

Praise for Deliverance

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren and 'sistren' to dwell together in unity," bellowed Pastor Reynolds.

He was a tall, large man who seemed to possess a spirit just as great. It was a Sunday afternoon, and Word Church Ministries was celebrating paying off their mortgage. The church's instructions were to invite their Christian and non-Christian friends alike from "all walks of life" out to the mortgage burning service.

Since the church was in a college town, many of the visitors were from the university.

"This is a sample of what heaven will look like," said Pastor Reynolds. "People from every kindred and tongue will be there together. So, we may as well get used to eternity now.

"God is going to prepare a magnificent feast, and everyone is invited," the minister continued. "There will be no hatred and discrimination there. The only thing required is that you must have accepted the precious gift of His Son. You must have received the one and only thing that will allow you to enter the Father's presence. You must confess Jesus as Lord and accept His death on Calvary.

"Then, you can join all peoples in that great banquet!" concluded Pastor Reynolds. "Won't that be a glorious time? Then somebody needs to shout 'Amen!'"

"Amen!" rang out voices from the congregation.

- 1.** *What are your special memories of eating with others?*
- 2.** *Why can there be something uniquely wonderful about sharing a meal?*
- 3.** *How did Jesus make eating with others especially significant and intimate?*

Perfect Faithfulness

Isaiah 25:1–5 KJV

1 O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

2 For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

Isaiah 25:1–5 NIV

¹LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness
you have done wonderful things,
things planned long ago.
²You have made the city a heap of rubble,
the fortified town a ruin,
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;
it will never be rebuilt.
³Therefore strong peoples will honor you;
cities of ruthless nations will revere you.
⁴You have been a refuge for the poor,
a refuge for the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the storm
and a shade from the heat.
For the breath of the ruthless
is like a storm driving against a wall
⁵ and like the heat of the desert.
You silence the uproar of foreigners;
as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud,
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

Prophets were God’s messengers who gave God’s perspective on events. In the eighth-century BC, Isaiah saw the growing threat of the mighty kingdom of Assyria. He knew that only faith in Yahweh’s plan would save Judah, not some clever political maneuvering.

In chapters 23–27, Isaiah addresses the whole world. He says that God has pronounced judgment on a “city” (Isa. 24:1–13, 17–23; 25:2). The city could be the capital of Assyria, or it could represent any city of oppressive rulers. In response to God’s intervention in history, other nations will honor God as a strong deliverer (v. 3).

Yahweh shows compassion toward the weak (vv. 4–5). The “poor” and “needy” find security from God, who is like a house in the middle of a storm or cloud in the heat of the day. The “storm” and the “heat” represent malevolent intentions of greedy kings. God is able to reduce them all to silence (v. 5).

Isaiah’s imagery also recalls the Israelites’ time of following God in the wilderness. God led them through the desert in the form of a cloud (Ex. 13:21–22). Just as God had gone before them and protected them in the past, God was still concerned for His people and would not let them be destroyed.

4. *Why has God pronounced judgment on a “city” (v. 2)?*

5. *What images of God’s protection does Isaiah share?*

Tears Wiped Away

Isaiah 25:6–8 KJV

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

Isaiah 25:6–8 NIV

⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

Isaiah continues to describe how God intervenes in history. He can crush the city that spreads chaos across the land, for He is “LORD of hosts” (v. 6 KJV). He commands armies of heavenly angels that outnumber human armies—like the ones that threaten Judah.

God will “make” or “prepare” something new: a feast for all nations (v. 6). Isaiah portrays a coming banquet, with Yahweh as its host. A feast will be held atop Mount Zion, and God will serve choice meat and fine wine. Meat was not a regular part of an ancient diet; still God is preparing to serve His guests lavish portions of the best foods. This is divine abundance, a way of saying that even some of Judah’s enemies will turn to find favor from God.

