

AN AMILLENNIAL RESPONSE TO A PREMILLENNIAL VIEW OF ISAIAH 65:20

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Abstract: *This essay argues that Isa 65:20 is not about a temporary reversible millennium in which there is actual death but about the eternal irreversible reality of there being no untimely death in the everlasting new creation. I adduce seven main lines of argument in favor of this: (1) discussion of a translational problem in 65:20, which could support premillennialism or could fit into an amillennial view; (2) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–19 and 65:21–25 points to the probability that 65:20 is also about the eternal new creation; (3) the use of Genesis 3 in Isaiah 65, which points to an eternal new creation context; (4) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–25 is supported further by its use of Isa 25:7–10, which is about there being no death any longer in the new, eternal age; (5) arguments favoring a figurative view of Isa 65:20; (6) the use of Isaiah in Rev 21:1–22:4 is figurative, thus pointing to Isa 65:20 being a depiction of the irreversible, eternal new creation; (7) the irreversible nature of eschatology itself favors the conclusion that Isa 65:20 is not about a temporary, eschatological millennial state but about the eternal new heavens and earth.*

Key Words: *eschatology, inaugurated eschatology, premillennialism, amillennialism, new creation*

Isaiah 65:20 says: “No longer will there be from there an infant *who lives but a few days*, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be *thought* accursed.”¹ This essay had its stimulus in a Westminster Theological Seminary panel discussion on eschatology at the Gospel Coalition conference in Orlando, FL in the spring of 2015. At the conclusion of the panel dialogue, there was an extended time for questions from the audience. One of the questions was about how Isa 65:20 could fit into a classic amillennial view, which typically holds that Isa 65:17–25 depicts the eternal new heavens and earth. As I recollect, the questioner referred to John Piper who had spoken earlier at the conference in support of premillennialism and had said that Isa 65:20 referred to the temporary millennial period which would eventually pass away. Among his reasons for this was that verse 20 so clearly affirmed that there would be sin and death in the future age, so that this age could not be referring to the eternal state.

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¹ Following for the most part NAS95. English translations of biblical references are from the NASB, and when translation veers from the NASB, it represents my own translation.

I was among those who responded to this specific question addressed to the panel. The following essay is an expansion of my answer. Added motivation for this essay is the recent publication of a book by Matt Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model*.² Among his thirteen chapters (not including the introduction and conclusion) is a chapter titled “The Intermediate Kingdom in Isaiah 65:17–25.” This chapter in Waymeyer’s work argues especially that Isa 65:20 is about the intermediate millennial kingdom and not about the eternal new cosmos.

The premillennial view affirms that Isa 65:20 is to be taken in apparently straightforward manner and describes death as being a reality during a millennium and does not portray the arrival of the eternal new heavens and earth. Some premillennialists might want to argue that the millennium is a second inaugurated fulfillment of new creation (the first being when one is regenerated as a Christian, e.g. 2 Cor 5:17), which is then consummated in the eternal new creation, after the so-called millennium. Other scholars agree that Isa 65:20 is to be taken as portraying death in the new age but do not specifically relate this to the millennium of Revelation 20.³

A “literal” interpretation of this verse, in the sense of referring to actual physical death, is certainly possible, but we need to remember that the context surrounding a verse is the “king, queen, prime minister, and ruler” of the meaning of a particular verse in that context. For example, the word “run” can have the following meanings: running with one’s legs, one’s nose running, a candidate running for an elected office, a run in some stockings, a run of luck, water running in a stream, and so on. The context can demand that “run” be taken straightforwardly (such as a context of running in a track meet) or the context may demand various figurative interpretations (e.g. a political context would indicate someone “running” for office). Sometimes the context may allow the possibility of a non-figurative or figurative meaning, which is the case with respect to Isa 65:20. This is why good scholars on both sides of the issue differ about whether 65:20 should be taken to refer to actual death or be understood figuratively.

My purpose in the following discussion is to argue why I think the context points to Isa 65:20 being figurative and not describing actual death, even though when looked at apart from its preceding and following context it could look like actual death is being portrayed. This essay will set forth the following main points in support of this: (1) discussion of a translational problem in 65:20, which could support premillennialism or could fit into an amillennial view; (2) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–19 and 65:21–25 points to the probability that 65:20 is also about the eternal new creation, the conditions of which are irreversible, and not a temporary millennium which can be reversed or pass away; (3) the use of

² Matt Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Sources, 2016).

³ E.g. see C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 409; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1975), 277; A. Gardner, “Isaiah 65:20: Centenarians or Millenarians?,” *Bib 86* (2005): 88–96, and others cited therein.

Genesis 3 in Isaiah 65, which points to an eternal new creation context; (4) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–25 is supported further by its use of Isa 25:7–10 which is about there being no death any longer in the new, eternal age; (5) arguments favoring a figurative view of Isa 65:20; (6) the use of Isaiah in Rev 21:1–22:4 is figurative, thus pointing to Isa 65:20 being a depiction of the irreversible, eternal new creation; (7) the irreversible nature of eschatology itself favors the conclusion that Isa 65:20 is not about a temporary, eschatological millennial state but about the eternal new heavens and earth.

I. A TRANSLATIONAL PROBLEM IN ISAIAH 65:20 VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THE ETERNAL NEW CREATION CONTEXT OF ISAIAH 65:17–25

Before proceeding to the core of the essay, a translational problem in Isa 65:20 needs to be cleared up. Some translations have “the *sinner* being a hundred years old shall be accursed” (Greek OT, Aramaic Bible [Targum], Geneva, ASV, KJV, NJB, ESV, RSV). “Sinner” in the English translations is a rendering of the Hebrew participial form of נֹפֵֿן, which is certainly a possible way to translate the word. On the other hand, several translations render this Hebrew verb as “fall short” (NRSV) or “fail to reach” (NASB, NIV, TNIV, JPS, NET Bible) or “miss” (HCSB), with the resulting translation of something like “and the one *who does not reach* the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed.”⁴ The translations are almost evenly split between the rendering of “sinner” and “fall short” (or “fail to reach” or the like⁵). The commentators also appear to be split on these renderings. Of course, “sinner” could (but not necessarily) mean that we are not speaking of an eternal age, whereas “fall short” would allow for a period in which there is no sin: “the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed,” which, if figurative, could mean that there will be no untimely death and that all will live well beyond one hundred, since all will live eternally (so that the assertion that none will be “accursed” would be a hypothetical condition that will not occur in this eternal state). In light of the following overall argument of this essay, I believe the latter translation to be preferable, especially because of the context of eternal new creation in Isa 65:17–20, but, at the very least, neither a premillennial nor amillennial view should appeal to this particular Hebrew verb as even a partial basis for their view, since either rendering is possible, as evident from the major translations.

⁴ The Greek ἀμαρτάνω, though usually referring to moral sin, like its Hebrew equivalent, can also have the non-theological sense of “miss the mark” or “fail of having, be deprived of” (LSJ 77) in distinction from its usual moral sense of “sin.” This sense of the word occurs in the LXX of Job 24:5: “the provision for your tabernacle *shall not fail*.” Thus, it is possible that the noun form of the verb in the LXX of Isa 65:20 (ἀμαρτωλός) could have this meaning, just as is possible in the Hebrew. However, it appears that this noun form in the NT, LXX, and Classical and Hellenistic Greek always has the idea of moral sin, and there appears to be no attestation of the noun form having the meaning of one who falls short in a non-moral sense.

⁵ See B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 419, who prefer the translation “he who fails to reach one hundred years *will be declared* (or, *regarded as*) *curled*.”

But even if “sinner” were the best translation, it could still fit within the framework of an eternal new creation. Outside of 65:20, the verb occurs five other times in Isaiah, and every other use refers to sinning against God (Isa 1:4; 29:21; 42:24; 43:27; 64:4 [5]). It is significant that in 64:4 [5] the sinners are asking for God’s mercy and hoping for restoration (see Isa 63:15–64:12). Thus, these are sinners who have hope (e.g. they ask God not to “remember iniquity forever,” Isa 64:9b). In this respect, it may be that the participle “the sinner” in 65:20 is a participle of identification, which distinguishes a state from an ongoing action. In the new eternal cosmos, redeemed people will always be redeemed “sinners.” It is part of their identity. This is supported by observing that the idea in context is that Isaiah’s “forever” and “no longer” statements in verses 17–20a build a contrast between what was versus what now is. Within the flow of Isaiah, when the time of the eternal new creation comes, the antagonistic sinners have been defeated already, which means “the sinner” in 65:20 is a person who is redeemed. Similar to the “salt” that remains in the marshes of the new creation (Ezek 47:11), like the single voice of praise emanating from the people groups with multiple languages (Rev 5:9; 7:9), and comparable to those in the eternal state who are still referred to as those “from every nation and all tribes and peoples” (Rev 7:9), so “the sinners” of Isa 65:20 are continual reminders throughout the eternal state of who the redeemed were. They are those who have overcome their sin because of the suffering Servant’s redemptive work (Isaiah 53).⁶ Accordingly, it is not bizarre that redeemed believers would be tagged as “sinners” as a continual reminder forever about from what they have been redeemed.⁷

II. THE ETERNAL NEW CREATION CONTEXT OF ISAIAH 65:17–25

I believe that the context of Isa 65:17–19 and 65:24–25 is about the eternal new heavens and earth, as Isa 66:22–24 (a verbal parallel with 65:17) also bears out in part (as we will see). Some premillennialists see the entire passage to include a description of a renovated earth in a coming millennium, but most see parts of the passage to refer to a millennium (like Isa 65:20), and parts that refer to a finally consummated new creation in the eternal new cosmos.⁸ But the remainder of this essay will elaborate on reasons why this is unlikely.

Since Isa 65:20–24 is sandwiched in between the clear eternal new creation context of verses 17–19 and verse 25, it would seem most natural to understand verses 20–24 also to be about the same eternal new cosmos and not some prior semi-renovated earth (a millennium) preceding the eternal new creation. If this is so, then Isa 65:20 (together with 65:21–25⁹) is not to be taken straightforwardly but is a figurative way of referring to a long, indeed, eternal life.

⁶ Note the old-world meaning of “salt” (Gen 13:10; 19:23–29; Zeph 2:9) and the old-world notion of multiple languages (Gen 11:9; Zeph 3:9).

⁷ This paragraph is based on a personal communication from Jason DeRouchie.

⁸ For commentators who hold forms of this view, see further below.

⁹ Which premillennialists generally also apply to the millennium, but as we will see 65:22 and 65:25 are best applied to the eternal new creation.

The following analysis in this paragraph is the strongest argument of this essay in favor of Isa 65:20 being about the eternal new creation and not about a temporary millennium. Verse 20 continues to portray the eternal conditions of Jerusalem in verse 19. Especially significant is the observation that the Hebrew of verse 20a straightforwardly reads “and there will not be [= “and never will there be” or “no longer will there be”] *from there* an infant who lives but a few days.” “From there” (מִשָּׁם) refers to “Jerusalem” in verse 19, where “the voice of weeping and the sound of crying” is “no longer heard.” This means that verse 20 continues to describe the eternal conditions of verse 19, where crying has to do with aspects of the curse from the old world, especially death, which no longer exists, as verse 20 elaborates.¹⁰ “Thus, death will not take away from there [i.e. from the Jerusalem of the messianic age] one who is merely a suckling child as death is now wont to do. Nor will the elderly man who has not yet lived out the full span of life meted to him be taken away by death as is now the case.”¹¹ The point of this language is that there will no longer be untimely death in the eternal new Jerusalem. Therefore, verse 20 continues to describe the conditions of “rejoicing” and no “crying” of verse 19, which itself continues the description of God in verse 18 “creating Jerusalem” in a new condition for “rejoicing and gladness” *which will last* “forever”¹² and which will never be reversed or pass away.¹³ God “creating Jerusalem” in verse 18 is an equivalent way of saying in verse 17 that he “creates ... a new earth,” since in the OT and some sectors of Jewish eschatology Jerusalem was to become expanded to cover the entire earth at the end of the age.¹⁴ And this “rejoicing” is to be

¹⁰ V. 20 is asyndetic (it has no waw or conjunctive word connecting it to v. 19). The use of asyndeton in Hebrew signals either the beginning of a new topic or explication (see J. S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017], 103–4). The “from there” (i.e. the new Jerusalem of vv. 18–19) shows that v. 20 is clearly a further explanation of v. 19 and not the introduction of a brand-new topic. DeRouchie brought my attention to the relevance of asyndeton here.

