

Session 23

Isaiah 25:1-12 | The LORD's Feast and the Defeat of Death

Isaiah Oracle by Oracle / Dr. Randy White

Isaiah 24 ended with the LORD of hosts reigning in Mount Zion and Jerusalem. Chapter 25 opens with praise to that same LORD and returns three times to **“this mountain”** (vv.6, 7, 10). The setting connects the song to His reign in Zion. The chapter moves from the overthrow of a fortified city to a feast for all peoples, the defeat of death, and the humiliation of Moab's pride.

The personal confession **“thou art my God”** in verse 1 becomes the shared confession **“this is our God”** in verse 9. Between those expressions of trust, the LORD is praised for His faithfulness and for blessings that extend beyond Israel to the nations. As in chapter 24, changes in speaker and subject matter guide the divisions. The passage presents the greatness of God's salvation without supplying a complete timetable for every promise.

A. Praise for judgment and refuge (vv.1-5)

- **Verse 1 - The speaker praises the LORD for His wonderful works and faithful counsels.** The announcement of the LORD's reign calls forth a personal response.
 - **“O LORD, thou art my God”** expresses allegiance to the One who has just been declared King in Zion. Isaiah voices the praise, but the song also gives words to those who will rejoice in the LORD's salvation. Verse 9 will make that corporate response explicit.
 - **“I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name”** reverses the self-exaltation repeatedly condemned in Isaiah. The fitting response to the LORD's greatness is to acknowledge Him. Compare the earlier declaration that the LORD alone will be exalted in that day (Isa. 2:11, 17).
- **“Thou hast done wonderful things”** looks upon God's works as accomplished. Within this prophetic setting, the past-tense language need not confine the song to a deliverance already completed in Isaiah's lifetime. The chapter includes the still-future swallowing up of death.
- **“Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth”** places these works within God's longstanding purpose. His judgments and salvation demonstrate that His declared intentions can be trusted. The praise rests on what He has purposed and done.
- **Verse 2 - A fortified city becomes a permanent ruin.** The first reason given for praise is the overthrow of an apparently secure human stronghold.

- **“For thou hast made of a city an heap”** explains the wonderful works just celebrated. The city that once gathered power and wealth is reduced to rubble. **“A defenced city”** emphasizes that its fortifications could not preserve it.
- The city is unnamed. Babylon is a possible comparison, especially in light of Isaiah 13:19-22, but this verse does not identify Babylon or explicitly equate this city with the unnamed city in 24:10. The emphasis is the collapse of fortified opposition to God.
- **“A palace of strangers to be no city”** brings foreign grandeur into the ruin. **“It shall never be built”** declares the judgment’s finality. The verse supplies no named conqueror or date from which to construct a separate historical timetable.
- **Verse 3 - Strong peoples glorify and fear the LORD.** The overthrow of human power produces recognition of the One who overthrows it.
 - **“Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee”** connects their response to the judgment of verse 2. Those who appeared strong encounter a power greater than their own.
 - **“The city of the terrible nations shall fear thee”** describes peoples who inspire terror now fearing the LORD. The verse announces their acknowledgment of Him without explaining the spiritual condition of every individual among them.
 - The international response anticipates the feast **“unto all people”** in verse 6. The LORD’s reign in Zion has consequences for the nations beyond Israel.
- **Verse 4 - The LORD has been strength, refuge, and shade for the needy.** His greatness is also shown in the preservation of people exposed to oppression.
 - **“A strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress”** identifies those who cannot secure themselves by the resources celebrated in verse 2. The LORD Himself supplies their protection.
 - **“A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat”** uses two familiar dangers to describe that protection. Shelter answers the storm; shade answers the heat. These are complementary pictures of relief from overwhelming conditions.
 - **“The blast of the terrible ones”** identifies the oppressors behind the storm imagery. Their violence beats **“as a storm against the wall.”** The passage joins the fall of the powerful with the preservation of those they threaten.
- **Verse 5 - The LORD quiets the threatening power of the oppressors.** The heat and shade imagery continues the preceding verse.
 - **“Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers”** pictures the silencing of hostile clamor. Their noise, like oppressive heat in a dry place, dominates the scene until the LORD intervenes.
 - **“Even the heat with the shadow of a cloud”** describes how effectively He brings relief. As a cloud interrupts the sun’s burning heat, the LORD subdues the oppressive presence of the terrible ones.
 - The KJV closes with **“the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.”** Whatever flourishing strength these oppressors display, it cannot remain exalted before Him. The controlling statement is their humiliation; the expression is not a reference to Isaiah’s promised Davidic Branch.

