

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 25

*God Will Swallow Up Death Forever*

**O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. 2 For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the foreigners' palace is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. 3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. 4 For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, 5 like heat in a dry place. You subdue the noise of the foreigners; as heat by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is put down. 6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; 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." 10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trampled down in his place, as straw is trampled down in a dunghill. 11 And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim, but the LORD will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill of his hands. 12 And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down, lay low, and cast to the ground, to the dust.**

**25:1–5** A song of praise celebrating the deliverance brought about by the judgments of ch. 24 (see 24:14–16; see also ch. 12). (CSB)

**25:1** Now that the kings of heaven and earth have been dethroned and the Lord has been exalted as King, Isaiah takes up the song he heard in 24:14. At that time, he could not yet sing because of all the destruction, but now that the Lord has been enthroned, Isaiah can celebrate. (TLSB)

*O Lord, you are my God* – THIS whole chapter belongs to the preceding, because it deals in like manner with the devastation of Judea. However, it starts out with praise and exaltation of God, in that the prophet rejoices in the Jews' hardening and ungodliness. (Luther)

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*plans formed of old.* See 14:24, 26–27; 23:8–9. (CSB)

God planned and controlled all of these things. He will accomplish His will. (TLSB)

“Plans which Thou didst form, faithfully and surely, because Thou didst promise these things to Abraham and his descendants. These promises are faithful and true, that is, they are fulfilled and

brought to completion.” It is as if he were saying: “Thou hast paid up in full, because there is nothing untrue, but Thou hast most generously fulfilled all promises.” This is the prophet’s joy with regard to the promises carried out and fulfilled by the mercy of God. So we, too, are joyful in the treasure of the Gospel. (Luther)

**25:2** *city a ruin.* Same city as in 24:10. In light of 21:9 and Rv 17–18, the city is Babylon, the ancient and perennial enemy of God’s people. (TLSB)

*fortified city a ruin* – That is, armed. Thus, in the second place, he rejoices over the boastful glory of those who put their trust in the fortified city, boasting that Jerusalem was the strong city of God and therefore impregnable. (Luther)

*foreigner’s palace* – As if to say: “Hitherto Jerusalem was fortified with palaces, but those have been razed, so that it is not a city, for the very citizens of Jerusalem are false and outsiders, and none are genuine citizens.” (Luther)

*never be rebuilt.* Cf. 24:20. (CSB)

In its last destruction Jerusalem will be so thoroughly laid waste that it is never ever to be rebuilt. (Luther)

**25:3** *strong peoples ... ruthless nations.* Such as Egypt and Assyria . (CSB)

Those who have been humbled (cf chs 13–24). (TLSB)

“They will bring sacrifices to Thee in all places. Not only in temples but everywhere they will worship Thee.” (Luther)

*glorify you ... fear you.* See 24:15. (CSB)

That is to say: “From having lost one city, Thou wilt gain a great and strong people, namely, the Gentiles. Until now Thou hast had a small people in a city, but now Thou wilt have a large and numerous nation of Gentiles.” (Luther)

**25:4–5** *stronghold ... shelter ... shade ... cloud.* God Himself, not human resources, gave refuge to the poor and needy. (TLSB)

“They will bring sacrifices to Thee in all places. Not only in temples but everywhere they will worship Thee.” (Luther)

Protection and trust. To Him alone we must flee for refuge. Hurricane, wind storm, and rain storm designate persecuting tyrants. In this storm we shall flee to Christ for refuge and for shade against the burning heat of the sun. (Luther)

This is a simile. It is as if he were saying: “Thou art the refuge in a time when the rage and blast of the tyrants makes its assault, as when a storm is borne in upon a wall.” Thus in every calamity that befalls us he assures us that the restoration will follow promptly. For we are hardly a hedge and a shaky wall that could set itself against a great swirl of waters and winds. So also we are nothing against the tyrants, we are extremely helpless against their power; but then it follows that we may be comforted in this refuge, Christ, our Asylum. (Luther)

