

## **WHY YOU MUST PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD**

*65 I have revealed myself to those who did not ask [for me]; I allowed myself to be found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call upon my name, I said, Here I am! Here I am! <sup>2</sup>All day long I have held out my hands to a rebellious people, [a people] who walk in a way that is not good, following their own thoughts. <sup>3</sup>A people who provoke me to my face continually, offering [pagan] sacrifices in gardens and burning incense upon [altars] of bricks. <sup>4</sup>[A people] who sit among the graves and spend the night in caves, who eat the meat of pigs, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots. <sup>5</sup>[They are a people] who say, Stay away, do not come near me, for I am holier than you! These [people] are like smoke in my nostrils, produced by a fire that burns all day long. <sup>6</sup>See, [their conduct] has been recorded in my presence; [therefore,] I will not remain silent, but will pay them what is just; indeed, I will [deliver their] recompense into their bosom—<sup>7</sup>[both for] your own iniquities as well as for the iniquities of your fathers, declares Jehovah—[into the bosom of those] who have burned incense on the mountains and scorned me on the hills. Therefore I will first measure their recompense into their bosom.*

*<sup>8</sup>This is what Jehovah says, As when juice is [still] found in a cluster [of grapes], and men say, Do not destroy it, for there is [still some] good in it, so will I do for the sake of my servants, so that I will not destroy them all. <sup>9</sup>I will bring forth an offspring from Jacob, and from Judah [I will bring forth] one who shall inherit my mountains. Indeed, my chosen one shall inherit it and my servants shall dwell there. <sup>10</sup>Sharon will become a pasture for flocks and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, [this will be] for my people who seek me.*

*<sup>11</sup>But as for you who forsake Jehovah, you who forget my holy mountain, you who prepare a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, <sup>12</sup>I will destine you for the sword and you shall all succumb to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, and when I spoke, you did not listen. On the contrary, you did what was evil in my sight, and chose those things in which I take no delight. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, this is what the Lord Jehovah says, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. <sup>14</sup>My servants will sing with a joyful heart, but you will cry out with a sorrowful heart and will wail with a broken spirit. <sup>15</sup>You will leave your name to my chosen ones [to be used] for [the pronouncing of] a curse, and the Lord Jehovah will put you to death; then he will bestow upon his servants another name. <sup>16</sup>Consequently, whoever pronounces a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; and whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth—because the past troubles will be forgotten; indeed, they will be hidden from my eyes.*

*<sup>17</sup>See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. <sup>18</sup>Instead, be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create; for I will create Jerusalem [to be] a [place of] rejoicing and her people to experience joy. <sup>19</sup>I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. No longer shall there be heard in [Jerusalem] the sound of weeping and the sound of crying. <sup>20</sup>No longer will there be in it an infant who lives for [only a few] days, nor an old man who has not lived out the full number of his days; for the man who dies in his youth will be one hundred years old, and the man who fails to reach the age of one hundred will be*

*[considered] accursed. <sup>21</sup>They will build houses, and inhabit them; they will plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. <sup>22</sup>They will not build [houses] only to have others inhabit them; they will not plant [vineyards] only to have others eat [the fruit of them]; for my people will live as long as a tree, and my chosen ones will enjoy the fruit of their labors for a long time. <sup>23</sup>They will not labor in vain, nor bear [children destined to suffer] calamity; for [these children] are the offspring of those who are blessed by Jehovah, they and their descendants with them [shall experience his blessing]. <sup>24</sup>Before they call, I will answer; and while they are [still] speaking, I will respond. <sup>25</sup>The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; but dust shall be the serpent's food. They will neither hurt nor devour [one another] on all my holy mountain, declares Jehovah. (Isa. 65:1-25)*

## **Introduction**

What would you do if you knew that you had only one day left to live? That question was once posed to 625 German students. A number of them responded by saying that they would spend their last 24 hours drinking, taking drugs, and chasing girls. (*Our Daily Bread* 4/19/93) That is not a good way to spend your last day before being ushered into the presence of your God and Judge.

Through the Old Testament prophet Amos, the LORD gives the exhortation, "Prepare to meet your God." This same message can be understood to be the theme of Isaiah 65. As we study Isaiah 65, let us consider Three Reasons Why We Must Prepare to Meet Our God.

### **I. We Must Prepare to Meet Our God, ...Because We will have an Inevitable Encounter with Him (Isa. 65:1-7)**

Verse 1 is describing an unexpected, but inevitable, encounter with God: *"I have revealed myself to those who did not ask [for me]; I allowed myself to be found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call upon my name, I said, Here I am! Here I am!"* The Lord has granted an audience to a people who did not request an audience with Him. The LORD suddenly revealed Himself to a people who were not looking for Him. The LORD presented Himself to a people who were not calling for Him.

