

“Praise for Deliverance”

Lesson Text: Isaiah 25:1-10a **Background Scripture:** Isaiah 25; Daniel 6:10-28 **Devotional Reading:** Ephesians 1:3-14

Isaiah 25:1-10a (NIV)

O Lord, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them. ² You turn mighty cities into heaps of ruins. Cities with strong walls are turned to rubble. Beautiful palaces in distant lands disappear and will never be rebuilt. ³ Therefore, strong nations will declare your glory; ruthless nations will fear you. ⁴ But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, O Lord, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress. You are a refuge from the storm and a shelter from the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall, ⁵ or like the relentless heat of the desert. But you silence the roar of foreign nations. As the shade of a cloud cools relentless heat, so the boastful songs of ruthless people are stilled. ⁶ In Jerusalem, the Lord of Heaven's Armies will spread a wonderful feast for all the people of the world. It will be a delicious banquet with clear, well-aged wine and choice meat. ⁷ There he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken! ⁹ In that day the people will proclaim, "This is our God! We trusted in him, and he saved us! This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!" ¹⁰ For the Lord's hand of blessing will rest on Jerusalem.

TODAY'S LESSON AIMS

- **Learning Facts:** To summarize the historical context of Isaiah.
- **Biblical Principle:** To connect Isaiah's historical context to his specific assurances of God's faithfulness.
- **Daily Application:** To write a personal testimony to God's faithfulness.

INTRODUCTION

When the Darkness Lifts

At times, darkness overwhelms. It happens to all; no one is exempt. Whether that darkness comes in the form of grief, poverty, sickness, or national tragedy, believers cry out to God for deliverance.

When we experience God's rescue, we naturally ... do what? That's a crucial question because it will reveal the level of our spiritual maturity and devotion. There are affirmations of this in various places in the Bible. One New Testament example is Luke 17:17. One Old Testament example is found in today's text.

LESSON CONTEXT

Today's text comes from a section of Isaiah that is often called "The Isaiah Apocalypse" (chap. 24–27). This is because the scenes pictured are similar to the apocalyptic language (which is imagery describing the end of the world) found in the book of Revelation (compare Zechariah 9–14; Mark 13:24–27).

Isaiah became a prophet in the year King Uzziah of Judah died around 740 B.C. (Isaiah 6:1–10). By the time Isaiah appeared on the scene, the Israelites had been divided into two countries for almost 200 years: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The prophet had a long ministry of several decades in Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Isaiah's ministry began during a time of economic and military prosperity (Isaiah 2:7). But spiritual rot had set in (2:8), and it was only a matter of time before God intervened (2:9–4:1).

God's interventions took the form of oppression by foreign powers (Isaiah 7:20). One such oppression occurred during the reign of Ahaz of Judah (735–716 B.C.) when Aram (Syria) and the northern kingdom of Israel joined forces against Judah (2 Kings 16:1–10). Ahaz "saved" Judah by means of an unholy alliance with Assyria (16:7–9). That country eventually conquered northern Israel and exiled its inhabitants in 722 B.C. (17:6). The city of Jerusalem (in

Judah) barely escaped the same fate in 701 B.C. (18:13–19:27). But that was only temporary. Jerusalem’s reaction to that time of forthcoming darkness would reveal where the inhabitants’ hearts actually lay (Jeremiah 7:1–8; compare Isaiah 42:20–25).

Isaiah not only served during difficult times, but he also foresaw them—not only for Judah, but for the idolatrous nations around her, such as Egypt, Edom, and Tyre (Isaiah 14:28–23:18). But while confrontation about sin was a critical part of the task of the prophets, that

was not their only function; the prophets also provided hope. The situation looks utterly hopeless by the time the reader gets to Isaiah 24. That chapter’s 23 verses are dire in their prediction of the devastation of the whole earth. The reason is given in Isaiah 24:5: “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” The utter holiness of God that is unmistakable in Isaiah 24 is followed by a message of God’s love in Isaiah 25. It bears a message of hope—today’s lesson.