Thou wilt subdue the noise of the aliens like the fiery heat in the desert under a burning cloud. He wants to say: “Thou wilt deliver Thine own from the tyrants as heat does in the desert without rain, drying up all the seeds of the earth.” (Luther)

Mildew and honey dew, which destroys everything, as if to say: “He will withdraw the rain from them and dry them up with heat and give them an altogether poisonous shade and fog.” (Luther)

“And Thou wilt cause the branch of the tyrants to waste away.” This means: “Thou alone art the helper of Thine own, so that they overcome all tyrants purely by patience since Thou, O Lord, dost overcome and destroy them. As that heat and destructive cloud creates barrenness, so Thou dost destroy them.” So the Lord confounds all kingdoms. We do not need swords and weapons but patience. They will die among themselves. “Thy people will endure in bloom, but they will be dried up like seeds.” Their song is: It wastes away, it is dried up. Just so we see that all the greatest kingdoms have perished, from whom He first removed the rain, that is, those whose wise men and kings He took away; then they collapsed by themselves. We see this happening to the fields when the cloud is gone. Thus God will suppress our tyrants if He withdraws the cloud from them. In other words: “I will deprive them of wise men, so that they will be finished one after another.” As I heard at Erfurt, there would be no lack of money but of men. Therefore by this picture the prophet most aptly describes the ruin of the ungodly. For just as in the springtime, when the grainlands are sprouting beautifully and progressing most hopefully and then come heat, drought, and harmful clouds, or mildew, so it will be for the tyrants who are flourishing supremely and moving along in their best effort. The springtime is there now, but the drought will get them. They will not succeed in what they are scheming in their councils, but rather they themselves will become good for nothing when it pleases God. (Luther)

Literally, “As the burning of the sun in a dry land Thou didst suppress the raging of tile barbarians, as the burning of the sun by a shadow of a cloud the triumphant song of violent ones must cease”; that is, Just as Jehovah causes the glowing heat of the sun to be cut off by a sheltering bank of clouds, so He is able to quell instantaneously all the raging and the triumph of hosts of enemies. (Kretzmann)

*storm against a wall.* Threats of the strong nations cause no harm to the people God protected. (TLSB)

**25:5** *noise of the foreigners.* God silences the enemy’s victory song (cf Ps 8:2). (TLSB)

**25:6-9** Immediately before our text, Isaiah proclaims the inevitable judgment of Yahweh on all the earth. It is a terrifying and inescapable thing. Sin and rebellion will be overcome. Even death itself will be vanquished, for they are the enemies of God and all that God desires for his people. For the sinner, there is no place of refuge from Yahweh’s righteous judgment anywhere in the world (24:17–18). Sin will be vanquished; death will be swallowed up (25:8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Yahweh’s judgment throughout Isaiah, though, is also a call to repentance (12:1–2). In the midst of his judgment, there is a place of hope, Mount Zion, the place of Yahweh’s work of salvation for all. All other kingdoms and hopes will be dashed. (See Heb 12:27–29.) Isaiah is sent to preach God’s wrath upon sin. He is sent to proclaim the end of all human kingdoms that have set their face against Zion, the end of the mountain of Moab (Is 15–16; 25:10), and all kingdoms like it, even mighty Babylon. But Isaiah is also called to proclaim hope to repentant sinners, to point to the only hope that they have, but a hope they *do* have, the King of Zion, who prepares a feast of victory, who swallows up sin and death forever, and who loves and forgives his people with a

gracious, everlasting love. The proclamation of righteous judgment and undeserved grace is a call for all to trust in Yahweh, the one who says and does this (cf 12:1–2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**25:6–8†** The eschatological feast prepared by God for the redeemed. (CSB)

**25:6** *on this mountain* – The translations that emphasize this phrase by moving it to the beginning of the verse (e.g. KJV, NIV) may mislead us to focus on the place where God is acting rather than on the one who is acting. The actual sequence in the Hebrew is who – all peoples / where - on this mountain / and then what – banquet. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

