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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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God Unveils His New Universe

Isaiah 65:17-25

This morning, we are going to look at one of the most provocative and powerful sections of Isaiah's prophecy... the vision he had of the future universe as recreated in Christ. God calls it the NEW HEAVENS and NEW EARTH... but the aspects of it here seem like it might be discussing the final stage before the eternal state... a final stage often called the MILLENNIUM.

Either way, this passage should fill us with a deep longing and expectation for the future...

It is essential to the life of faith to LONG FOR the future as it is promised in the Word of God... to LOOK FORWARD to what God has said he will do:

Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Hebrews 11:10 Abraham was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

2 Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

This "looking forward" can only be done by faith, for the eternal city and the new universe that are coming do not yet exist... they are described for us in scripture... and only by the REVELATION of scripture by the Holy Spirit can we see the invisible God and the invisible world that is coming... faith is the eyesight of the soul, and God the revealer of what is unseen

God the INVISIBLE... God the UNSEEN... dwells in a spiritual realm that surrounds us, but we cannot reach it

And we cannot KNOW anything about this mysterious, hidden God except that he REVEAL himself to us

I. Dreams of a Perfect World

A. Throughout Recorded History... Mankind Has Imagined a Perfect World

1. Since the Fall of Adam into sin, the world has been cursed... God said to Adam “Cursed is the ground because of you... it will produce thorns and thistles for you... and you will sink back into the dust”
 - a. So... both the earth itself and work were cursed and the struggle for survival was on
 - b. Life on earth became an instant grief to the human race

Ecclesiastes 1:2-4 Vanity of vanities ... vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ³ What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

- c. Creation itself has been groaning under the weight of this curse
- d. Death has been rampant and constantly threatened, both for man and beast

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. ²⁰ All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.

2. Human society was corrupted to the core by sin
 - a. Adam and Eve hid from each other when they sinned... their eyes were opened and they made fig leaves to cover their shame
 - b. Soon after, Cain killed his brother Abel
 - c. By the time of Noah, the contagion of sin had spread to epic levels... the thoughts of the human race were only evil all the time
 - d. Noah and his sons brought the contagion on the ark with them... and it resumed spreading after the earth cleansing flood
3. The link between human sin and nature’s groaning is clearest in the Flood; all air-breathing animals that were not on the Ark were swept away in a Flood designed to punished the human race... man sinned and animals died
4. This LAMENTING, GROANING, PAIN-FILLED, seemingly MEANINGLESS existence seems so wrong, down to the very core of our beings

5. We have the sense of a perfect world imprinted on our souls... and mankind has always yearned for it and imagined it
6. Authors and poets, cult leaders and statesmen, conquerors and songwriters, scientists and architects have all YEARNED for a paradise, a UTOPIA, that could be ushered in, a golden age free from the curse
 - a. Plato's *Republic* was written around 370 BC, one of the oldest efforts in human literature to describe a perfect society
 - b. About 150 years before Christ, the Greek merchant Iambulus wrote a book called *Islands of the Sun*, describing a perfect society on some distant island in the eastern sea
 - c. In the year 421 after Christ, a Chinese writer named Tao Yuanming wrote a fable called *The Peach Blossom Spring* in which a fisherman accidentally sailed up a river into a forest made up entirely of blossoming peach trees; the river led to a grotto, with a narrow passageway through which he was able to squeeze; there he found a village with animals and people of all ages; the villagers were surprised to see him, but they were friendly... it was an ideal society cut off from the outside world; he left and marked his path with signs so he could find his way back, but he never could find it again
 - d. In 1516, Sir Thomas More coined the term *Utopia* by writing a book with that name; the word literally means NOPLACE; it describes an island in the recently discovered New World with a perfect society
 - e. Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels are among the more famous efforts...
 - f. Many modern science fiction novels follow people like H.G. Wells in seeking to describe other planets with ideal societies...
 - g. This quest goes on and on... it is deeply rooted in the heart of humanity

Ecclesiastes 3:11 God has set eternity in the hearts of men

So God has also set paradise in our hearts as well...

