

ISAIAH

Chapter 65

Judgment and Salvation

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’² All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—³ a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; ⁴ who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of unclean meat; ⁵ who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’ Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day. ⁶ “See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps—⁷ both your sins and the sins of your fathers,” says the LORD. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”⁸ This is what the LORD says: “As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and men say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is yet some good in it,’ so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live. ¹⁰ Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me. ¹¹ “But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.”¹³ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. ¹⁴ My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. ¹⁵ You will leave your name to my chosen ones as a curse; the Sovereign LORD will put you to death, but to his servants he will give another name. ¹⁶ Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.

65:1–66:24 The grand conclusion to chs. 58–66, as well as to chs. 40–66 and to the whole book. (CSB)

65:1 | – The Lord replies to Isaiah’s petition (63:15–64:12). (TLSB)

Isaiah interceded for all of Israel, just as earlier Moses pleaded for the entire nation (Ex 32:11–13). In both situations though, only part of the community is saved (Ex 32:27–28; Is 65:8). (CC)

“I *allowed* [tolerated, permitted] myself to be sought; ... I *allowed* myself to be found.” The perfect verbs “express facts which have formerly taken place, and are still of constant recurrence, and hence are matters of common experience. (CC)

The main gist of Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 [ET 63:7–64:12]) is this: where is God in all of this (see 63:11)? Yahweh now speaks and states his perspective. He is not the one who has been absent without leave. The apostates are the ones who have abandoned the relationship and broken the covenant. (CC)

Is 65:1–2a functions to introduce a major thrust of chapters 65–66, the idolaters’ negligence toward the prophetic Word, a theme reinforced in 65:12; 66:4 (cf. 65:24). Yahweh’s agonizing question is this: where are my people? This lament is anticipated in 50:2 with angst: “Why, when I came, was there no one? [Why, when] I called, was there no one answering?” (cf. 59:1, 16; 63:5). Yahweh is appalled, so he throws the ball back into the apostates’ court. They are the ones responsible for the relationship’s demise. He has been present all along, making himself available; it is this group that has walked out. Yahweh’s eagerness for intimacy has been repeatedly ignored. The problem, then, is not divine silence; it is human unresponsiveness. Isaiah’s use of “all of us” in his lament (אֲנִי וְכָל־עַמִּי, 64:5, 7, 8 [ET 64:6, 8, 9]) is not an accurate assessment of the whole community. “Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6). (CC)

But God’s grace will not be thwarted! If his people reject him he will turn to the Gentiles, whom he has already invited (Is 56:1–8; cf. Acts 13:46; Rom 10:20–21). “Had He waited until He had been sought after, there would never have been a revelation of God’s grace.” Yahweh initiates the relationship. Taking the first step, he says, “Here I am. Here I am” (Is 65:1). The roles of servant and master are reversed as Yahweh seeks to serve his people (cf. Phil 2:6–8). (CC)

But there is more irony. Yahweh is willing—even determined—to be found by those who do *not* seek him (Lk 14:21–23). And this is always the way of divine grace. When God appeared to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3), Moses (Ex 3:1–14), and even Isaiah (chapter 6), these men were not looking for him. People seek God because he first seeks them (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). (CC)

Paul was grieved that more of his kinsmen did not embrace Jesus as their Savior (e.g., Rom 9:1–3), while many Gentiles were responsive to the Gospel (e.g., Rom 9:30). Why was this happening? Israel had the adoption, glory, covenants, Torah, divine service, promises, and patriarchs (Rom 9:4–5). From their human lineage came “the Christ ... who is God over all, blessed forever” (Rom 9:5). As the apostle looked for answers to this dilemma, he turned to Is 65:1–2. The problem for Israel was not a lack of revelation or an insufficient amount of God’s grace. At the root of the issue was rebellion. “I hold my hands outstretched all day to a stubborn people” (65:2). The “insiders” missed the free gift of eternal life, while the “outsiders” cast themselves upon the Savior’s mercy (Is 65:1; cf. Jn 1:11–12; Acts 13:46). Paul then quotes from Is 65:1–2 in Rom 10:20–21, applying Is 65:1 to Gentiles and Is 65:2 to apostate Israel. (CC)

The use of “seek” (שׁוֹרֵר) in Is 65:1 and 65:10 forms an inclusio around Yahweh’s action of “taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name” (Acts 15:14; cf. Is 56:1–8). The contrite attitude and grace-induced action of the Gentiles are what contrast them with Israel’s apostates. Each group has a radically different end (65:13–16). (CC)

Yahweh also implores *us* to seek him while he may be found (55:6), for “now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2; cf. Is 49:8). “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Ps 95:7–8; see Heb 3:7–4:7). (CC)

did not ask ... did not seek. The Lord now proceeds to answer Isaiah’s prayer. Israel failed to stay close to the Lord, though they sought him in a superficial way (see 55:6; 58:2 and notes). (CSB)

did not call on my name. See 64:7. (CSB)

God chose Israel. They had no merit or worthiness that attracted Him to them. (TLSB)

Here am I. See 58:9. (CSB)

