

The End of Death Isaiah 25:1-12

Our sermon text this morning is Isaiah chapter 25, and I'll be attempting to preach the whole chapter. Before the reading, I'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we do ask that you would now indeed bless your word to us. Please help me as I speak. Please help us all as we listen. We ask that we would be given ears to hear and eyes to see and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 25, starting at verse 1: “¹O 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. ²For 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. ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. ⁴For 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, ⁵like 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.

“⁶On 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. ⁷And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He 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. ⁹It 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.' ¹⁰For 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. ¹¹And 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. ¹²And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down, lay low, and cast to the ground, to the dust.” Amen.

In Isaiah chapter 25, Isaiah picks up many themes that he has already laid before us in previous chapters. For example, he speaks of the destruction of cities, the destruction of the cities of the proud. He spoke about that only back in Isaiah chapter 24. He speaks of the mountain of the Lord and the gathering of the peoples to worship at the mountain of the Lord, picking up on a theme that we first find in the book of Isaiah back in Isaiah chapter 2.

He speaks of the Lord supplying, caring for His people, of the Lord's provision for His people, watching over and caring for His people, very much in a way that's reminiscent of the book of Exodus. We found as we worked our way forward through the book of Isaiah that Isaiah makes many references back to the book of Exodus, and Exodus-type happenings, but he places them forward from himself in the future. Isaiah appears to be looking forward to a new exodus, another exodus, another setting free of God's people from slavery.

But I would suggest to you that here in Isaiah chapter 25, he puts a new layer on his words. He puts a new level upon his revelation, particularly verse 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.” He will swallow up death forever. That tells us something more. That adds something on top of the things that Isaiah has already told us.

What has he told us? He’s told us that the earth is weighed down with sin. He’s told us that the day must come when God will judge. He’s told us that all men are unrighteous in the eyes of God. “Though your sins are like scarlet,” Isaiah said, “they shall be white as snow.” He’s told us that God is a God who must judge wickedness, He must judge evil. He’s not going to just let things slide into oblivion. God is God who plans, God is God who has a purpose—a purpose that had been formed of old, if you look at the very last phrase of chapter 25, verse 1: “plans formed of old, faithful and sure.”

And what is the problem with all of humanity? What is the thing that all of humanity needs to be rescued from? As I’ve said, Isaiah often refers back to the book of Exodus. He refers back to the nation of Israel, the offspring of Abraham being delivered from Egypt, being delivered from a land of bondage and slavery. And yet, Isaiah’s looking forward. As I keep saying, he takes that exodus-type imagery, moving it on into the future, and speaking of another exodus.

What bondage and slavery is all of humanity under? What’s the bondage and slavery that all of humanity fears? Mortality. The death rate is one-for-one. That’s the way it works. We had that progressive reading from the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 11, we had that genealogy. Now it didn’t say, “And he died, and he died, and he died,” as it does earlier in Genesis, but it’s clearly implied. “So-and-so lived 200 years after the birth of his son,” saying, obviously, “therefore he died.” If he only lived another 200 years, when you stop living, you’ve died. And did you notice they all died?

Death is the problem that lays over all of humanity, and why? Well, death is the result of sin. You start looking at that in the Bible, back in the book of Genesis, chapters 1, 2, and 3, and what do you find? You find that man, the first man, was set in a Garden. His name was Adam. He was set in a paradise, where the food was laid on, where he lived in the very presence of God. And there was that one tree—“Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for if you eat of it, you will surely die.” And what were the words of the serpent as he came into the Garden? “You will not surely die.” You will not surely die. One word—in English, it’s three letters: Not. N-O-T. “You will *not* surely die.” And he offered to Adam, supposedly another way to life, a strange way to life. He offered it to Eve, he offered it to Adam, he offered it to all of humanity. Apparently disobedience, according to the serpent, was the way to life. But we know differently, don’t we, if we’ve read our Scripture? We know differently.