¹¹ E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3: *Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 515. See also John L. Mackay, *A Study Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2009), 605 who makes the same point that “from there” in v. 20 refers to the new Jerusalem of the two preceding verses.

¹² עַד־יָעַד in Isa 65:18 is translated by all the standard English versions by “forever” (RSV, JK, NIV, ESV, NASB, HCSB, NJB). For this translation see *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. D. J. A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2016), 6:256. See the same phrase used with the same sense in Isa 17:2 (uncertain text form), 26:4 (“trust in the Lord forever,” which is in parallel with “Yahweh as an everlasting [עוֹלָם] Rock”), Ps 83:17 (“let them [God’s enemies] be ashamed and dismayed forever”), Ps 92:8 (“But you, O Lord, are on high forever”), and Ps 132:12, 14 (“their sons shall sit on your throne forever. . . . This is my resting place forever”).

¹³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 202, has argued that since vv. 18 and 19 are about eternal realities, v. 20 must be about eternal realities, but he does not tie in the crucial “no longer” and the “from there [Jerusalem]” at the beginning of v. 20 with v. 19.

¹⁴ See G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2004), 81–167, where there is discussion of how the Holy of Holies was to expand to cover Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was then to expand to cover the promised land, and then the promised land was to expand to cover the entire earth, so that temple, Jerusalem, promised land, and new earth all represent the new creation. This is the rationale for Rev 21:1–22:5, where the “new Jerusalem,” temple, Garden of Eden, and new creation are all equated (*ibid.*, 365–73). See also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 750–72; and Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land* (Downers Grove, IL:

“forever” in verse 18 because Jerusalem is identified with the “new heavens and earth” that God will “create,” where “the former troubles are forgotten” (v. 17)—never to be remembered or experienced again (like death, suffering, persecution, etc.). That there “*will no longer be* [weeping and crying]” at the end of verse 19 is the “negative counterpart of ‘for ever’” in verse 18,¹⁵ and the “no longer” that introduces verse 20 is synonymous with the eternal “no longer” of verse 19, so that it signals that verse 20a–b at the least, are about eternal realities! In this light, Isa 65:17–20 are an unbreakable chain of descriptions depicting the eternal new creation and not some temporary (i.e. millennial) era, which will involve death, suffering, and ultimate destruction at the end. Indeed, verse 19 has said that there will never again be “weeping” and “crying,” but if verse 20 is affirming the notion of actual death, then there will be “weeping” and “crying” over such death in the eternal state introduced in verses 18–19 and continued with the “no longer” (which is synonymous with the eternal “no longer” of v. 19) at the beginning of verse 20. Thus, such death would pose a contradiction to the notion of the eternal state introduced in verses 18–19 and continued with verse 20a. This is why one premillennialist is correct to say that the interpretation of Isa 65:20–24 as referring to a non-eternal millennium is “unusual to be sure.”¹⁶

Furthermore, one cannot say that, after speaking of eternal realities in verses 17–19, verse 20 is a flashback to a millennium,¹⁷ since the “no longer from there” (לֹא-יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם) phrase in verse 20 introduces an eternal time scope for verse 20. Most translations render מִשָּׁם as “in it” (RSV, NRSV, NASB,¹⁸ NIV, ESV), “in her” (HCSB), “thence” (KJV, ASV), “there” (Geneva), and some translations do not render the phrase at all (NJB; NLT, NET¹⁹). All of these renderings are a bit more vague than “from there,” though the KJV, ASV, and Geneva are closest among the English versions to the Hebrew. Especially vague are those translations that do not translate מִשָּׁם at all. To say that the wording after the introductory “no longer from there” phrase in verse 20 is a flashback does violence to the syntax of this introductory phrase. To have the possibility of a flashback in verse 20, there would need to be more ambiguous introductory wording (like that especially in the NJB, NLT, and NET) that would be more susceptible to such a flashback. Premillennialists who prize a “historical-grammatical” exegesis should be wary of positing such a flashback.

Accordingly, Alec J. Motyer well summarizes the idea in Isa 65:20:

InterVarsity, 2015), passim, where the focus is on the Promised Land being expanded to cover the entire earth.

¹⁵ Mackay, *Isaiah*, 2:605.

¹⁶ W. C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 160.

¹⁷ See toward the end of this essay the section titled “The Nature of Eschatology and Its Significance for Isaiah 65:20” for premillennialists who hold such a telescoping or flashback view and further discussion of the viability of such a view.

¹⁸ NASB has a marginal reading of “from there.”

¹⁹ NET has a marginal reading of “from there.”

No infant will fail to enjoy life nor an elderly person come short of total fulfillment. Indeed, one would be but a youth were one to die aged a hundred! This does not imply that death will still be present (contradicting [Isa] 25:7–8) but rather affirms that over the whole of life, as we should now say from infancy to old age, the power of death will be destroyed.²⁰

We shall address Isa 25:7–8 more below, but the main point so far is that there will be no untimely death, so that people would be considered young *if* they were to die at 100 years of age, which, in reality, they will not.

Even a premillennial Isaiah commentator like J. N. Oswalt also sees that Isa 65:20 refers to untimely death. He summarizes the meaning of 65:20 as “no one will die without fulfilling all the days of a full life. In that kingdom, if someone were to die at *a hundred years* of age, they would be accounted as dying while still a *lad*,”²¹ which for Oswalt is a condition that will not happen. Of course, Oswalt sees that there would still be death, but that people would live hundreds of years, so that, theoretically, anyone who lived only a hundred years would be thought of as dying while still a youth. The only difference between Oswalt’s view and my own is that for him “the days of a full life” are limited to hundreds of years (as in the pre-flood period) but for me “a full life” refers to an unlimited, eternal life.

In the light of these observations, it is very difficult to say that Isa 65:17–19 and 65:25 are about the eternal new creation and that Isa 65:20–24 is about the millennium. If a premillennialist were to affirm that all of Isa 65:17–25 and 66:21–24 were also about the millennium, then this would be more consistent, and some do so argue,²² but others are more inconsistent.²³ However, so far we have seen that Isa 65:18, 19, and 20 form an unbreakable chain of portrayals picturing the eternal new creation and not some temporary millennial era. This argument from

²⁰ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 530 (cited also by Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come* [Ross-Shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2013], 36).

²¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 658, italics original.

²² The earliest version of this view is that of Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 81), who held that all of Isa 65:17–25 was only about the coming millennium. Premillennialists are not in agreement about which verses pertain to the eternal state and to the millennial epoch. For some examples, note the following: The New Scofield Reference Bible and P. L. Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1974), 92, view Isa 65:17 as referring to the eternal new creation and vv. 18–25 to the intermediate millennial age. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 229, 535, 544, 552, 561, understands Isa 65:17–19 to include the millennium and the eternal new cosmos, while relegating Isa 65:20–23, 25 to the millennial epoch (*ibid.*, 488–90, 503, 569). W. C. Kaiser, P. H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and M. T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 308–9, see Isa 65:17–19 to pertain to the eternal cosmos and vv. 20–25 to refer to the millennial state, primarily because they contend that the expressions of death in v. 20 must be taken to refer to actual death. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 656 (see also pp. 655–62) argues that in Isa 65:18 the prophet telescopes three periods and sees them broadly as one: the inaugurated new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), the renewed creation in the millennium (Rev 20:1–6), and the eternal new heavens and earth (Rev 21:1). Oswalt generally holds this for all of Isa 65:17–25. For the problem of such a threefold telescoping view, see the concluding section of this essay titled “The Nature of Eschatology and Its Significance for Isaiah 65:20.”

²³ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Commentary on Isaiah* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 191, who sees that Isa 65:18–25 refers to a millennium and v. 17 pertains to the eternal new heavens and earth.

the immediately preceding context is the strongest evidence against Isa 65:20 being about a temporary epoch during which death can occur. The remainder of this article will continue to elaborate on why Isa 65:20 does not describe such a temporary era.

III. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE ETERNAL NEW CREATION CONTEXT OF ISAIAH 65 IN LIGHT OF GENESIS 1–3

A second reason that Isa 65:20 is likely about the everlasting state is because the continuation of its thought in verses 21–22 is about the endless new world. Believers in the new creation will “plant vineyards” (v. 21; “planting” is repeated in v. 22). Verse 22 then says, “for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people.”²⁴ The Greek Bible (LXX) and the Aramaic Bible (Targum), the earliest existing interpretations of verse 22, interpret this tree as “the tree of life” from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22, 24). Literally, the Hebrew could be translated as “*the tree*” (since “tree” is preceded by the article in Hebrew), plausibly referring to the well-known tree in Eden. Admittedly, the article could be omitted, and the idea would merely be that people would live as long as an old tree lives (which is expressed by most translations, except for the Geneva Bible that renders it by “the tree”). If “*the tree of life*” is in mind, then it would refer to people living forever, since if Adam had eaten of “the tree of life,” he would have lived “forever” (Gen 3:22).

That a reference to Genesis 3 here is fitting is pointed to by the clearer allusion to Gen 3:14–15 in Isa 65:25, which narrates the curse on the serpent: “on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat . . . he [the seed of the woman] shall bruise you [the serpent] on the head.” Isaiah 65:25 has, “dust shall be the serpent’s food. They [including the serpent] shall do no evil or harm on all my holy mountain.”²⁵ This refers to the serpent being consummately defeated, so that there will be more harm or evil in the new age (which could not be true of the millennial age).

In addition to the allusion to the Genesis 3 serpent, there is likely another allusion to Genesis 3 with respect to the reversal of humanity’s labor being “sorrowful”²⁶ (Gen 3:16 [Geneva, KJV]; 3:17) and ultimately resulting in vanity due to

²⁴ Eng. rendering of the Heb.

²⁵ Among the numerous commentators who see this allusion in Isa 65:25 are J. Muilenburg, “The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66,” *IB* 5:757; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1975), 279; Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 662; W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 250; C. Seitz, “Isaiah 40–66,” *NIB* 6:544; Allan Harmon, *Isaiah* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 424; Mackay, *Isaiah*, 2:609. Gardner, “Isaiah 65:20: Centenarians or Millenarians?” 94, does not see an allusion to the Genesis 3 curse because, he claims, it is not people but the earth and the serpent that are cursed in Genesis 3 (though Gardner is reacting to those claiming that such an allusion can be found in Isa 65:20, her objection would appear applicable also to 65:23). However, it is clear in Genesis 3 that conceptually the man and woman also are under a curse, since they suffer from the effects of the curse (e.g. they are doomed to die in 3:19). Conceptually, death appears to be the major focus of the curse on humanity in Gen 2:17 and 3:3–4, 19.

²⁶ And note the reversed condition of “gladness” and “rejoicing” so that “there will no longer be . . . weeping and . . . crying” as a condition for all people living in the new creation in Isa 65:18.

death (see “not labor in vain” in Isa 65:23a; cf. Gen 3:17–19) and of the woman’s cursed labor pains (Gen 3:16)²⁷ being reversed into a “blessing” for her “seed” (Isa 65:23).²⁸ This blessing is expressed in the fact that the children will not be destined for “calamity” (Isa 65:23 in line with Gen 3:19) but “endure” forever like the “the new heavens and the new earth” (Isa 66:22).²⁹ This is a portrayal of the curse in reverse.³⁰ And, finally, Isa 65:17 (“I *create* a new *heavens* and a new *earth*”) alludes to Gen. 1:1 (“God *created* the *heavens* and the *earth*”),³¹ where the same Hebrew words for “create,” “heaven,” and “earth” occur. In fact, outside of Gen 1:1 and Isa 65:17, the combination of these three Hebrew words (for “create,” “heaven,” and “earth”) occurs only in Gen 2:3, as well as Deut 4:32,³² Isa 42:5, and Isa 45:12, 18, all of which refer back to Gen 1:1.³³ The “new heavens and new earth” of Isa 65:17 likely assumes the passing away of the old cosmos (as earlier in Isa 24:19–21 and 51:6³⁴) and the recreation, not of another temporary cosmos or of some escalated earthly period in continuity with the old earth that will pass away, but of a new everlasting cosmos.³⁵

The above allusions and echoes between Genesis 1–3 and Isaiah 65 may be summarized as follows:

²⁷ See J. L. Koole, *Isaiah*, vol. 3: *Isaiah Chapters 56–66* (Historical Commentary on the OT; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 461, who says that, on the basis of the MT reading of Isa 65:23a, there may be a link to Gen 3:16, which he later refers to as a “reminiscence” of Gen 3:16 (*ibid.*, 465).

