

Our Happily Ever After

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[0:00] This third week in Advent, we are continuing in Isaiah, looking, as we've been doing since! Last week, towards the end of the book, looking towards the end of the book at chapter 65. Last! week, if you remember, we were in chapter 40, and there we saw, in chapter 40, the beginning of the second part of Isaiah, as he begins his prophecy there, the prophecy of hope for our people under judgment. Now, in there, the prophet declared that God has come to save.

It was the advent of hope. And we saw the picture language that Isaiah painted, a picture language of great works of renovation taking place. And in the midst of the doubts, we are assured that God's word stands forever to accomplish that which he proposes for him to accomplish.

And as we started to see the description of this figure who comes to save, we saw that he is God who comes in might. This God himself who comes in might. He comes in a conquest over his enemies. And yet he is also a shepherd who tends and cares for his flock. Isaiah, in the following chapters, will show us, will further show us that this person who comes to save, this warrior shepherd is also the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

And we're moving forward this morning. Our text this morning looks beyond that, those events, the events of Christ's first advent is coming to save. This text this morning looks beyond that, and it looks to the accomplished work, not only to the accomplishment of the first coming of the Messiah, but it looks really to his second coming. And Isaiah again, as he did in chapter 40, paints a picture for us through his words. He paints a picture. He paints a picture of a home longed for. He paints a picture of the place which Christ himself told us he has gone to prepare for us. This great story that God is writing, the things which he has promised and planned, are being shown and are unfolding before our eyes in history. And we are fortunate, we, that is us here, we are fortunate to live in the last days, the church age. We live between the two advents.

Even as I say that, you might think, well, are we in the last days? Is in the last days something that's going to come, come, um, you know, at the end, you know, Armageddon and things like that.

[3:12] But do you really do know, brothers and sisters, that we do live in the last days. That is the time between the two advents are the last days. Christ has come, and he is coming again. And the time between that, uh, the Bible describes in the New Testament as the last days. These are the times, the gospel age, we can say, where the gospel of Jesus Christ goes out to all, that Christ has come to save, and that all will turn to him, will receive that salvation. These are the last days. The last day, singular, is coming, and that's the judgment day.

And we await that. So, as we think, as the people, we live between the two advents. As we, as we, as we look at our world, as we look at our life, I will, as we look at the promises of God. We know who we are as Christians, that we are people who have been justified.

That means that we've been made righteous by the suffering servant of Isaiah, the good shepherd, as we saw last week. We've been made righteous by this person, Jesus Christ. Our salvation is accomplished. But we have not yet fully realized the full application of the benefits and joy of that salvation in Christ. We still live, after all, in this world of sin, in this world of decay. We still have this flesh wicked by sin and death.

And I think of that beautiful line in Isaac Watts' hymn, Joy to the World, where he says, in which he says, he comes, that is, the Messiah comes to make his blessings known far as the curse is found. And yet, as we look around us, we see all around us places in which the effect of the curse still abounds. Our bodies, as it ages and succumbs to sickness and eventual death, is proof enough for us that the curse of sin, which is death, still persists. So we wait.

We wait. We wait expectantly, longingly, for the culmination, for the full application of that salvation that Christ has come to win and to rot and to accomplish for us. We wait for the destruction of evil. We wait for the complete eradication of the curse. And we have here in this passage of Isaiah, a

faithful picture of that which we long for, the happily ever after, which is the promise of God to all who are his, to all who are his, in this world. It is the end of this brief life on this earth.

[6:42] But it's also the beginning of our eternity with God in the world to come. So, we have a picture here in Isaiah 65. It's on page 742 of your pew Bible, by the way. So, I do encourage you to open up your Bible, page 742, and follow along.

We have here, starting in the latter end of this chapter, this picture of new heavens and a new earth. This conquering king is fully shown to us in the third part of the book of Isaiah.

And we saw that he comes to destroy evil. And all evildoers he comes to destroy. All who are opposed to God and to God's Messiah will be destroyed.

Verse 17 to 18 focuses on this new creation. It says, So, here we see that this work of creation is in fact a divine act. God himself will do it.

He himself brings to bear his word to its accomplished end. He doesn't need our help. All that is asked of God's people is to do what? Is to stand firm in faith.

