

“God salvation banquet”

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 25

Sermon Text: Isa. 25:6-9

Theme: God vanquishes death for his people

What are the two biggest things that we are always in need of? If you saw a little kid out on a street—he’s got no food, no water; no clothes; nowhere to live. What does he need? Provisions and protection. What if someone came to him with expensive clothes and a big meal with rich food and said, “Here this is for you. And here is a key to a house that has all the supplies you need.” Maybe the boy would say, “Sir, I don’t have any money.” The person then responds, “It’s all free, take it, it’s yours. I want you to have it.” What then would be his or her response to the provision and protection offered them? It would be a response of joyful praise!

What we want to look at today is how God does a similar thing for his people when he brings salvation. Our text will primarily be verses 6-9. And we want to see how God himself swallows up death and by so doing he gives provision and protection to his people.

Our goal is that you will see how Christ had to endure death for you, so that you could receive the benefits of God’s provision and protection. And as a result, you will be encouraged to live in gratitude for this. We have 2 main headings: **1) God’s wonderful gift of salvation and 2) the response of gratitude from God’s people.**

1) **God’s wonderful gift of salvation**

Let’s begin with God’s salvation. This will be the longer section and we will break it into 3 parts: **a) The place of God’s wonderful salvation b) The provision God gives c) the protection God offers.** Where does Isaiah bring us to see God’s salvation? Look with me at [Isaiah 25:6\(a\)](#) and notice the place of God’s salvation.

a) the place of God’s wonderful salvation: Isaiah calls his readers to envision this place called “The mountain of The LORD of Hosts.” The language of the LORD’s Mt. is common to the OT and refers to 2 places: (1) where God first made a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai; and then (2) the place in Canaan where God promised to plant his people: this is called Mt. Zion. Mount Zion is Jerusalem in Canaan, where God’s temple would also be built. These mountains represent some of the greatest places where God chose to manifest his presence.

Remember also that Isaiah talks a lot in his prophecy about the great Exodus event (from Egypt) and the covenant that God made with his people—at Mount Sinai (the 1st of the 2 mountains). But he reminds the people again and again that they have broken the covenant. And as a result, this leads Isaiah to talk about a greater Exodus event that is needed and a greater covenant that will come.

The scene that we have here in Isa 25:6-8 has a parallel in Ex 24 where the leaders of the people of Israel meet God on a mountain (Mt. Sinai). The leaders eat with God and God confirms his covenant with them. Listen to this, “Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel...and they beheld God, and ate and drank” (24.9-11).

But the issue there was that while Moses went further up the mountain and then stayed there for a number of days, that the people became impatient and they made for themselves a golden calf. They chose to *worship an image of the creation rather than the Creator.* No sooner had God made his covenant with his people than they disregarded his righteous requirements, sinned against God, and broke the covenant. Israel failed at Mount Sinai. And if you’re familiar with the storyline of Scripture you will remember that Israel also failed at Mount Zion, the second mountain. Israel was removed from Jerusalem (Mount Zion) because of their sins and exiled to Babylon.

Isaiah new judgment was coming. But he looks forward to a New and Greater Exodus; to a greater salvation and covenant relationship. People don’t just need physical salvation from some super power, like Israel being saved from Egypt (or even in Jesus’ day when the disciples wrongly thought Jesus would save them from the Romans). It’s not just communist dictators or drug lords. No, people need ultimately to be saved from their own sin and from the grip of Satan! You see, for Israel, the problem wasn’t with God’s Laws, God’s word is perfect, the problem instead was that the people failed to keep the Law! You and I are no different. There is no one who is able to perfectly keep God’s Word. But Isaiah points his audience forward to when God himself would do something greater than what he did in saving Israel from Egypt—God is going to save his people from sin and Satan so that they can live, where? In the place of God’s presence!

