

God's Answer to Israel's Prayer

Last Lord's Day we considered a prayer offered by the prophet on behalf of the people of Israel. The prophet Isaiah lamented the condition of his people, even as he identified himself with them. God had forsaken them, or so they thought. They felt estranged from their fathers--the Patriarchs, who had formerly experienced God's blessing. They saw themselves as under God's severe and unrelenting judgment. Nevertheless they had prayed to Him to have mercy on them and restore them. They appealed to God's purposes and designs for them, the promises of God that they had not experienced. The prophet expressed the longing of many of his people that God would manifest Himself in coming forth from heaven to deliver them from their wretched condition.

We now have before us Isaiah 65, in which the Lord declared an answer their prayer, explaining His purposes and actions as well as His plans for the future. Essentially God declared that for a substantial portion of them, they may not expect deliverance, but rather they could anticipate overthrow and destruction from His hand due to His judgment upon them for their sins. For although many thought that they were His people, they had resisted and rejected Him as they lived in their sins. Some would, however, experience His salvation, even a remnant of Jews who would experience His mercy and grace. Here is God's answer to the prayer of Isaiah, chapter 65:

¹I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;
I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that was not called by My name.

²I spread out My hands all the day
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;

³a people who provoke Me
to My face continually,
sacrificing in gardens
and making offerings on bricks;

⁴who sit in tombs,
and spend the night in secret places;
who eat pig's flesh,
and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;

⁵who say, "Keep to yourself,
do not come near me, for I am too holy for you."

These are a smoke in My nostrils,
a fire that burns all the day.

⁶Behold, it is written before Me:
"I will not keep silent, but I will repay;

I will indeed repay into their lap
⁷both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together,
says the LORD;

because they made offerings on the mountains
and insulted Me on the hills,

I will measure into their lap
payment for their former deeds."

⁸Thus says the LORD:

“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, ‘Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,’
so I will do for My servants’ sake,
and not destroy them all.
⁹I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,
and from Judah possessors of My mountains;
My chosen shall possess it,
and My servants shall dwell there.
¹⁰Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down,
for My people who have sought Me.
¹¹But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget My holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,
¹²I will destine you to the sword,
and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter,
because, when I called, you did not answer;
when I spoke, you did not listen,
but you did what was evil in My eyes
and chose what I did not delight in.”

¹³Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“Behold, My servants shall eat,
but you shall be hungry;
behold, My servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;
behold, My servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;
¹⁴behold, My servants shall sing for gladness of heart,
but you shall cry out for pain of heart
and shall wail for breaking of spirit.
¹⁵You shall leave your name to My chosen for a curse,
and the Lord GOD will put you to death,
but His servants He will call by another name.
¹⁶So that he who blesses himself in the land
shall bless himself by the God of truth,
and he who takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of truth;
because the former troubles are forgotten
and are hidden from My eyes.

¹⁷“For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.

¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.

¹⁹I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in My people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.

²⁰No 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 accursed.

²¹They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²²They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of My people be,
and My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,
and their descendants with them.

²⁴Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

²⁵The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
and dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all My holy mountain,"

says the LORD.

Here is an outline to help us understand this passage:

1. God's answer is delayed due to the attitude and behavior of many in Israel (65:1-7)
2. An elect remnant will be saved; the renegades will be condemned (65:8-16)
3. God portrays His new creation in all its glory (65:17-25)

I. Interpreting the Passage

A. God's answer is delayed due to the attitude and behavior of many in Israel (65:1-7)

In answer to the prophet's prayer in chapter 64 God responds:

*¹I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;
I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me.
I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that was not called by My name.*

*²I spread out My hands all the day
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;*

God had been extremely kind and gracious to Israel in extending His mercy and blessing to them. He had held out His hands to His people in the gesture of welcoming them. Even in their sinful rebellion against God, He had called to them saying, “Here I am! Here I am!” But they were a people who refused to follow Him. They were a people who refused to obey Him. They insisted on doing their own will, purposing to fulfil their own sinful desires rather than ordering their life directed by God’s laws that He had given to them. And so, although they had no desire for God and had sought Him, God had called to them repeatedly, tenderly. He only encountered their obstinate refusal to respond to Him. He had, as it were, held out His arms to them so as to embrace them even when in their rebellion, but they had refused Him. The day of grace had passed for them. He would judge them.

