

Will people live for 100 years in the millennium (Isaiah 65:20)?

Isaiah 65:20 No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

This verse is often used as proof of human life and death on the earth during the millennium. But is this a correct interpretation?

Some use this text to prove nothing less than a second chance doctrine. They teach that the unsaved dead will be resurrected at the Second Coming and will have another one-hundred-or-more year life during which to learn about Yeshua and accept Him as their sacrifice. All the while, satan will be bound so they have an unhindered opportunity to gain salvation. Isn't this teaching just another version of the rapture, i.e. another chance for those who chose not to believe when they had opportunity? But is this second chance doctrine a correct understanding of what the prophet Isaiah understood and taught?

Moreover, this common interpretation creates a clear conflict between Isaiah 65:20 and Revelation 21:4. Considering that John in Revelation was paraphrasing Isaiah, the two passages must match. If they don't, we have a contradiction in Scripture.

Isaiah Teaches the Earth Made New

Isaiah is teaching about the new heavens and the new earth, and he uses a distinct pattern in the way he does this. He uses a comparison and contrast style as he distinguishes the new heavens and new earth from the former (present) earth.

(NKJV) Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. 65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying. 65:20 "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. 65:21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. 65:24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear. 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

We know from Revelation 20:7-21:1 that the new heavens and the new earth are created at the end (not the start) of the millennium. Satan has been destroyed by the time the new heavens and new earth are created. Note how John is paraphrasing Isaiah 65 in Revelation 21:4. Although John was given more information than Isaiah, John understood that Isaiah was saying that there would be no more death in the new earth.

(NKJV) Revelation 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ... Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever ... 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. 21:1 Now [after satan is destroyed] I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea ... 21:4 And 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."

If Isaiah is teaching about the new heavens and the new earth (which we are told are created after the end of the millennium), it is not appropriate to take this passage and insert it into the beginning of the millennium. That would be an anachronism (the act of attributing a custom, event, or object to a period to which it does not belong). If we take Isaiah's statement to mean that there is death in the new earth, then there is a direct contradiction to what John tells us about the new earth, where he says that there is no death.

Progressive Revelation

Not every Bible writer was given a full and complete understanding of every last detail of God's plan and this earth's end. The concept of progressive revelation can be easily demonstrated if we begin in the book of Genesis in the account of the fall of man. God told Adam and Eve that the seed of the woman would defeat the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). When Eve had her first son, Cain, she exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord". It would seem that she thought this was the promised seed that would destroy the serpent. There is no indication that God showed her that it would be another 7000 years before the Kingdom would be restored to its Edenic state. God gave her the promise that the Kingdom would be restored, but there is no indication that He gave any time for the restoration to occur. What would it have done to Adam and Eve's hopes if God had told them it would be another 7000 years before the restoration?

Here's another example: Daniel, in studying the book of Jeremiah, was trying to discover how long it would be until the Messiah came. Nowhere in the book of Jeremiah did it say how long it would be. In Daniel chapter 9, Gabriel comes to give him additional understanding that Jeremiah did not have and therefore did not reveal. God continually unfolded His plan throughout the Bible. The prophets, the disciples, and the rest of us, are on a "need to know" basis. As they, or we, need to know, God gives us additional light.

Clearly the disciples did not understand the timing. If the disciples had understood that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were teaching (or implying) a millennium before the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, they would never have asked Yeshua, "Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It was the same with John the Baptist asking Yeshua if He was the Coming One or if John should look for another. John would not have asked such a question if Yeshua was setting up the kingdom that they all expected the Messiah would do, based on their understanding of the prophecies.

It seems apparent that none of the Old Testament prophets or the disciples recognized two comings, with 2,000 years between them, let alone another 1,000-year period after the Second Coming before the new heavens and the new earth. This was not revealed until Yeshua gave John the final revelation,

and it does not appear that John understood that it would be another 2,000 years before the Second Coming.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

God began revealing His plan through the prophets beginning at Genesis, and built on that foundation, culminating with the book of Revelation. When we demand that all of the Bible writers had a complete understanding of not only the plan of salvation, but the timing involved, we are making a grave mistake.

It is now up to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come, to put all of what the prophets have written together to come to a full understanding of God's plan. John, in the book of Revelation, was given greater light on the time of the end, light that no other prophet had, and this is why he was given greater details on the millennium.

How to Fully Understand Isaiah 65

To fully understand Isaiah 65, it is important to study it both in context, and as based on the literary style (compare and contrast) used by the author. In chapter 65, Isaiah is repeatedly comparing and contrasting two things: 1) life in the new heavens and the new earth, and 2) life the former earth.

God, through Isaiah, is presenting a comparison of the present age and the age that is to come after the new heavens and the new earth are created in the original Edenic state. In essence, God is holding out a choice for people to make: do they want the blessings that come with eternity, or do they want the pleasure of sin for a season and its reward (death)?

This compare-and-contrast style of writing is found in every passage of this text, and always in the same order of blessing vs. curse, future vs. past. This pattern begins in earlier verses, leading up to the continuing pattern of contrast in the misunderstood verse 20, and it continues beyond. There is nothing to suggest that verse 20 is exempt from the compare and contrast pattern. Nor is there anything to suggest that verse 20 is intended to teach a new theology of death and sin in the new heavens and new earth. In a long series of compare and contrast, future and past, blessings and curses, on what basis do we isolate one item in this series and place the curse (death) on the same side of the equation as we place the blessing (eternal life)?