B. The feast and the defeat of death (vv.6-8)

- **Verse 6 - The LORD of hosts prepares a rich feast for all peoples on His mountain.** The scene changes from shelter amid distress to abundant provision.
 - **“In this mountain”** points back to Mount Zion, where the LORD reigns in 24:23. The text locates the blessing. Jerusalem remains central even as the recipients extend to **“all people.”** Compare the nations coming to the mountain of the LORD in Isaiah 2:2-4.
 - **“The LORD of hosts”** is the host of the feast as well as the ruler who judges. The One who brings down the fortified city provides what human strength cannot secure. The repeated **“a feast”** emphasizes abundance and celebration.
 - **“Fat things full of marrow”** describes rich, desirable food. **“Wines on the lees well refined”** describes wine that has rested on its sediment and is then clarified. The language presents the quality and fullness of the provision.
 - Chapter 24 described failing wine, silenced music, and vanished gladness (24:7-11). Here the LORD prepares the feast Himself. The connection gives the promised celebration particular force after the loss of ordinary rejoicing.
 - The feast portrays the blessings of the LORD’s reign with concrete banquet language. The verse does not name the marriage supper of the Lamb or identify this occasion with the Lord’s Supper. Such connections require an argument beyond the presence of food and wine.
- **Verse 7 - The LORD removes the covering spread over the nations.** The repeated location binds this work to the feast.
 - **“He will destroy in this mountain”** identifies the same divine actor and the same setting. The covering extends over **“all people,”** and the parallel **“vail”** spreads over **“all nations.”** The problem reaches beyond one nation’s distress.
- Isaiah does not explicitly name the covering in this verse. The immediate movement to death and tears in verse 8 makes a covering associated with death and mourning the strongest contextual reading. The nations live under a shadow that the LORD alone can remove.
- Spiritual blindness is another proposed interpretation. However, this verse contains no explicit reference to blinded eyes, unbelief, or the reading of Moses. Those details should not be imported from the veil in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16 as though Isaiah had stated them here.
- The promise is removal of the covering itself. The following verse explains the reach of that deliverance: death is swallowed up, tears are wiped away, and the reproach of God’s people is removed.
- **Verse 8 - The LORD defeats death, wipes away tears, and removes His people’s reproach.** This is the climax of the chapter’s promised blessing.
 - **“He will swallow up death in victory”** makes death itself the object of God’s conquering action. A temporary escape from invasion cannot exhaust this promise. The enemy that consumes human life is itself swallowed up.
 - Paul explicitly takes up this saying in 1 Corinthians 15:54, placing its fulfillment in connection with the corruptible putting on incorruption and the mortal putting on immortality. That connection confirms that Isaiah’s words reach to victory over actual death.
 - Paul’s use of the promise does not erase Isaiah’s setting in Zion or the reference to **“his people”** later in the verse. The shared victory over death

should be recognized while allowing each passage to identify its own audience and circumstances.

- **“The Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces”** presents divine consolation in personal terms. The LORD deals with the sorrow as well as its cause. Revelation 21:4 takes up the same promise of tears removed and death ended in its description of the new heaven and new earth.
- **“The rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth”** concerns their reproach or disgrace. Within Isaiah’s setting, **“his people”** naturally identifies Israel. The nations

share in the announced blessing, and Israel’s humiliation is specifically removed.

- **“For the LORD hath spoken it”** supplies the guarantee. Neither the defeat of death nor the removal of Israel’s reproach rests on the ability of the recipients to accomplish it.
- Isaiah places these promises together without specifying the intervals between their fulfillment. A detailed relationship between the kingdom reign, resurrection, and the final absence of death must be developed from the other relevant passages. This paragraph alone does not establish that all occur at a single moment.

C. Salvation celebrated and pride humbled (vv.9-12)

- **Verse 9 - Those who waited for the LORD recognize Him and rejoice in His salvation.** The speaker’s personal praise becomes a shared confession.
- **“And it shall be said in that day”** introduces the response to the announced deliverance. **“Lo, this is our God”** expresses recognition: the One for whom they waited is the One who saves.
- **“We have waited for him”** appears twice. Their confidence has been directed toward the LORD Himself. The words fit the wider contrast in Isaiah between trusting Him and seeking security in political alliances, fortifications, or human strength.
- **“He will save us”** and **“we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation”** identify both the source of deliverance and the reason for joy. As in Isaiah 12:2-3, salvation and rejoicing belong together because God Himself is the Savior.
- In its prophetic setting, this is the confession of the people awaiting the LORD’s promised intervention. It should first be heard in that setting before

drawing broader lessons about trust and patience.

