



SUNDAY SCHOOL NOVEMBER 16, 2025

Prayer:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Old Testament2

Isaiah 65:17-25..... 2

 The Glorious New Creation 2

 Overview 2

 Biblical Context..... 3

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 3

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 3

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 4

 Summary 4

Gospel.....4

Luke 21:5-19 4

 The Destruction of the Temple Foretold + Signs of Persecutions 4

 Overview 5

 Biblical Context..... 5

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 5

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 6

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 6

 Summary 6

Addendums.....7

Common Themes of Today’s Scripture 7

The Church Vs. the Church Building 8



Old Testament

Isaiah 65:17-25

Context: Through the prophet Isaiah, God promises a new creation

THE GLORIOUS NEW CREATION

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating,
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it
or the cry of distress.
No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime,
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat,
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.

OVERVIEW

Isaiah 65:17–25 presents one of the most vivid and hopeful visions in all of Scripture—a poetic prophecy of a “*new heavens and a new earth*.” It describes a time of peace, justice, and prosperity



where sorrow, oppression, and death no longer rule human life. God promises to create a new order in which His people will experience joy, harmony, and long life—echoing Edenic perfection. The passage reflects both the culmination of Israel’s restoration after exile and the ultimate fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan for creation.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Isaiah 65 belongs to what scholars call “*Third Isaiah*” (chapters 56–66), written in the post-exilic period, after the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity (late 6th century BCE). The people expected a glorious restoration, but instead found hardship, division, and disappointment. Many had lost faith that God’s promises would ever come true.

In this passage, God responds to that disillusionment. He declares that His plans go beyond mere political restoration—He intends to renew creation itself. The “new heavens and new earth” signify a radical transformation, not just of geography or politics, but of existence. It’s a promise that injustice, violence, and death will no longer have the final word.

This passage anticipates later biblical developments:

- **Revelation 21–22** directly echoes it, portraying the New Jerusalem where “God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”
- **Romans 8:18–23** echoes the longing of creation for renewal, linking it to human redemption.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

The late 6th century BCE was a turbulent time. After decades in Babylonian exile, the Jews returned to a Jerusalem in ruins. Politically, they were under Persian rule (Cyrus the Great allowed their return). Economically, they faced scarcity; socially, they were fractured between returning exiles and those who had remained in Judah. Spiritually, the temple had been rebuilt but lacked its former glory, and many questioned whether God’s promises still applied.

Against this bleak backdrop, Isaiah’s words were revolutionary. They reoriented the people’s expectations from earthly politics to divine renewal. Instead of another empire, God was building a community based on joy, justice, and peace—a counter-vision to imperial dominance.

Thematically, this was not escapism; it was resistance. To proclaim a “new earth” under divine justice was to reject the oppressive hierarchies of the Persian empire. Isaiah’s prophecy thus served as a subversive theological statement: God, not empire, would define the final reality.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **586 BCE:** Jerusalem destroyed by Babylon; Israelites exiled.
- **539 BCE:** Persia (under Cyrus the Great) conquers Babylon.
- **538 BCE:** Cyrus’s decree allows exiles to return to Judah.
- **515 BCE:** The Second Temple completed; post-exilic life begins.
- **500–450 BCE:** Approximate period for *Third Isaiah* (chapters 56–66), reflecting post-exilic restoration efforts and spiritual renewal.

Isaiah 65:17–25 thus reflects a *future-oriented hope* emerging from a still-broken world.



SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, Isaiah 65:17–25 envisions the transformation of both the external world and the human heart. The “new heavens and new earth” symbolize the renewal of moral and social order. It’s about God reshaping not only creation but *community values*.

- **“They shall build houses and inhabit them”** speaks to economic justice—people benefiting from their labor rather than losing it to exploitation.
- **“They shall not labor in vain”** reflects dignity in work, echoing today’s calls for fair wages and stable livelihoods.
- **“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together”** signifies the end of predatory relationships—whether political, economic, or social.

Applied to **modern Grant County, Indiana**, this vision resonates deeply. The county, like much of rural America, has experienced economic struggle, depopulation, and social division. Yet Isaiah’s message invites communities to imagine renewal: neighborhoods where people thrive, not merely survive; where churches serve as centers of reconciliation; and where dignity replaces despair. The prophetic “new earth” might not mean a supernatural overhaul but a *reclaiming of local life*—where cooperation replaces competition, and where faith-based initiatives bring practical hope (e.g., community gardens, housing restoration, mental health outreach).

In this sense, Isaiah’s vision challenges Grant County (and any modern community) to partner with God in creation’s ongoing renewal—to be *co-creators* of joy, justice, and sustainability.

SUMMARY

Isaiah 65:17–25 proclaims God’s promise of a transformed creation—a new reality of peace, longevity, and justice. It offers a vision of restoration not limited to Israel’s borders but extending to the cosmos itself. The text affirms that God’s ultimate goal is not destruction but renewal: to undo the curse of sin and reestablish harmony between humanity, nature, and the divine.

