

[Isaiah 40:1-2:] Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

1. "Pastor, what's heaven like?" So, I begin thinking about all the passages which give us descriptions of what heaven is like, including the one God blesses us with today from Isaiah 65. But before I go too crazy doing the academic exercise of cataloging all the attributes of heaven from Scripture, I need to remember that it's *not* an academic exercise—neither for the person asking nor the Lord Who has given these blessed passages for us. Just the question itself tells us that we can't completely know *what* heaven is *like*. We can only compare it to the good things we know now. But it must be better than the best we know now because heaven will be without sin and without end. As 1 Corinthians 13:12 tells us, For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. Perhaps it's better to ask *why* God gave us these glimpses into what heaven is like. When Jesus gives us the beautiful picture of heaven as a house with many rooms in John 14 on Maundy Thursday, He starts with the *why*: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." Jesus has a tender heart for us. He knows we're concerned about where our loved ones go. After all, Jesus was just about to go to the cross for our sins so we can follow Him to heaven. Jesus also knows that we're concerned about where we will go when we die. So, He directly addressed the disciples with words that allowed them to not be troubled. We hold onto what God reveals to us. A picture of the kingdom of heaven then blesses the kingdom now.
2. Today, God blesses us with this picture from Isaiah 65. {Read verses 17-18.} "Pastor, what's heaven like: is it like this world I see?" No, it's not. God makes something new, something only He can make with His creative power—the power to make something when there is nothing. It will have qualities we can't fathom. What's it like to have *no sin—ever—at all?* I don't know. I only know sin. I only know repentance. I know only looking forward to no sin. So, why does God tell us that there will be new heavens and a new earth if we can't relate to them? It's for our comfort.
3. "Pastor, what's heaven like: will I remember all the bad stuff I deal with here?" Isaiah flat-out tells us no. How many days of our lives do we have when there's no memory of something bad we've done or something bad someone else has done? And those precious few times we have a day like that, shortly thereafter the reminders can't be kept at bay, no matter how much we'd love to live in that blissful moment and keep those reminders from crashing in on us. So, why does God tell us that the former things will not be remembered if all we can do is remember now? It's for our comfort.
4. "Pastor, what's heaven like: will I always be happy?" Yes, you will. Yes, the people you love who are there now—for God rules in the hearts of believers both here and there—they are happy too. What a stark contrast to here and now! Our moods can turn on a dime. Things are great ... until Satan whispers that utterly stupid (yet somehow appealing) temptation in our ear. Things are great ... until we turn on the news (or don't, and get bad news anyway no matter how much we avoid the news). Things are

great ... until I remember something I've done (or not done). So, why does God tell us that we'll rejoice forever in heaven? It's so that we might be glad and have comfort now.

5. {Read verse 19.} "Pastor, what's heaven like: will I get to be with God?" Yes, and even better: God wants to be with you. God rejoices over you and will wipe all tears from your eyes. Why does God tell us weeping and crying will not be in heaven? Our comfort is that He comes to us, even as He has already done to make us His own in Christ Jesus.
6. {Read verses 20-22.} "Pastor, what's heaven like: what kind of body will I have in heaven?" At the resurrection, our bodies will be like Jesus' glorious resurrected body. Using pictures we can relate to, we see that we will be mature but not frail. Our bodies will be strong to do blessed activities with God in the new heavens and new earth. So, why does God tell us my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands in heaven? Comfort comes from perfectly using a perfect body for our perfect Lord.
7. {Read verses 23-24.} "Pastor, what's heaven like: will I have a purpose?" Our purpose since Eden has remained the same. We are objects of God's love, created to have a relationship with Him, reflecting that love to God and our neighbor. Eden's perfection will be restored: the curse of painful childbearing is removed, work is not toil. And when God comes to speak with His creation in the cool of the day, we will not hide because of our shame. So, why does God tell us before they call I will answer? We have the comfort of knowing we always have Christ's perfection as our own.
8. {Read verse 25.} "Pastor, what's heaven like?" Sin and all the conflict it brings will be gone. Perfect justice is what we delight in. So, why does God tell us they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain? We will not be able to do what's harmful or destructive anymore—not just *want* to not do what's harmful or destructive, but we'll be *unable* to do what's harmful or destructive. What comfort for us who struggle to not do what's harmful and destructive now! What comfort for us who deal with conflict daily! What comfort for us who have to flee to Jesus in repentance daily now to know that the need will be gone there and then. We look forward to what the saints triumphant enjoy now. A picture of the kingdom then blesses the kingdom now. Amen.