Let's re-read the Isaiah 65 passage, inserting where the new heavens and the earth are in contrast to the former earth:

(NKJV) Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former [earth] shall not be remember]ed or come to mind.

65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people [in the new earth]; The voice of weeping [as in the former earth] shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying [as in the former earth].

65:20 "No more [in the new earth] shall an infant from there live but a few days [as in the former earth], Nor [in the new earth] an old man who has not fulfilled his days [as in the former earth]; For the child shall die one hundred years old [in the former earth], But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed [as in the former earth].

65:21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit [in the new earth].

65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat [as in the former earth]; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands [in the new earth].

65:23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble [as in the former earth]; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them [in the new earth].

65:24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear [in the new earth].

65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food [in the new earth]. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain [as in the former earth] Says the LORD.

Here is the same idea in chart form:

Future (New Heavens and New Earth)	Verse #	Past (The Former Earth)
Eat/drink/rejoice	13	Hunger/thirst/be ashamed
Sing for joy	14	Cry for sorrow
New creation of heavens and earth	17	Former which shall not be remembered
Rejoicing/joy	19	Weeping/crying
(Eternal Life) Infants will live beyond a few days, old men will fulfill their days	20	(Death) A child shall die at 100, sinners who die at 100 will be cursed
We build houses and we inhabit them	21-22	One builds and another inhabits
We plant vineyards and we eat from them	21-22	One plants and another eats
No labor in vain, no children for trouble	23	(Implied) Opposite as in the former earth
Wolf and lamb feed together	25	(Opposite) Neither hurt nor destroy
Lion shall eat straw	25	(Opposite) Neither hurt nor destroy

Part of the Confusion

Some poorly chosen translations in verse 20 could be part of the reason why this verse gets misinterpreted. This is very likely an instance where the translators may not have gotten it right. As we know, many Hebrew words can be translated in different ways. We must rely on the context to determine how a word should be translated.

The same Hebrew word translated “for” before the clause about death appears frequently throughout this section of Isaiah 65. In various places it is translated as “but”, “because”, and “for”. Had the translators chosen to say “...but the child shall die...”, the contrast would have been obvious, and people wouldn’t mistakenly place the curse of death into Isaiah’s description of life in the new earth. In that same vein, the “but” in the second clause of the curse is actually the Hebrew for “and”.

A second translation that lends confusion in verse 20 is the word “child”(H5288). It is translated “servant” in many texts, as in Isaiah 37:6 (“...the servants of the king of Assyria...”). It is also translated as “lad”, “young man”, etc. Because we know that a child does not die at 100 (they are called men by then), we know that saying “child” here does not quite fit. The curse side of this verse could be seen as “a servant dies at 100 and a sinner dies at 100” in that there is really no difference on earth between the

lifespan of those who serve God and those who do not. That is part of the curse on this earth, but the blessing in the new earth is eternal life.

By making these completely justifiable translation substitutions, this verse could have more clearly shown the contrast: “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; But the servant shall die one hundred years old, and the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.”

What Isaiah Didn't Teach

In Chapter 65, we see four things that Isaiah is NOT teaching, that people mistakenly interpret that he was:

1. **Millennium on earth:** Isaiah plainly states that he is teaching the creation of the new earth, which is identified in Revelation 21:1 as happening after the millennium. By his writing, there is no indication that Isaiah saw 2,000 years between the first and second coming, if he saw a second coming at all. He very likely saw the first and second coming as one event. There is also no indication that he saw 1,000 years after the second coming. How, then, can we take his vision of the new earth, and place it into a millennium that he didn't seem to understand? When we interpret Isaiah as having a complete understanding of the plan of salvation, we will err in our conclusions.
2. **Second Chance:** By understanding the compare-and-contrast style that Isaiah adopted for this passage, it becomes evident that he is not teaching a second chance theology that exists nowhere else in Scripture. This second chance theology is nothing less than a widely accepted version of the rapture theory.
3. **Death in the New Earth:** There is no reasonable basis to believe that Isaiah is teaching that there will be death in the new earth. This would be in opposition to the clear teaching elsewhere in Scripture (Revelation 21:1, 4 “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying”). All Isaiah is doing here is contrasting to show that there is eternal life in the new heavens and earth, and death in the former (current) earth.
4. **Sinners in the New Earth:** There is no reasonable basis to believe that Isaiah is teaching that there will be sinners in the new earth, which is in opposition to the many clear teachings in Revelation:

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:8 But 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.

Rev 21:27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Rev 22:15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Conclusion

While many interpret Isaiah 65:20 as teaching that there will be life and death on earth during the millennium, it would seem that such an interpretation would:

- Require that we accept a contradiction in Scripture between Isaiah and Revelation.
- Require that we isolate one verse from the established pattern of comparing and contrasting the new heavens and earth from the present earth.
- Require that we place the curse of death on the same side of the equation as the blessing of eternal life, in conflict with the rest of Scripture.
- Require that we accept a second chance doctrine that is not supported anywhere in Scripture.
- Require that we insert events into the millennium that clearly do not belong there, if we believe the sole Bible writer to whom Yeshua, after His ascension, revealed the millennium.

Therefore, it is our conclusion that Isaiah 65:20 is not talking about events during the millennium, but rather events when the new heavens and new earth are created after the millennium is over. This begs the question, "What does happen during the millennium?" For the answer to this question, see the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHLEWAlnDYE>

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