This was the condition of the Jewish people, “Israel”, even after the people had returned from the Babylonian exile. They had not been purified from their sins through God’s judgment upon them. They continued to resist Him. They continued to pervert their worship, rendering their effort to serve and worship other “gods” and in ways contrary to what God had commanded them.

In **verse 3** God further indicts the people for their egregious sin toward Him:

***³a people who provoke Me
to My face continually,
sacrificing in gardens
and making offerings on bricks;***

They had provoked God to anger in their defiance of Him. They had provoked God to judge them through their persistent idolatry. They had offered sacrifices to other gods and had burned incense to them in places devoted to their worship.

In addition to God citing their crime of “sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks”, practices that were in violation of God’s Word, God identified in **verse 4** other idolatrous practices that had characterized these people. They were ones...

***⁴who sit in tombs,
and spend the night in secret places;
who eat pig’s flesh,
and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;***

They had sought to receive communication from the dead, which is the practice of necromancy. They had spent whole nights in graveyards, the places regarded by the law as unclean and defiling. In addition the people had transgressed the Mosaic Law in breaking dietary laws that they were to observe. They ate unclean meats and meals, setting aside God’s dietary laws that He had established for them in the Mosaic covenant.¹

But even in their evil practices, they were boasting to one another how holy they were, even as they were excluding others from their company. They were justifying themselves while accusing others of not doing right. We read in **verse 5**:

***⁵who say, “Keep to yourself,
do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.”
These are a smoke in My nostrils,
a fire that burns all the day.***

They were self-righteous, even while they were practicing their errant behavior. They were inciting God’s anger, but they thought their behavior caused them to be more holy before God. They were separating

¹ This is not to say that it is unlawful for New Testament Christians to eat pork, but it was forbidden to the people under the Mosaic covenant. That covenant was annulled through Jesus Christ, Israel having broken that covenant. Under the new covenant our Lord Jesus declared that all kinds of meat are now lawful for food for His people (Cf. Mark 7:17, 18).

themselves from others who did not do as they did, lest they be defiled by them. These practices caused God's wrath to enflame toward them. Because of their persistence in these things, His anger did not subside.

God finally had enough of them and determined that He would judge them. He would no longer forbear with regard to these rebellious people. He would render justice by repaying them for their sins. **Verses 6 and 7** record,

***⁶Behold, it is written before Me:
“I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will indeed repay into their lap
⁷both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together,
says the LORD;
because they made offerings on the mountains
and insulted Me on the hills,
I will measure into their lap
payment for their former deeds.”***

Their behavior had continued through generations and God would no longer pass over their sins. He would visit the sons for their sins and the sins of the fathers. In their idolatry they had scorned God and now He would pay them back as one would pay a debt by measuring the money in one's lap.

In vs. 1-7 God tells the people why He had not visited them with the salvation for which they had prayed in chapter 64. But now with verses 8ff we see that He has good designs on some.

B. An elect remnant will be saved; the renegades will be condemned (65:8-16)

We read in **verse 8**:

***⁸Thus says the LORD:
“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, ‘Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,’
so I will do for My servants' sake,
and not destroy them all.***

God would judge Israel, condemning most of them. But God determined to save a remnant from among rebellious Israel. A metaphor is presented of picking grapes from a vine that is largely comprised of spoiled grapes. There is one bunch among all of the worthless ones from which good wine could be produced. God will discard the many, but will harvest the one bunch of grapes, a limited quantity, which has not been spoiled, from which some benefit could be brought forth. In saving a remnant of Jews while condemning the others, God was being just and true to His promises to the patriarchs that their physical descendants would be the objects of His favor, the recipients of His blessing.

God would be merciful to some, who are described as “My servants.” These are ones who had not given themselves over to living in the fashion of most in the nation. All would not be destroyed, but a few, a remnant, would be spared.