²⁸ See Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 249, who sees the ideas in Isa 65:23 recalling the curse beginning in Genesis 3.

²⁹ Following for the most part here John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 212.

³⁰ A suggestion made by my OT colleague Jonny Gibson.

³¹ So Koole, *Isaiah*, 3:450, who sees Isa 65:17 as a “reminiscence” of Gen 1:1; G. A. F. Knight, *The New Israel: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 56–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 97, says Isa 65:17 is “an outflow ... from Gen 1:1.”

³² Though God is not said explicitly here to have created the “heavens.”

³³ The same three words occur together in Isa 45:8 referring to the new creation likely against the background of the first creation.

³⁴ Cf. also Isa 13:10, 13 and 34:4.

³⁵ Gardner, “Isaiah 65:20: Centenarians or Millenarians?,” 95, who proposes that the phrase “the sinner ... shall be accursed” in Isa 65:20 is an allusion to Job 24:18–19, where the same two Hebrew verb forms (קלל + אטח) occur together: “their portion *is cursed* on the earth ... Sheol [consumes] *those who have sinned*.” This is possible, but thirteen words separate “cursed” and “those who have sinned,” which makes a literary allusion unlikely. The combination of these lexical roots occurs elsewhere (Lev 24:15; Eccl 7:20) but with different senses than in Job and Isaiah.

Genesis 1–3	Isaiah 65
(1) Gen 1:1 (old creation) (2) Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24 (tree of life) (3) Gen 3:14–15 (serpent “will eat dust” and “will be bruised on the head”) (4) Gen 3:17–19 (labor will entail “sorrow” and be done in vain) (5) Gen 3:16 (the woman’s cursed labor pains: “in pain you shall bring forth children”) and Gen 3:19 (children are destined for death)	(1) Isa 65:17 (new creation) (2) Isa 65:22 (the tree) (3) Isa 65:25 (“dust shall be the serpent’s food” and the serpent “will do no evil or harm”) (4) Isa 65:19 (“there will no longer be ... weeping and crying”) and Isa 65:23a (“they shall not labor in vain”) (5) Isa 65:23 (“they will not bear <i>children</i> for calamity, for they are the seed of those blessed by the Lord” who will “endure” forever [Isa 65:22]) (the first three above references are allusions and the last two are echoes)

These surrounding Genesis 1 and 3 allusions and echoes point strongly to the “tree” of Isa 65:22 being an allusion to the “tree of life” in Gen 3:22. What may further favor a reference to “*the tree of life*” and a recapitulation of Eden in an everlasting new creation is Isaiah’s other prophecies of new creation earlier in the book, which picture a restoration of the Garden of Eden. For example, Isa 51:3 says, “Her [Israel’s] wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord,” which is followed by the phrase “*joy and gladness* [שִׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה] will be found in her,” which are noun forms of the same two verbs that are found in Isaiah 65.³⁶

Even if “the tree of life” were not in mind, the restoration of Eden is reflected because of the repeated references to “plant vineyards” (v. 21), “planting” (v. 22), and “tree” (v. 22). In addition to Isa 51:3, this fertility language of new creation (especially with respect to trees) occurs earlier in the book together with the notion of it lasting for an “eternal” time (not a temporary millennial era) and with the same Hebrew expressions of “joy,” found in Isaiah 65, and which we will find below (in the next section) in Isaiah 25, describing the eternal state. For example, Isa 55:12–13 speaks of people “going out *with joy* [בְּשִׂמְחָה]” and the flourishing of “the trees of the field” and of the “cypress” and “myrtle,” all of which will be “an *everlasting sign which will not be cut off*.” Likewise, Isa 60:15 speaks of God’s people who will be “an *everlasting pride, a joy* [מְשׁוֹשׁ] from generation to generation,” when “the days of their mourning *will be finished*” and “they will possess the land *forever*” as “the branch of God’s planting” (Isa 60:21; cf. also Isa 27:6). Isaiah 60:19–20 shows this context is about the eternal new creation.

So, even if “the tree of life” from Genesis 3 is not explicitly the thought (though the evidence points to it), the notion of an everlasting time of recapitulated

³⁶ See the following section; the noun form מְשׁוֹשׁ is also found in Isa 65:18.

fertility from Eden is in mind in Isa 65:21–22. The other allusions to Genesis 1–3 observed above enhance this conclusion. And, since verses 21–22 clearly continue the thought of the debated verse 20, then verse 20 should likely be construed as referring to the endless state of the new age. The thought of the preceding and following context of Isa 65:20 is about eternal and not temporary conditions. The thought of a temporary, non-eternal millennium, is, therefore likely not in mind in verse 20.

IV. THE ETERNAL NEW CREATION CONTEXT OF ISAIAH 65 IN LIGHT OF ISAIAH 25:7–10 AND 35:1–10

The eternal new creation context actually begins at Isa 65:13–16 and continues on to 65:17 and the following verses. It is apparent that Isa 65:13–14, 18, 25 are likely an inner-biblical development of Isa 25:7–9, the latter of which both premillennialists and amillennialists generally agree is about the final, everlasting new cosmos.³⁷ If Isaiah 65, indeed, is actually alluding to this Isaiah 25 passage, then there is little doubt that Isa 65:17–20 refers to an eternal new creation. Note the combination of unique verbal and thematic parallels between the two passages that point to this dependence of Isaiah 65 on Isaiah 25:

Isa 25:7–10a	Isa 65:13–14, 18, 25
<p>And on this <i>mountain</i> He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, And <u>the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces</u>, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; <i>let us rejoice and be glad</i> [נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה] in His salvation.” For the hand of the Lord will rest on this <i>mountain</i>. (note also “holy mountain” in 27:13).</p> <p>*Italics in both columns represents verbal parallels and solid underlining</p>	<p>^{13–14} Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry. Behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty. Behold, My servants <i>shall rejoice</i> [וְנִשְׂמְחוּ] but you shall be put to shame. Behold, My servants <u>shall shout joyfully</u> [וְרִנְנוּ] with a glad heart ...”</p> <p>^{16–17} “... because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight! For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.”</p> <p>^{18–19} “But <u>rejoice and be glad</u> [וְשִׂישׂוּ וְגִילוּ] forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem <i>for rejoicing</i> [וְצִילָה], and her people <u>for gladness</u> [מְשׂוֹשׁ]. <i>I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad</i></p>

³⁷ E.g. John Oswalt, a premillennialist, agrees that Isa 25:7–9 describes the eternal state, where there will no longer be death (*Isaiah*, 464–66).

<p>represents linguistic synonymous parallels.</p>	<p>[ישׁתִּי] in My people; and <u>there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying ...</u>²⁵ “The wolf and the lamb shall graze together. ... They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy <i>mountain</i>,” says the Lord.³⁸</p>
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The following verbal and thematic parallels can be observed between the two passages that cumulatively are unique in all of the OT:

(a) the new epoch occurs on a holy “mountain” (Isa 25:7, 10a and 65:25; cf. Isa 27:13);

(b) it will be a time of “rejoicing” and “gladness” (using the same Hebrew verbs יִלֵּג and שִׂמַח for these expressions³⁹);

(c) God “will remove the reproach of his people from all the earth” (Isa 25:6) and “the former troubles are forgotten” and “are hid from” God’s “sight” (Isa 65:16);

(d) it will be a time in which there will be no more crying (Isa 25:8 and 65:19);

(e) both speak of the condition of this new era lasting either “for all time” (Isa 25:8, the time “death” will be abolished) or “forever” (e.g. Isa 65:18, the time of “rejoicing”).

The reference to “rejoicing and being glad” in Isa 65:18–19 (mentioned three times there) is likely a verbal allusion to Isa 25:9. In addition to this and other linguistic parallels, the combination of the above five themes occurs, as far as I am aware, nowhere else in the OT except in Isaiah 25 and Isaiah 65. If Isaiah 65 is using Isaiah 25 with the same contextual idea, then Isaiah 65 is also about the eternal new creation, where also there will be no death. Though Isa 65:20 is not a specific development of Isaiah 25, the verses around verse 20 are dependent on Isaiah 25 and its eternal new creational idea. Thus, it is likely that verse 20 is to be understood to fit into a figurative description of the eternal new cosmos.

Likewise, in addition to Isaiah 25, Isa 35:1–10 (and, as we will see, Isa 51:11) is an important background for Isa 65:13–14, 18, 25,⁴⁰ which the Isaiah 65 passage also develops. In this respect, note that (1) Isa 35:10 also predicts a coming new creation and uses a combination of three of the four same Hebrew verbs for “rejoicing” and being “glad” in 35:1–2 (and some of the corresponding noun forms in

³⁸ Commentators generally acknowledge that Isa 65:25 makes direct reference back to Isa 11:6a and 11:9a.

³⁹ Isa 65:18a uses the verb שׂוֹשׂ (“rejoice”) as a synonym and 65:18b uses the noun מְשׂוֹשׂ (“rejoicing”) as another synonym.

⁴⁰ Following Gardner, “Isaiah 65:20: Centenarians or Millenarians?,” 89, on the Isaiah 35 text.

35:10) as in Isa 65:13–14, 18, 25; (2) the passage predicts that no “vicious beast will go up on it” (35:9; cf. 65:25); (3) there will be healing of the bodies of those restored to this new creation (35:5–6); and (4) the passage climaxes with the righteous having “*everlasting* joy on their heads ... and sorrow and sighing flee away” (Isa 35:10; Isa 51:11 quotes Isa 35:10 verbatim, including “*everlasting* joy”).⁴¹ This further points to verse 20 being a figurative portrayal of the unending new creation.

V. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FAVORING A FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH 65:20

The earliest interpretation of Isa 65:20, in the Septuagint, renders the first three parts of the verse in the following way: “By no means should there be there *one who dies* untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the young shall be a hundred years *old*, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years shall also be accursed.” The first three phrases fit with an eternal perspective of verse 20 but note especially that the Greek tones down the Hebrew “the youth will die at the age of one hundred” by rephrasing with “the young shall be a hundred years old.” This can be understood more easily than the Hebrew of Isa 65:20 to indicate figuratively that there will be no more untimely death in the new world, since all will live forever (in the light of the preceding and following context), that is, in the eternal age one will be thought but a youth who reaches the age of 100. Living a “hundred years” without the mention of dying can naturally be understood not as living an actual “hundred years” but living a very long time, indeed, forever. However, it

⁴¹ It is unlikely coincidental that Rev 21:4 also alludes, not only to Isa 25:8 but also Isa 35:10 and 51:11 together with Isa 65:19–20 (on which see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 1049–50, and later in this essay). Note the “*everlasting*” nature of this “joy” and corresponding lack of sorrow, which is strikingly similar to Isa 65:18–19. The word for “*everlasting*” in Isa 35:10 and 51:11 is עולם. Outside of these two verses, the word occurs 41 times in Isaiah: according to my own analysis, once the word refers to a long lifetime (Isa 44:7), 7 times it refers to perpetuity, 12 times it refers to a long time in the past, and 22 times it refers to “eternity” with respect to what continues everlastingly (these four general ranges of meaning are cited by Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 6:300–307). Many of the “perpetuity” uses are close in meaning to “eternity.” The use in Isa 35:10 and 51:11 appears best to fit into the “eternity” uses. The phrase “*everlasting* joy” also occurs in Isa 61:7, where it is in parallel with “an *everlasting* covenant” that God will make with Israel in the eschatological time of restoration. It is unlikely that עולם means a “long but not everlasting time” in Isa 35:10 and 51:11, since they are in a restoration to new creation context, a period beyond which the prophet does not ever look in Isaiah 40–66 (on which accordingly see the following uses of עולם in these restoration contexts outside of Isa 35:10: Isa 9:7; 32:17; 51:6; 51:8; 54:8; 55:3; 55:13; 56:5; 59:21; 60:15; 60:19; 60:20; 60:21; 61:7; 61:8). The same Hebrew phrase “eternal joy” appears in 1QS 4:7, where it refers to an “eternal joy”: the righteous Qumran members will have “eternal blessings and *everlasting* joy through life everlasting. They will receive a crown of glory with a robe of honor in everlasting light.” 4Q427f7i.17 uses the same phrase clearly in a context of eternal blessings, among which “deceit [has ended] and there is no ignorant perverseness,” “mourning [has ended] and grief flees” and there will be “healing for all the eternal ages. Iniquity is ended, agony ceases as there is no sickness ...”) (4Q427f7ii.5–6); 4Q427f7ii.11 then repeats that “eternal joy is in their dwellings, perpetual glory without ceasing.” 1QH 26:30 and 27:5 uses the same phrase also in a context of eternal blessings. All five Qumran passages may be alluding either to Isa 35:10, 51:11, or 61:7, or may collectively allude to all three. The Hebrew phrase occurs elsewhere in Qumran and probably refers to everlasting joy, but the above passages are the clearest contexts where that meaning can be ascertained with more confidence.

is true that the Greek OT also refers to a “sinner who dies at a hundred years shall be accursed,” which, on the other hand, could support a premillennial view, but it might suggest a condition in the eternal state that will not, in reality, take place. Or, as noted earlier, believers could be tagged as “sinners” as a continual reminder forever about from what they have been redeemed.

Understanding the last part of the verse in this way is broadly analogous to Rev 3:5: “the one overcoming ... I will not erase his name from the book of life.” Some commentators view this to imply that some people who are truly redeemed will actually lose their eternal salvation. That is, some were written in the “book of life,” but their name will be erased because they do not persevere in their faith. However, it can just as easily, and more probably, indicate an assurance that if anyone is redeemed that person will never be wiped out of the “book of life.” It could represent a hypothetical condition that will never take place for the genuine believer.⁴²

Likewise, the end of Isa 65:20 can be understood similarly: that “no longer from there will there be an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days ... and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed.” “If one lived only 100 years, people would think that person was under some curse. Of course, people will not live to be just 100 years old and people will not be under a curse in God’s newly created world.”⁴³ The verse thus “illustrates the point that people will live a very long time.”⁴⁴ The point would be that not to “live but a few days” and to “live out one’s days,”⁴⁵ and that all will live beyond “one hundred,” is not to imply death but a very long life, indeed eternal, life. Isa 65:19 has spoken of there being no more “weeping and crying” in the new creation, and Isa 65:20 continues this idea and gives the greatest example of what people grieved over in the old world—death, over which they will no longer grieve, as 65:19 has indicated.

It is important to highlight, as we saw at the beginning of this essay, that the Hebrew of Isa 65:20 is to be straightforwardly translated as “there will not be *from there* an infant who lives but a few days.” As noted above, “from there” refers to “Jerusalem” in verse 19, where “the voice of weeping and the sound of crying” is “no longer heard.” This means that verse 20 continues to describe the conditions of verse 19, where crying has to do with aspects of the curse from the old world, especially death, which no longer exists, as verse 20 elaborates. That “there *will no longer be*” (weeping and crying) in verse 19 is the “negative counterpart of ‘forever’” in verse 18,⁴⁶ both of which continue the thought of the “new earth” in verse 17, where “the former troubles will not be remembered or come to mind.” And “there

⁴² For a defense of this interpretation, see Beale, *Revelation*, 278–82.

⁴³ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 722.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ A straightforward rendering of the Hebrew of this phrase would be an elderly man “who does not fill out his days” (אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָמָיו). It is possible that this is an allusion to Exod 23:26: “I will fill the number of your days” (אֶת־מִסְפַּר יְמֵיךָ אֲמַלֵּא), on which see the discussion in the closing excursus below.

⁴⁶ Mackay, *Isaiah*, 2.605.

will no longer be” (“heard”) in verse 20 is the counterpart to the eternal “there will no longer be” (weeping and crying) in verse 19. As we concluded in the introductory section, Isa 65:17–20 are an unbreakable chain of descriptions depicting the eternal new creation and not some temporary (i.e. millennial) era, which will involve death, suffering, and ultimate destruction at the end. Therefore, whatever verse 20 is saying, it has to be understood in some way as describing the eternal state.

1. *Syntactical problems in Isa 65:20.* The most significant difficulty for my interpretation of Isa 65:20 is the statement in the Hebrew text at the end of the verse (65:20c–d) that “the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed.”

Isa 65:20c–d (English)	Isa 65:20c–d (Hebrew)
65:20c: for the young man shall die a hundred years old, 65:20d: and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.	כִּי הַנְּעוּר בְּיָמָאָה שְׁנָה יָמוּת וְהַחֹסֵא בְּיָמָאָה שְׁנָה יִקְלָל:

Of course, as an isolated part of verse 20, it can easily be viewed to be depicting actual death. And premillennial interpreters all affirm or, better, assume that verse 20 refers to actual physical death, so that on this basis they conclude that it must be referring to a premillennial state.⁴⁷ But as we have just seen, verse 20’s “no longer” continues the eternal “no longer” of verse 19 and signals that, at least, verses 20a–b are about eternal not temporary millennial realities. In this light, verse 20 should read “no longer [for eternity] from there [the New Jerusalem] will be an infant who lives but a few days.” But this eternal “no longer from there” of verse 20a also carries over to the following clause of verse 20b: “*or no longer [for eternity] will there be from there* an old man who does not live out his days.” Verse 20c and verse 20d are introduced by a כִּי, which is either causal (“because”), explanatory (“inasmuch as”) or, more likely, adversative.⁴⁸ Should the “no longer” of verse 20a be carried over to these two final clauses with the following translation: “*but [or “because”] no longer [for eternity] from there* will the youth die at the age of one hundred, and *no longer [for eternity] from there* shall the one be cursed who does not reach the age of one hundred”⁴⁹ Syntactically, this is not likely.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ So, e.g., D. K. Campbell and J. L. Townsend, “Forward,” in *A Case for Premillennialism* (ed. D. K. Campbell and J. L. Townsend; Chicago: Moody, 1992), 8; Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 308–9; and David Allen, “The Millennial Return of Christ,” in *The Return of Christ* (ed. D. L. Allen and S. W. Lemke; Nashville: B&H, 2011), 81.

⁴⁸ See Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4:385, 387 for these common uses of כִּי.

⁴⁹ The NLT sees the “no longer” carrying over to v. 20c: “no longer will people be considered old at one hundred.”

At least, as we just noted, we can say that the **כִּי** clause in Isa 65:20 introduces a causal (“because”), explanatory (“inasmuch as,” “in that”) or, more probably, an adversative (“but,” “rather”) notion: “*but [or “for”] the youth will die at the age of one hundred.*”⁵¹ Furthermore, it may be helpful to survey elsewhere in the OT the syntactical construction found in Isa 65:20: **לֹא** + the imperfect + **עוֹד** + a following coordinating conjunction **כִּי**, which introduces a new clause. This construction also occurs eleven times in the prophets, where the **כִּי** almost always introduces an adversative clause supporting the preceding clause, though a causal idea is usually included and subordinated within the adversative notion.⁵² In each case, the content of the **כִּי** clause concerns the same time and a parallel antithetical theme of what precedes.

The nearest use in Isa 62:4 is a good example of this: “*it will no longer be said [עוֹד . . . לֹא־יֵאמַר] to you ‘Forsaken’ nor to your land will it any longer be said [לֹא־יֵאמַר עוֹד] ‘Desolate;’ but [כִּי, or “for”] you will be called ‘my delight is in her’ and your land ‘married’ for [כִּי] the Lord delights in you.*” The future time of Israel’s “no longer being said to be forsaken” and “no longer being said to be desolate” is contrasted with (**כִּי**) *the same future time* when God will “delight in her” and be “married” to her.⁵³ Also the “no longer” clauses and the **כִּי** clause *pertain to the same*

⁵⁰ Syntactically, it is difficult to know if this rendering with an ellipsis is plausible, since several observations pose problems for its viability. First, ellipses generally continue with a **ו**, as is the case in the second clause of v. 20, but there is an intervening **כִּי** between the first two and the last two clauses of v. 20. Second, if an ellipsis of the “no longer will there be from there” phrase of v. 20 is to be assumed, then why carry over only the “no longer from there” phrase and not the entire phrase including the verb “to be” (**לֹא־יְהִיָּה מִשָּׁם עוֹד**)? Finally, even if one accepted that the verb **יְהִיָּה** in the 3rd and 4th clauses of v. 20 should be supplied, it would compete with the verbs “will die” and “will be cursed” (**יָמוּת / יִקָּלַל**) that are already there in each of these clauses, resulting in an impossibly awkward translation (e.g., v. 20c would have to be translated as “but no longer will there be from there the youth will die at the age one of hundred”). Thus, it is possible but not probable that such an ellipsis is to be supplied with the initial phrase of v. 20a, “no longer will there be from there.” Could merely the “no longer” phrase be carried over from v. 20a? Possibly, but the problem with the intervening **כִּי** poses a syntactical problem for carrying it over, as noted above with carrying over the fuller clause of v. 20a. (I am grateful to my research assistant, Danillo Santos, for the substance of this paragraph.)

⁵¹ See Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4:387, who prefers the adversative use in Isa 65:20. It is generally recognized that after a negative statement that **כִּי** introduces an adversative clause, on which see C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 303; *GKC* 500; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), 603.

⁵² Isa 54:4–5; 62:4–5; Jer 22:11–12; 23:36; Ezek 7:13; 12:23; 12:24–25; 23: 27–28; 26:14; Hos 1:6; Amos 7:13; cf. also Nah 2:1 (supplying a synonym for the **כִּי**). The focus of these **כִּי** references in the prophets is upon an adversative idea but usually a causative notion also makes sense, so that the latter is included within the former; however, Ezek 26:14 and Amos 7:13 focus on the causative. See Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 603, who note that “the adversative sense [of **כִּי**] probably derives from the causal one, and must have developed in cases where there is virtual equivalence between “for” and “but.” This likely explains why many English translations render the **כִּי** as “for” in Isa 65:20, though some translate it with an emphatic “indeed” (HCSB and NET) while others leave it untranslated (JPS, NIV, and NLT). None, as far as I am aware, renders it as “but” or “rather.” The construction also occurs seven times outside the prophets (Gen 32:28; 35:10; Exod 9:29; Deut 10:16–17; Esth 2:14; Ps 83:4–5 [= MT 83:5–6]; Eccl 4:13–14), where it is causal, resultative, or exceptive, and only once is it clearly adversative.

⁵³ See Clines, *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4:387, who takes the **כִּי** in Isa 62:4 as adversative.

theme of Israel being married to Yahweh (this is first negatively stated in v. 4a and positively in v. 4b). The very last clause of Isa 62:4 then says, “because [כי] the Lord delights in you, and to him your land will be married.” This second and final כי clause in 62:4 gives the basis (or explanation) either for the “no longer” clause or for the preceding adversative כי clause in 62:4, but regardless it pertains to the same time and theme of the preceding clauses: the future marriage of the Lord to Israel. *Thus, the themes and temporal scope of the “no longer” and the two כי clauses are the same: both concern Israel’s future married relationship to God.*

Interestingly, the only other use of this syntactical construction in Isaiah is in Isa 54:4–5, where both the אל + the imperfect + עוד clause and the following כי clause pertain to the same future time of Israel’s marriage to Yahweh: “and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no longer but [or “for”] your husband is [will be] your maker” (Isa 54:6–7 make clearer that this is future and about marriage).