God suddenly and inescapably reveals Himself to a thoroughly unresponsive people, as He indicates in verses 1b-2. *"All day long I have held out my hands [as a loving father] to a rebellious people."* Here are a people who *"walk in a way that is not good, following their own thoughts"*—they will not listen to the Word of God, they stubbornly walk in the way that is appealing to them and appears to them to be wise and profitable. The has suddenly and unexpectantly revealed Himself to *"a people who provoke [him] to [his] face continually, offering [pagan] sacrifices in gardens and burning incense upon [altars] of bricks. <sup>4</sup>[A people] who sit among the graves and spend the night in caves, who eat the meat of pigs, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots"* (vs. 3-4.) The LORD has continuously demonstrated

lovingkindness, patience, and a desire for these people; but they constantly provoke Him with their idolatry. The LORD goes on to say that He has now revealed Himself to a people that were characterized by an incredible self-righteousness: *"[They are a people] who say, 'Stay away, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!'"* These people distanced themselves and stood aloof from others because they considered themselves to be more holy than their neighbors.

How does God describe such people? He declares, *"These [people] are like smoke in my nostrils, produced by a fire that burns all day long"* (vs. 5b;) they are a great source of grief and irritation to Him on a continual, day-by-day basis. According to verses 6-7, what will God do? First, we are informed, *"See, their conduct has been recorded in my presence."* That is to say, their conduct is inscribed in writing before the LORD, it is not dismissed or forgotten, it has been recorded as a testimony against them. Then the LORD informs us, *"I will not remain silent."* The LORD will not remain passive forever and let the sinful, insolent conduct of the people pass by without comment and without judgment. On the contrary, He *"will pay them what is just; indeed, I will deliver their recompense into their bosom—<sup>7</sup>both for your own iniquities as well as for the iniquities of your fathers, declares Jehovah."* The sins of one generation have been passed on to the next; whereas formerly the LORD abstained from bringing about a totally devastating act of judgment upon the nation, giving the people warning and time to repent, He will now abstain no longer. *"Therefore I will first measure their recompense into their bosom."* Therefore, because there has been persistence in sin instead of repentance, now, as a matter of first priority, the LORD will repay judgment into the very bosom of these people.

The Scriptures assure us that each one of us shall finally and inevitably stand before God when He reveals Himself to us face to face—we each will have the kind of inevitable encounter with the LORD God as did the Old Testament people of Israel described in Isaiah 65—note Revelation 1:7, *"Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him."* On that great day when we stand before the LORD our God nothing shall be hidden, everything shall be exposed to the light of His truth, as the writer to the Hebrews declares, *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"* (Heb. 4:13.) On that great day every false confidence will perish before the awesome reality of God's presence. The false confidence that God entertains an attitude of indifference and tolerance with regard to the issues of morality shall perish, note Psalm 50:16-21,

*... to the wicked, God says ... <sup>17</sup>You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you. <sup>18</sup>When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers. <sup>19</sup>You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. <sup>20</sup>You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. <sup>21</sup>These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face. (Psl. 50:16-21)*

The false confidence that the passage of millenniums refutes the teaching that there shall be a final day of judgment shall perish, note 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-10,

*First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ... <sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, beloved: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day ... <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not negligent in keeping his promise ... He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But 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. (2 Pet. 3:3-4, 8-10)*

Let us prepare to meet our God, because we shall have an inevitable encounter with Him: *"it is appointed for men once to die, and after this [comes] judgment"* (Heb. 9:27.)

## **II. We Must Prepare to Meet Our God, ...Because He will Make a Separation Between the Devout and the Hypocritical (Isa. 65:8-16)**

Using the illustration of harvesting grapes from the vineyard, the LORD shows us the distinction He makes between those who are spiritually alive and fruitful and those who are not (vs. 8.) When the harvesters come upon a juicy cluster of grapes in the midst of clusters that have rotted or are shriveled, they spare that good cluster before chopping down the unproductive vine. Let us carefully consider such passages as the following that emphasize the LORD's demand for spiritual fruit:

*Jesus testifies, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that does not bear fruit. But he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it may bear more fruit." (Jn. 15:1-2)*

*... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, integrity, <sup>23</sup>humility, self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23a)*

Verse 10 projects us into the future, describing the renewed land and those who will inherit it: *"Sharon will become a pasture for flocks and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds; [this will be] for my people who seek me."* From the plain of Sharon on the west to the valley of Achor on the east, the land to be inherited shall be filled with peace and prosperity—here is a picture of the new creation employing Old Testament geographical locations. The inheritors are defined as *"my people who seek me;"* in contrast to the people described in verse 1, those who are truly God's people seek Him and serve Him.

