



SHARING SCRIPTURE

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Rebirth of Planet Earth

For use: March 21 - 27

Texts: Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:1-19; Isaiah 66:19-21; Isaiah 66:21; Isaiah 66:22-24

While many are concerned that the global warming rate is growing at nearly one percent per year, and autism spectrum rates are growing at 1.1 percent per year, there is another “1 percent effect” rate that has scientists worried: the total fertility rate is dropping by 1 percent per year.

The culprits, cite *Scientific American*, are hormone-altering chemicals, including phthalates, bisphenol A, and flame-retardants. They’re in water bottles, food packaging, electronic devices, personal-care products, cleaning supplies and many other items we use regularly. We began producing them in increasing numbers around 1950, when sperm counts and fertility rates began their decline. [1]

Why is this a problem? Reproductive epidemiologist Shanna Swan reports that sperm counts have dropped by nearly 60 percent since 1973 because of those hormone-altering chemicals. Her research suggests that, at this rate, sperm counts could reach zero by the year 2045. Environmental activist Erin Brockovich states the problem plainly in an opinion piece in *The Guardian*: “The end of humankind? It may be coming sooner than we think. Zero (sperm counts). Let that sink in. That would mean no babies. No reproduction. No more humans.” [2]

People envision end of the world scenarios that range from nuclear wars and astronomical catastrophes to Erin Brockovich’s picture of humankind just quietly fading away. As Christians, however, we know that humanity will never

disappear. Whether or not we may experience some mass cataclysmic event before Christ's return, God's promise in Isaiah 65:17 is "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore" (NLT). The statement that no one will even miss the old earth implies that there must be people around to not think about the old earth! Humanity will be fully reborn.

Isaiah's beautiful description of life in the new earth in chapter 65 gives us a picture of a busy, active place. One of the most wonderful promises in this passage is that nothing will cause harm or destruction in this new creation. We will build houses, and then live in them. Too often in this life, people build homes and then, because of financial crises or death, pass them on to someone else. In our new life, we will enjoy the work of our hands for as long as we choose. We'll plant gardens and enjoy the literal fruit of our labors.

We will also worship God in person on this reborn planet. Isaiah 66:22-23 tells us that we'll continue to gather for our weekly Sabbath worship appointments, as well as a monthly worship service every new moon. We can only vaguely imagine what those worship gatherings will be like, based on our own limited experiences here. This celestial worship time will certainly include musical praise and thanksgiving. And we can be certain that it will include humans—God's crowning creation—expressing unending gratitude to our Creator.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reproductive-problems-in-both-men-and-women-are-rising-at-an-alarming-rate/>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/18/toxic-chemicals-health-humanity-erin-brokovich>

For Reflection

Connecting: Have you ever dreamt about the house you will build or the garden you will plant in the new earth? Share some of your plans with your group, through your online connection if you aren't yet meeting in person.

Sharing: What helps you to keep calm in the face of all of the potential catastrophes on this planet?

1. Prayer calms me whenever I feel anxious
2. Reading promises like those found in Isaiah 65 and 66 gives me assurance that this life is not all there is
3. I need worship; church services and fellowship with my friends in this group keeps me calm
4. I find that it helps to be involved in activities that promote peace and environmental awareness
5. I don't watch the news or pay attention to alarming posts on social media
6. Other:

Applying: What is one thing that you do to make your part of this world a better place? Compare notes with the rest of your group—are some of you involved in the same types of activities? Can you increase your effectiveness by combining your efforts?

Valuing: Humans need hope to endure all of the discouraging news we're bombarded with these days. Make a personal commitment to focus on those things that give you hope for a few minutes each day for the next week. Connect with another group member over the phone or through an online connection later in the week to share how your week is going, and pray for each other.

Other Helpful Resources

[Creative Ministry's website](#) equips you with [friendship evangelism](#), [small group](#), [community outreach](#), and [healing ministry](#) tools right at your fingertips. Our website also features [Adventist research conducted by Monte Sahlin](#), as well as [Sharing Scripture archives](#), [ScripShots](#), and [more](#). And if you're tired of staring at a screen, digital files are available for download as PDFs and to print.

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Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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