

July 21

Isaiah 65-66

2 Kings 19

2 Chronicles 33

Well, we did it! Today we read Isaiah 65-66 and finished this great Old Testament book! I'm very excited because I know that for some of you this is a huge milestone – the very first time you have read through one of the major Old Testament prophetic books. They are so long that sometimes they seem intimidating. Because you have finished reading it from beginning to end, I know you have gotten much more insight into its meaning and value.

In Chapter 65, there is a section in which God promises to create the new heavens and a new earth. Once again, we have found the source of imagery that crops up again at the end of the Book of Revelation and once again there is a certain amount of ambivalence here because the expression “new heavens and a new earth” would seem to orient us to expect him to talk about heaven and the eternal state, but what follows seems instead to be a description of the millennial age – a time of wonderful peace – when people again live to extraordinary ages and harmony exists between all created things. But a time that is still human time when people do still die and babies still are born. A wonderful age of grace and favor but still not heaven. In contrast to the present age when prayers, because of sin go unanswered and God sometimes seems far away, this future age will be a time when “before they call I will answer and while they are still speaking I will hear.”

I am certain that you also noticed the very last sentence of Isaiah. It is a book with so much hope and vision. For the faithful, there is an eternal future of bliss waiting. For the rebellious, there will be a different eternal destiny. There will be a place where “the worm will not die, nor will the fire be quenched.” In the New Testament that place is called hell and though we definitely do not like to think about it, that place exists. It is very real and it will be the eternal place of abode and torment for all who choose to reject the revelation of God and the salvation offered freely to all mankind through Jesus Christ our Savior and our redeemer.

When everything else is said and the bottom line is drawn, there will only be two groups of people. In Genesis, they were called the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain, the righteous and the ungodly. In New Testament terms, we talk about the saved and the lost. The sheep and the goats. Those on the path to life and those on the road to destruction. Good fish and bad fish... two groups, no matter what you call them. I want to close our study of Isaiah by reading again for you the warning God gives in Chapter 65 to the ungodly group:

“This what the sovereign Lord says: My servants will eat, but you will go hungry. My servants will rejoice, but you will go thirsty. My servants will sing, but you will cry out from anguish of hearts and wail in brokenness of spirit...”

Knowing what the future holds for both the righteous and for the ungodly ought to fill us with immeasurable hope, but it ought also to fire us with a deep and consuming passion to reach one more.

Who is it that you need to share that hope with today? Eternity hangs in the balance and the end of Isaiah reminds us of that.