The place where God dwells and dispenses his grace through his appointed means. On Mount Calvary, God dwelling in Christ, procured grace for us. In our present age Zion’ equivalent is the church, wherein the means of grace are found. Here the Lord will exhibit his victorious reign before his people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Also notice the “*this mountain*” reference. Isaiah contrasts Mount Zion with Mount Moab (v 10). Zion is God’s appointed place to “receive the victory” because he has appointed it so and made it so. He makes the victory plain and accessible in contrast to all other human institutions and powers. He makes it plain so that all might be able to see it and receive it as his gift for them. God locates his promise for all people in the lowly line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the line of David, come to fruition in the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb of Jesus, the Christ. Look only to Zion fulfilled, Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*Lord of hosts will make* - The Lord will prepare a rich feast for all people. Notice the position of “Yahweh, the Lord” in the Hebrew compared to the ESV translation. In the Hebrew text, God’s name comes first. The text is about what Yahweh is doing for all people. The mountain of Zion is vital because he has chosen it. The victory feast is beyond all expectations because he has prepared it. Yahweh prepares a victory feast of the very best wines and meat, reminding us all that all good things flow from the one who created and redeemed us (Gen 1; Is 43:1–3). One is reminded of Jesus miraculously providing the finest wine at the wedding of Cana or even finer wine at the feast of the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus is the “delivered Lamb” who forgives the sins of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*feast*. Associated with a coronation (1Ki 1:25) or wedding (Jdg 14:10); cf. the “wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). (CSB)

At Sinai, a similar feast was held, at which God’s people ate and drank with Him (Ex 24:9–11). Jesus speaks on several occasions about God’s feast for His people (e.g., Mt 8:11; 22:1–14; 25:10). (TLSB)

God’s people eat of this banquet of grace every time they hear the gospel or receive the sacraments. As God’s people read and study the Word, they eat from God’s banquet table and receive nourishment for their souls. (PBC)

*rich food*. Symbolic of great spiritual blessings (see 55:2). (CSB)

Delicacies. (TLSB)

In the ancient Near East, where starvation was a constant threat, fatty and rich foods were the most desirable. (In Job 21:24, “bones rich in marrow” described a prosperous, satisfied person.) This

fine meal fully satisfies the members of God's household, even amid our earthly sorrow and cares (cf also Ps. 36:8). The parallels to the Lord's Supper are obvious. This banquet is the end-times meal Jesus promised after instituting the Lord's Supper, when he will dine with us anew (Mt. 26:29; cf 1 Cor. 11:26) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Healthy and desirable. Descriptive terms refer to the absolute best that money could buy. This will be a feast like no other. (TLSB)

*aged wine.* The best wine—aged by being left on its dregs (see Jer 48:11; Zep 1:12). (CSB)

Left on its fermented sediment to improve strength and flavor. (TLSB)

Wines that have been left to stand on their lees (Sediment settling during fermentation, especially in wine dregs) have a richer flavor. (Concordia Bible)

The power of the gospel to bless men passes all human comprehension. It fills the heart that receives it with light and joy; makes every nation that obeys it prosperous and happy; it provides all believing families with harmony and blessedness. (Concordia Bible)

The banquet Isaiah described is one of the richest the ancient world could imagine. The language emphasizes that it is the best. The wine ages in order to increase its color and quality. The meat was the best that the ancient world could provide. It was fat and rich. In our day we taught to avoid fat, but in the ancient world fat was highly desired. The banquet is the banquet of God's grace. The Savior-God – the Lord Almighty – has prepared the best His love could offer: rich compassion, wonderful forgiveness, and every satisfying food for the soul. (PBC)

The entire verse, in the Hebrew, is most poetical and musical song, full of praises for the richness of God's grace in the spiritual food prepared for His children in the Gospel. (Kretzmann)

*full of marrow.* Healthy and desirable. Descriptive terms refer to the absolute best that money could buy. This will be a feast like no other. (TLSB)

