Isaiah 65:17-18 “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 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.”

 I always get a chuckle out of reading passages that deal with the last day or the judgment of the world. I get a chuckle out of them because I clearly see the encouragement and comfort that are to be found in these passages, while there are so many others who don’t see any comfort and encouragement, but rather are just frightened by what they read.

 How sad that such a triumphant victory should be turned into some sort of scary prophecy. Yet that is what so many do. Take those who are millenialists. They have decided to use the Bible as some sort of crystal ball to see into and determine future events. The sad fact is that all of these people who spout off about 1,000 year reigns, raptures, great tribulations, final battles and the like are still caught up in ancient and errant Jewish opinions about the Messiah, now turned errant opinions about Jesus and the end of the world.

 The problem was that the Jews had gotten into speaking about the coming Messiah as an earthly ruler who would establish an earthly kingdom. When Jesus finally came, these Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as the Christ simply because Jesus didn’t fit what they wanted the Messiah to be. Instead of changing their minds to fit what Scripture said and how Jesus fulfilled that Scripture that they might believe in Jesus, they rejected God’s Word and thus rejected Jesus for what they wanted to believe, what they felt was good and right.

 It is this same idea of an “earthly kingdom of Christ” that still plagues many modern protestant churches. What the Jews expected of Christ the first time they have now accepted as the truth for Jesus coming the second time. In this way, they begin to use the Bible and especially the Book of Revelation as some sort of crystal ball, predicting all sorts of strange things, indeed going so far as to suggest that social security numbers and credit cards, or the new micro identification chips that could be, are all a part of the warning of Scripture found in the “mark of the beast.” The future of these people is filled with all sorts of crazy and scary ideas.

 They miss the pure joy of such passages like the one before us. Not only that, but they miss the thrust of what passages like those found in all of our readings today, have to say. They find no comfort in these passages, rather they find themselves only confused because of the myriad of theories they have proposed about the end of the world.

 Not me. When I read a section of Scripture like the one before us, or when I read the Book of Revelation or Daniel or Ezekiel, I am filled with the joy and wonder of what God has promised. I am filled with the awesomeness of heaven, spellbound by the simplicity of God’s kingdom, and renewed by the certainty of the eternal life that God is planning for his children.

 Let’s take a look then, at this promise of what is to come. Our theme will be: **THE KINGDOM TO COME. 1st. It is a new Heaven and Earth. 2nd. It is a place of Rejoicing. 3rd. It is easy to get to.**

 The first question that we might have about this kingdom of God to come is, “When will it come?” That question I can’t really answer any more specifically than God’s Word tells us. God’s Word reveals such things like: **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”** That is the way the entire Scripture speaks of the Last Day of Judgment. Recall that even in the parable of the 10 virgins, a parable about being prepared for the Last Day we read, **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”**

 We really don’t know the day or the hour in which the kingdom of God will get here. The Lord has given us certain general signs of his coming but the Lord has provided us with nothing specific that we could use to say, “Here it is or there it is.” What Scripture constantly tell us is that the Judgment Day will come when we least expect it and that we should simply be ready when it does come. The only way to be ready is through faith in Jesus, yes, through simple trust that Jesus as the Savior rescues you from the fear of hell and damnation.

 What can we expect on this great day? Notice that I do call it a great day. I find nothing frightening about this day. I have nothing to fear about this day for this day is all about Jesus returning to establish His eternal kingdom. Because Jesus died for me (for all of us!) I have no fear of what that day will bring. What I have is anxious and eager expectations for the day because that day will bring entirely new and awesome things!