In the light of the uses of this אל + the imperfect + עוד + a following כי construction, it is highly probable that Isa 65:20c–d is about the same future eternal time of 65:20a–b. If this is correct, then whatever these last two clauses of Isa 65:20c–d mean, they could not mean that actual death will take place in that future time, since it is an eternal time. Thus, 65:20 c–d should be understood figuratively in some way (what kind of figure of speech this is will be discussed below).

In addition, if the כי clause that introduces verses 20c–d gives an adversative synchronous condition to (or cause for) verse 20a–b, it would not make sense for verses 20c–d to refer to actual death taking place. If actual death were being referred to, then we would have the following contradictory train of thought: “there *will be no death* in the eternal state (v. 20a–b) but there *will be death* in the eternal state (v. 20c–d).” It is highly improbable that verse 20 contains such a contradiction.

2. *What kinds of figures of speech are in Isa 65:20?* What are the precise figures of speech in Isa 65:20? It is significant that verse 20 delineates three age groups over which verse 19 says “there will no longer be ... weeping and crying:” infant, old, and youth. The opposite age groups of “infant” and the “old man” are a figure of speech called merism (the totality of polarity), indicating all inhabitants of Jerusalem. All three groups likely refer to everyone who lives in the new Jerusalem, which verses 18 and 19 refer to as all the “people” (the third element of the “youth” may be added to enhance the notion of totality by giving the middle element of the spectrum or together with “infant” be a further contrast with “old man”).⁵⁴ Merisms using “youth” and “old man” together with other contrasting words occur, at least, seventeen times in the OT and always indicate the totality of a people group (usually Israel) who all share the very same blessing or judgment.⁵⁵ So, likely all the

⁵⁴ See E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Dublin: Brown & Nolan, 1943), 312, who says “the two terms ‘infant of days’ and ‘old man’ are intended to include all the inhabitants” of “Sion,” apparently understanding the terms as a merism (stating opposites to include everything in between).

⁵⁵ Combined references elsewhere in the OT to “young, old, and children” (and usually including other groups such as man and wife or bride and bridegroom) occur elsewhere in the OT to refer in context to the totality of a people group (Gen 19:4; Exod 10:9; Deut 28:50; Josh 6:21; 1 Sam 15:3; 2 Chr

parts of the group in Isa 65:20 share exactly the same blessing of long (eternal) life. The totality of the group is also called “My people” (Isa 65:19; 22), “her people” (Isa 65:18), “My chosen ones” (Isa 65:22), and “the seed of those blessed by the Lord and their descendants with them” (Isa 65:23).

Accordingly, verse 20a–b is saying that all inhabitants of the new Jerusalem “no longer” will die an untimely death in the eternal new creation, so that no one will “weep and cry” at such death (v. 19), since even the death of a very old man (v. 20b) brings mourning. But in contrast to the old Jerusalem’s inhabitants of different literal ages, the inhabitants of the eternal new world get there through new creational resurrection, so that the merism indicating “all inhabitants” of the New Jerusalem are all the same age—they all have been raised together at the same eschatological time into eternal consummated spiritual and physical life (as Isa 25:7–8⁵⁶ and 26:19⁵⁷ have said and the parallel of 66:22b has implied⁵⁸). This would mean that an infant or an old man who no longer dies an untimely death is a figure of speech called meiosis or litotes, by which one thing is lessened to magnify another.⁵⁹ Even the full life of an elderly man from the old world who finally dies becomes the lesser temporal reality that points to the greater temporal reality of eternal life. In the old world, untimely death is one of the most explicit things over which people “wept and cried” (v. 19b). But, of course, in the old world there was mourning over infant death and even mourning over a person who grew up and lived a long life and then died. Thus, now infant death, and any other kind of premature or untimely death or any death at all, will not occur in the new creation, since nothing will occur there that would be a cause for “weeping and crying,” as verse 19 has said. Of course, there will not be infants or elderly people in the eternal new creation, since they merely are a merism referring to all resurrected people in the new world.⁶⁰ The resulting idea would be that no one will be prevented from enjoying life nor fail to live a complete and full life (eternal life; paraphrasing Motyer from above).⁶¹

36:17; Esth 3:13; Ps 148:11–12; Jer 6:11; 31:13; 44:7; 51:22; Lam 2:21; 5:14; Ezek 9:6; Joel 2:16, 28). Eight of these uses combine the same Hebrew word for “old man” (זָקֵן) and “youth” (נֶעַר) as in Isa 65:20, while six have “old man” (זָקֵן) and a synonym (בְּחֹרֵר) for the Hebrew word used for “youth” (נֶעַר) in Isa 65:20. The remaining three merisms either include “old man” (זָקֵן) or a cognate word (e.g. עוֹלָל for “infant” (עוֹלָל) used in Isa 65:20).

⁵⁶ Recall that we have observed that Isa 25:7–10a have been developed in Isa 65:13–14, 18, 25.

⁵⁷ Isa 26:19 prophesies, “Your dead will live, your corpses will rise, you who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy.”

⁵⁸ Isa 66:22: “For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure [for eternity] before me, says the Lord, *so your offspring and your name will endure.*”

⁵⁹ E.g. David lessens his own stature by asking Saul if he is pursuing him as “a dead dog, a single flea” in order to highlight that he is the opposite—the great heir apparent to Israel’s throne (1 Sam 24:14).

⁶⁰ This answers the objection by some that those viewing v. 20 to be “exclusively about the eternal state cannot adequately explain the ongoing existence of physical birth and physical death as portrayed in this passage” (Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*, 45).

⁶¹ Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 202, followed by C. P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 293, contends that Isa 65:20 is figurative for incalculably long life, which he interprets as eternal life. This is possible, but it is more likely that no untimely death and enjoyment of

Likewise, though the “no longer will be” formula does not carry over linguistically or syntactically into verse 20c–d, conceptually, as we have seen, these last two clauses pertain to the same eternal temporal theme as verse 19 and verse 20a–b, so that we could paraphrase verse 20c–d as follows: “But [in the eternal state] the youth will die at the age of one hundred and [in the eternal state] will the one who does not reach the age of one hundred be accursed.” The adversative “but” (ב) contrasts the fact of there being no untimely death in the eternal new creation (v. 20a–b) with there being long life in the eternal age (one hundred years figuratively representing long life—indeed, eternal life). If this is correct, then each of the four clauses in Isa 65:20 make sense as describing old world conditions, which will not happen literally in the eternal age but point to greater eternal realities. Thus, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem from verses 19–20b continue to be in mind in verse 20c–d (this is the figurative meaning of the merism discussed above, of which verse 20c–d is a part). If this is on the right track, then it would necessitate that the following phrases in verses 20c–d would be an eternal reference.

Thus, we can say that “the youth” who “will die at the age of one hundred” would be figurative for someone who *would be considered* a youth who died at one hundred, a condition that, in fact, would not happen in the new era,⁶² since all would live eternally as resurrected beings. As with the first two clauses of verse 20, this would also be a figure of meiosis or litotes by which a hundred-year life of a person (which would be considered young in the pre-flood age of the old world) becomes a lesser period of time of life that is designed to magnify a greater period—indeed, eternal—time of life. In the light of this unending period of eternal life, anyone who died at one hundred (which will not happen) would be considered a youth.

If the phrase “the youth will die at the age of one hundred, and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed” is taken strictly literally, then it means that all youths will die at one hundred or less,⁶³ which would contradict a strictly literal view of all old men living out their days (v. 20b) and of all who do not reach the age of one hundred being cursed.⁶⁴ In other words, if all

full life is uppermost in mind, which we see as pointing to eternal life. See J. H. Sailhamer, “Evidence from Isaiah 2,” in *A Case for Premillennialism*, 100, who says that “even as figurative language there is a crucial difference between ‘eternal life’ and ‘dying at a ripe old age.’” Sailhamer sees this to be supporting a temporary millennial state, while I see it as a litotes pointing to a very long, indeed, eternal life.

⁶² Paraphrasing the above figurative interpretation of Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 530.

⁶³ “Youth” in v. 20c likely carries over to and includes those considered to be cursed in v. 20d.

⁶⁴ Indeed, on a literal reading, each of the groups (infants, old, and cursed) refer to “all” in the group, so that, on a literal reading and in light of the immediate context, it would appear likely that “the youth” refers to all youths or at least all youths who are not cursed by not reaching one hundred. The article “the” before “youth” is probably a generic article that “marks out ... a class of persons,” i.e. the young, as a collective unity (Waltke and O’Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, 244–45; likewise, van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 191; and GKC 406 [§126 1–m], who notes that general names with the article are used “as collectives in the singular to denote the sum total of individuals belonging to the class.” This fits with the above-mentioned OT combinations of “young, old, and children” (usually including other groups such as man and wife, or bride and bridegroom) that refer in

youths will die at one hundred or less, then there would be no old men to live out their days. So, even the premillennial literalist must take the phrase about “the youth” figuratively to some degree or paraphrase it in some sense so it would be harmonious with their view: e.g. “some youths will die at the age of a hundred” or “one would be considered a youth who dies at the age of one hundred” (v. 20d). Furthermore, Isa 65:22 says all of God’s “people” will live as long as an old “tree,” which most premillennialists agree is some hundreds of years old, not strictly a hundred years. If so, even such a reading of “some youths dying at the age of one hundred” would be too literal, since it would contradict this statement in verse 22.

Indeed, again to paraphrase Motyer on verse 20c–d, according to our proposed figurative interpretation, this does not imply that death will still be present (contradicting Isa 25:7–8) but rather affirms that over the whole of life, as we should now say from infancy to old age, the power of death will be destroyed. To attempt to say that verse 20 refers to a very long but temporal physical life, ending eventually in death and alluding to the very long lifetimes of the pre-flood people does not take into consideration the eternal context of Isa 65:18–20b (including its development of the eternal context of Isaiah 25, which affirms there will be no death in the eternal state), especially 65:19’s assertion that “there will no longer be ... the voice of weeping and the sound of crying,” since there will be “eternal rejoicing” (v. 18). If verse 20 says there will be death in the period described by verse 19, then there would be “crying” in verse 19 and the two verses would be in stark contradiction.

3. *What kinds of figures of speech are in Isa 65:23?* The last phrase of verse 20 needs a little further comment by focusing on the parallel in Isa 65:23. We contend that Isa 65:20 affirms that there will be no “curse” on the “one who does not reach the age of one hundred” because no one, indeed, will be cursed in the eternal state and, thus, no one will die before the age of one hundred but will live forever, just as no “youth will die at the age of one hundred.” Indeed, Isa 65:23 says that women will not “bear children for calamity because they are the seed of those blessed by the Lord, and their descendants with them.” “Calamity” (בְּהִלָּה) refers to death here, as it does in its three other uses elsewhere (Lev 26:16; Jer 15:8; Ps 78:33). Does this merely refer to premature death of infants or young people, or does it refer to there being no death at all? The new creational parallel of Isa 66:22–24 points strongly to there not being any death at all for the godly “seed,” since it refers to an eternal time: “‘For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘So your seed and your name will endure [i.e. endure forever].’”