For today, it serves as both *comfort and commission*. Comfort, because God’s justice will prevail; commission, because we are invited to live as citizens of that coming world—planting seeds of peace, building homes of belonging, and refusing to accept despair as the final word.

Gospel

Luke 21:5-19

Context: Jesus teaching in the Temple during his final days

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD + SIGNS OF PERSECUTIONS

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”

And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.



“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.”

Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify.

“So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.

“You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

OVERVIEW

In Luke 21:5–19, Jesus delivers a prophetic warning about the coming destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the trials his followers will face. The disciples admire the Temple’s grandeur, but Jesus foretells its ruin, unsettling them. He then describes signs of upheaval—wars, earthquakes, famines, and persecutions—but cautions against fear and deception. His followers are promised both suffering and divine endurance: “By your endurance you will gain your souls” (v.19).

This passage is sometimes called “**The Little Apocalypse**” because it echoes themes later expanded in Revelation—warning believers to stay steadfast in faith during times of chaos.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This scene occurs during Jesus’ final days in Jerusalem, just before his arrest and crucifixion. He is teaching in the Temple, surrounded by disciples and religious onlookers. The Temple—renovated under Herod the Great—was a source of national pride, symbolizing God’s presence and Israel’s resilience. When Jesus predicted its destruction, it struck at the heart of Jewish identity.

Luke’s Gospel was written around 80–90 CE, after the Temple’s actual destruction in 70 CE by the Romans. Thus, Luke presents Jesus’ prophecy as already fulfilled historically but spiritually ongoing. The evangelist encourages readers to interpret persecution and turmoil not as signs of God’s absence but as confirmation that God’s plan is unfolding.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

The **Second Temple** was an architectural marvel, adorned with gold and marble. Herod’s reconstruction project aimed to glorify Judaism and curry Roman favor, blending religious devotion with political propaganda. Its destruction in 70 CE by Roman legions under Titus was catastrophic—ending Temple sacrifice and scattering the Jewish people.

Politically, the first century was defined by **Roman occupation, taxation, and resistance movements**. Tensions brewed between Jewish nationalists (Zealots), religious elites (Sadducees), and reformers (like Jesus and John the Baptist). Apocalyptic expectations—belief that God would soon intervene to set things right—were common.



Luke's audience, likely Gentile Christians living under Roman rule, faced **persecution and suspicion**. The warning about betrayal by family and friends (v.16) reflects the lived reality of early Christians, who were sometimes ostracized or executed for refusing emperor worship.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- ~**30 CE**: Jesus' prophecy in Jerusalem (during Passion Week).
- **66–70 CE**: The Jewish Revolt against Rome leads to massive devastation; the Temple is destroyed.
- ~**80–90 CE**: Gospel of Luke written, interpreting the prophecy in light of those events.
- **Post-70 CE**: The Jewish faith transitions toward rabbinic study and synagogue worship rather than sacrifice; Christians increasingly define themselves apart from Judaism.

This passage, then, straddles two moments—Jesus' spoken prophecy and Luke's retrospective narration—showing how divine truth transcends time.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, this passage speaks not only to the destruction of stone buildings but to the **collapse of human certainties**. The Temple symbolizes whatever we believe to be indestructible—our institutions, traditions, or sense of control. When Jesus says, "Not one stone will be left upon another," he reminds us that *faith must not depend on structures but on endurance through change*.

In today's world—and in Grant County, Indiana—this can be read as a meditation on **faith amid social, economic, and cultural shifts**. Factories close, congregations shrink, news sources vanish, and once-stable systems seem to erode. *Yet, like the early disciples, believers are called not to despair but to bear witness: to continue living truthfully, compassionately, and courageously even as "the old temples" crumble.*

The "wars and rumors of wars" (v.9) might today look like **polarization, misinformation, and fear-driven politics**. The call to "not be terrified" is a message of spiritual steadiness: faith is not naive optimism but the courage to remain kind and grounded when society frays.

For a local congregation, this passage can encourage **hopeful realism**—to acknowledge that change, loss, and even institutional decline are not the end of God's story. Rather, they are the soil from which new expressions of faith and community can grow, just as the early Church emerged from the ashes of the Temple.

SUMMARY

Luke 21:5–19 is both a prophecy and a pastoral charge. Jesus warns of upheaval and persecution but promises divine endurance for those who remain faithful. Historically, it foreshadows the Temple's destruction and the trials of the early Church. Spiritually, it challenges every generation to root their trust in God rather than in worldly stability.

In Grant County terms, this text asks believers to hold fast to their **faith's essence**—love, perseverance, and witness—even as familiar forms of community, religion, or politics shift. The passage closes not in despair but in endurance: "By your perseverance, you will secure your lives."