That is, “I will offer Myself to the Gentiles by the Word of the Gospel, so that I may be their God. Here I am, here I am, I want to be yours.” These are excellent words of consolation for the Gentiles, as they are extremely harsh threats for the Jews. God wants to be the God of the Gentiles as one who has not been sought. (Luther)

Indicating that the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). Isaiah answers the Lord’s call with the same eagerness (Is 6:8) (TLSB)

65:2-7 Syncretistic worship (57:3–13a; 65:3–5; 66:3, 17) exists alongside orthodox faith, so Yahweh decides that the faithful and the idolaters can no longer live side by side (cf. Rom 16:17). Yet his decision to sever the remnant from the apostates is introduced gradually. Instead of beginning with an abrupt rupture, Is 65:2–7 announces judgment upon the evildoers, who are addressed in the third person through 65:6. Then Yahweh becomes more direct as he speaks to them via second person plural suffixes (“your”) in the first part of 65:7. He will not pardon those who have jettisoned the faith; rather, he will repay the idolatrous faction in full (65:6–7). (CC)

65:2 In Is 65:1 Yahweh portrays converted Gentiles. Now he tells us about the Israelite renegades. His use of “a ... people” (אֵלֶּם) is revealing. They are no longer “my people” (40:1; 63:8) or “his people” (63:11) or even, as in Isaiah’s lament, “your [Yahweh’s] people” (63:14). The idolaters are diminished to the status of “a ... people” because the term “my people” is reserved exclusively for the faithful (65:10, 19). (CC)

Yahweh’s hands are spread out in love. These are no ordinary hands! With them, he created the heavens and the earth (Is 45:12; Pss 8:7 [ET 8:6]; 19:2 [ET 19:1]), and these same hands will recreate Zion (Is 60:21) because he has engraved his people upon his hands (49:16). God the Son allowed Roman soldiers to inflict his hands with the pain of their nails (Ps 22:17 [ET 22:16]; cf. Jn 20:19–20). In contrast, our hands are stained with blood (Is 59:3) and filled with violence

(59:6). It is foolish, therefore, not to entrust ourselves and our times into God's loving hands (Ps 31:6, 16 [ET 31:5, 15]). "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8). (CC)

I HAVE HELD OUT MY HANDS – ESV has "spread out my hands." God's strong arms are now spread in patient appeal. (TLSB)

obstinate people. See 1:2; 30:1, 9 and notes. (CSB)

When Israel turned a deaf ear to the Lord's repeated calls to faithfulness, they, the chosen people, sank to the level of the heathen, who likewise did not seek Him. (TLSB)

imaginations.† See 59:7 and note; Ro 10:20–21. (CSB)

They were walking after their own devices. (Leupold)

65:3-4 Through four participles describing activities connected with necromancy, the apostates' evil plans are described in 65:3–4. These rituals are further explained in 57:3–13a; 66:3, 17, which show us that the fallen human heart is deeply pagan. (CC)

The apostate kings Manasseh (2 Ki 21:18) and Amon (2 Ki 21:26) were buried in gardens, and this may indicate their obsession with foreign gods, which were worshiped in such places. "Burning incense upon the bricks" (Is 65:3) is likewise noted in Jer 44:17–25, where the rite is directed to the queen of heaven, who is to be identified with Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess (cf. Jer 7:16–19). Yahweh never authorized brick altars. The images of false gods and worshiped animals could be inscribed on bricks, just as they could be on carved stones, which Yahweh prohibited for his altars (see the third textual note on 65:3). (CC)

"Sitting in the tombs" (Is 65:4) is probably an attempt to consult the dead (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9–13; 1 Sam 28:3; Is 8:19; 57:9). The classic OT example is Saul's encounter with the witch at Endor, who apparently was able to gain an audience with the spirit of dead Samuel (1 Samuel 28). The Gerasene demoniac also fits this profile (e.g., Lk 8:27–30). (CC)

Sacrificing pigs, especially in chthonic contexts, was practiced in the ancient Near East. Heider believes that Is 65:4 references a meal shared with the dead, something like a funerary feast. The fact that Isaiah does not go into explicit detail should be interpreted as meaning that people were so thoroughly aware of these rites that further definition was not needed. Indeed, those unacquainted should not be informed lest they be tempted to imitate the rites. The apostates revel in what Yahweh declared unclean: the dead, the demonic, and unclean food. Such occult arts breed elitism and pride as people attempt to turn what is evil into good (cf. 5:20–21; 28:15; 30:9–11). (CC)

65:3 *provoke me.* By worshiping idols (see Jdg 2:12–13). (CSB)

to my very face. Defiantly (cf. 3:8–9). (CSB)

gardens. See 1:29 and note. (CSB)

Isaiah lashes out at pagan rites and forms of divination of which Israel was guilty from the days of their fathers. (TLSB)

The cults planted delightful gardens in honor of certain deities that were reputed to love such homage. (Leupold)

burning incense. As when worshiping the Queen of Heaven (see Jer 44:17–19). (CSB)

65:4 *sit among the graves.* Perhaps to consult the dead (see 8:19 and note; 57:9; Dt 18:11). (CSB)

Engaging in occult forms of divination such as consulting the dead (cf 8:19). (TLSB)

flesh of pigs. Considered ceremonially unclean (see 66:3, 17; Lev 11:7–8). (CSB)