God then declared what He would do with this remnant. **Verse 9** reads,

***⁹I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,
and from Judah possessors of My mountains;
My chosen shall possess it,
and My servants shall dwell there.***

There would yet be a future for His people Israel. He would cause offspring to come forth and survive and thrive as they experience God's blessing. They would inherit that which God had promised to the Fathers--the Promised Land, the mountains of Judah. These ones are described as "chosen ones" and "My servants", ones whom God has reserved for Himself. They are the elect from Israel.

Verse 10 records further blessings from God that He will bestow upon them:

***¹⁰Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down,
for My people who have sought Me.
and chose what I did not delight in."***

They experience God's blessing in their land and their existence is characterized by peace. From the Plain of Sharon, which was in the west, to the valley of Achor, which was in the east, a state of security and tranquillity exists. That is, for all those who seek Him. We should understand these descriptions to metaphors for the peace and security of God's people in the coming kingdom of God, which these verses foretell.

But in contrast to His chosen ones, the remnant for which He had desire and design for their salvation, God purposed to condemn all others in their sin. **Verse 11** reads,

***¹¹But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget My holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,***

Those who forsake the Lord could be assured of God's judgment upon them. These are ones of Israel who had forsaken Jerusalem as the place of worship, who reject the reality of God's kingdom--His holy mountain.

Two false gods are mentioned here by name to which the Israelites had resorted when they forsook their God: the twin goddesses of Fortune (Hebrew: Gad, or "good luck") and Destiny (Hebrew: Mani). These rebels were hoping to manipulate their future and destiny through worshipping these gods. But in so doing, they had rejected the true God Who controlled their fate.

God declared their end:

***¹²I will destine you to the sword,
and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter,
because, when I called, you did not answer;
when I spoke, you did not listen,
but you did what was evil in My eyes***

God had determined that they would encounter His judgment. He had destined them for death. He would cause them to be defeated and killed. They had "bowed down" in reverence to these deities. They would yet bow down to the executioner when their heads would be removed from them. This was all because they had refused to respond to God for so long, He Who had graciously and for so long had called to them. They were willingly sinful and rebellious, though God had appealed to them repeatedly to come to Him, even as He had foretold to them of the consequences if they refused.

God then contrasts the experience of those who receive His salvation with those who are the objects of His judgment:

***¹³Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
"Behold, My servants shall eat,
but you shall be hungry;
behold, My servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;***

*behold, My servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;*

The contrast between the righteous and the wicked is set forth. This description seems to parallel the blessing and cursing which was set forth originally before them, when God had given to them the Law of Moses. The righteous--His servants--would eat, drink, and rejoice; the wicked would be hungry, thirsty, and encounter humiliation.

A further contrast is set forth in **verse 14**:

*¹⁴behold, My servants shall sing for gladness of heart,
but you shall cry out for pain of heart
and shall wail for breaking of spirit.*

The contrast is continued. The words are still directed to the rebellious. It would seem that part of their sorrow will be witnessing the joy that others experience, joy which they have forfeited due to their rebellion against God shown in the practice of their sinful behavior. Their forfeited opportunity will aggravate their sorrow, causing their remorse to be very great.

We then read a further contrast in **verse 15**,

*¹⁵You shall leave your name to My chosen for a curse,
and the Lord GOD will put you to death,
but His servants He will call by another name.*

A great concern of the ancient world was how one would be remembered after his death. The ancient man desired honor, respect, and a good legacy at his passing. These rebels would be remembered, but for the opposite of what they would have desired to be remembered. Their "name" would remain as an emblem of a curse.

On the other hand the righteous would be given a new name that would symbolize or express their blessed condition. The servants of the Lord who had served and honored their God would themselves be honored.

*¹⁶So that he who blesses himself in the land
shall bless himself by the God of truth,
and he who takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of truth;
because the former troubles are forgotten
and are hidden from My eyes.*

The time of blessing would arrive for the servants of God. They will be richly blessed by the God of truth Who renders justice in truth. He rewards them who maintained their fidelity to Him. Only the righteous dwell in this place, for "*he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth.*" All former difficulties are past and forgotten by God's people and all the former sins are no longer regarded by God. A state of blessed existence commences. This thought is repeated in **Revelation 21:3ff**:

³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

⁶And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers,

sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

C. God portrays His new creation in all its glory (65:17-25)

In the following verses God described the conditions of that time when His words would be fully realized.