B. HOWEVER: No Visions are Better than the Bible's!

1. God alone has the imagination and mental power to create a perfect world in terms we understand
2. God alone can work out all the details in a way most glorifying to him and most satisfying to us

3. The Bible actually DOES describe an ideal world in which people live in harmony with nature and with each other
4. Many passages in this book of Isaiah describe it; so also does the Book of Revelation
5. As we come to Isaiah 65:17-25, we come to an UNVEILING of God's future perfect world... BEHOLD, says God... Me, and my perfect world
6. The question all Christians struggle with are the DETAILS, the particulars...

C. The Power of Predictive Prophecy

1. Again and again, we've seen the utterly unique power that the God of the Bible has to predict the future...

***Isaiah 46:9-10 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.
¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.***

2. Christianity is the only religion in the world with this power... no other religion even claims to be able to make real predictions about the nations and history ahead of time
3. This is the consummation of all of history... the destination to which all of history is moving

D. Questions of the Millennium!

1. Isaiah 65 will bring us to ask some of the most exciting and debated questions there are about Christian eschatology... teaching about the end of the world
2. Age-old debates about the possibility of a thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth after his Second Coming
3. The possibility of a greatly enhanced life on earth—a life in which the effects of sin and death are greatly decreased though not totally removed
4. These questions will come up, not naturally from Isaiah 65, but from the Bible as a whole, with Isaiah 65:17-25 as a key reference
5. If there will be a Millennium, and if life in that Millennial Kingdom is described anywhere in the Bible, almost certainly it is described here in this text
6. Either way, Isaiah 65:17-25 describes an Earth so richly blessed by the power of God that we should eagerly desire it to come...one way or another, we will get these blessing in Christ! Either this text describes the ETERNAL STATE

in the New Heavens and New Earth, or it describes the Millennial Kingdom...
or BOTH

E. My Own Uncertainty

1. No topic in theology has so eluded my analysis as this one!
2. I stand before you today like a theological ping-pong ball; I go back and forth and back and forth on this topic!
3. This is BAD!

Dr. Howard Hendricks: "A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pews."

In other words, if the pastor doesn't fully understand what he's preaching on, how much less will the people listening to him!

4. The best I can do for you this morning is show you as clearly as possible the options for understanding the future world as the Lord has revealed it in the Bible

First... context in Isaiah 65:

II. Isaiah 65: God Says "Behold Me... and My New Universe!"

A. Key Word: Behold!

One word that has been used by scripture again and again for powerful moments of revelations is BEHOLD... as we discussed last time

In Isaiah 65, the word "Behold" is used NINE TIMES... only the KJV translates them all, but the ESV gets most of them

These nine times that God says "Behold", it's as though he is saying to the human race – WATCH WHAT WONDERS I am about to unveil before your eyes... you will see amazing things, things you have not known, that never would have entered your mind except that I revealed them to you... WATCH AND BE AMAZED, look on with wonder at what I will display to you... hidden things you have never seen before!

B. "Behold, Me!": God's Humble Self-Revelation to the Gentiles (vs. 1)

[Twice] Isaiah 65:1 I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

C. "Behold, My Judgments" on Wicked Rebels (vs. 2-7)

Isaiah 65:6 Behold, it is written before me: "I will not keep silent, but I will repay

D. “Behold, My Servants Singing... While the Wicked Are Shamed” (vs. 8-16)

[Four times] Isaiah 65:13-14 Therefore 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; behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit.

E. NOW: Behold My New Universe (vs. 17-25):

III. Walking Through the Text, Weighing Its Promises

A. What is described is an IDYLLIC EXPERIENCE of rich blessing never yet seen on our sin-cursed planet

Isaiah 65:17-25 "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 BEHOLD, 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.