As verses 11-12 declare, a far different future is in store for those *who “forsake the LORD”* and *“forget [his] holy mountain;”* those who neglect the worship of the LORD their God and who abandon the faith:

*But as for you who forsake Jehovah, you who forget my holy mountain, you who prepare a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, <sup>12</sup>I will destine you for the sword and you shall all succumb to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, and when I spoke, you did not listen. On the contrary, you did what was evil in my sight, and chose those things in which I take no delight. (Isa. 65:11-12)*

Such people are described as preparing a banquet table for Fortune and Destiny—they have given themselves over to pagan superstition and idolatry and to the pursuit of hedonism. The LORD declares to them, *“I will destine you for the sword”*—the sword of God’s judgment and punishment, in this case by means of a foreign invader. The reason for the judgment is stated in these terms: there was no responsiveness to the LORD when He called; on the contrary, there was the pursuit of wickedness and all that is abominable to Him (vs. 12b.)

In verses 13-15 the LORD Himself reveals the respective fate and rewards of those whom He identifies as *“my servants”* in distinction to those whom, back in verse 2, He has identified as *“a rebellious people.”* He declares, *“my servants shall eat”*—they shall be provided for and be satisfied, *“but you will be hungry”*—those who have lived for themselves and in opposition to the LORD shall at the end be denied His blessing and given over to His judgment. In verses 13b-14 He goes on to assert, *“My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. <sup>14</sup>My servants will sing with a joyful heart, but you will cry out with a sorrowful heart and will wail with a broken spirit.”* The servants of the LORD shall experience the joy of the divine promises being fulfilled, the joy of discovering that their investment in Christ reaps eternal dividends of blessing; but shame and suffering shall be the consequence of bad, ungodly life choices, the consequences that await those who have lived for themselves instead of for their LORD and God. In conjunction with these verses of Isaiah 65 we may note our Lord’s teaching as recorded in Luke 6:20-26,

*Looking at his disciples, he said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. <sup>22</sup>Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven; for that is how their fathers treated the prophets. <sup>24</sup>But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. <sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup>Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. (Lk. 6:20-26)*

The contrast is between those who have invested their lives in Christ and the kingdom of God and those who have invested in themselves and this world.

Let us prepare to meet our God, because He will make a distinction and separation between the devout and the hypocritical:

*Then those who feared Jehovah talked with each other, and Jehovah listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared Jehovah and honored his name. <sup>17</sup>“They will be mine,” declares Jehovah of hosts, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. <sup>18</sup>And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.” (Mal. 3:16-18)*

### **III. We Must Prepare to Meet Our God, ...Because Only His Servants will Inherit the New Creation (Isa. 65:9,17-25)**

In verse 17 the LORD declares, *“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”* What is coming is nothing less than a new creation—a new creation that shall completely replace the present creation, replacing even the memory of this creation. It will prove to be a creation filled with glories so great that we will never be tempted to even consider comparing them to the blessings experienced in this present world.

In verses 18-25 the life and blessing of the new creation are described in terms of this present creation that are familiar and meaningful to us—especially meaningful to the Old Testament people of God. As we are projected into the future and made to stand at the threshold of the new creation, the LORD extends to His people the invitation and issues the command: *“be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create.”* The LORD promises that He Himself is going to rejoice with us and we are going to be a source of joy to Him, and He pledges that all sorrow will be left behind forever (vs. 19.)

The assurance that there will be no infant mortality nor premature death—he who fails to reach one hundred years of age will be considered to be accursed—is conveying the promise of eternal life (vs. 20.) By means of the imagery of building houses and living in them, planting vineyards and enjoying their fruit, there is conveyed the blessing of enjoying the fruit of our labor free from futility and oppression (vs. 21-23.) Verse 24 is communicating the blessing of close, instantaneous fellowship with God, *“Before they call, I will answer.”* In verse 25 there is conveyed the blessing of perfect peace throughout God’s new creation: the wolf and the lamb shall feed together.

Let us prepare to meet our God, because those who serve Him shall inherit His new creation.

## **Conclusion**

So very many people are living their lives totally absorbed with gaining riches and success in this present world without any preparation for their encounter with God. Many other people live their lives like those young German students, absorbed in the pursuit and experience of the pleasures of this present world without any preparation for their encounter with God. But the message of Isaiah 65 is this: Be prepared to meet your God.

How do you prepare yourself for that awesome encounter? Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and take refuge in Him if you have never done so. Return to Christ if you have strayed away from Him. Remain in Christ and, by His grace, continue to be faithful to Him.