Here again in Isaiah 66 is reference to “the new heavens and earth, which I will make,” a virtual quotation from Isa 65:17. Then it says that this new creation “will endure before” God, and since people are part of that new creation, they will endure in the same way: “so your offspring (זֶרַע, or “seed,” same word as in 65:23)

context to the totality of people in Israel, a nation, or the world, each member of the group representing a particular class that makes up the totality.

and your name will endure.” Is this a mere temporary but long endurance in a millennium, which will pass away? Those who worship God (Isa 66:23) “shall go forth and look on the corpses of men who have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire will not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

The godly will look upon unbelievers who suffer a judgment in which they “will not die” and “their fire will not be quenched.” Since the eternal judgment of death for unbelievers endures forever, so will the godly “endure” forever in observing them. Isaiah 66:22–24 is thus about the eternal new creation, which points heavily to Isa 65:17 and 23 being about the eternal state. If this is correct, then it also suggests that the “curse” of death in Isa 65:20 should be understood figuratively, since the promise of no death in 65:23 and its parallel in 66:22–24 refer to eternal conditions, where there will never be death for the godly.⁶⁵ This is supported by remembering that “not laboring in vain nor bearing children for calamity” is part of the reverse of the curse in Gen 3:16, 19. Likewise, Isa 65:22’s reference to “the tree of life” (LXX, Targum, and implied in the MT) explains that the ceasing of untimely death in 65:20a is to be understood not as an extended temporary period but to be an eternal ceasing of untimely death.⁶⁶

In line with our interpretation of Isa 65:17–22, 2 Pet 3:13 applies Isa 65:17 and Isa 66:22 not to a millennium but only to the eternal “new heavens and new earth.” Furthermore, Isa 66:24 refers to the beginning of eternal punishment, which would correspond antithetically with an eternal new creation in verses 22–23 (where references to eternal blessings are stated). In this respect, just as the “the new heavens and new earth will endure” forever (66:22a), so also will the “descendants” (“seed”) there “endure” forever (66:22b). These eternally living “descendants” (“seed,” יָרַע) are likely to be identified with the “descendants” (“seed,” יָרַע) and “children” of Isa 65:23: “they shall not labor in vain, or bear *children*”⁶⁷ for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, and their descendants [seed] with them.”⁶⁸ The implied “children” and “offspring” (צִאָּרְוֹת) together

⁶⁵ Many commentators affirm that Isa 66:22–24 is about the eternal new heavens and earth: e.g. Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 543–44; Young, *Isaiah* 3:535–36; and Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 691–93, though the latter understands the millennium to be included in a telescoping manner.

⁶⁶ So also J. van Ruiten, “The Intertextual Relationship between Isaiah 65,17–20 and Revelation 21,1–5b,” *EstBib* 51 (1993): 503–4, who sees the same exegetical link between Isa 65:20a and 65:22. The eternal “days” (יָמִים) of 65:22 may develop explicitly the period or “days” (יָמִים) in which there will not be untimely death of an infant or of an old man in 65:20a–b. The only other use of יָמִים in Isaiah 65 is in 65:5: the ungodly “are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day,” which the Targum identifies as the fire of “Gehenna” and which Targ. 66:24 expands into the following: in “Gehenna” “their breaths [the sinful men who rebelled] shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched.” The Targum thus sees the “fire of Gehenna” in Isa 65:5 to be an eternal fire. The MT likely also sees the “fire” of Isa 65:5 to be the eternal “fire” of 66:24.

⁶⁷ The original wording is “they will bear,” so that “children” is implied.

⁶⁸ Premillennialists believe that Isa 65:23 is about birth in the new millennial age, and, since there will be no birth in the eternal new heavens and earth, this verse must also be about the millennial epoch preceding the eternal new heavens and earth.

with “descendants” (“seed,” זרע)⁶⁹ are in synonymous parallelism. Certainly, “in vain” and “calamity” in 65:23 refer to the effects of the curse on the old world that will no longer affect God’s “offspring” and “seed” in this new epoch.⁷⁰ Thus, especially in the light of Isa 66:22, the reference to “children” born that will not ever suffer “calamity” (the curse of death; 65:23) “because they are the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants [seed] with them” is a figurative way of saying that God’s seed in the eternal cosmos will not suffer a curse but live forever. The synonymy of the implied “children” and “offspring”/“seed” shows that a strict class of infants is not exclusively in mind but also includes adult believing Israelites, since “seed” can include both. Thus, the implied notion of “children” and “descendants” (“seed,” זרע) are overlapping ideas. The focus here is on the eschatological Jerusalem’s “seed,” which will live forever in the eternal cosmos. The reference to “descendants” (“seed,” זרע) elsewhere in Isaiah outside of chapters 65 and 66 also refers to their “eternal” existence, which would exclude physical death, and thus could not be compatible with a temporary existence, e.g. in a millennium.⁷¹ This “seed” in Isaiah 40–66 typically refers to believing Israelites in exile who will be restored⁷² into a new creation, so the focus is not on infants or children. At the time of the eschatological restoration, Israel will bear spiritual “sons” and “seed” who “will possess nations” (Isa 54:1–3; Gal 4:27–29 identifies the Isa 54:1–3 “son” and “seed” as those “born according to the Spirit”). This human seed is actually the spiritual seed produced by God’s Spirit (Isa 44:3: “I will pour out my Spirit on your seed”). Accordingly, the point in Isa 65:23 is not that there will be actual infants or children in this new millennial age but that God’s believing “children” or “seed” will live forever in the eternal age.

Similarly, that “no evil or harm” shall occur in this new age (Isa 65:25) alludes to the same notion that no aspect of the old-world curses will affect that new age.” Also, the second part of Isa 65:17 says, “The former things [of the old creation] shall not be remembered or come to mind.” But if this refers merely to a millennium on an old (but renewed) earth, then the fact that death will occur during the

⁶⁹ These two Hebrew words זרע and זרע are synonymous in Isaiah 40–66 (see Isa 44:3; 48:19; 61:9).

⁷⁰ E.g. we noted above that the Hebrew word “calamity” (בְּהִלָּה) refers in its other OT uses to the suffering of death. The LXX translates the word with “curse” (κατάρα), which is often associated with death (e.g. see Deut 28:45; 30:19; Sir 41:9).

⁷¹ Isa 45:19 refers to “seed of Jacob,” which Isa 45:17 says will be “saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation” and “shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.” Isaiah 48:19 mentions Israel’s “seed” twice and says that “their name would never be cut off or destroyed from my presence.” Isaiah 59:21 says “my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your seed, nor from the mouth of your seed’s seed ... from now and forever.” Isaiah 61:9 refers twice to Israel’s “seed,” “whom the Lord has blessed” (cf. 65:23, “seed of the blessed of the Lord”), 61:7 says “in their land ... they shall have everlasting joy,” and 61:8 says that God “will make an everlasting covenant with them.” The last two references are especially clear, since the seed will never cease in holding to God’s word (Isa 59:21), and they will never cease rejoicing” (Isa 61:7, 9), but if these references referred to a “seed” living in a temporary millennium in which they would die, they would, indeed, cease holding to God’s word and they would cease rejoicing.

⁷² H. D. Preuss, “זרע, zārā’,” *TDOT* 4:160.

millennium (according to the premillennial view of 65:20) and that death will occur again when Christ's human enemies are defeated at the end of the millennium, appears to contradict the promise in 65:17b that "the former things" of the old creation "shall not be remembered or come to mind." Indeed, the worst feature of the old creation—death—will "come to mind" during the millennium. In the light of this essay so far, I do not think this is the preferable position to hold.

4. *Conclusion to the figures of speech used in Isa 65:23.* Therefore, all the statements in Isa 65:20 are better taken figuratively to refer to there being no untimely death for *all resurrected inhabitants* of the new earth in the new eternal age, especially in view of what has been argued so far in this essay: (1) the resolution of the translational problem in 65:20 could support premillennialism but, as we think more likely, fits better into an amillennial view; (2) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–19 and 65:21–25 points to the probability that 65:20 is also about the eternal new creation, the conditions of which are irreversible, and not a temporary millennium, which can be reversed or pass away; (3) the use of Genesis 3 in Isaiah 65 points to an eternal new creation context; (4) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–25 is supported further by its use of Isa 25:7–10, which is about there being no death any longer in the new, eternal age; (5) and as we will now see directly below, John's figurative interpretation of Isa 65:20 is a reference to the eternal new world, where there will no longer be death.⁷³

VI. THE USE OF ISAIAH 65 IN REVELATION 21:1–22:4 POINTS TO ISAIAH 65:20 BEING A DEPICTION OF THE ETERNAL NEW CREATION

Another reason that Isa 65:20 is likely about the everlasting state is because of the way in which Isaiah 65 is used in Rev 21:1–22:4. For example, Isa 65:17 and 66:22 are clearly alluded to in Rev 21:1 ("I saw a new heaven and a new earth"). The conclusion of Rev 21:4 that "the first things have passed away" calls to mind again the wording of Isa 65:17 (together with Isa 43:18), with which Rev 21:1 led off: "the first heaven and the first earth passed away." Both of these uses of Isaiah 65 by John refer to the eternal new creation.

Similarly, Isa 65:19 together with 65:20 is alluded to in Rev 21:4. First, Isa 65:19 is alluded to in Rev 21:4c ("there shall no longer be any mourning or crying"), since the Isaiah passage also says that in the new creation and eschatological Jerusalem "there shall no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping or the voice of crying,"

⁷³ Eusebius of Caesarea believed that Isa 65:19–20 refers to the final "resurrection of the dead," when "everyone shall be in the prime of life, so that there shall be found among them neither an *untimely* infant who has not grown up nor one who is spent and who has grown old. But all shall be equal in age, because all shall come into existence at one time in the resurrection." He applies the first three clauses of Isa 65:20 to believers; he translates the last phrase of Isa 65:20 as "the sinner shall also be a hundred years old, and he shall be accursed," and applies it to unbelievers who also will be bodily resurrected and "be delivered over to 'punishment'" (*Commentary on Isaiah* [Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013], 311–12, italics removed).

which expresses irreversible eternal, new world conditions.⁷⁴ Second, Isa 65:20a says “no longer shall there be” unnecessary or untimely “death” in the end-time Jerusalem (in line with a figurative reading proposed above), as in the old world, which appears to be the basis for the expression “there shall no longer be death” also in Rev 21:4b, which also describes the New Jerusalem.⁷⁵ Consequently, even the formula “there will be no more” (οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι) is repeated twice in Rev 21:4, and this repetition derives from the twofold use of the formula in Isa 65:19–20, which is a viable translation of the Hebrew of both verses (which the NASB renders “there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping” [65:19] and “no longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days”⁷⁶ [Isa 65:20]). As we have seen earlier, Isa 65:20 continues to describe the eternal conditions of the new world from Isa 65:17–19. John in Rev 21:4 testifies to Isa 65:19–20 being about an eternal state and not a temporary millennial era.

Thus, John’s double mention of the formula “there shall no longer be” is likely based on the double formula in Isa 65:19 and 65:20, viewing both to be portraying the eternal new earth. While the double formula is used elsewhere in the prophets within the space of one or two verses (e.g. among several uses, see Jer 3:16–17; Ezek 29:15–16; 34:28–29; 37:22–23⁷⁷), Isa 65:19–20 is one of only two places in Isaiah that the formula “there shall be no longer” occurs twice within two verses.⁷⁸ And, since Rev 21:1–8 is shot through with numerous other allusions to the latter

⁷⁴ See Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 202, among others, who has made the same point about the use of Isa 65:17 in Rev 21:1, and Isa 65:19 in Rev 21:4.

⁷⁵ See J. van Ruiten, “Intertextual Relationship between Isaiah 65,17–20 and Revelation 21,1–5b,” 504–5, who also sees that Rev 21:4b alludes to Isa 65:20, though together with Isa 65:22 and Isa 25:8a (“he will swallow up death forever”), recalling that Isa 65:22 clarifies how long the untimely death of 65:20 will last, i.e. forever. Van Ruiten has first noticed that Isa 65:18–20 and Rev 21:4 both refer to an eternal lack of doom in the end-time Jerusalem (501).

⁷⁶ Cf. also Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 93; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 254–56, who understands that the formula is based on the Hebrew of Isa 65:19–20 עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִשְׁמָע . . . עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִהְיֶה = “no longer shall there be heard . . . no longer shall there be.” See also J. van Ruiten, “Intertextual Relationship between Isaiah 65,17–20 and Revelation 21,1–5b,” 501, who sees the two formulas in Isa 65:19–20 as parallel with the formulas in Rev 21:4 and partly pointing to an allusion to Isa 65:20. J. L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB 20; New York: Doubleday, 1968), 199, understands Isa 65:19 to be “echoed” in Rev 21:4. In Rev 21:4b, John literally renders the formula of Isa 65:20a, “there will no longer be” (עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִהְיֶה), as “there will be no more” (οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι), and in Rev 21:4c he uses the same Greek formula also to render the similar but different “there will no longer be heard” of Isa 65:19 (עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִשְׁמָע). Thus, John sees both Hebrew phrases as equivalent and renders them by the same Greek formula.