1. Key points:

- a. Vs. 17: God declares he will create a “new heavens and a new earth” so radically different it will drive out all thoughts of the old world

^{ESV} Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Note that it begins “FOR BEHOLD...”

The word “for” follows from the previous verse, the concept of God’s chosen people being free from the curse of his judgments:

Isaiah 65:16 *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.*

Now... Isaiah 65 immediately calls these famous verses to mind:

Revelation 21:1-4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

i) BUT... the "New Heavens and New Earth" in Revelation 21 is what most people call the eternal state or simply "heaven"...

ii) Clearly death and all misery are eternally gone forever

iii) BACK to Isaiah 65:

b. Verse 18: it will be a place of eternal joy, where people will have cause to rejoice FOREVER; the naming of the city of Jerusalem and her people as a source of eternal joy will stir passions among the Jews

Isaiah 65:18 *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.*

c. Vs. 19: God declares he will rejoice over Jerusalem eternally and the sounds of WEEPING and MOURNING will never be heard in it again

d. Vs. 20: WAIT... WHAT???

Isaiah 65:20 *"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.*

i) There are INFANTS?? And people AGING... and DYING???? And the possibility of some dying younger than they should and being considered ACCURSED?? I thought death was gone forever... and all curses! What about this:

Revelation 22:3 *No longer will there be any curse.*

And this:

Mark 12:25 *When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.*

Back to Isaiah 65:21

- ii) The seeming existence of BIRTH and DEATH in verse 20 are the very things that make some people think this MUST BE the millennium
 - iii) A greatly improved existence, but not quite heaven!
 - iv) BUT verse 17 says “I will create a NEW HEAVEN and a NEW EARTH”
 - v) Very difficult to put verses 17 and 20 together!
- e. Vs. 21-22: rich building of homes that will not be seized by enemies; planting of vineyards that will bear a rich harvest

Isaiah 65:21-23 *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.*

- i) The blessing of the earth... rich harvests, either the curse completely removed or at least greatly reduced
- f. Vs. 22: unusually long life... like the redwoods I mentioned in Isaiah 61’s sermon... “as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people”... and yet, trees die
- g. The overall language is of the blessings of the Old Covenant richly poured out

Isaiah 65:23 *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.*

- h. Vs. 24 promises amazing access and intimacy with God:

Isaiah 65:24 *Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*

- i. Vs. 25: a repeat of earlier language on the amazing, supernatural peace that will be on the earth:

Isaiah 65:25 *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.*

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

This seems to be talking about an IDYLLIC relationship with the animal kingdom... no more of an ADVERSARIAL relationship; wolves will stop acting as predators against lambs; leopards the same toward goats; calves will stand side by side with lions with no fear; the CARNIVOROUS, destructive nature of the animal kingdom will be changed

Alfred Lord Tennyson: "nature red in tooth and claw"... the seemingly mindless ripping and shredding of animal flesh by other animals... all of that it seems is DONE FOREVER

Even the SERPENT (cobra and viper) is transformed from enemy to friend; the infant has nothing to fear

Universal knowledge of the Lord.... AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA

To sum up, it seems that this section of scripture speaks of a stunning level of blessing on earth so great that it has never been seen in the history of the world... It comes under the title of a NEW HEAVENS and NEW EARTH that God will create; it is centered in Jerusalem, and it involves such amazing joy that the sounds of mourning will not be heard at all... it involves rich agricultural blessings – sowing and reaping, with no crop failure at all; building houses and other structures, and no destruction at all... work is lavishly blessed and successful. There seem to be no enemies, no danger, no sorrow... BUT [IT SEEMS] THERE ARE BIRTH AND DEATH... it seems there are infants born there, and people live unnaturally long lives...

The combination of the term NEW HEAVENS and NEW EARTH with the presence of birth and death is difficult for every single Christian interpreter of this passage

- B. Basically, there are one of two main evangelical approaches to this: 1) this is describing the millennial reign of Christ on earth, established after the Second Coming but before the final state; 2) this is rich, Old Testament language for the blessings of the New Covenant under Christ, culminating in the eternal state... and the verses don't actually say there will be birth and death, but it is just using well-known Old Testament language for rich blessing in Christ.