Praise the Lord: Isaiah 25:1-5

Isaiah’s response to the vision of devastation in chapter 24 was a prayer of praise. The prophet now (chapter 25) addresses God instead of the people and praises Him for who He is and what He has done. This chapter is also a song of praise to the Lord from the believing remnant that He preserved during “the Day of the Lord.” In this song of praise, three striking images stand out: 1) The ruined city (Isa. 25:1-3); 2) The refuge (Isa. 25:4-5); and 3) The feast (Isa. 25:6-12).

We see in verse 1 of today’s lesson that Isaiah’s knowledge of God’s truth did not make him proud; it humbled him and moved him to worship the Lord. Isaiah also praised God for His marvelous intervention on their behalf. In Isaiah’s time, large cities were places of power and wealth. In times of war, the people fled to the walled cities for protection. But the great cities of the world would offer no protection when God poured out His wrath on the nations (2:19; Rev. 16:19). The rebellious cities will be forced to acknowledge the greatness of God and give their homage to Him.

History witnesses the arrogance of those who trust in earthly protections. It’s not wrong to take steps to protect oneself or others from harm (example: Nehemiah 3). But reliance on such human efforts to the exclusion of God leads to arrogance and disaster (examples: 2 Samuel 5:6–8; Proverbs 18:10–11; Daniel 4:19–33).

1. Why did Isaiah give honor to God? What did God do? (Isaiah 25:1-3)

What Do You Think?

What are some things today that men and woman trust in and put before God? (e.g. homes, jobs, wealth...etc.)

Digging Deeper

What are some good godly habits that you have formed or should form so that you can enjoy your blessings yet stay humble before God?

The opening word “for” (left untranslated in the *NIV*) ties the previous discussion of these often-oppressive nations to a recognition of God’s concern for *the poor* and *the needy*. When people groups neglect or abuse the most vulnerable, God comes to their defense. In that regard, Isaiah compares God to a *shelter from the storm* or a *shade from the heat* (compare Isaiah 14:30; contrast 30:2–3).

2. In what ways will God show His mercy? (Isaiah 25:4-5)

What Do You Think?

In what ways does the church demonstrate God’s concern for the poor?

Digging Deeper

What roadblocks prevent your community from recognizing God’s concern for the poor?

Isaiah paints two pictures in verses 4-5: the buffeting of a storm and the beating down of a burning sun in the desert. Tribulation is like a storm, but God is the Refuge; it is like desert heat, but He is the cloud that blocks out the hot rays. God silences the noise of the enemy and brings peace. God will be a refuge for His believing people during that terrible “Day of the Lord.” The victory shouts of the enemy will disappear the way heat vanishes when a cloud covers the sun.

The Lord Hosts a Banquet: Isaiah 25:6-8

3. What did Isaiah say about the future kingdom? Who will be invited? (Isaiah 25:6-8)

“This mountain” refers to God’s holy mountain in Jerusalem (Isaiah 27:13). The prophet locates a future banquet here as he uses that phrase a total of three times in 25:6, 7, 10). For the Old Testament Jew, a feast was a picture of the future Kingdom Age where God was the Host, and when the Messiah would reign over Israel and all the nations of the world. Israel would enter into her glory, and the Gentiles would come to Zion to worship the Lord (2:1-5; 55:1-5; 60:1). When Jesus used the image of the feast in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28-29, the people knew He was speaking about the promised kingdom.

As for feasting, the food that we eat only sustains life, but at this feast death itself will be conquered. “On this mountain He will destroy the shroud [veil] that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever” (v. 7 of today’s lesson). The veil is not a reference to the veil of the Temple that would be rent later, but the *covering* of death that hangs over *all nations* as a result of the recently completed devastations of the Tribulation Period. Moreover, *The LORD will wipe away the tears* (v. 8; Revelation 7:17). Again, there could be no doubt that in this passage Isaiah intends to look to the distant future as he speaks of the time of unparalleled peace that shall occur during the millennial kingdom as a result of the intervention of God Himself.

In summation, the banquet, therefore, celebrates the death of death. God will destroy death, and His people will celebrate life; see Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54. The apostle John, for his part, quotes Isaiah 25:8 twice: Revelation 7:17; 21:4. In the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more death or pain, no more mourning, and no more tears. The foundation of the Christian’s assurance in this regard is the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:12–28).

