

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH-Red Bud, Illinois**  
*Adult Bible Class*     "A New Heavens and the New Earth"

**What comes to your mind when you hear the word "heaven"?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you think eternal life will be like?** \_\_\_\_\_

I.     Psalm 8:3-4

*When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?*

**How is the word "heavens" used here?** \_\_\_\_\_

Martin Luther on Psalm 8:3- David looks into such a future, and he feels just as though the world had already ended and he had already risen from the dead and were seeing heaven, moon, and stars new before him. Indeed, he really did see it—but in faith and spirit. In his time he will see it with us and we with him in the revelation. The Prophets and Apostles proclaimed it to us. Isaiah says (65:17, 18): "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." And St. Peter says (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:13): "According to His promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Such proclamation of the Prophets and Apostles took place through the Holy Spirit and cannot fail.

That will be a broad and beautiful heaven and a joyful earth, much more beautiful and joyful than Paradise was. There were no stinging nettles or prickly thorns and thistles or noxious creatures, worms, or vermin in Paradise, but lovely and noble roses and aromatic creatures. All the trees in the garden were lovely to behold and good to eat. After Adam's fall the earth was cursed to bear thorns and thistles, and man was cursed to eat of it in toil all the days of his life (Genesis 3:17, 18). From this there came many noxious creatures, which struggle against us men and trouble and plague us, as we men do to one another. Now, all this will be set right and made new by the fingers of the Lord, our Ruler. Then no sin or unrighteousness will dwell on earth, no homicide or murder, no hate or envy, but perfect righteousness, love, and friendship. Now unrighteousness and infidelity dwell on earth; from this we should realize what we have lost through Adam's fall and our sin and learn to long and yearn for the restoration and renewal of the creation and for the liberty of the children of God.

II.     Isaiah 65:17-25

V. 17: "create" The Hebrew word used here denotes only divine action. It expresses great and new acts that require a divine agent. This verb occurs eleven times in the early chapters of Genesis and twenty times in Isaiah 40-66 with three of those times here in verses 17-18. What will be new about creation is a purification of the old, sinful order in a return to the perfection of God's original work in Eden. The preview of that is our life in Christ now where we are new creations (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17). An example is in the resurrected body of Jesus which was the same, yet different, to the eyes of His disciples. "But as did Christ, so also will we retain our full humanity (but without sin) as we, in our risen bodies, dwell in the new creation" (Reed Lessing, Isaiah 56-66, St. Louis, CPH, 2014, page 438).

**What might be the "former things" that shall not be remembered?** \_\_\_\_\_

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

V. 18: Now God's revelation turns to the city of Jerusalem. It was the capital of His people in the Old Testament. It was where His temple was built. It was where the sacrifices were made by which the sins of His people were forgiven. Jerusalem is where the full and complete sacrifice of His own Son living among

us took place upon the cross. It is the Bible's shorthand way of referring to where God's people dwell in His personal presence.

**What words describe our response to this creative work of God?** \_\_\_\_\_

*Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.*

V. 19: God shares in the joy and gladness of His creation.

**What two things will not be part of this creation?** \_\_\_\_\_

V. 20: The usual situation of life and death in a sin-broken world now do not exist. In this new creation, life defeats death. Since the setting describes this creation as being without death, it seems strange to even use the word "die" in this verse. But Isaiah is speaking hypothetically to prove a point. This new creation is far different from what we now experience. Our sense of time is no more. Our idea of a blessing ("a hundred years old") will mean nothing for the accursed sinner who will not be there. Isaiah is using language that we understand to describe for us what is beyond our comprehension.

Vv. 21-23: One major problem of living in the ancient world especially is not enjoying the fruits of one's own labor, not living in a house that you built or enjoying the crops of your own planting. Even worse, having your children taken away from you by force or by death.

**How would such things happen at that time (or even now)?** \_\_\_\_\_

Vv. 24-25: The presence of God with His people in this new creation is so personal that He is answering our "call" before we even make it and hears us while we still are speaking.

**What part of our current Christian living does this describe?** \_\_\_\_\_

The peace that prevails in this new creation is described in terms of the animal kingdom (does this mean such creatures will be in "heaven"?). Everything will be marked by perfect peace.

**Typically, what would the relationship be between wolf and lamb?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Typically, what would the lion eat?** \_\_\_\_\_

*Genesis 3:14 The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life."*

"In the Lord's new creation, we will completely forget the weeping and futility so characteristic of life in a fallen world. In their place shall be joy and gladness, fulfillment and satisfaction. It is the Lord's desire that His repentant people should no longer remember or be troubled by their former sins. Our place in the Lord's new creation has been secured through faith in Jesus. Through the saving work of His hands, we have the joy of sins forgiven and the gladness of life eternal" (*Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1197).

Isaiah recorded God's plan of creating new heavens and a new earth so unique, so beautiful, so wondrous, that the "former things shall not be remembered" (65:17). In this new creation, neither the sound of weeping nor cries of distress would be heard (65:19). The glorious new life in Christ would never be cut short by death. Predator and prey dwell together in harmony: "the wolf and the lamb shall graze together" (65:25). Carnivores would again be herbivores: "the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (v. 25).

Once again, animals would live together in peace. People would live in peace. People and animals would once again walk together without fear of the other. Just as God had created the original creation, so there would be no destruction or violence in this new world. There would be no crime or terrorism. In this creation God would preserve mankind and angels from falling into sin. Never again would sin, Satan, or death stalk God's creatures.

We know not all the details of the new creation, such as how old our bodies will be or what daily life will be like, but this we know, the reality will exceed our expectations and "the former things shall not be remembered." (page 1198)

Closing Prayer: Lord God, You who are quick to hear and answer the prayers of Your people, hasten the day when we will enjoy the fullness of Your new creation. Amen. (*Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1197)