⁷⁷ Ezekiel 34:28–29 has two “no longer will there be” (עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִהְיֶה) phrases; Ezek 29:15–16 and 37:22–23 have one “no longer will there be” (עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִהְיֶה) phrase together with a לֹא + imperfect form + עוֹד phrase; Jer 3:16–17 has two לֹא + imperfect form + עוֹד phrases.

⁷⁸ The other passage where the very same Hebrew formulations עוֹד . . . לֹא־יִהְיֶה and לֹא + imperfect form + עוֹד occur is in Isa 60:18–20, which is parallel with the context of Isa 65:19–20: “violence will not be heard again in your land nor devastation or destruction within your borders . . . no longer will be for you the sun for light by day”; then Isa 60:20 follows up again with “your sun will set no more (לֹא־יָבוֹא עוֹד).” Interspersed in this context is the twice repeated statement that “you will have the Lord for an everlasting light” (Isa 60:19–20), which expresses positively what is implicit in the “not again” and “no longer” of 60:18–20. This parallels the explicit notion of eternal blessings in 65:18, which is also expressed implicitly by the “no longer” of 65:19–20.

chapters of Isaiah, it is highly likely that the double mention of the formula comes from Isa 65:19–20. The most important of these other allusions are set forth in the following chart together with the proposed allusion to Isa 65:20 (see my Revelation commentary for additional allusions to the latter chapters of Isaiah in Rev 21:2–6⁷⁹):

Isaiah 65	Revelation 21–22
<p>(1) “For behold, I saw a new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered ...” (Isa 65:17; likewise 66:22)</p> <p>(2) “Do not call to mind the former things” (Isa 43:18; likewise, Isa 65:17)</p> <p>(3) “there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying” (Isa 65 19b)</p> <p>(4) “no longer shall there be from there an infant who lives but a few days” (i.e. untimely death; Isa 65:20a); cf. also v. 23, “they will not bear <i>children</i> for calamity, for they are the seed of those blessed by the Lord” and they will “endure” forever (Isa 66:22)</p> <p>(5) “I am making new things” (Isa 43:19)</p> <p>(6) Note also the “tree of life” (Gen 3:22, 24) + “children” will not be “cursed” (Isa 65:22–23)</p>	<p>(1) “I saw a new heaven and new earth” (21:1)</p> <p>(2) “the first things have passed away” (21:4)</p> <p>(3) “there shall no longer be any mourning or crying” (21:4c)</p> <p>(4) “there shall no longer be death” (21:4b) Note the double use of “there will no longer be heard ... there will no longer be” in Isa 65:19b–20a and the double “there shall no longer be” in Rev 21:4b–c. Note also that the two “there shall no longer be” formulas in Rev 22:3 and 22:5 introduce respectively allusions to (Isa 65:23) and 60:19–20, the latter where the formula also occurs twice, further pointing to the two formulas in 21:4 being from the two formulas in Isa 65:19–20.</p> <p>(5) “I am making all things new” (21:5b)</p> <p>(6) “the tree of life” (22:2) + “there shall no longer be any curse” (22:3)</p>

What further points to John alluding to Isa 65:20 is that his reference to “death” together with the formula of “there shall no longer be” is found in only two OT passages—one of which is Isa 65:20!⁸⁰ I observed this allusion to Isa 65:20

⁷⁹ Beale, *Revelation*, 1039–59 (where, in addition to the following allusions, even more Isaiah echoes are discussed): Isa 52:1 in Rev 21:2; Isa 61:10 (LXX) in Rev 21:2; Isa 62:1–2 in Rev 21:2; Isa 51:10–11 in Rev 21:4; Isa 43:19 in Rev 21:5; Isa 65:16 in Rev 21:5; and Isa 49:10 in Rev 21:6. See also the NA²⁷, which lists six allusions in Rev 21:1–6 from Isaiah 51, 52, 61, 65/66, and 43/65.

⁸⁰ Though Rev 21:4, in contrast to the LXX, uses the *θανατώ* word group instead of the *ἀποθνήσκω* word group and uses a noun form of “death” (*θάνατος*) instead of the verbal form, as in Isaiah. John’s use of the *θανατώ* word group is a viable rendering of the Hebrew verb “die” (*מוֹת*), since both verbs in the LXX often translate the Hebrew *מוֹת* (“die”). The only other occurrence of the formula occurring together with “death” is 2 Kgs 2:21: “there shall not be from there [a spring of water] again death,” referring to Elisha’s miraculous purification of a fouled water source.

in my Revelation commentary in 1999,⁸¹ but for some reason at that time did not make any connection with the issue of the millennium.

The formula “there will be no more” (οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι) is used twice more to indicate eternal, irreversible conditions in 22:3 (“a curse there shall be no longer”) and in 22:5 (“night shall be no longer”). Revelation 22:3 alludes to Zech 14:11, which says “there will be no more curse” in the new world. But Rev 22:2–3 (“tree of life ... there shall no longer be any curse”) also includes allusion to Isa 65:22–23: “for as the days of the *tree of life* shall be the days of my people ... they will [not] bear children to be *curse*” (so Greek OT and Aramaic OT),⁸² just as 65:20d says that there will no longer be anyone “*thought to be* accursed.” That the Targum of Isa 65:22 would be in mind here is pointed to further by observing that already in Rev 20:6, 14 and 21:8 reference to the “second death” is an explicit allusion from Tg. Isa. 65:6, 15,⁸³ so that John’s mind is not only saturated with references to Isaiah 65 in the MT and LXX but also from the Targum. Recall also that Isa 65:22 (“the tree of life”) clarifies how long the lack of untimely death of 65:20 will last (i.e. forever).

And once more the formula “there will be [is] no more” (οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι) occurs in Rev 22:5 to describe eternal conditions: “night shall be no longer; and they shall not have need of ... the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them.” This is based on Isa 60:19, which we noted earlier together with 60:20 had a parallel repeated temporal formula and expression: see Isa 60:19: “*there will no longer be* for you the sun for light by day ... but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light”; see Isa 60:20: “your sun *will no longer* set ... for you will have the Lord for an everlasting light.”⁸⁴

What is also beyond coincidence is that John also clearly alludes to Isa 25:8 (“God will wipe tears away from all faces”) at the beginning of Rev 21:4 (“he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes”) and combines it with the allusions to Isa 65:19 and 65:20. Isaiah 25:8, as we have seen, is about death no longer existing, which we have seen that Isaiah 65 also refers to and develops. John, thus, also combines Isaiah 65 with Isaiah 25, just as had Isaiah before him.⁸⁵

The upshot of this discussion is that Isa 65:20, *in its context*, is to be understood as a continued figurative portrayal of the eternal conditions of Isa 65:15–19, underscoring the notion that there will no longer be any untimely death. If Rev 21:4 is alluding to both Isa 65:19–20 and 65:17 (the latter repeated from Rev 21:1), as

⁸¹ Beale, *Revelation*, 1050.

⁸² The “tree of life” in Rev 22:2 alludes together with Isa 65:22 (LXX and Targum) to the Genesis 3 “tree of life,” which is in line with Isa 65:22 (LXX and Targum) and which also alludes to the Genesis 3 tree.

⁸³ Indeed, the phrase “second death” does not occur in the MT or LXX but only in the Targums. Since there are so many references to the latter chapters of Tg. Isa. 65 in Rev 21:1–6, it is likely that the reference to “the second death” in Rev 21:8 is to Tg. Isa. 65:6, 15, where the second death is understood to be an eternal penalty (on which see further Tg. Isa. 66:24 and Beale, *Revelation*, 1036–37).

⁸⁴ Note again the parallel formulas of עוֹד . . . לֹא יִהְיֶה in v. 19a and לֹא + imperfect form + עוֹד in v. 20a.

⁸⁵ Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation*, 254 n. 75, asserts that Isa 65:20 does affirm death as a possibility but that John interprets it in light of Isa 25:8 as not referring to actual death, which would unfortunately put John at odds with Isa 65:20’s purported original intention.

well as Rev 22:3 alluding to Isa 66:22–23,⁸⁶ then we have John understanding that Isa 65:20 is to be understood, in its context, as a description of the eternally irreversible new cosmos. John does not interpret Isa 65:20 as referring to a temporary period in which people will die at an old age or in an untimely way but as an eternal period in which people will live out their days eternally and “there shall no longer be death.” Therefore, we have apostolic authority for understanding most of the context of Isa 65:17–25 to portray an eternal new creation and specifically for understanding Isa 65:20 in such a way!⁸⁷ Accordingly, the phrase “the youth will die at the age of one hundred” is to be understood figuratively for living a long time—forever.

Thus, to take Isa 65:20 to be referring to literal death in an escalated new creational but corruptible and reversible stage of a millennium would contradict Rev 21:1–4 which applies Isa 65:17 and 66:19–20, 22–23 to the destruction of the old cosmos and the replacement of it with an eternal and irreversible new creation (likewise, Isa 65:17 is applied again to the passing away of the old earth in Rev 21:4 and the new creation passage of Isa 43:19 is immediately applied in Rev 21:5: “behold, I create all things new”).

VII. THE NATURE OF ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ISAIAH 65:20

An additional reason that Isa 65:20 is likely not an affirmation about actual physical death has to do with the nature of eschatology. A possible historic premillennial view and a version of an amillennial view is that Isa 65:20 is about the inaugurated stage of the new creation (the fulfillment of which is noted in 2 Cor 5:17) and that it refers to the idea that physical life is not eternal in the inaugurated phase of the new creation. However, I believe this is not a viable view of the way the new creation prophecy is inaugurated, as I will now attempt to argue.

Many premillennialists believe in three fulfillments of the new creation prophecy from Isa 65:17 (and 66:22 and Isa 43:18–19). A number of premillennialists rightly believe that the first inaugurated fulfillment of Isaiah’s new creation prophecies occurs when a person is regenerated (i.e. resurrected) during the church age. These premillennialists also believe there is a second stage of the inaugurated fulfillment of Isaiah’s new creation prophecy in the millennium,⁸⁸ and the final, third, stage of fulfillment is in the eternal new cosmos, after the destruction of the old cosmos. In this respect, as briefly alluded to earlier, Oswalt argues that in Isa 65:18 the prophet telescopes these three periods and sees them broadly as one: the inaugurated new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), the renewed creation in the millen-

⁸⁶ And note, in addition, that Rev 22:5 alludes to Isa 60:19.

⁸⁷ Of course, this conclusion is based on the assessment that John actually alluded to Isa 65:20 and used the Isaiah text in line with its original meaning and was not merely applying it in a haphazard way.

⁸⁸ E.g. see Craig Blaising, “The Kingdom that Comes with Jesus,” in *The Return of Christ*, 143.

nium (Rev 20:1–6), and the eternal new heavens and earth (Rev 21:1).⁸⁹ Oswalt generally holds this for all of Isa 65:17–25.⁹⁰

We have seen earlier in this essay that the “no longer from there” phrase in verse 20 introduces an eternal time scope for verse 20, and it would do violence to the syntax to see a flashback or to read in a temporary epoch into the rest of verse 20.

Amillennialists believe in a telescoping perspective, however seeing only one inaugurated fulfillment in the church age and then a consummated fulfillment at the very end of this age and in the beginning of the eternal new age. There is no evidence anywhere of two stages of *inaugurated* fulfillment of this prophecy (as some premillennialists affirm), unless one is already convinced that Rev 20:1–6 affirms a premillennial age, as do Oswalt and Delitzsch, and other premillennialists.⁹¹ This should be cause for great caution. NT scholars in general are convinced about what we call “the already and not yet” or “this age and the age to come.” However, it would be unusual to see two inaugurated stages of fulfillment with regard to other OT prophetic eschatological fulfillments (such as the prophecies of the Holy Spirit, the temple, reconciliation, adopted sonship, the second exodus, new covenant, etc.⁹²), though some premillennialists might try to apply these other prophecies to such a two-stage *inaugurated* fulfillment. Premillennialists hold what amounts to an eschatological view of “this age and the millennial age to come and the consummation age to come.”