b) the Provision God gives: Look again at [verse 6 \(b-d\)](#): Isaiah shows a banquet overflowing with the best food. “Wine on the lees” simply means high quality, well-aged and well-refined wine. We might think of this in modern terms: this isn’t cheap lousy wine that comes in a box and has no flavor. No this is the high-quality stuff; this is the finest of all wines,

the wine of royal courts; and there are thick, juicy New York steaks, not just cheap knockoff burgers. Isaiah's point is simple: something is coming that is going to beat anything you've ever seen, any feast you've ever had before! This will be infinitely better than either the Keg or the Mandarin! Remember Psalm 23 and 36 where the guests at God's feast are anointed with oil and their cups are overflowing with drink. "They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life... and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Notice also Isaiah in verse 6 says God will do this "for all peoples." We reject the notion that in the end God will just save everybody. *God's salvation is offered to all peoples*. But only the people who are in the right place will taste of it. Only those in God's presence, who have been reconciled to him, can taste of his salvation. But remember the offer of this salvation goes out to all peoples. It is not limited to Jews only. And it's also free. Isaiah will say later on, in chapter 55:1 "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." You don't have to earn your salvation. You can't work for it. It's free.

c) The Protection God offers: So, we've seen the place of the banquet. And we've thought about the provision offered. But what is the protection? In other words, what is God saving his people from? Yahweh of hosts is hosting a banquet for his people; and we know what the guests are eating, but we might as this: what is God eating? When someone hosts a banquet they naturally eat with their guests.

Look what Isaiah has to say in verse 7, "And He will destroy (better translated *swallow*) on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." Isaiah doesn't tell us straight away. He is building suspense. He wants us to get the sense of the darkness that hangs over the people. The two terms used here (*the covering* and *the veil*) speak of a woven blanket, almost like some sort of iron curtain. Like a blanket that covers the whole bed. There is a sense of a dark covering which traps all peoples under its shadow. Isaiah says "all nations." We get the sense that this woven blanket stretches to the 4 corners of the earth, like a black blanket covering the whole bed. It's an image of darkness and despair. You get the idea that the people are trapped. They can't get out, it's black, and suffocating.

So, what is God swallowing up? Verse 8 begins with the same word that verse 7 began with, the ESV translates the beginning of both verse 7 and verse 8 as, "He will swallow up," and verse 8 finally explains: he will swallow up death forever! God alone can pull back the dark veil.

And what is the veil? The veil is death. And who is under this veil? Is it just the poor and unfortunate ones? Is it just a particular nation? Was it just the Assyrians or Babylonians? No, the Bible teaches that everyone is under the veil of death; it is spread like a giant bedsheet over all peoples and nations. And why? Because all have sinned. All have fallen short of God's glory. Like Israel at Mount Sinai, all have broken God's Law. For this reason all of humanity is under the curse of death. There are no exceptions! The previous chapter (Isa. Ch 24) tells us this in verses 4 through 6 (look at that with me, Isa. 24:4-6)—

"The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty (proud) people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants,
Because they have transgressed the laws,
Changed the ordinance,
Broken the everlasting covenant.
6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth,
And those who dwell in it are desolate (ESV: therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt).
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
And few men are left."

The problem that faced Isaiah and the people of his day is the same problem that faces you and I: death, which comes upon us all because of our sin, because we are spiritually dead. It is precisely as God said it would be in Genesis 2:17 when he said, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." When Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3 they were not instantly struck dead, but the effects of the curse began then and there, and led eventually to death.

If you're somewhat familiar with Isaiah you might remember how in chapter 5 the prophet pictured death as a monster with an appetite like a bottomless pit. Death cares not whether you're rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy. It gobbles up everyone. But in our text we seen an amazing paradox in which God swallows up death *for his people*.