65:5 “I am too holy for you.” How disturbing is this? A person enmeshed in idolatry of the most vile sort (65:3–4) promotes himself as a holy person of the highest order! This is the kind of spiritual blindness Isaiah describes throughout his book (e.g., 42:7, 16, 18, 19; 43:8; 56:10). (CC)

The root of the human problem is that we are unable to recognize we have a problem. “The heart is more depraved than anything; it is incurably sick. Who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). Self-deceived, we go about deceiving others. Every manmade religion comes down to a mechanism for people to exalt themselves while placating a non-god and excluding others through elitism and sanctimonious legalism. Israel’s sacrifices were to be sweet-smelling to Yahweh (e.g., Lev 1:9, 17; 2:2, 9, 12). However, “all day” long their spiritual charades provoke him to anger (Is 65:5). This “holier than thou” attitude is smoke in Yahweh’s nostrils. He cannot tolerate even a whiff of this hypocrisy that has become so dull to divine delights (cf. Amos 5:21–23). (CC)

I am too sacred for you. Those who engage in pagan rituals believe they are superior to others (cf. the attitude of the Pharisees in Mt 9:11; Lk 7:39; 18:9–12). (CSB)

They arrogantly regard themselves charged with supernatural forces that could prove hurtful to the uninitiated. (TLSB)

SMOKE IN MY NOSTRILS – Israel’s vanity (and likely burnt offerings to idols) was an irritation to God that turned His face from them. (TLSB)

65:6-7 In ending his lament, Isaiah asks Yahweh, “How can you be silent and afflict us forever?” (64:11 [ET 64:12]). Yahweh responds by saying, “I will not be silent” (65:6), and, breaking his silence, he announces that the apostates will have hell to pay, literally (cf. 66:24). It is written in his book. (CC)

Isaiah does not elaborate the specific written document lying open before God, but in all likelihood he refers to a scroll that keeps a complete record of sinners’ evil actions (Rev 20:12;

cf. Mal 3:16; Dan 7:10). These iniquities lead to divine redress in a most personal way, “upon/into their lap” (Is 65:6, 7; cf. Ps 79:12; Lk 6:38). Yahweh vows to punish the iniquities of the apostates and of their fathers “together,” for the sons have perpetuated their fathers’ sins. “This, in effect, means that the amnesty announced in 40:2 is revoked for those who have opened the old wounds by continued pagan worship.” (CC)

65:6 *not keep silent*. The answer to 64:12. (CSB)

To declare that God will not remain inactive. Leupold)

pay back. See 59:18 and note. (CSB)

The Hebrew idiom has it that evil will repay them in their bosom, for which again we might say: “into their very lap” the entire unholy mess is to be deposited. (Leupold)

65:7 *burned sacrifices on the mountains*. Offered to Baal on the high places (see 57:7; Hos 2:13). (CSB)

defied me. See Eze 20:27–28. (CSB)

Israel prided had themselves on being renegades and this amounted to a reviling of God upon the hills. (Leupold)

65:8-10 The promise of a remnant is based on the Lord’s everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:7; cf. 3:29). He will never nullify this promise. Therefore, though judgment may come, it is intended to remove those who claim to be members but are not (cf. 15:2, 6) and to purify those who are true members (cf. Heb. 12:7-11). (TLSB)

65:8 A new section begins here and runs through 65:16. However it is connected with what precedes as Yahweh continues responding to Isaiah’s lament in 63:7–64:11 (ET 63:7–64:12). By means of the criteria Yahweh sets forth in 65:1, 10b, he only calls those who seek him “my servants” (cf. 54:17; 56:6; 63:17) and “my people” (cf. 56:7; 60:21). Yahweh illustrates the remnant motif by means of a grape cluster (65:8). The divine “blessing” (65:8) is to be found in his elect servants, whom he has first sought out (65:1) and who then respond in faith by seeking him (65:9–10). They alone are the ones who will inherit and possess (65:9) the ancient promises of “blessing” (65:16). (CC)

Is 65:8–16 expounds this antithesis between the seeking remnant and the apathetic apostates. While 65:2–7 focuses upon the idolatrous faction, 65:8–10 clarifies Yahweh’s plans to deliver those who are his servants through faith. Is 65:11–16 then shifts back and forth, from grace for the faithful to judgment upon unbelievers. The two groups have vastly different outcomes (65:15–16). (CC)

When divine judgment strikes the community, it will not be indiscriminate (65:8). Yahweh will spare the remnant of believers, who are accounted righteous by the righteous, justifying Servant (53:11; see the third textual note on 62:1). Abraham’s query to Yahweh is pertinent here: “Will

you destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Gen 18:23). Yahweh’s answer is no. “If Yahweh of armies had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah” (Is 1:9). New life comes from what is discarded as hopeless and dead. A shoot will burst forth from Jesse’s burned-out stump (6:13; 11:1a). Indeed, “a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (11:1b). These promises of a Davidic Messiah imply a messianic community as well. (CC)

In this way, 65:8 is the interpretive key to Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 [ET 63:7–64:12]) as well as to chapters 56–66. Not everyone in the community is guilty of the sins cited in, e.g., 56:9–12; 57:3–13a; 58:1–5; 59:1–15a; 65:2–7. God preserves a remnant chosen by grace (cf. Rom 11:5–7). (CC)

