

Isaiah 65 Note: In Isaiah 65:1-16, Isaiah compares how the Lord will treat those who forsake Him in contrast to those who truly seek Him. Isaiah finds powerfully fresh images to name and describe those who provoke the Lord.

1. Isaiah describes how the Lord himself initiated his care and concern for His people. How did the Lord initiate the relationship and how did the people respond? (Is 65:1-2)
2. Compare how the Lord will treat people who truly seek Him and those who forsake Him. (Is 65:11-12)
3. In Isaiah 65:17-25, the Lord addresses His faithful servants and tells them how He will renew the face of both heaven and earth. Among all of Isaiah's imagery, which images of the heavenly Jerusalem are most comforting to you? Why?

Isaiah 66 Note: Isaiah's last chapter is a two-part oracle. The first five verses focus on the spiritual lives of the returning exiles. They are humble people showing a great reverence for God in rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple. The rest of the chapter focuses on those people who arrogantly choose their own way. It forms an apocalyptic description of the Lord's coming at the end of the world. Christians find it filled with associations to Jesus Christ, His church, and His final coming.

4. The Lord poses this ironic question to the proud Israelites: "Just where and how are you going to build a house for me since the entire earth itself is no bigger than my footstool"? (Is 66:1)
 - a. Why do you think some Israelites like to "contain" God within the Temple and go through all the rituals, and then do as they please in other parts of their lives? (Is 66:3-4)
 - b. *Reflection:* Do you think people today like to contain God in a church building?
5. The returning Israelites, hearing Isaiah 66:3, must have been very confused, because the Book of Leviticus prescribes that the priests and the people do exactly what the Lord is now repulsed by. How might you explain to these returning Israelites what the Lord is really trying to tell them? (Is 66:3-5)
6. Once the new nation of Israel is born, it will become like a mother to her people. How does Isaiah portray Israel as a mother? (Is 66:11-13)
7. How does Isaiah say the people will be enriched by other nations? (Is 66:12)
8. *Challenge:* What would it mean to the returning Israelites for the Lord to bring foreigners to be priests in the Temple, since they believed that priests had to be men who biologically came from the tribe of Levi? (Is 66:20-21; 1 Peter 2:5-9)
9. What apocalyptic images strike you the most in the final three verses in the Book of Isaiah? (Is 66:22-24)