



Will **Isaiah 11:6-9** be fulfilled literally or figuratively? Since there are strong views both ways, let's look at what the Bible itself reports, and then analyze

“And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a young boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing baby will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will do no evil nor act corruptly in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh As the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9 LSB).

The above prophecy is often viewed as having both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment, that is, spiritually among genuine Christians from **Acts 2** onward, and physically from **“the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:21 NLT).**

EXPLANATION OF ISAIAH 11:6-9

“The wolf will live with the lamb

This phrase symbolizes a future time of peace and harmony, often interpreted as the Messianic age. In the natural world, wolves are predators of lambs, but this imagery suggests a radical transformation of nature. This peace is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden before the fall, where there was no death or predation. It reflects the hope for a restored creation, as seen in [Romans 8:19-22](#), where creation eagerly awaits liberation from its current state of decay.

and the leopard will lie down with the goat

Leopards are known for their stealth and hunting prowess, making them natural enemies of goats. This imagery further emphasizes the theme of peace and reconciliation. It suggests a time when natural instincts are subdued, and enmity is replaced with coexistence. This can be seen as a metaphor for the reconciliation between different peoples and nations, as prophesied in [Ephesians 2:14-16](#), where Christ is described as breaking down the dividing wall of hostility.

the calf and young lion and fatling will be together

The calf, young lion, and fatling (a well-fed animal) represent a diverse group of creatures that would not naturally coexist peacefully. This imagery points to a future where natural hierarchies and food chains are upended. It can be seen as a type of the peaceable kingdom that Christ inaugurates, where all creation is reconciled. This is echoed in [Colossians 1:20](#), which speaks of Christ reconciling all things to Himself.

and a little child will lead them

The image of a child leading these animals highlights innocence, purity, and the reversal of power dynamics. In biblical times, children were considered the least powerful members of society, yet here a child leads fearsome creatures. This can be seen as a type of Christ, who, though coming in humility and weakness, leads and transforms the world. It also reflects the prophecy of a child born to lead, as seen in [Isaiah 9:6](#), where a child is given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders.”—Bible Hub Study Bible

THE PROPHECY OF [ISAIAH 65:25](#)

“The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil nor act corruptly in all My holy mountain,’ says Yahweh” ([Isaiah 65:25 LSB](#)).

*This prophecy is also often viewed as having both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment, that is, spiritually among genuine Christians from [Acts 2](#) onward, and physically from **“the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets” ([Acts 3:21 NLT](#)).***

“The wolf and the lamb will feed together

This phrase symbolizes a future time of peace and harmony, often interpreted as the Messianic Age or the new creation. In the natural world, wolves and lambs are predator and prey, respectively. This imagery reflects a reversal of the curse and a restoration of creation to its intended order, reminiscent of the peace in Eden before the Fall ([Genesis 1:29-30](#)). It echoes

Isaiah 11:6, where similar imagery is used to describe the reign of the Messiah, suggesting a time when natural enmities are reconciled.

and the lion will eat straw like the ox

Lions, known as carnivores, eating straw signifies a transformation of nature itself. This imagery points to a radical change in the natural order, where predatory instincts are subdued. It reflects the prophetic vision of a world where violence and death are no more, aligning with the eschatological hope found in Revelation 21:4, where God promises to wipe away every tear and eliminate death and suffering.

but the food of the serpent will be dust

This phrase recalls the curse placed upon the serpent in Genesis 3:14, where it is condemned to crawl on its belly and eat dust. It signifies the continued judgment and defeat of evil, even in a restored creation. The serpent, often associated with Satan (Revelation 12:9), remains in a state of humiliation and defeat, highlighting the ultimate triumph of God's righteousness over sin and evil.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain," says the LORD.

The "holy mountain" refers to Zion, a symbol of God's presence and kingdom. In biblical prophecy, Zion often represents the center of God's redemptive work and the place where His peace and justice are fully realized (Isaiah 2:2-4). This assurance of safety and peace underscores the complete restoration and protection found in God's kingdom. The phrase "says the LORD" emphasizes the certainty and divine authority behind this

promise, assuring believers of its fulfillment.”—Bible Hub Study Bible

NEW COVENANT PROPHETIC FULFILLMENTS

“Don’t ever think that I came to set aside Moses Teachings or the Prophets. I didn’t come to set them aside but to make them come true” (Matthew 5:17

GWT. *“this fulfillment is not merely a legalistic adherence but a deeper realization of God’s redemptive plan for humanity, as seen in the sacrificial system and the prophetic visions of a new covenant.” (Bible Hub Study Bible).*

Under the New Covenant, Old Covenant laws and patterns are generally fulfilled in various spiritual ways.

“Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually from. year to year” (Hebrews 10:1 NAB).