While Is 63:17 could be interpreted to imply that all Israelites are “servants,” 65:8 clarifies the issue. Only those who refuse to participate in pagan rites and social sins belong to Yahweh. This clarification becomes even more apparent in 65:13–16, where divine judgment and salvation segregate the servants from the self-servers. The good grapes are spared (cf. 27:2–6), while the bad grapes are culled for judgment. While Isaiah’s Song of the Vineyard depicts wholesale destruction (5:1–7), there are some good grapes after all. The entire cluster is not condemned. There will be a remnant comprised of the Servant’s “offspring” who embrace the gift of righteousness by faith (54:17). Only these humble and contrite “servants” (65:8; see also, e.g., 57:15; 66:2, 5) will inherit the kingdom (cf. 65:17–25). Regardless of outward appearances (e.g., Ps 73:1–16), Yahweh will take them to glory (Ps 73:24), for he is their strength and their portion forever and ever (Ps 73:26). The first will become last and the last first (cf. Is 60:22; Mt 19:30; 20:16), but all servants will receive the same reward (Mt 20:8–12) because of the Master’s generosity (Mt 20:15). (CC)

The remnant motif is prominent in Isaiah 1–39 (e.g., 4:2–3; 7:3; 10:22–23; 11:11–16; 37:31–32) and appears again in 46:3. The prophet even names one of his children “a remnant shall return” (7:3). Not only will Yahweh spare a remnant (65:8), but these people will also become beneficiaries of his glorious promises in chapters 60–62 and be called “the oaks of righteousness” (61:3), as well as the “holy people” and “Yahweh’s redeemed ones” (62:12). (CC)

An overview of the biblical theme of the remnant begins with the fall when Yahweh preserved Adam and Eve after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3). He also kept Noah and his family from the worldwide deluge (Genesis 6–9; 1 Pet 3:18–21). The Jacob narrative connects Yahweh’s promise of a remnant with the covenantal promises to Abraham and Isaac (e.g., Gen 32:10 [ET 32:9]). Joseph continues the motif when he forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery: “God sent me before you to preserve for you *a remnant* [תִּשְׁאֶרֶת] on earth and to keep alive for you a great group of survivors” (Gen 45:7; cf. Gen 50:20). The prophet Elijah thought that he was the sole remnant in his time, but Yahweh pledged: “Yet I will *cause to remain* [Hiphil of שָׁרַף] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that do not bow to Baal” (1 Ki 19:18). (CC)

These promises are based upon God’s first Gospel promise (Gen 3:15), amplified in his everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:7; Gal 3:29), which will never

be nullified (Mt 16:18). As the Elect Stone (1 Pet 2:4–8), Christ promises that all baptized believers are numbered among the “elect race,” the “people of God” (1 Pet 2:9–10), the “remnant of mankind” (Acts 15:17). Judgment removes those who claim to be members but are not (cf. Jn 15:2, 6) while also purifying those who are true believers (cf. Heb 12:7–11). A remnant from among all the nations, saved by grace through faith, will one day gather before the Lamb to give thanks to him forever (Revelation 7). (CC)

cluster of grapes. Israel was a vineyard that had produced bad grapes (5:2, 4, 7). (CSB)

DO NOT DESTROY IT – The owner of the vineyard is told not to discard an entire cluster of grapes if some of them are dried or rotten, because there are enough good ones left to produce excellent wine. In the same way, the Lord will not cast out the whole nation because there will be faithful servants in its midst. (TLSB)

servants. See vv. 9, 13–15; 54:17 and note. Here the Lord’s servants are equivalent to the remnant (see 1:9 and note). (CSB)

Responding to Isaiah, God says that only “my servants” will eat, drink, rejoice, and be blessed (Is 65:8, 9, 13–16). They alone are the heirs of the ancient promises, the children of God, and members of the household of faith. (CC)

65:9 The movement from Is 65:8 to 65:9 is from preservation to inheritance. When placed together, these words in 65:9—“Jacob,” “offspring,” “one inheriting,” “my mountains,” “they will possess it,” and “they will dwell there”—point to Yahweh’s promises of land for the patriarchs (e.g., Gen 13:14–15; 15:18–21; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12), a gift that is frequently reiterated in Isaiah 40–66 (e.g., 49:8; 54:3; 58:12; 60:21; 61:4). But this will be no ordinary land; it will be the new heavens and new earth (65:17–25). (CC)

With great rejoicing (35:10; 51:11; 65:14a), the offspring of Jacob will come from distant places (43:5–6; 60:4–5) to their eternal homeland. To depict the greatness of the throng, Isaiah suggests that there will not be enough room for the crowded multitude (49:20; 54:2–3). These promises point to a restored Eden (51:3), indeed a renewed heaven and earth (65:17–25; 66:22). The remnant may rest assured that God’s promise of the land is for them, forever. (CC)