**25:7 covering...veil.** Or “covering ... veil,” with which faces were covered in mourning—in any event, the associations are with death. (CSB)

Symbol of death and mourning (cf 2Sm 15:30; Jer 14:3; 2Co 3:12–18). (TLSB)

The pall on a coffin represents the clothing of Christ's righteousness, given in Holy Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Luther goes one step further and says that it means “death and all its evils.” The work done “on this mountain” to destroy the shroud is a work done by the Lord for all people. Understanding this, the work is clearly the work of Christ on the cross done on Mount Calvary. The feast's connection to the Lord's Supper is clear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The veil of ignorance with its attendant sin and wretchedness. The covenant made with Abraham was from the beginning designed to bless all nations; and this design Christ will gloriously accomplish. He will make the light of His gospel shine from mount Zion into every land, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Concordia Bible)

**25:8** Quoted in part in 1Co 15:54. (CSB)

*swallow up death.* Death, the great swallower, will be swallowed up. (CSB)

Now, death “swallows” life. On that day, death itself will die. (TLSB)

He will “swallow up . . . the covering that is cast over all peoples.” Sin casts a “death pall” over the world. All the world’s solutions to the human condition end in despair. (See also Eccl 2:18–25.) “Covering” and “veil” could signify suffering and despair, but it probably is even more futile. It probably means absolute blindness to the things of God (2 Cor 3:12–18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The death referred to here is the second death, as interpreted in 1 Corinthians 15:54, and Revelation 20:14 and 21:4. Another such passage is Hebrews 2:14. (Concordia Journal/January 2000)

The verb is found here in the perfect tense without a conjunction. “Having swallowed up, he..” may be better translation showing the connection in thought to the previous verse and its effects as reflected in what follows. The work is done and the victory is won in the cross. The shroud of death is destroyed on Calvary. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Literally, “for ever.” The swallowing up of death is its abolition in the widest sense. The prophet’s vision extends not only into, but beyond the NT period. He has a view of the final issue of Christ’s redemption in this world and in eternity. (Concordia Bible)

In the kingdom of Christ all believers enjoy such unspeakable blessedness of pardon and peace that words cannot describe God’s goodness; and this will be but an earnest of the perfect redemption of heaven, where God will in the fullest sense of the words swallow up death for ever, and wipe away tears from off all faces. (Concordia Bible)

In Canaanite mythology, the gods destroyed death, but the enemy returned with the changing of the season. Here, the Lord demonstrates His kingly authority by swallowing up death forever. John quotes John 18:13 when he describes the marriage supper of the Lamb which will take place after “the former things have passed away (Rev. 19:9; 21:1-4). (TLSB)

*LORD GOD.* See 7:7; 28:16; 30:15; 40:10; 49:22; 52:4; 61:11; 65:13. (CSB)

*wipe away tears* – This is often applied to those who have lost loved ones. However the “tears” are our tears caused by the disgrace and sin committed against God for the Gospel is that despite all this He remains faithful toward us by removing our disgrace by His grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

He will “wipe away tears from all faces” and remove the “reproach of his people.” Yahweh’s concern is for the lives of all people. He not only wipes away the tears (the external sign) of one’s reproach, but he also destroys and eliminates the cause (cf 2 Cor 5:17–21). Israel has borne the public reproach of Yahweh as well. Not only the “nations” have felt the wrath of God, but even Israel, due to her rebellion and sin, has borne God’s chastening hand. To the remnant of Israel, who through it all trusted in the one who could alone save and redeem them, their “reprimand, public discipline” has come to an end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*reproach...will take away.* See 54:4. (CSB)

The accusation and the penalty for sin is destroyed. Luther: “Christ destroys death. As a plague consumes the body little by little, so Christ is the pestilence of our death and of our old Adam” (AE 16:197). (TLSB)

God removes his people’s disgrace caused by sin and death, as prophesied in Joel 2:19. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*the Lord has spoken* – We note how Isaiah punctuates these promises by his familiar exclamation point, “The Lord has spoken.”

