn't be in heaven forever, but in hell. Because Christ paid for our sins and rose from the dead to give us eternal life, we will sing his praises forever in heaven. And as we rejoice, we won't even bother remembering or reminiscing about our lives on earth.

The old, that is what we experienced on this earth, will be forgotten when we are in the New Jerusalem. But right not on earth we can't possibly comprehend what heaven will be like.

That is because we have nothing to compare it to. We understand things by comparing them to things we know. For instance, what does alligator taste like? Well, it tastes like chicken. We understand things based on our experience. We are able to grasp something because it's able to be understood. But there is no comparison to heaven. Our lives are marred by sin. So we don't know what a sinless world would look like. There is no way our weak and feeble minds can understand sinlessness.

It is like trying to describe color to a blind man. He can't compare it to anything. He doesn't even know what it is like to see. So it is with heaven. There is nothing that compares to it. God does use many earthly terms to describe heaven. He compares it to a great wedding banquet. He says that it is the home of angels. It is a place where God in his full glory dwells. And in heaven, we'll share in that glory. In heaven, we'll also have a full knowledge of God. It is a place that doesn't need the sun because the Son of God will be our light.

And yet, we can't really understand what heaven will be like. Often, when God describes heaven, he tells us what isn't there. In heaven,

there will be no sin and its effects. John describes heaven this way in Revelation 21, **Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.** Heaven is a place without sin because it's the dwelling place of our righteous God. And his children who dwell with him have been washed clean by the blood of Christ. Paul makes this point in Ephesians 5, **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.** Made holy by the blood of Christ we live in his holiness forever in heaven. So heaven is a place free from sin.

And if it's free from sin, that it's free from the effects of sin. John makes that point earlier in Revelation 21, **He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.** In the New Jerusalem we will never be hungry or thirsty. There will be no pain or sorrow. Sin is gone and so is everything that goes along with it. Isaiah makes a similar point in verse 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.** And if there is no sin, than there is no death. That's why it's called eternal life. It has no end. It will last forever. Again, not something we can understand.

We will be without sin. We will have his image that was lost in Eden. And so we will share in his glory. John talks about this in 1 John 3, **now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** We will be like God. We will be perfect—holy and righteous, through the work of Christ. And notice what else John says about heaven. **We will see God as he is.** When Moses asked to see God's face, God replied, **you cannot see me and live.** We are so sinful and God is so holy that we cannot see him in our sinful state and live. But in heaven we will see God as he is—with his full glory. That is because our sins have been removed and we stand pure and innocent before the Lord. John mentions this in our second lesson for today, **No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants**

**will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.**

A perfect, holy life. Sitting side by side with our fellow believers. Seeing God face to face. Singing his praises forever. Free from pain, sorrow, hunger, or thirst. No more sin and its effects. And all this is eternal. This perfect life with our Savior will never end. We may not be able to understand heaven. But we long for it to come.

Going on vacation is great. But eventually you just want to go home. Living on this earth, with all the blessings God has given us, is great. But we just want to go home. And what a home we have waiting for us! A perfect life—free from sin and its effects. No more sickness, sorrow, pain, or death. Just a glorious life with our glorious Savior, forever. Amen.