Is 65:9 envisions Yahweh returning the remnant to the land, thus restoring covenant blessings to the faithful drawn from both the North and the South (Jacob and Judah). These believers are the Suffering Servant’s offspring (Is 53:10; 59:21) who will inherit God’s kingdom, centered in the new Zion (Isaiah 60–62). They are synonymous with Zion’s children (cf. 54:1–3) and are mentioned frequently in chapters 40–66 (e.g., 44:3–5; 49:19–21; 60:4–9, 21–22). Because Jacob’s “offspring” (65:9) will include Gentiles (see 56:1–8; 65:1), this vision is already fulfilled now (via proleptic eschatology) in the present Christian church, where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus. If you are of Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28–29). (CC)

descendants. See Jer 31:36. (CSB)

He promised that a remnant of the people would be saved. (PBC)

Jacob ... Judah. The northern and southern kingdoms respectively. (CSB)

possess my mountains. See 49:8; 60:21 and notes. “Mountains” refers to the whole land, since so much of it was hilly (see Jdg 1:9; Eze 6:2–3). (CSB)

chosen people. See 41:8–9 and note. (CSB)

inherit. See 57:13 and note. (CSB)

65:10 Sharon. See 33:9 and note. (CSB)

Northern grasslands along the coastline of the Great Sea, near Joppa. (TLSB)

Valley of Achor. A valley near Jericho (see Jos 7:24, 26; Hos 2:15). Since Sharon and Achor are on the western and eastern edges of the land respectively, they probably represent the whole country. (CSB)

Cf Jsh 7:24–26. Sharon and the Valley of Achor lie on opposite ends of Israel’s borders and so represent the prosperity of the whole country. (TLSB)

seek me. See v. 1; 51:1 and notes. (CSB)

At the beginning of the chapter he speaks about the seekers. It is they who are found who seek Him. (Luther)

65:11 forsake the LORD. See 1:4. (CSB)

Refers to idolatry. (TLSB)

holy mountain. See 2:2–4 and note. (CSB)

Zion. (TLSB)

David began an extension of the city, and the name Zin came to be used for the whole of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:9; 2 Kings 19:21; Ps. 48; 69:35; Is. 1:8). Zion is a symbol of God’s kingdom (Ps. 76:2; Is. 1:27; 2:3; 4:1-6; Joel 3:16; Zec 1:16-17; Rm. 11:26). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

spread a table ... mixed wine. A meal and drink offering presented to deities. See note on 5:22; cf. v. 3; Jer 7:18. (CSB)

Fortune ... Destiny. The pagan gods of good fortune and fate. See Jos 11:17, where “Gad” may mean “Fortune.” (CSB)

Likely names of pagan deities. Their devotees appealed to them in ritual eating and drinking to grant them good luck and a positive fate. (TLSB)

Hand in hand with their infidelity goes neglect of the holy temple-mountain, i.e., true worship is not maintained as the seed-bed of faith. Rites honoring other foreign deities are resorted to, honoring for example, the god of good luck (Hebrew: Gad); honoring him by preparing a counterpart to the table of shew-bread (cf Ex 25:23-30) that symbolically represented a fellowship meal with the Lord. (Leupold)

65:12 sword. Designed for God’s enemies, such as Edom (34:5–6), but the wicked of Israel would also suffer (see 1:20; 59:18 and note; 66:16). (CSB)

bow down to the slaughter. Kneel for execution. (TLSB)

called ... not answer. See 50:2 and note; 2Ch 36:15–16. (CSB)

Through the prophets. (TLSB)

“You are extremely ungodly. I come of My own accord, I preach, I cry through the prophets, but you do not receive Me.” *When I called, you did not answer.* The worst sin is not to accept the Word. For such there is no help. (Luther)

chose what displeases me. Contrast the faithfulness of the eunuchs in 56:4. The last four lines of v. 12 are almost identical to those of 66:4. (CSB)

65:13–16 The Lord provides a contrast between His people (the servants) and those who have been disobedient. This contrast reflects the blessings and curses of Lv 26; Dt 28. (TLSB)

65:13 eat ... drink. See 41:17–18; 49:10. (CSB)

The faithful of Israel. (TLSB)

you. The unfaithful. (TLSB)

go hungry ... thirsty. See 5:13; 8:21. (CSB)

rejoice. See 61:7 and note; 66:14. (CSB)

The faithful of Israel. (TLSB)

put to shame. See 42:17; 44:9, 11. (CSB)

65:14 *sing out of ... joy.* See 35:10; 54:1 and notes. (CSB)

brokenness of spirit. They had refused God's healing. See 61:1 and note. (CSB)

Sadness and discouragement. (TLSB)

65:15 *chosen ones.* See v. 9 and note. (CSB)

as a curse. The rebellious Israelites will be used as an example when curses are uttered (see Jer 29:22). (CSB)

The names of those destroyed by God's wrath will be used in an oath formula when a judgment just as severe is invoked on subsequent enemies of God and of His chosen. (TLSB)

the Lord GOD will put you to death. Possibly the wording of the curse (Nu 5:21). (TLSB)

another name. Perhaps the "new name" of 62:2 (see note there). (CSB)

His servants will not be named in the curse. Each will be entitled to "bless himself" by praying to "the God of truth" (v 16). (TLSB)

65:16 *invokes a blessing.* See 48:1; Dt 29:19. (CSB)