The result of sin was death, and not just death for Adam, and not just death for Eve, but death for all of humanity—all of us born in sin, all of us the sinful offspring of sinful parents. If you could trace your genealogy right back to the start, you’re going to end up the same as I will, back at Adam and Eve, back at the original pair of sinners that walked this earth. And every name and every generation that you could go through, all the way back, just as it says in the Bible—“And he died, and he died, and he died.” They all died.

If God is going to draw the nations together to worship him eternally, in a place which Isaiah calls Zion, the mountain of the Lord—well, if people are going to be worshipping God for all of eternity, obviously, death has to be dealt with. Obviously, death has to be broken. That curse, that grip, that judgment of God that all of humanity has been under since the beginning, since the day that man first ate of that forbidden fruit—that judgment has to be broken, that curse has to be lifted. How? Well Isaiah says, “He will swallow up death forever.” He will swallow up death forever.

I was asked a question not so long ago by somebody who read Peter’s sermon in the book of Acts, where Peter says that it was predicted that the Messiah would suffer and die and be raised again. Now Peter was speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures. And the person’s question was, “Where in the Old Testament does it say that the Messiah will suffer and die and be raised again?” And my answer—and you can only answer honestly—if there are chapter and verse that said that, I would point you straight to it, but there’s not. There’s not one that says it in so many words, it’s not said so clearly, it’s alluded to. It’s spoken of in many places.

Here, in Isaiah chapter 25 is one of those places that it’s spoken of. Death will be swallowed up forever. Peter pointed to the Psalms. He pointed to King David, and how David had said that God would not allow the body of God’s Holy One to see corruption, and Peter said, “You see, David is dead. And we know where his tomb is.” So obviously, the Psalm wasn’t of David. Remember Peter’s words in that sermon in the book of Acts. Peter pointed to the Psalms.

Well another place that we could point, as I’ve said, is Isaiah chapter 25. And also later, next week, the Lord willing, we’ll be in Isaiah chapter 26, and we’ll see again that God plans to deal with this problem of death.

The Lord Our God is Wonderful and Faithful

Well that’s going to be the main point of my sermon, and we will try and at least cover the whole chapter. So the first section I want us to look at is verses 1 to 5. Now I’ve given it a subtitle, “The Lord Our God is Wonderful and Faithful.” For those who were here when we looked at Isaiah chapter 24, you might remember that Isaiah heard all of creation, all of redeemed creation and all of the angels, singing “Glory to the Holy One,” or “Glory to the Righteous One.” You’ll find that in Isaiah chapter 24, verse 16. “From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One.”

In Isaiah chapter 24, Isaiah felt the pain of loss. Remember the second half of verse 16, Isaiah says, “But I say, ‘I waste away, I waste away. Woe is me!’” He couldn’t rejoice in this coming judgment. He could feel the pain of loss as he understood that this judgment of God would fall on people around him, people that he cared about. And so he says, “I waste away, I waste away. Woe is me!” But you come forward into Isaiah chapter 25, and Isaiah is now joining in with all of redeemed creation, praising God without reservation. Look at how verse 1 starts: “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.”

Isaiah now absolutely rejoices in the good things that God is going to do. He rejoices in the fulfillment of God's plans and promises. He's passed through something, you might think. He's seeing even further forward. He's seeing the finishing of all things—Jesus revealed in His glory. Though Isaiah himself would not have known Jesus as we know Jesus, as the Lord Jesus Christ, he would have seen the Messiah revealed in His glory.

And Isaiah now exalts the Lord with the same type of praises that he heard way back in Isaiah chapter 6. Look there at verse 1 of Isaiah 25: "O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name." "I will exalt you," or literally, "I will lift you up. O LORD, I will lift you up." And now cast your mind back to Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1, and the things that Isaiah saw. Turn back there if you will. Isaiah 6, verse 1: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." "High and lifted up" is the same phrase. Isaiah now joins in praising God. "I will exalt you. I will lift you up." Isaiah rejoices in the goodness of God.

