

The Future Glory of the Kingdom of God

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[0:00] Let's turn together to the prophecy of Isaiah to chapter 25 and we can read at verse number 6. Isaiah 25 at verse number 6.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, a rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all the peoples, the veil that is spread over all the nations. And so on down to the end of verse number 8.

We want to continue today to plot a path through this prophecy of Isaiah and we have already done so by looking at Isaiah chapter 6 and Isaiah chapter 12.

And in these chapters we saw something of the way in which Isaiah as somebody who was representing the people, the way he came to experience the presence of the glory of God and the way in which that impacted his own life.

[1:08] And the message that God gave to him as somebody who was then willing to serve the Lord. And then in Isaiah chapter 12 we saw the way in which the experience of that salvation that Isaiah 6 speaks of.

The way in which that brings about a transformation. The way in which it speaks of joy in the person's life. And the way in which we come to sing the song of God because of God's salvation. And as we journey on through the book we do notice that Isaiah uses a particular strategy to drive home certain key points.

And the strategy is the use of contrasts. Highlighting differences between different emphases.

And he does so to create an emphasis. He does so to deepen the meaning. But he does so also to capture attention. It's a valuable mechanism, a tool in any walk of life.

[2:16] If we're describing anything, to use contrasts. And so give that picture of opposite. So that we see the significance of one thing as opposed to the other.

And one of the great contrasts in the Bible of course is, as Paul speaks in Ephesians, In Ephesians, once you were darkness, now are you light in the Lord. How different are you that these are the extremities, the contrast, darkness, and now you are light in the Lord.

So the contrast brings out particular characteristics that highlight certain things. And Isaiah uses contrast in three particular areas that help us to understand what he's saying.

There is a contrast with regard to the people. There is a contrast with regard to kings. And there is a contrast with regard to places.

And in this chapter today, we are in one of these places where Isaiah is using contrasts with regard to places to highlight the importance of God's salvation.

[3:31] And we do want to look at these verses in this chapter today. And to think of the life of faith and the future glory of the kingdom of God.

We want to think first of all of the contrast and the privilege. The honor placed on certain people. And when we think of the privilege, we think first of all of a place. And there is a location. And the location is on this mountain.

And this mountain is the mountain that we sang of in Psalm number 48. It's the mountain that we read of in 1 Kings, the first few chapters, where Solomon builds the king's house and the temple, the God's house, where on Mount Zion he builds all of these beautiful buildings where God will dwell.

On this mountain, Mount Zion, at the very center of the message of the Old Testament. And when we follow the story of this mountain that began in all of its glory, we see that this mountain ultimately comes to be a pile of rubble.

[4:45] Because Nebuchadnezzar comes into Jerusalem. He burns the king's house. He burns the Lord's house. And he takes away all of the valuables that were in both houses.

And he did so because the people rebelled against God. And God comes to judge them because of their rebellion. And so the glorious Mount Zion with all of its beautiful buildings becomes a heap of rubble because of the rebellion of the people.

And in the beginning of this prophecy in chapter 2, we see that that will be reversed. That the day will come when God will raise up and establish this mountain once more and this house and all the nations will flock to it.

And when we read our Bibles, we come to understand that that moment is not for the here and now. We come to understand that that gathering of the nations to the glory of Mount Zion is not anywhere here in this world.

It's not in Jerusalem. It's not anywhere on this earth. It's what Revelation calls and what Hebrews chapter 12 calls. It is Mount Zion, the city of the living God.

[6:11] And today we come to think of the glory of the kingdom of God. And we are taken, as it were, on the wings of these words and raised up in our study of God today to think not of the here and now of where we are, but where God is bringing his people.

Mount Zion. That must be the focus of our attention. We know too well that everything else is broken. We know too well that everything else is in ruins.

And unless we have this hope before us, then what is there for us? To die in the ruins. But that is not the purpose of God.

There is a privilege because of the place, but there is a privilege especially because of the celebration. What do we have here?

We have a celebration where there is a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well-refined. We have the feast, the celebration, full of all of the rich food that is to satisfy all who gather.

[7:34] It is the greatest feast of all time. And when we read the Old Testament and the history of kings in the ancient world, we understand that this kind of celebration took place on three occasions.

The first occasion is when God makes a relationship with his people. And God did so at Mount Sinai with the children of Israel in Exodus 24.

He made a relationship with his people. He gave to them the book of the covenant. They promised to be faithful to him. And when all that was done, they beheld God and they ate and they drank.

The feast of celebrating that God is uniting himself in a relationship with his people on Mount Sinai. The second occasion is when the king is crowned.