[8:17] Trust in the Lord's promises. Living in this present world with the future promises of God in mind. That's what we're asked to do. We have a picture of it.

There's new heavens and a new earth. It seems like John, in Revelation, picks up this language of Isaiah. I'm just going to read briefly to you, Revelation 21.

Starting from verse 1 to 3. John says, That's the picture that's painted for us there.

In those pages of Revelation 21. And so we see it. We see God's promises. We see Isaiah here also talking about this new heavens and a new earth.

This new heavens and earth are a recreation. It's not a renovation of the old. That's not what's going on here. God didn't say, I will come into the temple in Jerusalem and renew it.

[9:56] Rebuild it. It's not even just a renovation of the temple. Of the temple site. Or of Jerusalem as we know it. Or even the world as we know it.

It is a new earth. It's a recreation that's taking place here. And we have a picture of this eternal city. The heavenly Jerusalem that's spoken of in these verses.

And such will be its newness. That nothing of the old will be remembered in it. What does that mean?

What Isaiah is saying is that all the painful memories. All your painful memories. All your regrets. Guilt. Guilt.

Nothing of the residue of sin will remain in this new Jerusalem. Remember what John says in Revelation.

[10:57] God will wipe away every tear. There will be no sorrowing. No mourning. In this new Jerusalem. All we will remember is God's great work to save us and redeem us.

And so we are invited. We are invited even now. To start to rejoice. And to delight. In this eternal city.

Which is ours. Which is promised for us. And so. Isaiah continues. Towards the last end of verse 18.

And it gives us the realities of this. Of this eternal city. It says. For behold I create Jerusalem to be a joy. And a people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem.

And be glad in my people. It's God himself who rejoices. In this new creation that he has created. And rejoice and is glad in my people. No more shall be heard.

[11:59] In it. That is this new earth. In it the sound of weeping. There will be no cry of distress. No more shall there be in it.

An infant. Who lives but a few days. Or an old man who does not fill out his days. For the young man shall die. A hundred years old.

And the sinner a hundred years old. Shall be cursed. They shall build houses. And inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards. And eat their fruit. They shall not build. And another inhabit.

They shall not plant. And another eat. And so this is the realities of this new creation. Which is further shown to us in these verses. Isaiah is. What Isaiah is doing here.

Is he's using what we know in our world. As best as he can. To paint a picture. To help us to catch a glimpse. Of what the new creation will be.

[12:56] Or what it will be like. And it's a hard thing for Isaiah to do. Because he's trying to paint a picture. Of this renewed world. With colors of this world.

That can only ever really attempt. To approximate. To approach. What awaits us. The home that awaits us. There is no language for it.

In this world. It's important that we see. That's what Isaiah is doing here. That the language being used there. Can never really fully do justice. To the true worth. Of that which awaits us in heaven. That which no eyes. Have seen. And no ears. Heard. And no human heart. Imagined. But Isaiah is attempting to paint it for us.

And so that's why in verse 20. We're invited to think of the vitality. Of this new city. Look at the earthly imagery. That is painting. To approximate the realities. Of this new heavens.

[13:57] And new earth. No more shall there be in it. An infant who lives but a few days. There is not going to be premature death. In fact. He's actually saying.

There's no death at all. There is not a place. Where the death will persist. But in earthly language. He's saying. There's no. And he unfolds that.

Right. There's no death at all. So. Premature death is gone. An old man. There's not going to be anything. Such as an old man. Who does not fill out his days. And you might see.

As you read that. Well. It's still. It seems like people are still dying. For the young man shall die a hundred years old. And the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. Right. So he's saying. There's no death. And there's no sin.

Well. He's trying to use human language. To help us. To see. What is happening. In these new heavens. And the new earth. And that's why he paints the picture. A man will die. Imagine a man dying a hundred years old.

[14:52] And you're saying. Oh. What a shame. He died so young. That's the picture he's trying to paint for us. A hundred year old man dies.

And you say. Oh man. He went too early. We don't say that in this world. Do we? A hundred years old man dies. When someone's over the age of 80.

He was like. Well. He lived a good life. A long life. But such would be the realities of this new hearse. That to see that.