C. A word about Premillennialism and Evangelicalism

1. Evangelicals believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God
2. 20th century: the Battle for the Bible... fought MODERNISM or anti-supernaturalism
3. Prophecy became a major litmus test for being evangelical
4. Many believed that if you did not accept a LITERAL thousand year reign of Christ on earth, you were a theological LIBERAL...
5. That is not true... of course many theological liberals do not believe in the literal thousand years reign, like they don't believe in a literal Virgin Birth or a literal bodily resurrection of Christ
6. BUT it is possible to believe that every word in the Bible is inspired and inerrant, and that Christ truly was born of a Virgin, truly did miracles, truly died on the cross, truly rose bodily from the dead, and truly will physically return again at the end of the age... and NOT believe in a millennial reign of Christ on earth
7. It has to do with how difficult Isaiah and Revelation are to interpret! So many difficult images and words and visions... SO HARD!!!!

IV. Could This Be the Millennium?

A. What Is the "Millennium?"

1. The word literally means "one thousand years"... the key text is Revelation 20:1-6, which mentions a thousand year period (perhaps after the Second Coming of Christ) in which the devil is bound and some (if not all) of the saints are resurrected and ruling with Christ; and after the thousand years, the devil is set free
2. The idea of a period of rich blessing in the Millennium is not openly taught in Revelation 20, but people usually reach for Old Testament prophecies (like in Isaiah and Zechariah) to describe such a time of blessing... a time of rich blessing, BUT NOT YET FULLY HEAVEN... there is still death, still unbelief, still the threat of a rebellion at the end of the thousand years

B. Looking Quickly at Revelation 20

1. Understanding the sequence of chapters in Revelation
 - a. Revelation 19: the Second Coming of Christ... the Beast (the Antichrist) assembles a huge army to destroy God's people, and Christ Himself returns from heaven to destroy the Beast and send him to the Lake of Fire;

Christ returns from heaven with the armies of heaven and they slaughter the Beast and his followers in one massive battle

- b. Revelation 20... the Thousand Years...: Satan is bound so he cannot deceive the nations; martyrs slain by the Beast are raised from the dead and sit on thrones and reign with Christ for a thousand years; at the end of the thousand years, Satan is released from his prison and he once again goes forth on the earth and deceives people; he gathers them for one final battle; the evil army of rebels is massive and marches against the city of God's people, but God destroys them with fire from heaven; then at last the devil is cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever; after that comes the GREAT WHITE THRONE judgment of all human beings that have ever lived... everyone is judged by the books of God... everyone whose name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life is thrown in the Lake of Fire
 - c. Revelation 21-22: the New Heavens and New Earth... as quoted earlier, where there is no longer DEATH or mourning or crying or pain... the eternal state
 - d. So... the SEQUENCE of the chapters is important for millennial interpretation: wrath on the earth, the Second Coming of Christ, the chaining of the devil for a thousand years; the release of the devil for a final battle, then the New Heaven and New Earth and eternal state with NO DEATH
2. Understanding progressive parallelism
- a. The idea that the Book of Revelation is teaching the same thing over and over again... the stretch of time between the First and Second Comings of Christ
 - b. So the seven seals and the seven trumpets and the seven bowls in Revelation 6-16 covers that same period in different ways... a time of great suffering for the church as God pours out judgments on the earth for their treatment of his people
 - c. Generally: Revelation 1-11 unfolds the suffering of the church in the world; Revelation 12-20 gives the deeper spiritual background of this struggle... especially revealing SATAN'S activity in all the earthly persecution of the church
 - d. Thus Revelation 20 depicts the restriction of Satan during this phase and his final doom
3. Unfolding Revelation 20 itself:

4. This is the KEY PASSAGE on the millennium... the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth is taught openly nowhere else in scripture