God of truth. God is true to his promises. The Hebrew word for "truth" here is 'amen (see 2Co 1:20; cf. Rev 3:14). (CSB)

swear by. See 45:23. Perhaps a contrast is intended with those who took oaths in the name of Baal (see Jer 12:16). (CSB)

They will have their being forever in the faithful God, because it is such a name of blessing that people may bless themselves with it and swear by it. As surely as I am a Christian, we who swear by this name speak a word of blessing. (Luther)

65:1–16 The Lord will repay the iniquities of those who reject Him, but His chosen servants—who seek Him in faith—will lie down in safety. The Lord threatens to punish all who follow their own devices and do not listen to Him. The retribution we deserve for our iniquities has been laid on Jesus. With His own blood, He made payment for all of our sinful deeds. • O Lord, in Holy Baptism You chose us to be Your servants, and You filled our lives with blessing. Help us each day to choose what You delight in and to sing for gladness of heart. Amen. (TLSB)

New Heavens and a New Earth

¹⁷ **“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ 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. 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. ²⁰ “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. ²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² 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. ²³ 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. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ 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.

65:17-25 The future restoration of the Lord’s people and all creation. This vision further defines the new things mentioned earlier (42:9; 48:6). With earthly imagery, the prophet is trying to help his generation understand the blessings of eternal life. Luther emphasized that the blessings of God’s new creation begin now for believers. Luther: “He is not speaking only of the spiritual heaven, but He makes all things new, spiritual and physical, although I do not see a new heaven and a new body in us, but only the one born of our parents. Yet we believe it. We must turn the sack inside out, and then they will appear.... The promise is everlasting. Rejoice in it. Peter says (1 Peter 1:9), ‘As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.’ This salvation is already prepared. Peter is as certain as if it were already there. Then he says, ‘But the revelation is awaited.’ Then we shall see what we cannot now receive with the mind.... Therefore whoever is tormented in his feeling by sin and death, let him rise again in the Word and kingdom of Christ and say, ‘My Christ lives’ ” (AE 17:388). (TLSB)

65:17 BEHOLD – Behold always calls attention to something unexpected. Here the Lord informed His people of the wonders He would still perform for them in the future. (PBC)

I WILL CREATE – Hebrew word denotes divine action (cf Gn 1:1); it expresses great and new acts that require a divine agent. It occurs nine times in the early chapters of Gn and 19 times in Is 40–66 (three times in Is 65:17–18). (TLSB)

This always has God as the one creating, and it always refers to creation *ex nihilo*, rather than to forming something out of previously existing matter. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

“I will bring it about and do it.” He is not speaking only of the spiritual heaven, but He makes all things new, spiritual and physical, although I do not see a new heaven and a new body in us, but only the one born of our parents. Yet we believe it. We must turn the sack inside out, and then they will appear. (Luther)

new heavens and a new earth.† The climax of the “new things” Isaiah has been promising (see 42:9; 48:6 and notes), including the final consummation of Christ’s kingdom in heaven (Rev. 21:1). (CSB)

This would seem to represent the totality of things, as expressed in Gen 1:1. The new heaven and earth will so fully show forth the glory of God their Creator, and so completely fulfill every need and desire of his creatures, that the former heavens and earth will no longer be remembered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

Former things. The “old order of things” (Rev 21:4), including pain and sorrow. (CSB)

The old creation and the sins of God’s people, which have now been forgiven. Cf Ps 103:12. (TLSB)

Psalm 103:12: “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

That is, “they shall not be praised,” as if we were to say on Judgment Day, “What a dark sun and what small stars we had!” Away with those who apply the ceremonies to the coming kingdom! They are thread and seam for the outward bag and sack. God will not be concerned about them, and He will not honor them. So it is with us. We do not observe the ceremonies of the Jews. (Luther)

65:18-19 The center of the new creation is the new Jerusalem and its temple (Ezk 48:30–35; Zec 14:10–21; Rv 21:2–22:5). (TLSB)

65:18 *be glad and rejoice.* See 66:10; see also 51:3 and note. (CSB)

The promise is everlasting. Rejoice in it. Peter says (1 Peter 1:9), “As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.” This salvation is already prepared. Peter is as certain as if it were already there. Then he says, “But the revelation is awaited.” Then we shall see what we cannot now receive with the mind. Now, while we are in the sack and skin, we cannot do it. The kingdom of Christ is not to be found there, but it rises to another place, where sense is not, but where faith is. So if I should feel sin, death, and evil and nothing good in my flesh, I must nevertheless believe in the kingdom of Christ. For the kingdom of Christ does not have its place in the senses. The treasure lies in the certainty of life. Feelings of despair and afflictions have to do with the sack, for they are done externally. Therefore whoever is tormented in his feeling by sin and death, let him rise again in the Word and kingdom of Christ and say, “My Christ lives.” I am not speaking of those righteous people who should taste the firstfruits of the Spirit and the flavors of sweetness (as the scholastics say). But I am speaking of the wrestling of life, of sweetness and the firstfruits of the Spirit, when we are involved with the devil’s worst bites and still overcome by faith. This is the very work of faith, to fight against sins and to slug it out with death. This is the security of the godly. (Luther)

create Jerusalem.† John links the coming of a new heaven and a new earth with the “new Jerusalem” (Rev 21:1–2). A restored Jerusalem after the exile prefigures the Messianic kingdom and its consummation in this greater Jerusalem. See note on 54:11–12. (CSB)