“For the law is only a shadow of the good things to come

The term “shadow” suggests that the law was a preliminary representation, not the full reality. In biblical context, the law given to Moses was a guide and a tutor (Galatians 3:24) leading to Christ. The “good things to come” refers to the new covenant and the salvation brought through Jesus Christ. The law’s rituals and sacrifices pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, who fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). This concept of shadow versus reality is also seen in Colossians 2:17, where Paul describes religious festivals as a shadow of things to come, with the substance belonging to Christ.

not the realities themselves

The “realities” are the fulfillment of God’s promises through Jesus. The law’s sacrifices were temporary and symbolic, unable to provide true redemption or a clear conscience (Hebrews 9:9). The reality is found in Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice, which provides complete atonement and access to God (Hebrews 9:12). This distinction emphasizes the superiority of the new covenant over the old.”—Bible Hub Study Bible

“In Galatians 5:2-6, Paul argues that circumcision is not necessary for salvation, emphasizing faith in Christ over adherence to the Law. This reflects the theological shift from physical signs of the covenant to spiritual faith in Christ.”—Bible Hub Study Bible

Likewise, prophecies regarding the New Covenant are generally fulfilled spiritually. The prophecies of Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25 come under the New Covenant.

What about the balance of nature, ecosystems, and the biosphere?

CLUES FROM THE PROPHECY ITSELF AS TO WHY IT IS FIGURATIVE, NOT LITERAL

The prophecies of [Isaiah 11:6-9](#) and [65:25](#) give us many clues that the prophecies have spiritual fulfillments.

They take place, **“in all my holy mountain”** ([Isaiah 11:9](#); [65:25](#)), which is obviously a symbolic reference to the entire earth being under the control of **“the seed of” “the son of Jesse . . . a Savior Jesus”** ([Acts 13:22,23 LSB](#); [Isaiah 11:1](#)).

“A young boy will lead them” ([Isaiah 11:6](#)). A young boy isn’t capable of leading multiple wild animals.

“The earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh” ([Isaiah 11:9](#)). Animals, birds, fish, insects, etc., cannot learn the “knowledge of Yahweh”.

“dust will be the serpent’s food” ([Isaiah 65:25](#)). Dirt is not a food source for snakes.

“They will do no evil nor act corruptly in all My holy mountain” ([Isaiah 65:25](#)). Animals cannot do evil or act corruptly.

All of these statements above are obviously figurative, not literal. The other aspects of these two prophecies are also figurative, have they have language that appears, on the surface, at least, to be literal, which is why some take them literally.

WERE ALL CREATURES VEGETARIANS IN THE BEGINNING?

“And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so” ([Genesis 1:30 NIV](#)).

Does this mean no animals or birds ate any meat? Some have asserted that this scripture proves God's original purpose was that all creatures ate only 'green plants'. "Everything that has the breath of life in it", does seem to include all living creatures. But, how about carnivorous plants that consume insects? Tapeworms and giant tube worms, for example, do not eat green plants or animals, but absorb nutrition in other ways. Since **"on the seventh day . . . God . . . rested from all the work he had done in creation"** (**Genesis 2:2,3 NAB**), these non-vegetarian creatures had to have already been created prior to the seventh day, long before God gave humans the option to no longer be vegetarians (**Genesis 9:2,3**).

“The geological evidence of the existence of death in prehistoric times is, however, too powerful to be resisted; and the Biblical record itself enumerates among the pre-adamic animals the chayyah of the field, which clearly belonged to the carnivora. Perhaps the most that can be safely concluded from the language is “that it indicates merely the general fact that the support of the whole animal kingdom is based on vegetation” (Dawson).—Pulpit Commentary on [Genesis 1:30](#)

“The whole of the grasses and the green parts or leaves of the herbage are distributed among the inferior animals for food. Here, again, the common and prominent kind of sustenance only is specified. There are some animals that greedily devour the fruits of trees and the grain produced by the various herbs; and there are others that derive the most of their subsistence from preying on the smaller and weaker kinds of animals. Still, the main substance of the means of animal life, and the ultimate supply of the whole of it, are derived from the plant. Even this general statement is not to be received without exception, as there are certain lower descriptions of animals that derive sustenance even from the mineral world. But this brief narrative of things notes only the few palpable facts, leaving the details to the experience and judgment of the reader.”—Barnes Notes on [Genesis 1:30](#)

FULFILLMENT

“No prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God” (2 [Peter 1:21 NAB](#)).

The fulfillment of **Isaiah 11:6-9** and **Isaiah 65:25** is definitely in a non-literal spiritual sense. How about in a literal, physical way? We can't say for sure. While it doesn't seem likely, it would be presumptuous to say these prophecies cannot have any physical fulfillment whatsoever in the **"new heaven and a new earth . . . new Jerusalem"** (**Revelation 21:1-2 LSB**).

"At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror" (**1 Corinthians 13:12 NAB**). *"This imagery suggests that our current understanding of spiritual truths is incomplete and imperfect. The Apostle Paul uses this metaphor to illustrate the limitations of human knowledge and perception in this life. The concept of seeing "dimly" aligns with the broader biblical theme of partial revelation, as seen in other scriptures like 2 Corinthians 5:7, which speaks of walking by faith, not by sight. This phrase emphasizes the contrast between our present limited understanding and the complete clarity we will experience in the future."* (Bible Hub Study Bible)

Like so many other Bible prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, we'll have to wait and see exactly how all the details of **Isaiah 11:6-9** and **Isaiah 65:25** are fulfilled.