What Do You Think?

When considering death, do you tend to dwell on the certainty of God’s work or the uncertainty of exactly what life after death will be like?

Digging Deeper

How does either approach allow you to share your hope in the Lord with others who may not know Him?

Testify About Him: Isaiah 25:9-10a

Isaiah 25 begins with the prophet’s tribute of praise. Now the praise is on the lips of all who will come to the mountain of the Lord to share in the “wonderful things” to be provided there (Isaiah 25:1). Note the use of the pronouns *our*, *we*, and *us*. The language is similar to the often-sung words of Psalm 118:24: “The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.”

When banquet day arrives, no better words can be uttered than *this is our God!* He has saved us. Thus, the people can rejoice in the fact that although they have waited years, it has been worth it!

4. What will the people say about God? (Isaiah 25:9)

The hand of the Lord is active throughout the Bible. Sometimes it is associated with blessing (Joshua 4:23, 24; Ezra 7:6; Luke 1:66; Acts 11:21); at other times, it is extended for discipline or punishment (Exodus 9:3; Judges 2:15; Ruth 1:13; 1 Samuel 5:6). Here, the focus is on God’s hand being at *rest* as a blessing. When God’s hand rests upon the land, it gives the land rest and protects it from all enemies, including death. God’s rest will also be ushered in His new creation—the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65:17–25; Revelation 21–22). Before that rest occurs, “The last enemy to be

destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). When death is defeated for good at the return of Jesus, it will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14), never again to cause pain and tears.

5. What will be accomplished when God’s hand rests upon the mountain? (Isaiah 25:10a)

What Do You Think?

Why is God’s rest good news for people?

Digging Deeper

Can your own rest (blessing) also be good for others? Explain.

CONCLUSION

Living Gratefully in Hope

Isaiah 25 provided a message of hope for God’s covenant people. In response, a song of praise and victory was predicted to be sung by Judah in Isaiah 26. The message of today’s lesson text was what assured that song. We mentioned in the Lesson Context that the section of Isaiah 24–27 has been called “The Isaiah Apocalypse”; the final and concluding work of this section is this: there will come a day when God gathers His people to worship Him in a place He has made holy.

People experience oppression in different ways and degrees. But everyone experiences death. We certainly should use godly methods and motivations to overcome oppression and injustice, as well as work for the sanctity of life. But as we do, we should remind ourselves that the complete presence of justice and absence of death in the life to come is what to focus on. It’s coming! As we so focus, we experience and expect God’s continuing faithfulness for our assured hope in ultimate deliverance.

One way to express this hope is to practice gratitude. We can do so in many ways. Some do so through music as they write and sing songs. Others do so via personal contact. Still others [you fill in the blank]. One of the simplest ways to express gratitude and become thankful, even during trials, is to create a gratitude list daily, perhaps first thing in the morning or the last thing before bed. A daily gratitude list will remind you of God’s many gifts. To name them is to offer thanks. Built into this naming is also an expectation of more good things from God, including the death of death. A gratitude list reorients our experience of the trial, recenters our faith, and expresses hope in the future.

As believers in Jesus, we anticipate and yearn for the messianic banquet hosted by Jesus in the presence of God (Matthew 26:29). As Israel shared in the blessings of God through the altar when they ate the sacrifices, so we share in the fellowship of body and blood of Jesus at the table when we eat and drink (1 Corinthians 10:14–17). It is a foretaste of the messianic banquet. When we eat and drink at the table of the Lord, we give thanks for the body and blood of the Lord. We also remember God’s faithfulness and yearn for the death of death. We eat and drink, and we go out into the world to serve, comforted by hope (Acts 20:7–12).

PRAYER

Father, we thank You for the promise of a banquet to celebrate Your faithfulness. Give us the desire and capacity to faithfully serve You in the present. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Gratefully wait for the fulfillment of the promised death of death.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week’s lesson is “Trust in God Alone” where students will be able to list many ways in which God is a source of strength in times of trouble. Study Psalm 62.