Moving on in chapter 25, verses 2 and 3. Isaiah once again mentions the cities that are to be destroyed. If you look back into Isaiah chapter 24, verse 10: "The wasted city is broken down; every house is shut up so that none can enter." Isaiah chapter 24, verse 12: "Desolation is left in the city; the gates are battered into ruins." And now come forward to Isaiah chapter 25, verse 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." As I said, Isaiah is drawing things from things that he has already said, but he's going to add that layer of the defeat of death over the top.

In verses 4 and 5, Isaiah speaks of the poor and the needy. "⁴ For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress." "A stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy." I'm wondering, does that bring to your mind, as indeed it does to mine, in the book of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes? I'll just read you a few verses. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Back in Isaiah chapter 25, the Lord our God is a stronghold for the poor and the needy—the poor in spirit, those who know their need of salvation. He's not a stronghold to the proud. He's not a stronghold to those who will not submit to His rule and His reign. To them, He's a fearsome judge. Continuing in Isaiah chapter 25, verse 4: "A shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat." A shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. I would suggest, once again, that this is another reference back into the book of Exodus—the pillar of cloud that was a shade by day and a fire by night. The Bible speaks of the fact that God watched over His people from that cloud, that they were led by that cloud, that they were sheltered by that cloud.

Back in Isaiah chapter 4, Isaiah actually speaks of the fact that the cloud was comfort to the people. Isaiah chapter 4, verse 5: "Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. ⁶ There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain."

So you see how all of the previous prophecies that Isaiah has spoken of concerning God's salvation, and concerning the coming Saviour, are being woven into Isaiah chapter 25. All of those previous things are being brought once again to light.

And just looking at verse 5, Isaiah speaks of how God is going to indeed judge the nations. "You subdue the noise of the foreigners." God holds down, or holds back the noise of foreigners—their accusations—"as heat by the shade of a cloud." What's he saying? He's saying it's like the way when a heavy cloud comes over, it just cools the day down a bit. Well when God works this work of salvation, He's going to silence the noise of those who rebel. "The song of the ruthless is put down."

The Mountain of the Lord

That brings us to the next section, verses 6 to the very start of verse 10. The subtitle I've given it is simple "The Mountain of the Lord." There are a few things to see on the mountain of the Lord. Verse 6 tells us that there's provision. This mountain of the Lord, this gathering of the people of God, this Zion, where all the nations are drawn in, where God dwells with His people—there's provision. Verse 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." The very best of things.

For people gathered into this mountain, into the presence of God to worship the living God, the very best of things are there, supplied by God. The people aren't bringing them in. No one's packing a kit bag, or an Esky, a portable fridge, or something to take this stuff along. God's supplying this stuff. When God draws His people to this mountain, there's going to be an absolute feast.

Turn to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 14. We'll start at verse 22: ²² 'You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.²³ And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.²⁴ And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there,²⁵ then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses²⁶ and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.²⁷ And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.'"

What's the Lord saying there to the people, in the book of Deuteronomy? He's saying that when they bring in their tithe to Jerusalem, as we know it now, or to Zion. Now, they didn't know that. Remember, all that Moses said to them was "to the place that the Lord chooses to make his name dwell there," verse 23. The Lord says to them, "Come into that place, and there you'll

feast. You'll feast in my presence. You'll feast with me. You'll feast with the people of God. Oxen, sheep, wine, even strong drink, whatever your appetite craves."

Now in the book of Deuteronomy, they're carrying that food there, or they're carrying the money to purchase the food. But in the time of fulfillment, in the time of God's provision, in the time of salvation, you're not carrying anything there. You're not making any offering. You're not bringing your tithe there, but it's as though God's giving His tithe to you. It's more than that, obviously, but you see how things have been reversed.