And we read of David being crowned over the whole nation of Israel in 1 Chronicles chapter 12.

And there is a celebration for three days, eating and drinking, because this is a great occasion in the experience of the nation.

[8:54] And the third occasion when there is such a feast is when the king is getting married.

We know something of that ourselves when there is a royal marriage. There is a buzz around the nation because something really significant is happening.

But that was true in the Bible. And we read in Song of Solomon chapter 1 and chapter 2 that the bride is brought into the banqueting house where the king's banner over her is the banner of love.

And the summons then in chapter number 2 come to see the glory of King Solomon on the day that his mother crowned him, the day of his marriage and of the gladness of his heart.

The celebration of marriage. And when I follow this through to think of the celebration that this passage speaks of, it speaks of the marriage between Christ and his church.

[10:10] That glorious picture that we have in Revelation in chapter number 21 that the church, the people of God, they appear as a bride adorned for a husband.

And the dwelling place of God is with people. God draws near in this marriage relationship. Jesus has already been crowned at God's right hand.

God has already made a covenant through the death of the Lord Jesus. This cup, this new covenant in my blood. But the marriage is still outstanding.

And that's what we have in Revelation 21. And that's what these verses are pointing to. That there is a day coming when all of the people of God will gather in the city of God at the marriage supper of the Lamb, having made themselves ready in this world.

And as Jesus says in the parable in Matthew 22, the wedding hall will be filled with guests and the door will be shut. The privilege.

[11:26] The contrast and the privilege. The ruination that sin has brought into this world. The ruination that sin has brought into your life and into mine.

And the promise of all of that being reversed to bring us all into the glorious presence of God where there's that great feast of satisfaction and the door will be shut.

And we are here today because God expects us as well as commands us to make ourselves ready. the invitation has gone out and is going out for this wedding celebration to you and to me. And it is our responsibility to make sure that we are ready so that when it comes to shutting the door of this heavenly marriage feast in the city of God in Mount Zion, we will be on the inside.

And we won't be like those who came knocking at the door in the parable of Jesus in Matthew 25, knocking at the door thinking that although they were late and had no oil that they would enter the marriage feast.

[12:57] The door was shut. Depart from me. I never knew you. The contrast and the privilege. And what a privilege it is today for you as the child of God to have this expectation based on the promises of God and on the plan of God that there you shall be and there God will take you and there you will sit down and you will be like the bride of Christ adorned in the beauty that he bestows upon all those who put their trust in him.

The contrast and the privilege. Secondly, we want to think of the contrast and the power. There was a custom that when the king was married and at such a feast as this that the king would demonstrate his power by some kind of heroic act.

And here we have the same thing happening in this moment of this wedding celebration that this king, God's king, our king, King Jesus, that he demonstrates his power by a heroic act.

And his heroic act is bound up in this word that we have in verse number 7, he will swallow up. If I move something out of its place, there's the possibility that I can move it back.

And there's also the possibility that somebody else can move it back to where it was. But if I swallow something up, it's gone forever.

[14:57] It's complete destruction. No matter what anyone will do, they're not able to recreate this or replace this. It is gone forever.

It is swallowed up. And that's encouraging for us because here is our great king who in this moment of his marriage when we enter in to be with them forevermore, that he is going to bring to an end, swallow up, destroy completely to display his power for the encouragement of those who are his bride and to show to them the security that is theirs.

And when we read through these verses, we see that he swallows up three particular things. And these three particular things are really important for you and for me today, for all of the people of God.

And the first thing is that he swallows up grief. My word, what a demonstration of power that King Jesus is going to swallow up grief so that it will never exist again.

The grief that comes from calamities. The grief that comes because of our sin. The covering that here is, in version number seven, the covering that is cast over all of the peoples.

[16:30] It's as if there is a large sheet that covers all of the people and it's a covering of grief.

And today we reflect on where we are. And if there was a time before, and there were many, but these days are a time when there is a cloud of grief.

And God promises that Jesus will remove that so that it is there no more. We can familiarize ourselves with grief.

We can accept it as something that is part of life. To imagine what life would be without it is perhaps beyond our thinking. But God wants us to remember and to know that He will swallow up grief.

And the second thing, He will swallow up the curse, the veil that is spread over all nations. We are all sinned against God.

[17:51] We are worthy of the wrath and curse of God because of our sin. and that is like a veil that covers us in darkness so we cannot see and we cannot take in the information given to us.

It's something that functions in a way that grasps us and takes hold of us so that in many ways we are trapped under it. He swallows up the veil of the curse.