Revelation 20:1-10 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. ⁴ ¶ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. ⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog-- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

5. Walking through it:

- a. It begins with an angel who descends from heaven with a key and a chain

Revelation 20:1 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.*

NOTE: the "abyss" means a deep pit, in the Bible, a holding place for demons before their final condemnation in the Lake of Fire

- b. The angel seizes the dragon (Satan) and binds him with the great chain

Revelation 20:2-3 *He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*

- c. This binding of Satan has a clear purpose: to restrict his freedom on earth and prevent him from deceiving the nations

- d. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is set free again
- e. Next is described the resurrected and ruling saints:

Revelation 20:4-6 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

- f. The binding of Satan and the resurrection of the saints are the KEY INTERPRETIVE issues of this passage
- g. The saints said to be raised here are designated as those who were beheaded for their testimony of Jesus and the Word of God during the reign of the beast and his image... thus it seems to be a LIMITED resurrection of only some of the saints
- h. There is a clear blessing spoken on those who are resurrected at that point... but no such blessing spoken on those resurrected later
- i. There is NO DESCRIPTION of life in the millennium; all such questions are left to other passages of scripture... including Isaiah 65 and other OT prophecies
- j. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is set free and wreaks havoc once more:

Revelation 20:7-9 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog-- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

- k. This seems to be a reenactment of the battle Jesus fought at the time of his Second Coming, described in Revelation 19
- l. This final rebellion is crushed by fire coming down from heaven like Sodom and Gomorrah
- m. Then Satan is finally corralled and thrown in the Lake of Fire

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

n. What follows at last is the Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

6. This is the only text in the Bible that teaches the Millennium openly and directly

C. Arguments for Premillennialism

1. The sequence of the chapters Revelation 19-20-21 seems to teach the Second Coming of Christ FOLLOWED BY the thousand year reign FOLLOWED BY the New Heavens and New Earth
2. The binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 seems to imply that Satan has NO FREEDOM TO ROAM the earth at all, and no ability to deceive the nations AT ALL; if this refers to this present church age, that does not line up with the present activity of Satan in ruling this world and attacking the saints
3. The millennium seems the best way to explain the very passage we're looking at today—Isaiah 65, in which there is a better experience on earth but still birth and death
4. AND the millennium also fits into a general sense of the UNFOLDING of sin in progressively better, more gracious scenarios, showing how SIN IS SO DIFFICULT TO ERADICATE

Genesis 2:9 the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:5 you will be like God, knowing good and evil

Genesis 3:6 the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom

Education in EVIL... step by step...

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more

God DRAWS OUT sin like poison so we see how evil it is!!

- a. After the Garden: a great increase of evil, resulting in the flood, but also the rescue of righteous Noah
- b. After the Flood: a great increase of evil, resulting in the Tower of Babel and the confusing and scattering of the peoples... then the call of Abraham
- c. After the Call of Abraham, the Law of Moses, the Old Covenant... the whole Jewish history resulted in a great display of evil and the exile to Babylon
- d. After Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the church age... but sin is STILL PRESENT, still STUBBORN, still so very hard to eradicate...

Romans 7:15 what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

- e. After the Second Coming of Christ, during the Millennial reign... no Satan, active reign of Christ on earth... but still sin is present, and results in a final rebellion
- f. STEP BY STEP... we have learned how stubborn sin is to deal with

D. Arguments for Amillennialism

- 1. Amillennialists do not believe there is NO THOUSAND YEAR period of the binding of Satan and the life of the martyrs...
 - a. The number 1000 is SYMBOLIC... 10 times 10 times 10... a long period of time
 - b. The binding of Satan is specific: so that he should not deceive the nations and so that he should not gather them in a concerted attack on the church
 - c. Satan's binding happened at the FIRST coming of Christ specifically with regard to the ELECT:

When Jesus' enemies said he drove out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus said this:

Matthew 12:25-26 "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?"