Instead of remembering the former afflictions, the people are exhorted to “be glad and rejoice forever.” God is about to recreate Jerusalem, which will be the focal point of the new creation, as also in the eschatological vision of Ezekiel 40-48. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

This is a figure of speech where the abstract is put for the concrete. I want these people and Jerusalem to be rejoicing itself, as Terence says that the malicious man is malice itself, and Christ is called righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). There a rich excellence is meant. So Christ will be an abundant joy to me, so that I am nothing but joy. But we do not feel this in this life, since it must be pure joy objectively and formally. (Luther)

65:19 *rejoice ... take delight.* See 62:4–5 and notes. (CSB)

So great is his love toward us, that he delights in our prosperity not less than if he enjoyed it along with us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

To the extent that one is a Christian he is joy. To the extent that we believe, however, it is a matter of foretaste. There are two joys: Not only do we have a new heaven, but we shall also see God in eternal joy. (Luther)

weeping ... crying. See 25:8 and note; 35:10. (CSB)

To weep means to cry and to howl. This is the antithesis between the Law and faith and Christ’s kingdom. He who is under the Law sees sin, God’s wrath, and death, and joyful things are apparitions and the realm of Moses. This condition will last as long as we have the skin and the sack. But when we are in Christ’s kingdom, another joy will appear and be revealed. (Luther)

65:20–25 See 11:6–9 and note. (CSB)

65:20 NEVER AGAIN WILL THERE BE – The usual circumstances of life and death in a sin-broken world are cast aside. In the new creation, life triumphs over death (cf 25:8). (TLNB)

The best explanation is that again earthly language is being used to describe heavenly realities that far surpass what can adequately be conveyed in terms we can understand. Eternal life is described as the absence of any of the tragedies that can cut life short in this world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

hundred ... mere youth. Comparable to the longevity of Adam and his early descendants. See the genealogy of Ge 5 (but see note on Ge 5:5). (CSB)

The context describes creation without the corruption of sin and death (vv 17–25), so the examples here seem confusing. But, in fact, they are hypothetical (a conditional use of Hbr *ki*, “though”; cf Jer 49:16; 51:53). One could translate it “supposing that the young man shall die.” The two halves of v 20 present a contrast, and the examples of the second half are unreal—remarkably, the vulnerable infant and old man live on, but those strong by worldly standards (“young man,” “sinner”) would surely suffer death or a curse. *a hundred years*. Used figuratively for a great length of time. See p 217. Time will no longer have its aging effect on those who formerly were under the curse of sin. (TLSB)

God does not promise here that every believer will live to the ripe old age of 100 but that every believer in the church is “blessed by the Lord” and comes under His watchful eye. (PBC)

65:21-25 The blessings of the covenant with God are again expounded as being fully restored for His people (cf Dt 6:10–12). (TLSB)

65:21–22 Contrast Moses’ curse for disobedience in Dt 28:30. (CSB)

65:21 *plant vineyards*. See 62:8–9. (CSB)

DWELL IN THEM..EAT THEIR FRUIT – God’s people will never fear invading outsiders. They will be free to enjoy the blessing of laboring (remember, Adam was put in unspoiled Eden to work and keep it, Gen 2:15) and enjoying the fruits (cf. the fruit-bearing trees in Rev. 22:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

How shall we harmonize this: He builds new heavens, we build houses? Because in the skin we do not see but may know by faith that the head of the kingdom grows, so they may build houses, plant vineyards, and set up households, which do not consist of house and stones, but of wife, children, and family. So the church will grow, and one church will produce ten. They also enjoy their own fruits. (Luther)

65:22 NO LONGER WILL THEY BUILD ...OTHERS LIVE IN THEM – Unlike the futility of the exodus, when those who began neither finished the journey nor entered the Promised Land, here there is completion of the promised dwelling. (TLSB)

Earlier they had anxieties and toil, and another was in possession. That is to say, they served the devil with their merits. (Luther)

days of a tree. Compared to the righteous also in Ps 1:3; 92:12–14. (CSB)

A tree is a symbol of permanence and endurance. Job 14:7-17 uses the figure of a re-sprouting tree to describe eternal life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

This is a well-known comparison in Scripture, where the ungodly are compared to hay and to herbs that fade quickly, as in Ps. 37:2 and Is. 37:27. The godly are the opposite and are compared to trees planted by streams of water (Ps. 1:3). It is as if He were

saying: “My godly people shall not struggle in vain, because their righteousness is lasting like a flourishing tree.” They are not hay like the ungodly, for the godly are always bearing fruit. They do not speak idle words. For that reason He says, “The days of My people shall be like the trees.” This, too, is not apparent, just as the new heaven and the kingdom of Christ cannot be perceived except in the Word. Whatever is left over in the senses belongs into the sack and bag. (Luther)

chosen ones. See 41:8–9 and note. (CSB)

long enjoy. Cf. Ps 91:16. (CSB)