And thirdly, He swallows up death forever. something went wrong as we noted in talking to the children.

The something that went wrong had this attached to it. The day that you eat of this tree you will surely die. And from the moment that Adam and Eve ate of that tree the door was opened to send them out of the garden and the door was closed so that they would not return and eat of the tree of life.

The wages of sin is death because of one man's sin death reigned upon all because all have sinned. We weren't in the garden of Eden physically but Adam was there as you represented as mine and what he did you did and what he did I did and we are under the condemnation of death. [19 : 36] And Jesus came and he died for our sins according to the scripture. Jesus sacrificed himself he was obedient to death even death on the cross.

He bore our sins he was made a curse for us he cried out it is finished and in Paul's words he abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

But yet we know today that death remains part of the experience of humankind and so it will continue as long as the world continues as it is.

But on this day of celebration on the day of the marriage supper of the lamb when the people of God will be gathered in that moment this king will display his power before all of his people he will swallow up death forever the end of death what a prospect that God will not allow anything to enter the marriage feast that will spoil the banquet that he will make sure that everything is outside left beyond the bounds of where the people are celebrating and in the book of Hosea we think of death as a plague that affects the whole of humankind but in words that reflect what Isaiah is saying here in Hosea chapter 13

God says oh death I will be your plagues oh grave I will be your destruction the death that is a plague that affects us all on this great day God will be the plague for death and God will be the destruction of the grave the end of everything that was the consequence of sin and today we rejoice in the hope of the glory of the kingdom of God because death will be no more because there will be no more curse and no more grief in this life we are so often grief laden calamity broken and because of that unable to live life with the joy that God wants us to have in our hearts but at this wedding feast in this location celebration and forever more it will be a zone where death will be no more and grief will be no more and curse will be no more the zone of the glory of God the contrast and the privilege the contrast and the power and finally the contrast and the participation all of the things that we said they are so true and they have to be true but they are all things that affect the people who are going to be there this God is personal this display of the power of the Lord [23 : 48] Jesus and this heroic act of swallowing up all of these awful things that we want out of our lives all of these things happen for you and for me if we are to be there what is how do we participate well we read in version number 8 the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces the tears that come with grief the tears that come with calamity the tears that come with circumstances changing the tears that come when my life is turned upside down because something happens that I did not expect the tears that leave me robbed of the peace of God and that leave me lamenting through life because of all of these different things that so affect me the children of Israel they had these tears because they were in exile in Babylon away from the city of God but we have tears in this life because we are not yet in the holy city of God in Mount

Zion we have tears because we are in the valley of tears and these tears Isaiah says God will wipe away from all faces blotting them out so that they will be there no more it's so obliterating so that these tears will never more appear it's the permanent removal of the tears that have followed us as we journey on through life and does that not show to us the loving care of our heavenly father which one of us who have children or have children which one of us has not in a moment of crisis come along to our children and when they're in distress and wiped away their tears and encouraged them that it's over now and this will never happen again we have no control over that but we want to encourage our children in that moment of distress by wiping away their tears but in this case when the

Lord God our father when he comes to wipe the tears out of our eyes he can tell us for sure with certainty that you won't live like that anymore that all of that is behind you and you will never again shed the tears of grief and of sorrow there is something in my heart that wants to think that we can shed tears of joy the Bible doesn't say that we won't but we are comforted in the knowledge that we won't shed tears of grief a tear free sown in the kingdom of God in the glory of the final kingdom and for all those who are weeping today and who are grieving and who have to journey on through painful experiences having suffered loss and painful loss of loved ones here is a promise not for

God was and perhaps today you may be there yourself where has God gone where is God is God any longer with me because of what I'm going through the voices in my own mind saying to me you cannot have God if this is the case there's a voice in my own mind saying to me this is confirmation that this God is not your God there are so many voices in our minds that through which reproach is brought upon our own hearts so that we feel a sense of shame and belonging to the people of God because things are not what we expected things are not what we would wish but that will not be the case here as we saw recently there will be no temple there it will be all temple the Lord

God we rejoice in the good news of the gospel we rejoice in the prospect of one day being before your presence with exceeding great joy we rejoice in that day when there will be a major discontinuity between all that brings suffering and grief and sorrow here in this world and when at last we will enter into the joy and the rest of our Lord bless our hearts here today so that we may be on that journey with the people of God so that we may know where we are going so that we may know that you are our shepherd who goes before us along the highway of life and help us always to be watchful and to pray and to trust that we may walk in the light with you and ultimately arrive at that glorious destination where eternity will be a place of bliss and of blessedness with all of the people of God and especially with the

Thank you.