- **Verse 10 - The LORD’s hand rests on the mountain while Moab is trodden down.** The same reign brings security to Zion and humiliation to proud opposition.
- **“For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest”** returns to the location of the feast and the removal of the covering. His hand signifies His active power; in this setting its resting on the mountain expresses His settled presence and protection.
- **“Moab shall be trodden down”** names a particular people. Isaiah 15-16 already addressed Moab, and 16:6 specifically exposed its pride. Moab’s appearance here therefore recalls a theme already developed in the book.
- Moab can illustrate the larger humiliation of proud nations, but the named people should not simply disappear into a symbol. The text expressly announces Moab’s abasement.
- **“As straw is trodden down for the dunghill”** gives an intentionally degrading

picture. The contrast with the rich feast is severe: the LORD's provision is abundant, while resistance to Him ends in humiliation. **"All people"** in verse 6 does not mean that pride and opposition escape judgment.

- **Verse 11 - The swimmer imagery accompanies the bringing down of Moab's pride.** The pronouns require care.
 - **"He shall spread forth his hands ... as he that swimmeth"** can be understood as Moab, personified, struggling in the degrading circumstances of verse 10. On this reading, the next **"he"** refers to the LORD, who brings down Moab's pride despite its efforts.
 - Another reading takes the LORD as the subject throughout: He spreads His hands in judgment as a swimmer spreads his hands. The English wording does not resolve the subjects beyond dispute. The conclusion is clear under either reading: the LORD brings Moab's pride low.
 - **"Together with the spoils of their hands"** joins what they possess or have

gained to their humiliation. Neither their achievements nor their resources can preserve the pride God has determined to overthrow.

- **Verse 12 - The high fortress is brought all the way down to dust.** The final verse makes the humiliation visible in the collapse of the walls.
 - **"The fortress of the high fort of thy walls"** gathers the language of security and elevation. The direct address continues the announcement against Moab.
 - **"Bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust"** piles up expressions of descent. The apparent height of the defense only sharpens the completeness of its fall.
 - The ruined city in verse 2 and the fallen fortress in verse 12 frame the chapter's feast and salvation. Those who wait for the LORD rejoice in Him; proud defenses cannot stand before Him. Chapter 26 will open with another city, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation.

The Psalms and Isaiah 25

Psalm 9 follows much of the same order and flow as Isaiah 25. The connection involves a sequence of themes: praise for God’s wonderful works, judgment upon hostile powers, refuge for the oppressed, deliverance associated with Zion, rejoicing in salvation, and the humiliation of nations.

Isaiah 25	Psalm 9
Praise for God’s wonderful works (v.1).	Praise for His marvelous works and His name (vv.1-2).
The fortified city reduced to ruin (v.2).	Nations judged and cities destroyed (vv.5-6).
Refuge for the poor in distress (v.4).	Refuge for the oppressed in trouble (v.9).
Salvation centered on the LORD’s mountain (vv.6-8; compare 24:23).	The LORD dwelling in Zion; rescue from the gates of death and praise in Zion’s gates (vv.11-14).
“We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (v.9).	“I will rejoice in thy salvation” (v.14).
Moab’s pride and fortifications brought low (vv.10-12).	Judgment upon the wicked nations and a plea that they recognize themselves to be only men (vv.15-20).

The comparison proceeds forward through both passages without rearranging their principal movements. Psalm 9 supplies a fitting song alongside Isaiah’s prophecy. The correspondence is not exact: Psalm 9 returns to the needy in verse 18 and closes with prayer for judgment, while Isaiah announces Moab’s downfall. Nor does Psalm 9 explicitly describe the feast or the abolition of death. Its rescue from death’s gates is a close thematic connection to Isaiah 25:8, whose promise extends further.

- **Psalm 118:14-24, 28 - Salvation and the same confession of praise.** Verse 28 closely matches Isaiah 25:1: **“Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.”** Verses 14 and 21 name the LORD as salvation; verses 17-18 describe preservation from death; verse 24 joins rejoicing and gladness, as does Isaiah 25:9.
- **Psalm 22:22-31, especially verses 26-28 - A meal and worldwide worship.** The meek eat and are satisfied, the nations turn to worship, and the LORD governs the nations. This combination closely fits Isaiah 25:6 and its wider setting. The psalm does not explicitly identify its meal with Isaiah’s feast.
- **Psalm 48:1-14, especially verses 1-6, 11, 14 - Zion secure and hostile kings humbled.** God’s holy mountain, His refuge, the kings’ terror, and Zion’s joy in His judgments fit Isaiah 24:23-25:12. **“This God is our God”** (v.14) closely resembles **“Lo, this is our God”** in Isaiah 25:9.

These parallels support reading the passages together; they do not by themselves establish that every psalm predicts the identical event.

Scripture wording follows the King James Version, Isaiah 25. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and Revelation 21:3-4, Psalm 9, Psalm 118, Psalm 22, and Psalm 48.