What we would think is a long full life here. Would be tragic. And so it's really just approximating. The idea that there will be no death at all. In this new heavens.

A new earth. He's trying to paint that picture for us. And there's no sin. And so you see. You see that picture. In the latter end of verse 20. It says. A sinner. A sinner a hundred years old. Shall be accursed.

[15:46] And the picture that we're meant to see. Is someone who's a sinner. But's been so successful with his sin. You know. For a hundred years. No one's known. But here.

Isaiah is saying. Even someone who's so adept at covering up his sin. In this world. That everyone sees them as. Oh. Paragons of virtue. But he's a sinner. He says. There will be no hidden sin. In this new heavens. In this new earth. In fact. He's really saying. There is no sin at all. Because it cannot exist there. It cannot.

It will not. And then he goes on. And he says. They shall build houses. And inhabit them.

They shall plant vineyards. And eat their fruit. You know. To plant a vineyard. It takes about. I don't know this. I read about it. But it takes about. Eight to ten years.

[16:44] For you to actually get the fruit. Of a vineyard. The kind of vineyards. That produce good wine. It takes about. Eight to ten years. Of investments. Before you can reap the benefits.

And so the picture being painted here is. There will be stability. You can plant. And you can expect. That you will reap the fruit. Of your planting. There will be no invading armies.

To set fire to your fields. And to take you away as slaves. There will be peace. There will be stability. In this new earth.

They shall build. And another will not inhabit. Think about it. You're building. We all build. We build. We build houses.

And homes. And things. But all of those things. Are destined for somebody else. Eventually. Your house. You live in now. Eventually.

[17:40] Someone else will inhabit. Those. Those places. Maybe your children. Maybe. A stranger. That you sell it to. All the things you have. Will eventually go to somebody else.

Or will go to a landfill. We don't take anything with us. Everything in this world. Perishes. And dies. And is no more. Not so. In this new earth.

You shall build. And you shall inhabit. You shall plant. And another will not eat. Eat that which you planted. You will enjoy. The fruit of your labor.

And this is a wonderful picture. Of the new earth. The heavens. This new world. Oftentimes. We fall into this. Mindset. As the people of God. And we think that. You know. Heaven is this ethereal place.

Where we're all floating around. As mindless. Disembodied people. That's not. The Bible does not. That's not the picture. The Bible paints of heaven.

[18 : 39] Heaven is a place. Where we will have. First Corinthians 15. New bodies. We will be embodied beings. We're not floating souls and spirits. We are embodied.

We will have a new body. Though not this decaying flesh. Of sin. We will have an incorruptible body. That's what heaven will be. And we will enjoy. All the goodness. Of God's creation.

We'll be a new. Eden. Instead of a garden. It will be a city. It will be a wonderful city. I invite you to go read.

Revelations 21 and 22. When you get home. The paint of further picture. And all the pictures. The Bible paints. The wonderful pictures. That give us a clue.

But they're really. At the end of the day. They're just approximations. Of the beauty. And the majesty. And the glory. Of that which no eyes have seen. And no hear has heard. We can't even imagine.

[19 : 37] The full weight. Of that glory. For that is. That is the home. We longed for. That is the home.

We longed for. That is our happily ever after. Brothers and sisters in Christ. That is. The end. To our story. Really. To the story. That he is writing. That we are part of. This great story.

And so we see. Fitless Jerusalem. As Isaiah described Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem. The warring. Hallowed. Rebellious city.

We see that Isaiah prophesied. Against that Jerusalem. That Jerusalem will be replaced. By the faithful. New Jerusalem. It will be a fruitful city.

It's a place of guaranteed security. There will be no Assyrians. Or Babylonians. Who are coming to invade. To destroy. The prince of peace. Reigns. Within.

[20 : 37] Our walls. Having defeated. All his enemies. And brought them to subjection. Under his feet. And all the citizens.

Of this city. Will have a personal. Intimate. Relationship. With the Lord. For like.

It goes on. For like the days of a tree. Shall the days of my people be. Be. That's another language. Of talking about. Eternal. Eternity.

There will be no death. What's the oldest living things. You know in the world. They're trees. You know. There are trees that have been around. Since the. Before the time of Jesus. And so.