This is a Hebraism often used, that the godly are compared to permanent trees. For that reason He here calls them a lasting tree which produces lasting works. See Ps. 1. They shall do what they want, because they flourish like a palm tree and last even to old age, “they shall grow old.” Both shall blossom: The godly in such a way that they will not grow old; the ungodly shall blossom too, but like a flower and like grass. Because the work of the godly man is permanent, it is not forgotten. The godly distribute¹¹ and give to the poor, and they are not forgotten. The ungodly man also distributes and is forgotten. (Luther)

65:23 *toil in vain.* See 49:4 and note. (CSB)

Ever since the fall of Adam into sin, his descendants have often labored for nothing – the “vanity” lamented in Ecclesiastes. In the eternal state people will labor for God (see the Gospel reading) and will see the fruit of their efforts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

There is a difference in giving birth between the godly and the unrighteous. The travail of the fools prostrates them. They are in extreme and useless labor. Here He condemns not only the useless labor but the very travailing and begetting itself. So the labor of the godly is not only light labor, but they do not even feel the labor. In all labors they are happy and cheerful. (Luther)

misfortune. Such as death or captivity. (CSB)

Refers to the ravages of war. (TLSB)

The death of a child, which psychologists describe as the most traumatic of losses, will never happen again. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

That is, they do not travail like the ungodly, who, as it were, bring forth a premature birth which may not see the sun. It is as if He were saying: “With the ungodly there is much laboring, and, what is even worse, there is much laboring for nothing.” This is not the case with the godly. Their works are a Bernard. What the ungodly bring forth is a miscarriage, as Ps. 7:14 tells us. They bring forth nothing. Therefore all endeavors and

works of the ungodly are clearly useless and futile. But the godly “shall not bear children for calamity,” that is, they shall not bring forth an abortion. (Luther)

people blessed by the LORD. See 61:9 and note. (CSB)

God’s faithful people. (TLSB)

Whatever they say and undertake is done by the Holy Spirit, and there will be no abortion. (Luther)

65:24 *Before they call I will answer.* See 30:19; 58:9; Mt 6:8. (CSB)

Luther: “Our prayer pleases God because He has commanded it, made promises, and given form to our prayer. For that reason He is pleased with our prayer, He requires it and delights in it, because He promises, commands, and shapes it. Therefore only the prayer of the godly is a prayer for the sake of God’s excellent promises, since we know that they are acceptable and pleasing. But the prayer of the ungodly is sin. God cannot get enough of the prayers of the godly. Therefore the prayer of the godly is likened to the most attractive odor which one cannot smell enough. Then He says *I will hear*. It is not only guaranteed, but it is actually already obtained” (AE 17:393). (TLSB)

In Isaiah 64 the Israelites complained to God that he did not listen to them when they cried out to him. In the eschaton he will abundantly hear. So great is God’s love, he is ready to answer prayer immediately, if not sooner. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

This promise is extremely necessary for strengthening our hearts and inciting them to pray. John explains this passage (cf. John 15:7). We know what promises we have if only we would pray. Here you see the power in the prayer of the godly. We must know, in the first place, that we must remain with the Word. In this life our old skin always smacks of the nature of its origin. The wine takes on the taste of the barrel. Therefore it must always be cleaned out. Our life, however, is set firmly on the foundation of the apostles and prophets so that in these remains we can always say, “I am a child and an heir of God.” We can say this not because of ourselves but because of the most far-reaching promises, for the sake of which we are certain that we shall be heard. In the presence of God our prayers are regarded in such a way that they are answered before we call. (Luther)

The prayer of the righteous man is answered before it is finished. Before they begin to formulate, when they are still speaking in general, as elsewhere, “Thou hast given him his heart’s desire” (Ps. 21:2). So God heard Moses, groaning and laboring in the anguish of his heart; he heard the groan and the sob of his heart. Then He struck the sea. So Bernard says to his brothers, “Do not despise prayers, and know that as soon as you will have raised your voices, they are written in heaven, and it will come to pass and it will be given you. If it is not given, then it is not good for you, and God will give you something in its place that is better and more useful.” (Luther)

65:25 *wolf ... lamb ... lion.* See 11:6–9 and notes. (CSB)

Proverbial opposites. The first is aggressive and voracious; the latter, weak and helpless, the wolf's natural food. (TLSB)

A new harmony will exist in the age with no enmity; contrast Gen 3:15. Eden is restored. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

LION WILL EAT STRAW – Nature itself is changed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

dust ... serpent's food. See Ge 3:14 and note. The serpent will be harmless (see 11:8). (CSB)

As a reminder from Gen 3:14, it indicates that the propensity of the serpent to attack man will be a thing of the past. It shall indeed “eat dust,” i.e., taste defeat, but its presence in the picture shall not mar the perfection of God's new creation. (Leupold)

They ... mountain. Identical to the first two lines of 11:9. (CSB)

Cf 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11; 66:20. Denotes paradise restored (cf Rv 21:10). (TLSB)

The prophet calls attention to God's “mountain,” the new Zion with no temple or altar for sacrifice, just the Lamb who was slain (Revelation). Here the benefits of the Savior's atonement will be enjoyed fully and forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

65:17–25 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. • 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. (TLSB)