***¹⁷“For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.***

God will cause to come into existence a whole new creation. His people will inhabit this place. Dwelling there will fully and forever separate the ones who enjoy this new creation from the former creation, which saw so much sin and death. This new creation is, of course, also set forth in the New Testament:

“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Pet. 3:13).

“According to His promise” may be a reference to the verses before us in Isaiah 65.

We also read of this new creation in Revelation 21:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” (Rev. 21:1).

God further assures His people by promising them that He will renew “Jerusalem” whose inhabitants will always be characterized by “gladness.” **Verse 18** reads,

***¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.***

And so, a New Jerusalem is created as well. It will be characterized by a worshipping people who are rejoicing in their fellowship with God and one another. And not only the people of God will rejoice, but God Himself will rejoice over His people. God declared in **verse 19**:

***¹⁹I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in My people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.***

God Himself will be among His people and will manifest His presence and the blessing that comes with His favor.

Notice in verse 19 (as well as in verse 18) that we have the commonly seen parallelism of Hebrew poetry. One line is repeated in similar language in the next line, thereby providing clarity of understanding and emphasis. Let us look at the second stanza first:

***(1) no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
(2) and the cry of distress.***

We see that the expression, “the sound of weeping” is parallel with “the cry of distress.” Our ESV translation helps us to recognize this in the manner that the verse is formatted. And now the first stanza:

*(1) I will rejoice in Jerusalem
(2) and be glad in My people;*

Here we read that God would rejoice “in Jerusalem” is parallel with God being glad “in My people.” Here is another place where it can be seen that in the prophets “Jerusalem” is a metaphor for “God’s people”, those who are elect of God, chosen by God to receive His salvation.²

We now arrive to **verse 20**, which might be regarded as one of the most difficult to interpret in all of the chapters that we have studied in Isaiah’s prophecy. Throughout all of our studies, I have sought to argue that Isaiah’s prophecy does not foretell of a future, earthly, 1,000 year Jewish millennium that most evangelicals believe is taught in God’s Word. Rather, we have sought to give evidence and argue for an amillennial understanding of prophecy, that is, this present church age is the realization of God’s promises respecting the restoration of the nation of “Israel”, the recovery and establishment of David’s throne. This is none other than the very throne in heaven at the right hand of God upon which the Lord Jesus currently sits and from which He reigns over history as King of kings and Lord of Lords. And so, where most modern day evangelicals believe the Old Testament prophets foretell the promised restoration of the kingdom of Israel to be a literal, physical, national, Jewish state during a future 1,000 year kingdom on earth, we have set forth the historic reformed teaching that the promised Kingdom of David, that is, the kingdom of God, has been inaugurated by the Lord Jesus through His crucifixion, and exaltation to throne of God.

But what of **verse 20** before us? It reads:

*²⁰No 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 accursed.*

This is a verse that poses great difficulty for interpreters. If one holds that the passage is dealing with the eternal state, then how is it you have people growing old and dying even though it takes much longer in the new creation than in the old? It does not sound like conditions in the eternal state, for then there will be no more death? Furthermore, then there will be no 100 year old sinners who die, for all sinners will then have been cast into the lake of fire that burns forever. Therefore, it is argued that this does not reflect what life will be like in the present Kingdom of God, but of life during a future, earthly, 1,000 year millennium, after Jesus Christ returns. For here we have people experience a longevity of life like to the people prior to Noah’s flood. They argue that these will be the conditions of things during the earthly reign of Jesus the Messiah, but it will not be the conditions of the eternal state after the end of the 1,000 years when there will no longer be any death.

This explanation may seem at first to satisfy the matter, but this position also is beset with difficulty. For in the book of Revelation the new heavens and new earth are described as coming into realization *after* the 1,000 years, but here in Isaiah 65 the prophet speaks of death and long life, but finite life, *after* the creation of the new heaven and new earth. Do you see that this is a problem for both views?

I believe that the answer to this problem is to understand the prophet as describing conditions of God’s blessing on the populace in a manner which the people of his day could have understood and related. The conditions of the coming kingdom would be like a time prior to the flood, perhaps reaching back to Eden after the first earth was created, when long life was enjoyed before the effects of the curse of sin was fully seen in humanity. This is describing the blessed existence, the blessed life of those who have had God’s salvation given to them.