God’s ultimate enemy is death. Yahweh will put an end to this “vail” or “shroud,” which all people fear (v. 7). Instead of allowing death to “swallow” humans any longer, God will be the one to “swallow up death in victory” (v. 8 KJV). His victory means an end to tears from “all faces,” for God is going to protect the honor and reputation of His people (v. 8). Judah is not about to be destroyed and disappear from the earth, for Yahweh is able to save, even from death.

6. *What is God preparing for people of all nations (v. 6)?*

7. *What figurative enemy is God planning to defeat (v. 8)?*

Trusting God

Isaiah 25:9–10a KJV

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest.

Isaiah 25:9–10a NIV

⁹In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we trusted in him;

let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

¹⁰The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

Isaiah predicts deliverance of God’s people—a relevant message for those facing armies bent on destruction. God preserved Judah from Assyria and kept a remnant of His people in Jerusalem, as Isaiah said He would (Isa. 10:20–23).

Isaiah also says that God’s plan is bigger: God is planning to destroy death itself (Isa. 25:8). Since God’s victory is more glorious than anything in human experience, even God’s people will be amazed at the salvation of God. The people shall say to themselves, “This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us” (v. 9 KJV). Isaiah predicts God’s salvation will come to the mountain of God. The same images of a *mountain* and *city* are repeated in the vision of Revelation 21:10. There, from a mountaintop, John witnessed the city of the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. God will dwell with His people forever. The Lord Jesus is the God who saves, the God who defeats death, and the God who invites all nations to turn to Him in faith. They become the guests of His table.

8. *What did Isaiah’s prediction of salvation mean for Judah?*

9. *How does Jesus fulfill Isaiah’s words about the God who saves?*

God's Great Banquet

One day during the ministry of Jesus, He was sharing a meal in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 14:1–24). Everyone was vying for attention and seeking a place of honor at the meal. But as was Jesus' habit, He told a story. His parable told of a man preparing a magnificent banquet. This man invited many guests, but they declined the invitation and gave excuses. When the man learned of this, he told his servant to invite the poor, the disabled, and the people from roads and country lanes so that his house could be full (Luke 14:23). The banquet goes on, and what a shame for those who miss it!

Jesus' listeners understood that He was talking about God and His heavenly kingdom. The followers of Jesus would spread the good news of salvation for all people. But God's kingdom is especially good news for the poor and lowly and those who appear forgotten. If we wish to be near the kingdom of God, we follow Jesus into places of poverty and need.

Ask yourself: Am I one of those who would decline the invitation? Do I make excuses about the business of my life? If we wish to experience the full measure of God's abundance, His banquet, we must set aside our excuses and join the fellowship of those who accept His invitation—including some we once considered enemies.

The banquet of God is a picture of the end of time, a celebration like no other. God's love, mercy, and salvation shall be on everyone's lips. "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29).

10. *What barriers do you encounter when God calls you to share the good news about Jesus?*

11. *Which people does society appear to forget?*

12. *How can you receive courage and determination to invite people to God's great banquet?*

The Great Commission

In this week's Scripture, Isaiah declared God's awesome invitation to partake in a great banquet, which He has been preparing for "all" peoples—that is, for people from all over the world who will humbly receive Him as their Lord God. Moreover, for those who already are His people, God calls them—and us—to invite everyone we know and meet to join in this festive occasion.

► *First write, "Invite all peoples to the feast of the Lord" at the top of an index card. Below it, write some names of people you could share the gospel with this week and so invite them to the wedding feast of the Lamb.*

KEY VERSE

And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. —Isaiah 25:6 KJV

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. —Isaiah 25:6 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of October 21 through October 27

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Mark 9:14–27—I Believe, Help My Unbelief!
- Tue.** Psalm 28—God Is My Strength and Shield.
- Wed.** Proverbs 3:1–8, 13–14—Trust God with All Your Heart.
- Thu.** 1 John 4:4–13—God in You Is Greater.
- Fri.** 1 John 4:14–21—Boldness on the Day of Judgment.
- Sat.** Jeremiah 17:5–11—Blessed Are Those Who Trust God.
- Sun.** Psalm 62—Wait upon God's Salvation.