Addendums

Common Themes of Today's Scripture

Isaiah 65:17–25 and **Luke 21:5–19** share deep thematic resonance even though they come from very different moments in Scripture. Here's how they align across several key themes:

1. Renewal and Endurance Amid Destruction

- **Isaiah 65** envisions *new creation*—a transformed world beyond ruin and despair.
- **Luke 21** warns of the destruction of the Temple and future turmoil, but also calls believers to endure, promising that “*not a hair of your head will perish.*”

Common thread: Both proclaim that *God's purposes persist through devastation*. Destruction and suffering are not the end; they are the doorway to renewal.

2. Faithfulness in Times of Crisis

- In **Isaiah**, God calls His people to rejoice and trust in His creative work, even while the old order is passing away.
- In **Luke**, Jesus tells his followers not to be terrified by wars or chaos, emphasizing steadfast faith when the world seems unstable.

Common thread: *Faith becomes the act of resistance*—trusting God's promise when the visible world appears to crumble.

3. God's Sovereignty Over History

- **Isaiah** emphasizes that God alone can bring about the “new heavens and new earth.” Human kingdoms fade, but divine purpose prevails.
- **Luke** situates history within God's control: empires, persecutions, and upheavals cannot thwart His plan.

Common thread: Both reject despair and fatalism, affirming that *history itself bends toward God's redemptive intent*.

4. The Cost and Reward of Discipleship

- **Isaiah's vision** depicts reward for the faithful—a world of justice, long life, and joy.
- **Luke's account** prepares disciples for hardship: arrest, betrayal, and endurance. Yet the reward is spiritual resilience and salvation.

Common thread: *Hope and hardship are intertwined*. God's promise does not eliminate struggle but transforms its meaning.

5. From Temporal to Eternal Vision

- **Isaiah** moves the people's gaze from the ruined Jerusalem to a *new Jerusalem*.
- **Luke** moves the disciples' gaze from the *glorious Temple* to God's *eternal kingdom*.

Common thread: Both shift focus from earthly structures to divine permanence. What humans build—whether temple or empire—will fall, but God's kingdom endures.

Grant County, Indiana Reflection

In local context, both readings speak powerfully to communities facing economic change, loss, or uncertainty. Isaiah's “*new earth*” can symbolize local renewal—hope in community rebuilding, cooperation, and faith-led restoration. Luke's warning about not fearing upheaval



reminds Grant County believers that even when industries fade or traditions shift, *faithful endurance plants the seeds of renewal*. Together, the two passages say: *God's new creation is not just after destruction—it often begins through it*.

The Church Vs. the Church Building

Is it any wonder that today's churches seem to have an identity issue ... one that goes back to what their building structure represents rather than what the people in the structure do? So, it's not surprising at all that today's churches struggle with an identity issue rooted in *structure over substance*.

The two passages you've been working with (Isaiah 65 and Luke 21) illustrate this tension. In **Luke 21**, **Jesus looks at the temple—magnificent, ornate, admired—and warns that “not one stone will be left on another.” In other words: Don't mistake the building for the mission.** Meanwhile, **Isaiah 65** shifts the focus from restoring a temple or city to restoring *creation itself*—to people, relationships, justice, and joy.

Somewhere along the way, many churches began to equate holiness with heritage, and community with property lines. The building became the identity—how old it is, how it looks, how full the pews are—rather than what happens when the people leave it. But biblically, the *Church* was never defined by walls. It was defined by *witness*: how believers embody God's new creation in their neighborhoods.

So, when churches today wrestle with identity, it's often because we've confused *the container for the calling*. The temple was never the point; it was the *people's transformation* that mattered.

Reflection:

In both Isaiah 65 and Luke 21, God redirects human attention away from impressive structures toward transformed hearts and communities. Isaiah promises a *new creation* where joy, justice, and peace define God's people—not ornate buildings or rituals. Jesus, standing before the majestic temple, reminds His followers that even the most beautiful walls will crumble, but faith, endurance, and compassion will endure.

In today's world, many churches find themselves in a similar moment of reckoning. We often define success by attendance, budgets, and buildings, rather than by how deeply we love our neighbors or serve our communities. The danger is subtle but real: when we start maintaining *institutions* instead of nurturing *people*, we drift from the Gospel's center. God's new creation isn't built in stone—it's built in souls, actions, and relationships.

Discussion Questions:

1. What might our church look like if we measured “success” by *impact* instead of *attendance*?
2. How can we shift our identity from maintaining a building to embodying a mission?
3. What would “a new creation” look like in Grant County—if the church became known more for what it *does* than where it *meets*?

This message will hopefully resonate and even gnaw at a our love of the inward physical building, rather than directing their focus outward. So, let's channel Isaiah's and Jesus' message: shaking comfort without condemning, redirecting affection from the *walls* to the *work*.