The kingdom of heaven/God is the kingdom which God had promised to His people from the beginning of biblical history. It is the promise of a world in which there is no presence of sin or of sin’s effects, but rather,

² Here “Jerusalem” is a metaphor for God’s elect; elsewhere the term “Zion” is used in the same way.

God rules over His people. God alone governs and protects His people in a realm characterized by true righteousness, peace, and joy. It is a kingdom in which the people of God dwell in safety and security. God promised that His people would dwell together in harmony, mutual respect and dignity, and with no need. God would rule over His people through a mighty King, a son of David, who would assure that the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Within this promised kingdom ruled by the son of David, God would enable His people to dwell, enjoying the benefits of their own property and eating the fruit of their own labor. One Old Testament passage that speaks clearly to this promised kingdom in **Micah 4:1 4**.

¹It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, ²and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; ⁴but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

The major subject that our Lord Jesus taught His disciples was the nature of the Kingdom of God that He would inaugurate as the promised Messiah. The disciples of the Lord Jesus knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised King. They also anticipated that the kingdom would be inaugurated when they came to Jerusalem. It was fitting that the kingdom would be the subject of their discourse and the subject of our Lord's teaching as they made their journey to Jerusalem. What the disciples of our Lord did not understand (and some of His disciples today still do not understand) is that the kingdom of God would come in two stages. The kingdom of God would be inaugurated after Jesus was crucified and then raised and enthroned in heaven by His Father. This kingdom would exist in a "mystery" form throughout this church age, a spiritual kingdom that would exist among the fallen earthly political kingdoms of this world. But the final form and full realization of the kingdom of God would come when Christ returns the second time at the end of the age. Then the Lord Jesus would judge the world, create a new heavens and new earth, and then exclude from the new heavens and new earth any and all but those who are citizens of His kingdom. His people would thereafter live with Christ their king in His everlasting kingdom.

We next read of further ideal conditions of peace and blessing in the kingdom of God.

*²¹They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
²²They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of My people be,
and My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

A peaceful scene is described in which people are dwelling in peace and safety, enjoying the fruit of their labor. It is not as though they labored and then others came and took away the benefit of their labor. This commonly occurred in the ancient world. It was one of the manifestations of God's judgment, the result of God's curse upon them (cf. 62:8ff).

Verse 23 assures them that God is their God, watching over them for their good.

*²³They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,
and their descendants with them.*

Their state is one of perpetual peace and blessedness. Their children will inherit blessing rather than calamity. Here again is a verse which some would see as problematic in that it seems that in the eternal state

children will be produced. The Mormons would like this verse. As with the earlier verse, many see this as descriptive of times during a future 1,000 year earthly millennium. But again the same problem arises as before. These conditions are characteristic of life on the newly created earth (v. 17), which the book of Revelation declares will come into existence after “the millennium.” One commentator, Leupold, sought to deal with the problem this way:

Verse 20 is concerned with another blessing that shall stand forth prominently--longevity on this new earth. This passage as such does not rise to the level of maintaining that there will be eternal life, but merely a long continuation of life on this earth enabling man to taste to the full this pleasant existence. Therefore the level of 25:8 is not achieved here. The truth concerning the eternal blessedness of God’s children was, in the providence of God but slowly revealed through the centuries.³

It is best to understand these words as prophetic of the kind of life that Kingdom citizens enjoy through the Lord Jesus. It is a life of joy and peace and righteousness, even as we live and move in a fallen world.

In **verse 24** God promises His people that He will be their God, caring for them and providing for them as their covenant God. God declared,

***24 Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.***

There is a full and unhindered relationship between God and His people. They may speak to Him and He will respond to them without hesitation or delay. There is no sin that stands between them in His kingdom.

Lastly we read **verse 25**, in which conditions are described in which the curse of God upon man’s sin is removed. All that is within God’s kingdom is in a state of His blessing. All is at peace.

***25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
and dust shall be the serpent’s food.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all My holy mountain,”
says the LORD.***

Ideal conditions exist which are likened to a time before sin entered the world and the curse came upon the earth. Peace and harmony will exist, even in the animal kingdom. In God’s eternal kingdom there is no sin, no pain, no danger, no death. The curse of God is removed from His people and from the new earth which He has created for His people.

