

DCF:

It's always a pleasure to move in to a new building. When we first moved in to our present church building, it was a real joy! Fresh paint, new concrete and brand new carpet. New cushiony chairs instead of hard plastic. It was a real joy! If you've ever moved in to a new house, same thing. Or, if your business relocated to a new building, same thing. Everything works, nothing's broken. It's a real pleasure moving to a brand new place.

As believers, we're going to be moving to a new place on Judgment Day. Our Lord is going to come to this earth, pack up all believers of all time and return to the heights of heaven. Ever wonder what life is going to be like after Judgment Day? Let's turn to the prophet Isaiah and see what God says through him about “**LIFE IN THE NEW JERUSALEM.**” Sin and its effects will disappear and God's peace will endure forever.

Part One: Sin and its effects will disappear

It's hard for us to picture what life in heaven will be like. When God tells us that He will create a “***new heavens and a new earth***”, we're not able to truly understand it, are we? We've only known this sinful, imperfect world. Tears, accidents, disasters and death are woven through the fabric of our lives. What we enjoy here on earth always comes to an end. Marriages end with the death of a spouse. Health ends with disease or death. Even the joyful times we have sooner or later come to an end. That wonderful concert comes to an end. Your excellent birthday party comes to an end. That wonderful trip to the Caribbean comes to an end. We know that while here on earth the good times will eventually end.

Why is that? Because of sin. Sin has corrupted God's wonderful creation. When we talk about sin, we're not talking about individual actions that go against God's will. We're talking about a state of being. When sin entered this world through Adam and Eve so did imperfection. Nature is no longer perfect. People are no longer perfect. Sooner or later, anything corrupted by sin ends. It breaks down. It wears out. It degrades. It dies. That's the reason we have tears, broken hearts, cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's and death. Sin is the reason we suffer.

Now, some say that suffering is a good thing, that it's all part of God's plan. Some say that if we did not suffer, we wouldn't fully appreciate the glories that God is preparing for us in heaven. In other words, God wants us to experience pain before we can enjoy paradise. Nonsense! Do we willingly beat our heads against the wall because it feels so good when we stop? No! Pain and suffering were never part of God's plan for us. It was Satan's plan to bring pain and suffering, sin and death to this world. We suffer because of sin.

Our suffering will not go on forever. Today our Lord reminds us that He has a plan. He will eliminate sin and all its effects from this universe and from the lives of His children. On Judgment Day the Lord will wipe all sin out of existence and dispose of it in hell. “***Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 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.***”

The joys of heaven will be so great that we won't think about our previous sinful lives. We'll be too busy praising God and delighting in all the ins and outs of heaven. We'll be too busy enjoying our eternal life. It's kind of like the second week of a three week vacation, but much better. You know what I mean, right? The first week of vacation you're decompressing and starting to relax. The second week you're thoroughly enjoying your vacation and never think about work. The third week you start to remember and recall all the projects you have waiting for you when you get back. The second week of vacation is the best. Our lives after Judgment Day in heaven is like the second week of vacation, but much, much better!

In this section of Isaiah, God moves swiftly from talking about the physical universe to the subject that is most dear to Him. Us. God will remake this universe, cleansing it from sin, for our benefit. He says to us “***be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create.***” Be glad, not only because life after Judgment Day will be so wonderful, but that God is doing it all for us! You see, we are the new

Jerusalem that Isaiah mentions here. He uses a picture of where God had His temple, the place where He met with His people, to describe all believers of all time. This picture is repeated in the book of Revelation, where the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God.

God delights in delighting us, and He will enjoy it even more when He can bring us home and show us the full extent of His love. Oh, how happy our heavenly Father will be to show us His love! If you think it's a delight to give your grandkids presents and see their faces light up with joy, just wait until our heavenly Father can see our delight in the gift of paradise. He delights in delighting us! ***"I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more."*** No more sin. No more pain. Only joy in the presence of our Lord forever!

What makes all this not only possible, but guaranteed? God's peace with us, won by Jesus Christ. And that will last forever.

Part Two: God's peace will endure forever

We're so used to conflict in our lives that I wonder if we really know how great our peace in heaven will be. We have conflict and stress in our jobs, in our relationships, with our homes and our possessions. There's the conflict with our sinful nature, a daily battle to live the way God commands us to live. We're constantly dealing with one problem or another. Maybe it's a sticky situation at work. Maybe it's our relationships with our children. Maybe it's struggling with a financial challenge. It seems we're always dealing with some sort of conflict, either external or internal.

In paradise, there will be no conflict, no problems, no arguing. In paradise we will no longer fight our sinful nature because God will remove it. No temptations, no sinful desires, no conflict with our glorified bodies and minds. We also will be at peace with God, and that's the big one. No longer will be separated from Him because of sin. No longer will we question, doubt or argue with the Lord. No longer will we need forgiveness, because we will be totally at peace with the Ruler of heaven and earth.

Isaiah uses a graphic picture to describe the peace that will exist in heaven. He uses a rather startling picture of something that just doesn't happen here on earth. Listen to verse 25: ***"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox."*** You just don't see that happening. It's not in a wolf's or lion's nature to behave like that. At least, not on this planet. But in heaven, Isaiah is trying to tell us, peace will reign. And it's like nothing you've ever experienced. Perfect peace will be found on God's ***"holy mountain"***, the place where He dwells. Heaven.

Right now, our Lord is giving us a little taste of heaven. Specifically, Isaiah focuses on the gift of prayer, of communication with God. Verse 24 talks about prayer. ***"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear."*** God knows what we pray for even before we begin our prayers. His answer to our prayers is already in the works even before we ask. He pays immediate attention to our prayers, because we are His children.

All the credit, all the glory for these blessings belongs to Christ. He is the One who has made our future perfectly peaceful life possible. Being God, His payment for our sins on the cross of Calvary is big enough to cover everyone's sins. He sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts to create a faith that believes this is so. He covers us with His perfect life and makes us presentable to our holy Lord. Jesus is the Source, the Author, the Savior of our lives. Eternity is ours, because Jesus won it and gave it to us.

And we're going home to the new Jerusalem. How that comforts us when stress and conflict threatens our faith. How that comforts us when we hear of wars and rumors of wars. How it lifts up our hearts to know that Christ has triumphed over sin, death and the devil. Soon, we go home.

It's nice to move to a brand new place, isn't it? Especially when the place you leave is broken, run down and just littered with the corrosive effects of sin. Soon, we'll be in heaven, where God's peace will last forever. Look forward to life in the new Jerusalem.

AMEN