He's just trying to say. You know. What's the longest. The longest thing I can think of. Well. Your days. In this new earth. Will be like the days of trees. You will be oaks of righteousness.

[21 : 31] My chosen. Shall long enjoy. The work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain. Or bear children. For calamity. They shall be the offspring. Of the blessed of the Lord.

Their descendants with them. Before they call. This is the relationship. You will have. With the king. Of this new city. Before they call. I will answer.

While they are yet speaking. I will hear. Such is the peace. And harmony. Of this new creation. That verse 25. We're told.

The wolf. And the lamb. Shall graze together. The lion. Shall eat straw. Like the ox. And doth. Shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt.

Or destroy. In all my holy mountain. Says the Lord. Now. The wolf. And the lamb. Shall graze together. The lion. Shall eat straw. Like the ox.

[22 : 30] You want to. You want to. Try that experiment now. Go to the zoo. Put the wolf. And the lamb together. The lion. With the ox. No.

That would not. The earth. The cursed world. That we live in. We see. We see it. Even in nature. There is death. There is violence. This is the vestiges.

Of the sinful world. That we live in. Not so in this world. Right. There will be. Peace. And harmony. But.

What won't be there? There will be peace. There will be harmony. There will be righteousness. There will be holiness. But. Look there in the middle of verse 25. And dust.

And dust. Shall be the serpent's food. So there is righteousness. There is holiness. But sin. Sin is still a curse. Sin is still a cursed.

[23 : 31] Sin. And so as you read that. You should think of Genesis. Three. Dust. Shall be the serpent's food. That's the curse. To the serpent.

Sin. Sin. Sin. Will not exist in this. In this new earth. But those who have been destined for destruction. Will be in torment.

They are not part of this world. But we are meant to see here. That even in the midst of this great salvation. Of this new heavens and new earth.

There is going to be judgment of the wicked. And the rebellious. The cowardly. And the unpickful. As. God says in Revelation.

So what is our response then? As we look at this glorious vision. Of our home. That awaits us. What is our response?

[24 : 38] Well first it should be that. We live. Presently. In this world. Every minute. And every hour. Day. Week. Months and years of our days.

With the future in mind. We live with the future in mind. What future? Not. What you'll do five years from now. Yes. You should do that too. That's practical and wise.

But the future. The home that awaits you. Are you longing for home? Beloved. Are you longing for home? Are you living.

With that future home in mind? Is it shaping your thoughts? And your imaginations? Does it shape your joy? Even in the midst of sadness?

Do you know that you have an assured hope? That's the way the Bible describes it. That's the way our book of common prayer describes it. Even in the midst of this life.

[25 : 36] We're in death. But yet we have an assured hope. That he who is the resurrection and the life. Has redeemed us and saved us. And he has gone to prepare a home for us.

And he will come. To bring us to himself. Do you live with the future in mind? Isaiah's call is for us to do that.

It's a call for us to have faith. It's a call for us to wait expectantly. You hear that word. It's to wait. But it's not a passive waiting.

It's expectant. Longing. Hopeful waiting. By believing the promises of God. We who live between the two advents.

Are still waiting people. We are waiting for the culmination. Of Christ coming. To accomplish. To fully accomplish.

[26 : 35] The work of salvation. And as we wait. Is that faith. Is our faith demonstrated. By our obedience to his word.

That is the invitation of Isaiah. Both in chapter 40. And here in chapter 65. As we look at it. It's an invitation. To wait.

To long for. And to demonstrate. Our reliance. And trust. In that promise of God. By our obedience. To his word. Are you prepared then. To live on these promises of God. Are you prepared then. To base your life. To base your life. Upon it.

The best. Is yet to come. Brothers and sisters. That is our slogan. As the people of God. You might be living. In. Absolute.

[27 : 35] Pleasure. And prosperity now. But if you're a Christian. The best is still yet to come. Nothing in this word. Approximates. What is yet to come. You might be living. In pain.

In abject. Poverty. Suffering. You might be sick. You might be infirmed. You might be going through. One trial or the other. The promise of God for us.

As people. Is that the best is yet to be. And so we live. Without awareness. Even in this present. World.

Of sin and darkness. Amen.