What should give further pause to a two-stage inaugurated fulfillment is that the new creation prophecies of Isa 65:17–25 are about “eternal” realities. The amillennial view sees the inaugurated stage of fulfillment of Isa 65:17–25 being a regeneration of the heart that is eternal and grows and never stops growing until it is fully consummated in the everlasting age (e.g. see 2 Cor 5:14–17). But premillennialists believe that the second fulfillment stage of a new creation in a millennium is *not an eternal* renewal of the earth and of humans living on it, except for resurrected Israelite martyrs. Accordingly, people in the millennium will be born who die (this is the point purportedly made by Isa 65:20), and some will be unbelievers, gathering together at the end to support Satan’s revolt, culminating in their physical death at the end of the millennium and their judgment. In addition, though the earth is to be renovated, it is still not an eternal renovation but one that is still corruptible and

⁸⁹ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 656.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 655–62. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (repr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 492–93, who holds to a comparable telescoping view, says that in Isa 65:17–25 the prophet “was not yet able to distinguish from one another the things which the author of the Apocalypse separates into distinct periods” (i.e. a millennial era followed by an eternal period); so likewise, among several other premillennial commentators, see John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck; Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 1120; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1127–28; and Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*, 43–45, who cites other premillennial interpreters holding the same position. But such a view assumes that Rev 20:1–6 is clearly about a premillennial kingdom, which begs the question.

⁹¹ See the preceding footnote.

⁹² On all of which, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, passim; see, e.g., 887–957.

will pass away. Therefore, this second purported inaugurated stage of new creation fulfillment in the millennium is still ultimately part of the “old heavens and earth,” which is ultimately under a curse, which is why it must be destroyed.

This is a quite different perspective of “inaugurated” fulfillment than the kind of amillennialism being argued for in this essay. Premillennialists hold to a corruptible form of inaugurated fulfillment of new creation in a millennium. On the other hand, amillennialists believe that *even the inaugurated stage begins with a fulfillment of spiritual resurrection of the heart that is incorruptible and will never be reversed*. Though it is true that this inaugurated fulfillment of the heart occurs in the midst of a corruptible body and world, *the only part of the inaugurated new creation is “the inner man” and not the outer person’s body or any part of the physical world* (cf. 2 Cor 3:16). This new creation of the heart is irreversible and will become part of a new body later in a new incorruptible physical world. In fact, part of the definition of true NT eschatological fulfillment is that what begins fulfillment will never be reversed and will eventuate into a never-ending consummate state.⁹³ Those events that are truly eschatological are irreversible. This is why there is no true inaugurated eschatology in the OT. The inaugurated state begins in the NT era with eternal spiritual realities (though Christ’s resurrection, of course, is physical) and the consummated state follows in everlasting spiritual and physical resurrection and material renewal of the whole cosmos. Even the “eternal rejoicing” in verse 19 and the eternal (“no longer”) “no weeping” of Isa 65:18–19 begins to occur during this inaugurated spiritual resurrection, since it will last eternally and never be reversed and will eventuate in final consummate spiritual and physical resurrection in an eternal new earth. The “eternal rejoicing” over the new creation in Isa 65:18 (which refers back to the “new” cosmos in 65:17) shows that whatever inaugurated “newness” that occurs will not be reversed but will eventuate in a fully consummated new creation. Whatever is truly eternal cannot be reversed and made non-eternal.

Thus, it is not incorrect to see Isa 65:17–25 (and especially v. 20) to be telescoping the two-stage inaugurated *irreversible* new creation of one’s spirit *and the irreversible consummation* of that new creation in an eternal state, including physical resurrection. But three stages, including a millennial stage of fulfillment of Isaiah 65 cannot be telescoped in Isaiah, since the millennial stage of fulfillment is a reversible stage, that is, there will be death in it and the millennial earth, though somewhat renewed, will be destroyed.⁹⁴ The major problem is that any partial fulfillment of eternal realities in Isaiah 65 must be irreversible, but the millennium is completely reversible.

⁹³ On which see throughout Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, e.g. 88–92, 114–15.

⁹⁴ Premillennialists (like Waymeyer, *Amillennialism*, 43) sometimes cite W. C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 67–68, to support this concept of telescoping. Kaiser’s view in theory is good but the question here is whether or not there is a telescoping of two eschatological stages or three stages, the latter including a millennial stage.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that Isa 65:20 is about, not a temporary reversible millennium in which there is actual death but is about the eternal irreversible reality of there being no untimely death in the everlasting new creation. We have argued this on the basis of seven main lines of argument: (1) discussion of a translational problem in 65:20, which could support premillennialism or could fit into an amillennial view; (2) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–19 and 65:21–25 points to the probability that 65:20 is also about the eternal new creation, the conditions of which are irreversible, and not a temporary millennium, which can be reversed or pass away; (3) the use of Genesis 3 in Isaiah 65, which points to an eternal new creation context; (4) the eternal new creation context of Isa 65:17–25 is supported further by its use of Isa 25:7–10, which is about there being no death any longer in the new, eternal age; (5) arguments favoring a figurative view of Isa 65:20; (6) the use of Isaiah in Rev 21:1–22:4 is figurative, thus pointing to Isa 65:20 being a depiction of the irreversible, eternal new creation; (7) the irreversible nature of eschatology itself favors the conclusion that Isa 65:20 is not about a temporary, eschatological millennial state but about the eternal new heavens and earth.

We have highlighted in the essay that there “*will no longer be* [weeping and crying]” at the end of Isa 65:19 is the negative counterpart of “forever” (“rejoicing”) in verse 18, and the “no longer” that introduces verse 20 is synonymous with the eternal “no longer” of verse 19, so that it signals that verse 20a–b at the least, are about eternal realities! And we have seen that Isa 65:20c–b continues to describe such realities. If one first focuses on the rest of verse 20 about untimely death, one might think the prophet is moving his focus from an eternal age in verses 17–19 back to an escalated but corruptible age (as in the millennium). However, one should first focus on the “no longer” at the beginning of verse 20, which signals that what follows in verse 20 describes eternal realities: i.e. there will be no untimely death because people will live eternally in the eternal new creation. Thus, there is no telescoping of the eternal with a millennial age in verses 17–20.

In this light, it would be strange for Isa 65:20 to be affirming a corruptible stage of people living in a renovated millennial earth, when 65:17–19 and 65:21–25 refer to eternal, irreversible realities of incorruption. New creation is inextricably linked to eternal realities that begin irreversibly and result in a fully permanent era. For the premillennialist to refer to an inaugurated stage of new creation in a millennium as corruptible is not new creation. We have attempted to show that the verses surrounding 65:20 refer to eternal realities. If context is the ultimate controller of what specific verses mean (compare our initial above example of “run”), then we are compelled to take 65:20 as figurative for a long—indeed, eternal—life, as explained above (and as noted by Alec Motyer⁹⁵). Of course, if one reads the phrase “the youth will die at the age of one hundred” by itself, it could well sound like actual death. But nothing should be interpreted by itself in the Bible; all verses must

⁹⁵ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 530.

be interpreted by and shaped by the context. The context of Isa 65:17–25 and 66:22–24 is a mold shaping 65:20 into a figurative statement about eternal life.

We believe this essay has answered the objections by M. Waymeyer to an amillennial reading of Isa 65:20 that the verse portrays “the ongoing existence of physical birth and physical death, and, therefore, must refer to a temporary millennial period.”⁹⁶

EXCURSUS ON ISAIAH 65:20 AND ITS FURTHER POSSIBLE USE OF THE OT

A straightforward rendering of the Hebrew of the second clause of Isa 65:20 would be an elderly man “who does not fill out his days” (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָמָיו). A. Gardner sees this phrase to be an allusion to Exod 23:26: “I will fill the number of your days” (אֶת־מִסְפַּר יְמֵיךָ אִמְלֵא).⁹⁷ She acknowledges that מלא + plural of יום occurs elsewhere: Jer 25:34 (“the days of your slaughter and dispersions are filled”); Lam 4:18 (“our days were filled”); 2 Sam 7:12 = 1 Chr 17:11 (“when your days are filled”). She argues the Exodus context is the only one among these uses that is contextually similar to Isa 65:20: both not only speak of people living out their days to old age but also contrast this respectively with “an infant who lives but a few days” (Isa 65:20a) and “there will be no one miscarrying” (Exod 23:26). The Exodus text is a promise of the blessing that will come upon Israel if she is faithful when she enters the promised land (a promise reiterated in Deuteronomy, though not with the same wording as Exod 23:26). Gardiner sees that Isa 65:20 is the fulfillment of that promise, since Israel’s earlier generations were unfaithful and did not receive this promise. Just as there would still be death after a very long life in the Exodus promise, so Gardiner concludes the same with respect to what Isa 65:20 is picturing. Gardiner’s view would fit in with and support a premillennial view. There are a few problems with Gardiner’s analysis. First, it is not clear whether or not Isa 65:20 alludes verbally to the Exodus text, since there are four other texts that have virtually the identical wording, two of which, at least, refer to David’s long life as “your days are filled.” Thus, while no mention of untimely death is mentioned, the long life of an old man is underscored, and this is mentioned in direct relationship to an “eternal kingdom” (2 Sam 7:12b–13, 16). It is hard to know if there is allusion, if any, to the Exodus or the 2 Samuel text. Furthermore, there are significant differences between the Exodus 23 context and that of Isa 65:20: (1) in the former there is to be a slow process of driving out the enemy from the promised land (Exod 23:29–30), but in the beginning of the purported millennium all enemies are initially destroyed and only at the end are enemies gathered to oppose Christ; (2) unbelieving nations will not live in the future promised land but in outlying areas around it throughout the earth (Exod 23:31b–33), whereas according to the premillennial view there is no such radical geographical division; (3) there are definite boundaries in the Middle East given for the promised land (Exod 23:31), but Isaiah 65 speaks

⁹⁶ Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*, 45.

⁹⁷ “Isaiah 65:20: Centenarians or Millenarians?” 93.

not only of Jerusalem but of the entire “new earth” where people apparently will live (Isa 66:23 speaks of “all flesh” worshipping God in “the new earth” of Isa 66:22).

If Isa 65:20 were alluding to Exod 23:26, then it would appear best to see the promises related to the promised land being expanded to the whole earth, the eternal new earth, as noted earlier in the essay. Again, see Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*,⁹⁸ where there is an argument about the Holy of Holies being designed to expand to cover Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was then to expand to cover the promised land, and then the promised land was to expand to cover the entire earth—so that temple, Jerusalem, promised land, and new earth all represent the new creation. This is the rationale for Rev 21:1–22:5, where the “new Jerusalem,” temple, Garden of Eden, and new creation are all equated.⁹⁹ See also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*,¹⁰⁰ where the focus is on the Promised Land being expanded to cover the entire earth. The book of Isaiah itself expresses this very promise about the temple and Israel's land “enlarging” and “stretching out” and “spreading abroad to the right and to the left,” so that Israel's “seed will possess nations” (Isa 54:2–3). Isaiah 54:3 is developing the promise given to Jacob in Gen 28:14 that in Jacob's “seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Accordingly, the limited boundaries of the promised land would be typological of the whole new earth,¹⁰¹ in which temporal blessings become transformed into eternal ones. To see the longevity of life in Exod 23:26 as typological of long life in the eternal new creation is in line with the promise of long life in Exod 20:12 and Deut 5:16, which are quoted in Eph 6:2–3 and understood not to refer to life in the old Promised Land of Israel but to be typological of the new eternal earth. Thus, Isa 65:20 would be using the longevity language of Exod 23:26 and understanding it to be typologically referring to everlasting longevity in the never-ending eternal cosmos.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Pp. 81–167.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 365–73.

¹⁰⁰ Pp. 750–72.

¹⁰¹ As argued in Beale, *Temple and Church's Mission*, 81–167, and *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 750–72; in further support of this idea, see Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, *passim*.

¹⁰² I am grateful for my following TAs who read and commented on this essay: Danillo Santos, Matt Dudreck, Laura Leon, Tyler Milliken, and Calvin Peronto. I am also grateful for comments on the essay by my colleagues Jonny Gibson, Brandon Crowe, and Vern Poythress, as well as by Jason DeRouchie and Brian Tabb. Of course, any mistakes or infelicities are due to my own hand.