

## Lesson 12

### Isaiah 66:1-24

Nothing much changes! People in Isaiah's day disbelieved Yahweh's promises of what he was about to do — the New Heaven and New Earth — and mocked those who did believe (v. 3b). That was in, say, 700 sc. In the first century AD Peter warned of scoffers who dismissed the truth of the Lord's Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:3-4), and now, over two thousand years on? Sadly there are thousands who, week by week, recite the faith that 'He will come again in glory', and yet the truth of what they profess has never dawned on them. But even more sadly, there are those for whom the supernatural elements of our Lord coming as they saw him go (Acts 1:9), and of our being caught up to meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), are stumbling blocks, making them current doubters of biblical eschatology. To them (it would seem) a coming kingdom is an acceptable thought but a coming King a problem. Yet, as Isaiah taught (and the New Testament affirms), the coming kingdom too is totally supernatural. Isaiah asked if a world could be born in a day (v. 8); John saw the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:3), illuminated not by explicable light but by the glory of God and the Lamb (Rev. 21:23). The kingdom is as foreign to 'modern' modes of thought — and to all anti-supernatural notions — as the reality of the Son of man coming in the clouds. Let us be insistent on recovering, teaching, and rejoicing in the great truth of the Lord's return, specially with reference to its awesome reality (2 Pet. 3:10), its triumph, its present moral (2 Pet. 3:11) and churchly (2 Pet. 3:14) implications, and the Christ-centred eternity to which it ushers us (1 Thess. 4:17). But behind this contrast between those who accept and those who reject biblical eschatology lies a fundamental difference: there are those who 'tremble' at the Lord's Word (vv. 2, 5) and those who do not hear when the Lord speaks (v. 4). To face up to this distinction, firmly to choose to live under the authority of the Bible, and to seek to hear, every day, what the Lord our God will say to us (Isaiah 50:4) is as central a response to Isaiah's sixty-six chapters as he would have wished!

## Questions Isaiah 65:17 – 66:24

Isaiah 65:17-25 speaks of 'New Heavens and New Earth.' Compare these passages with Revelation 21 and 22. What do these passages reveal about the future? What are the specific ways that Isaiah describes this coming world that go far beyond anything we have seen since sin entered the world.

What does Isaiah 66:1-2 teach you about the Kingdom of God? In 66:3-6, why is God as angry with the externally religious as with those who follow pagan gods? What do these verses show about the attitude of the 'externally religious' to those who 'tremble at his word'? What is God's response? What does it mean to 'tremble at his word?'

Isaiah ends with a vision of two contrasting eternal destinies. a) The first destiny is of a people from every nation worshiping God in his new creation (Isaiah 66:19-23). How will this be accomplished?  
b) The second destiny is eternal destruction (Isaiah 66:15-18, 24). What is Isaiah seeking to accomplish in the readers by ending with these two destinies?

How does Isaiah 66:18-21 ultimately fulfill the Covenant Promise to Abraham? (See Genesis 12:1-3)  
What do these verses in Isaiah reveal about the ultimate purposes of God's grace in the gospel?

As you examine your own life as we have studied Isaiah, are you confident as to which group you are in? Why or why not? How has the book of Isaiah helped you grow in your understanding of true, authentic saving faith?