We don't have to look far in our world to see the effects of the curse do we? Hearing-loss, heart problems, war, famine, earthquakes. And people are always trying to evade death aren't they—whether with medicine, surgeries, diets. Don't get me wrong, it's good to try stay healthy. But no one has yet forced their body into immortality. A few years ago there was a doctor in Italy who wanted to perform a human head transplant. He named the project "HEAVEN." His hope was to provide immortality. Pop your good head onto another body, and you live a second life. That's absurd! No one can have immortality unless they trust God to take away death for them.

Notice lastly what else verse 8 says (8b-c). *all faces*. God personally attends to his people. He wipes away tears like you wipe clean a plate after a meal to make it clean and shiny. There is no more sorrow in God's presence. God also removes *the reproach of his people*. God's people can have the comfort that even if they lose their life because of their faith, God will vindicate them.

Without God you and I are spiritually dead because of our sin. And only God can protect us from death and judgment. And in so doing he is able to give you the provisions you need to dwell in his presence and to glorify him. If you're safe with God then he will protect and provide for your soul, and when Jesus returns you will get a new body in which you can live in the presence of God, forever! And even if you are called to die for Christ, you know the victory is won; and God's people will be vindicated.

In the tail end of verse 8 Isaiah says emphatically, "For the LORD has spoken." There can be no doubt that God will do this for his people. God has given his word!

2) **God's salvation brings a response of gratitude.**

Let's consider our second point: We have seen that when God saves he gives his people rich provisions and he protects them. Now we see how **God's salvation brings a response of gratitude**. Isaiah compels the people to respond to God with grateful praise—both as individuals, as well as corporately.

Chapter 25 has 3 sections. The banquet scene is the center. Verses 1-5 is a song of praise by an individual and verses 9-12 is a corporate song of praise. We'll just glance at the openings of each song. Verse 1 says, "O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."

Notice God's plan of salvation is from of old. About a year ago there was a popular song on Christian radio stations that talked about the reckless love of God. The chorus went: "Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God." (reckless: to be rash and uncalculated). We might often be reckless, but God's salvation plan is from of old, and it's guaranteed. It will not fail. God's plan was carefully calculated; not reckless. And he knew what the outcome would be. And the only proper response then is to say, "you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name."

And what is the prophet's assurance that God will do great things in the future? Verse 1 says, "you have done wonderful things." The readers can be assured that God will make good on his word for future salvation.

Then jump with me to verse 9. Notice how it says, "It will be said on that day:" we just thought about how God's plan of salvation was from of old, and here now Isaiah looks forward to when God will take death away.

What does this cause the people to say? Verse 1 said, "my God," and in verse 9 now we see, "Behold, this is our God." The people respond both individually and corporately to the personal God of Scripture.

The text says, "we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah and his readers were in a state of longing and waiting. Why were they waiting? Because only God could bring salvation. But when the salvation comes, each person will see God face to face, and they will burst into fireworks of joyful praise! And so simply put, what do we see with these 2 songs of praise? It's as if we can watch the pilgrims marching into the New Zion and coming **one by one** into the banquet hall, **each** with a song of deliverance on their lips. But inside the walls of God's holy city they become **a company of believers** with a common testimony of God's deliverance for them.

Let me make a few points of application.

Firstly:

Isaiah invited his readers to look to a day when God would bring salvation by taking away death and suffering and would provide for and protect his people. But how has this been accomplished?

1) From our perspective we see that *God has swallowed up death. But it took the death of his only Son, Jesus Christ, to accomplish it.* Christ came as the great 2nd Adam. Unlike any other man, Christ obeyed God's law completely and was faithful to the covenant demands. And so, when he died, he died as an innocent man. The Devil couldn't ultimately kill him, and the grave couldn't hold him in. And since he rose from the grave, he is able to give the promise of resurrection to all who believe in him!

Look today towards that hill outside Jerusalem, were Jesus Christ, the righteous Son of God, died for you. He swallowed up death for you through the shedding of his own blood. You and I deserved death for our sin. But Jesus became a curse for you, in order to lift the curse of death from you.

Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15, "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory

through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And if you believe in him today then you are among the pilgrims marching to the new Mount Zion. You are already among God’s people today. And remember that the New Testament calls us to meet together, with joy, as God’s people. Isaiah, all through his prophecy, looks back at the old corrupt Zion, and looks forward to the New Jerusalem that God will make. Remember also then, that your home is not here. That’s why Hebrews 12 can say that we come to the New Mount Zion, to the city of the living God—the heavenly Jerusalem—to angels in festal gathering, to the saints and spirits made perfect, to God the judge, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, who has purified sinners through his blood! You see, God offers his provision and protection to you, freely, but it cost the blood of Jesus Christ. We are part of this Zion now already. But there is more to come. And in the Lord’s Supper we remember what Christ did for us (*past*), so that we could become part of his people (*present*), and look forward to when we will dine with Christ for all eternity (*future*).

In Rev. 21 we read of the New Mount Zion. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...” then again we read this, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

If you believe in Jesus today then he will already protect and provide for you. It doesn’t mean you will never face anything difficult in this life. In fact, you might actually die for your faith. But you don’t have to fear. God promises to protect your soul. Trust him for the spiritual provisions that you need now to fight sin and to grow, by the Spirit’s work, in the wisdom and the knowledge of Christ; so that one day, when you are in Christ’s glorious presence, your new physical body will be able to experience the bounties of heaven. You won’t have to wait at the bottom of the mountain like Israel of old when Moses and the leaders met with God on the mountain. We get just a small taste of that today as we remember The Lord’s Supper. With just simple bread and wine we remember Christ’s blood covers us today, but the best is yet to come.

2) **The response of wonder: a people full of joy and gladness.**

So firstly, God removes death through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Secondly, how should you respond?: We saw in Isaiah that **In light of God’s salvation, the people respond in gladness and rejoicing**—on an individual level and a corporate level. **Joy:** Do you give thanks to Christ for taking away your sin and giving you eternal life? Whether you die of cancer, a car crash, a tree falling on you, or just old age, if you have confessed your sins and believed in Jesus, then you don’t have to fear death. You have the promise of life eternal. And do you love to be with God’s people to celebrate this reality?

Gratitude: Be thankful. We can so easily grumble and complain can’t we? We can think about Christ’s salvation one minute and the next we grumble in the car because so and so said this or that, or the traffic is this, the TTC is that, again. We can complain about work, or family, or school. Be thankful. Share the gospel with those still under fear of death. Remember that Christ took the full brunt of death so that you can have life! May you be able to rejoice with Isaiah and say, “God has brought us a wonderful salvation, he has taken away our death; this is our God!”

If you’re here today and you have not trusted Jesus to take away all your sins and to give you life in exchange, then death is not swallowed up for you. Instead you will be swallowed up by God’s wrath and will face eternal death! Cry out to God for mercy! We didn’t have time to work through all of Isaiah 25. But we can note in closing how verse 10 says that Moab will be trampled down like straw in a dunghill. And verse 12 says that all the proud will be pulverized to dust under God’s judgment. In other words, while Christ provides and protects his people up on Zion, everyone who opposes Christ will be crushed under his feet. Know then that you will be crushed by God’s wrath without Christ’s blood to protect you. Why is the name “Moab” given? To remind us that these people are just as real as you sitting in front of me now. Repent of your sins. Place your faith in Jesus. He is the only one who can give you life!

And as believers, remember that Christ is busy right now gathering a host of different people to enjoy his wedding feast. Remember Paul’s words in 2 Cor 5:(vs 1, 4): “For we know that if our earthly house (or “body”), this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”...and again we read, “4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” You have tasted of this life. But remember there are others who have not. The New Zion is not yet complete. There are others who still need to be brought into this feast. And there is only one way in—through Jesus who is the door. Therefore, go, make disciples of the nations, tell them about this Jesus.