Now some of us might be skeptical about what we have put forward regarding the interpretation of this passage, but there is one argument that can be made that confirms what we are saying is the correct. When we first considered the opening two verses of this chapter, we showed how this was a prophecy of God dealings with the Jews. Again, it reads,

¹I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;
I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me.
I said, “Here I am, here I am,”
to a nation that was not called by My name.

²I spread out My hands all the day
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;

³ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Baker Book House, 1971), p. 367.

The prophet Isaiah in his Hebrew text declared that God had purposed to save only a remnant of Jewish people in Israel, leaving the remainder of the nation to encounter His wrath in His judgment upon them for their sin. But the apostle Paul, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, quoted this passage in Romans 10:20f. He used verse one of Isaiah 65 as a prophecy of Gentiles who had become Christians through the gospel in this church age. Paul explained the teaching of verse 2 as referring to Jews who had rejected Christ. Paul's use of this passage was based on the Septuagint (LXX), or the Greek translation of the Hebrew (Old Testament) Scriptures. Here it is as recorded in Romans 10:

As it is written:

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

¹⁸But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

“I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.”

²⁰***But Isaiah is very bold and says:***

***“I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”***

²¹***But to Israel he says:***

***“All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people.” (Rom. 10:16-21)***

The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, applied these two verses to the Gentiles who were becoming Christians under the gospel, and also to the many Jews who remained unbelieving and obstinate. Paul interpreted these verses to be a prophecy of the kingdom of God in this church age, not of a future 1,000 year millennium.

When the apostle applied this prophecy for “Israel” of Isaiah 65:1 and 2 to include the Gentiles who believed the gospel in this church age, he was setting forth the New Testament church as the Israel of God. The church of Jesus Christ is “Israel” which relates to God through Jesus Christ, the promised Son of David. We who believe on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior enjoy the spiritual benefits that are set forth for kingdom citizens within this passage.

II. Consider some doctrines taught in our passage

A. God has decreed (determined and destined) all of His work of salvation on behalf of His chosen people. We read the words of James before the gathered church leaders at the council in Jerusalem:

¹³And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me: ¹⁴Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ¹⁶'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; ¹⁷So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.' ¹⁸***Known to God from eternity are all His works.*** (Acts 15:13-18)

God revealed through Isaiah what would transpire in this church age and beyond, even unto the new heavens and the new earth in which all the redeemed shall dwell in the unending blessing of God. God revealed that He would bring salvation to a chosen remnant of Jewish people, even as He also purposed to save Gentiles, incorporating them into the one people of God.

B. In bringing His chosen people to salvation, is all due to His sovereign grace, not because of merit in the ones that He saves (Isa. 65:1).

God's grace is bestowed upon guilty sinners, who are as deserving of damnation and eternal punishment as are all others in this fallen world. But God purposed to manifest His love and mercy upon certain ones, each and all that He has purposed to save from eternity. They are His "chosen" ones, who are saved due to God's gracious purpose and action on their behalf.

C. The Holy Scriptures teach God's sovereign and gracious election of sinners unto salvation (Isa. 65:1f). His favor toward them is not based upon their foreseen faith, or that they are less sinful than those who are damned in their sins, or that they have gained God's favor by their good works or due to being less sinful than those who are damned. God often chooses the worst of us from among sinners to be saved, in order that He alone may receive the glory (credit) for our salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26ff).

D. Those whom God has not chosen (elected) unto salvation, He leaves in their sin and He will justly condemn them in judgment, for they are responsible and accountable for their sinful thoughts and actions before God the Judge of all the earth (Isa. 65:11, 12). The Scriptures do not teach election unto damnation. Election is always set forth as God's sovereign selection of sinners unto salvation. He leaves all the rest to incur their just condemnation. God is just in the damnation of sinners. They are damned due to their sins, not due to God not having chosen them unto salvation.

E. Christians may be confident that their faithful proclamation of the gospel will be effectual unto the salvation of sinners. God has a chosen people that He has purposed to save. Our Lord Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:44, 45)

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:20f)