Matthew 12:28 if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:29 how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

In other words, the Kingdom of God advances BY POWER, by the BINDING UP of Satan so that his former slaves can be plundered from him

2. Simplest explanation of everything...
 - a. A time of increasing persecution of the church in the world, culminating in...
 - b. The reign of the antichrist as a powerful world figure who blasphemes and who martyrs tons of Christians, culminating in...
 - c. The Second Coming of Christ in which he defeats ALL of his enemies, culminating in Judgement Day, finally culminating in...
 - d. The New Heavens and New Earth
3. The progressive parallelism approach to Revelation seems the best
 - a. Revelation 20 does seem to go BACK OVER the same ground again, especially when Satan attracts a huge number of people to attack the people of God and are destroyed by heaven's power
 - b. The "resurrection of the martyrs" in Revelation 20 seems best described by comparing Revelation 6:9, and 20:4

Revelation 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

Revelation 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

In both places the same phrase is used to describe those persecuted for Christ in this present world... persecuted by Satan;

The "coming to life" may not be a resurrection at all, but like the martyrs in Revelation 6, they were ALIVE spiritually through faith in Christ and were ruling with Christ in heaven

4. Premillennialists have a hard time explaining why the millennium is not taught at all in the works of Paul or in the rest of the New Testament

Sam Storms: If you are a premillennialist, whether dispensational or not, there are several things with which you must reckon:

- You must necessarily believe that physical death will continue to exist beyond the time of Christ's second coming.
- You must necessarily believe that the natural creation will continue, beyond the time of Christ's second coming, to be subjected to the curse imposed by the Fall of man.
- You must necessarily believe that the New Heavens and New Earth will not be introduced until 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.
- You must necessarily believe that unbelieving men and women will still have the opportunity to come to saving faith in Christ for at least 1,000 years after his return in kingly glory.
- You must necessarily believe that unbelievers will not be finally resurrected until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.
- You must necessarily believe that unbelievers will not be finally judged and cast into eternal punishment until at least 1,000 years subsequent to the return of Christ.

So what's wrong with believing these things, asks the premillennialist? The NT explicitly DENIES these things...

Especially the resurrection happens at the Second Coming of Christ; so also the defeat of DEATH and all Christ's enemies:

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left

will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

The resurrection of ALL the saints happens at the Second Coming of Christ! Not a partial resurrection of some saints

And how do you have some in resurrection bodies who then procreate?

Matthew 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

These are serious problems for the premillennial position.

E. My Quick Evaluation

1. So... will there be a thousand year reign of Christ on earth? MAYBE, maybe not
2. Some days I think yes, some days I think no
3. The problem just has to do with proper interpretation of Isaiah 65 and Revelation 20
4. It actually doesn't change the way I live my life

V. Applications

A. What Benefit Comes from Pondering the Millennium?

1. Compared to the New Heaven and New Earth, not much
2. Most premillennials seem to spend a lot more time thinking about the millennium than they do the New Earth
3. All of the richest blessings of the millennium will be EVEN BETTER in the New Earth, with NO DEATH and no UNBELIEVERS
4. Stick with Peter's applications:

2 Peter 3:10-13 the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ ¶ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

- a. LOOK FORWARD to the future that we are sure of... the Second Coming of Christ and the New Heaven and New Earth
- b. Think about it daily... set your hearts upon it
 - i) Think about the beauty of the coming world
 - ii) Read Isaiah 65 and imagine a day in which these kinds of blessings will come... the curse removed from the earth and from our labors on it
- c. Concerning THIS AGE: Realize that everything around you will be destroyed by fire
- d. So...Live for eternity
- e. Be ready for your own death and for the deaths of loved ones, neighbors, coworkers, fellow citizens, fellow humans
- f. BE HOLY... don't get sucked into the Babylon lifestyle
- g. SPEED THE DAY OF GOD... by evangelism and missions

B. A Word to Unbelievers: FLEE TO CHRIST!!!