

1. There is coming a new world altogether, and we may taste it even now

• When God's people are blessed even creation rejoices over them

• We can get some of the final vision fulfilled before we get to the end

• God can work for us to give abundant blessings

• Deserts can become green

• Believers can see the glorious character of God

2. We should encourage each other to press forward to get as much of that new world as we can even now

1. There is coming a new world altogether, and we may taste it even now. Isaiah sees into the future and sees what God will do after the Assyrians are defeated.

¹*The desert and the parched land will be glad about them; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.*

'Them' refers to the people of God. When God's people are blessed, even creation rejoices over them.

*Like the crocus,
²it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of Yahweh,
the splendour of our God.*

How is this fulfilled? It is partly a vision of the final 'new heavens and new earth' that will come at the end of the world when Jesus returns. But we must remember what I call 'the panoramic principle' — the principle that says we can get some of the final vision fulfilled even before we get to the final end! Jesus can say to us — even before the end of the world — 'The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Change your whole viewpoint and believe the good news!' ¹. Even now when life is a wilderness, God can work for us such that the wilderness becomes a garden, with an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! Even now the deserts may become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel's pastures and the plain of Sharon (places which were famous for their fertility and beauty).

God likes to reveal his glory even now. When Jesus comes every eye will see the glory of God, but even before Jesus comes those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are able to see the glorious character of God.

2. We should encourage each other to press forward to get as much of that new world as we can even now.

³*Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;
⁴say to those with fearful hearts,
'Be strong, do not fear.
Behold your God.
He will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he himself will come and he will save you
⁵Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
⁶Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy..'*

¹ see Mark 1:15

• *Every miracle is a sign of spiritual as well as physical blessing*

• *Even in Isaiah's day anyone who looked forward to the coming of a Saviour would know a taste of God's blessings*

• *Our world will change*

• *The more we believe in Jesus, the more we shall know the joys of the final kingdom*

• *God's people are to be pilgrims travelling towards the new Jerusalem*

3. We are righteous pilgrims travelling on a highway of holiness

• *The unclean do not want to be on this road*

• *It is a way of wisdom*

• *Already redeemed and ransomed*

The blind will see; the deaf will hear. It is true now spiritually. Jesus' miracles were literal but every miracle (then and now) is a sign of what God does spiritually as well as in physical blessing. In the final new heavens and new earth every kind of blindness and deafness will be abolished, but we may know something of that even now. The lame may leap; those who cannot talk may shout. Even in Isaiah's day anyone who looked forward to the coming of a Saviour was able to know a taste of the blessings of the kingdom of God. Now in days of fulfilment we know even more – and yet greater things are to come.

For water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

⁷The desert heat will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the home of jackals – where they have their den – there will be grass as well as reeds and rushes!

The very earth will become a paradise again, but we may have tastes of it now! Our world – spiritually and physically – will change from dryness to a place full of streams of freshness. The more we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we shall know something of the joys of the final kingdom.

The people of God are to be pilgrims travelling to this 'new Jerusalem'. Isaiah now puts his point in a different manner. The glorified world he has spoken of is on its way. But we are pilgrims travelling towards it. We are on a highway to a new Jerusalem. It will not come fully and totally until Jesus comes again but we are travelling towards it and we are enjoying many of its blessings in advance.

3. We are righteous pilgrims travelling on a highway of holiness.

⁸And there will be a highway and a way. It will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it. It will be for the one who walks that way; even if they are simpletons they will not stray.

Not everyone is interested in this new Jerusalem. The people walking along this road are already righteous. They have God as their 'covering' righteousness; and God is also working righteousness into them in the actual way they live. The unclean do not want to be on this road.

It is a way of wisdom. 'Whoever walks that way – even fools will not stray.' No dangers will be found in that city and even now the Lord chases the lions away!

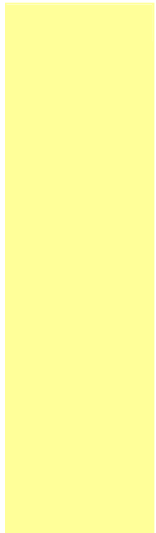
⁹No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there.

Those who walk on it have already been redeemed and ransomed.

But the redeemed will walk there,
¹⁰ and the ransomed of Yahweh will return,
 and they will come to Zion with singing;
 everlasting joy will crown their heads.
 They overtake gladness and joy;
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

• Everlasting joy will be our crown forever, but we are beginning to wear the crown of joy already

We are rejoicing in the foretastes of what is to come to us. We are singing songs of joy. We are little kings who will reign with the great King. He is crowned with many crowns but we are crowned also. Everlasting joy is about to be our crown for ever but we are beginning to wear the crown of joy already. We are rejoicing with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. One day 'sorrow and sighing' will disappear for ever but they are beginning to disappear already. The Saviour has come; we are enjoying foretastes of glory!



	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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