 That is what our text tells us. Verse 17 says, **“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”** Do you grasp the promise of those words? We are basically being told that we will not remember or have in mind the former things, the things of this sinful world and its troubles. I don’t think this means we will remember nothing, like we will forget family or friends or such. I think we are being told that the bad things, the hurtful things, the troubling things, the ugly and horrid things that sin brings to our world will no longer be a part of our existence or even our memory. Those whom we love who had faith in Jesus, we will be with them and remember our love but that which is evil and wicked will be gone. And just so you know…how well this promise fits in with what we hear in the New Testament. 2 Pet. 3:13 says, **“But in keeping with his promises we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”**

 We are told that God will make for us a new heaven and earth. What we understand by this is the promise of this world restored to the perfection with which it was created. All sin will be purged from this world. The world will be a perfect place without any flaws or problems at all.

 Think about what that means. Can you imagine a world that is perfect? Can you imagine a world that is free from sin and the evil that sin has brought? Can you grasp a world with no sickness, no crime, not hatred, no shortage of food, water and supplies? Can you imagine a world with no death? Our text pictures this perfection by saying things like: **“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…no longer will they build houses and others live in them or plant and others eat…The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox.”**

 Such is the world God will make for us on the last day. All who enter into God’s kingdom will enter this world of perfection and joy. It will be a physically perfect world such as you and I can’t even begin to fully imagine.

 What else do we know about this world that God will bring us to? Our text says: **“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…the sounds of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”** While the first verse spoke of the perfection that was to be given to the physical heavens and earth this second verse speaks of the perfection that will become yours and mine. The best way I know of further helping you grasp the tremendous wonder of this Kingdom of God is to simply share with you other portions of Scripture.

 Rev. 7:15-17 describes this world of God’s children in these words: **“They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

 Later on in Rev. 21 we are given another picture of this New Kingdom of God. The whole chapter describes a place of immense beauty and wonder. One of the aspects that is spoken of is **“the streets of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.”** Then the description goes on and describes even more for us. It says, **“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life…no longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city and his servants will serve him…there will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.”**

 I don’t even think that I could, without the words I just read to you, begin to describe the perfection that God has prepared for us. Is it any wonder that the Apostle Paul would write in Romans: **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** There is nothing in this world that will even come close to the joy, happiness, and peace that we will have in God’s forever kingdom.

 Now that I have spoken about what God is preparing for us, let me share with you how you and I are going to get there. I already spoke about it when I spoke about having faith in Jesus to get there, but I want to speak more about Jesus and faith. I want to speak of it more because I want you to be sure that this kingdom that is coming is a kingdom you will be a part of.

 The way to get to this kingdom is through faith in Jesus. I’m not talking about just saying you believe. I am talking about the real, true, genuine kind of faith that only God can give. I’m talking about faith that comes from hearing the message of Jesus, faith that comes from the Holy Spirit working in you through the Word of God. I’m talking about the faith of a little child, that simple and wonderful faith that hears and believes what God has said and promised, you know, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!”

 There is the real key. If someone says to me, “I believe in God”, the first question from my mouth is “What God?” To have faith is to believe what God’s Word says. To have faith is to be willing to fight for, to die for the truths of God’s Word, no matter how minute that truth may seem. To have faith is to say no to the ways of the world. You may lose that boyfriend (girlfriend) because you don’t sleep with him (her) or move in with him (her) but Jesus is worth it. To have faith is to have your whole being in the hands of Jesus Christ. He shapes how you are act, how you speak, how you behave at all times…He does so by leading you to study and know His Word.

 To have faith is to do the hardest thing we humans have to do, to admit we are lost and condemned sinners. To have faith brings repentance. To have faith recognizes that through Jesus working in us, we can minimize the sin of our life not wallow in it. To have faith in Jesus is to know beyond any doubt that He will and has forgiven us for our sins just because we believe in Him. To have faith is to have the desire to hear and follow Jesus.

 To have faith is to believe that the Kingdom of God that is coming is for you and it is for me. Faith eagerly awaits the coming Kingdom of God and the joy and wonder God has prepared for us. May you have this kind of faith, faith in the promises, hope and love of God as found in Jesus. Jesus has made this kingdom ours. Jesus has made this kingdom sure. Jesus has made this kingdom our eternal home. Amen.