**25:9** Another brief song of praise. (CSB)

Trusting God’s promises in life, His people now see them powerfully fulfilled. (TLSB)

*we* – This signified the church of all ages – the communion of saints – those who enjoy the richest feast and rejoice in the Lord’s salvation. His salvation may seem a long time in coming. It did for Israel as she awaited the Messiah. Our lives may be prolonged in suffering. But those who wait for the Lord will not be disappointed.

*we have waited.* Cf. Ps 22:4–5. (CSB)

It means “wait for, trust in.” His salvation may seem a long time in coming. It did for Israel as she awaited the Messiah. Our lives may be prolonged in suffering. But those who wait for the Lord will not be disappointed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

“This is our God.” This is who Yahweh, the true God, is. This is who he has always been. We can trust him. We can “entrust” our lives to him. He is the source of forgiveness, life, and salvation, of never-ending joy and peace. TRUST IN HIM! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*be glad and rejoice.* Cf. 35:10; 51:11; 66:10. (CSB)

**25:10–12** An elaboration on the theme of judgment. (CSB)

**25:10** *hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain* – That is, the strength of the Lord. *Will rest*, that is, it is in the church, although it may not be openly apparent. His power is there, because He frees us from all evils. (Luther)

God will act for His people and against His enemies. (TLSB)

*Moab.* Symbolic of all the enemies of God, like Edom in 34:5–17. (CSB)

Contrast here between two mountains, the mountain of Zion and the mountain of Moab. Mount Zion will continue to stand tall as the dwelling place of the Lord (cf Heb 12:22–24; Rv 14:1), while Moab, representing those opposed to God, will fall (cf Is 34:5; 63:1). (TLSB)

*dunghill.* It will be cast away as worthless. (TLSB)

Moab denotes the ungodly synagogue that is to be laid waste, a synagogue that is unbelieving in the time of the Gospel. It will be trodden down like a dung-pit and like chaff on the ground, because that synagogue will be utterly worthless; we see this by experience among the Jews, who

have no kingdom and neither priesthood nor government. This is a most apt illustration. John also used it to depict devastation most particularly and to show the people to be worthless (Matt. 3:12), as straw is a mere nothing for the dung-pit. (Luther)

**25:11** *swimmer spreads his hands out* – Deepest humiliation, swimming in dung. Despite Moab’s attempts to “keep its head above water,” the Lord will take it down. (TLSB)

Deepest humiliation, swimming in dung. Despite Moab’s attempts to “keep its head above water,” the Lord will take it down. (TLSB)

*skill of his hands.* Human efforts fail; God succeeds. (TLSB)

**25:12** *high fortifications.* See v. 2; 2:15; 2Ki 3:27; Jer 51:58. (CSB)

Walls and towers. (TLSB)

No matter how well fortified Jerusalem is, it will be made equal to the dust of the earth, and not one stone will remain on another (Matt. 24:2). These two chapters have in a figurative way described the devastation of the ungodly synagogue. But the prophet intersperses them with references to the kingdom of Christ, who does not forsake His own afflicted but at length frees those who by faith have been well exercised in these things. (Luther)

Thus all the enemies of the Lord will finally be destroyed with the everlasting destruction of the wrath of the just God, while the city of God, the congregation of believers, will triumph with Him in all eternity. (Kretzmann)

*lay low.* God will destroy their defenses. (TLSB)

**Ch 25** On Mount Zion, the Lord of hosts will prepare a feast and will swallow up death forever. Death is what we deserve as the just penalty for our sin. No human efforts or resources can shelter us from this reproach. By Jesus’ resurrection, death has been swallowed up in victory (1Co 15:54). As we await the day of our own bodily resurrection, we are invited to eat and drink with the Lord in His Holy Supper, a foretaste of the feast to come. • Lord of Life, teach us to live each day in the joy and gladness of knowing that because Jesus lives, we shall live also. Amen. (TLSB)