Under the law, Old Covenant law, if you wanted to have a feast in the presence of the Lord, you brought the feast with you. You sat there and you ate your own food in the presence of God, thanking God that He had given you this food, which you had laboured and worked for. You brought your offering in. But here on the mountain of the Lord, this feast of well-aged wine, rich food, food full of marrow—the Lord provides. It's all there for you. He's giving it to you. He's giving us all we need. In the book Revelation chapter 19, there's the feast of the Lamb and of the Bride. What's it say? Blessed are all who are invited to that feast. Blessed are all who come to take of that food, that feast, in the presence of the Lord God. And Isaiah speaks of it here.

Let's have a look at verse 7: "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." We should just look at the fact that in verse 8, Isaiah uses the same phrase: "⁸ He will swallow up death forever." What is this "veil"? What is this veil that lays over all the nations? Well I think that it's not just death. In verse 8, we're to understand that this swallowing up on the mountain of a veil that's cast over all people involves the swallowing up of death, but I think that it's clarified for us in the New Testament.

Turn if you would to the book of Second Corinthians, chapter 3. We'll start reading at verse 12, and on into Second Corinthians chapter 4. Second Corinthians 3:12: "¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Chapter 4: "¹ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Back to Isaiah chapter 25, verse 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.” There’s a veil spread over all the peoples, a veil over all the nations, and Paul is suggesting that all the nations are veiled in that they cannot see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They cannot see God revealed in Christ. Why cannot they see it? They will not see it. They’re under a veil. The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

In this place where the people gather, in this place where the people gather in the presence of God, called by Isaiah “the mountain of the Lord,” this Mount Zion, this wonderful blessed place—in this place, there’s light, there’s provision, there’s a feast. And there’s light. It’s not a place of darkness, like the darkness that lays over the earth. It’s not a place of sin, it’s not a place where darkness reigns and where people live in blindness. There’s a feast and there’s light.

And now we move on to Isaiah 25, verse 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.” “He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,” quoted twice in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation chapter 7, verse 17, we’re told that the Lamb reigns and the tears will be wiped away forever. There will be no more tears. And also in Revelation chapter 21, verse 4—no more death, no more tears. Turn to Revelation chapter 21. Notice a city is coming down—the new Jerusalem, which was a city on a hill in the Old Testament. Revelation 21, verse 1: “¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’”

The Apostle John in the book of Revelation is drawing from whom? The prophet Isaiah, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—God speaking to us from His word. What’s the promise? Death will be swallowed up forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces. No more death. How could that be? Well, it would have to be because there’s no more sin, and there’s no more stain of sin, and there’s no more reckoning of sin.

God is a just God. He is a just judge. Sin is not forgiven because God just happens to be in a good mood. It’s not forgiven because He just happens to be a generous old grandfather-type figure. Sin must be paid for. The price of sin must be paid. I call your attention to Exodus chapter 34, verses 6 and 7. What does it say there? “⁶ ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,’ and that sounds good, doesn’t it? Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. “But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’”

And I hope you see that there seems to be some kind of tension there. There seems to be a problem there. It says that the LORD, the LORD, is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, “but who will by no means clear the guilty.” Think about that. If you’ve committed iniquity, transgression, and sin—and we have—with iniquity, transgression, and sin comes guilt. It says there in Exodus 34 that the Lord will forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, but at the same time, He will not clear the guilty. He’ll forgive, but He won’t clear the guilty. There’s a problem there, isn’t there?

How is it, then, that God forgives the sin of sinners, and yet at the same time, His perfect justice is fulfilled? How is it, then, that the lawgiver and the lawkeeper and the judge who judges according to His righteous law forgives sin, and yet at the same time, His own righteous demand of perfect justice can be fulfilled? In other words, how is it that this curse of death, this weight of sin, can be lifted from off of humanity? Someone has to pay the price for sins. The full payment for sin has to fall upon somebody—the full price, not just part, not just a little bit. God’s justice must be paid.

One of the words for “sin” in the Bible is “debt”—debt, something you owe. You owe something to God. I owe something to God. We owe something to God. A debt. Why? We’ve broken His law. We’re like people with out-of-control debts, when it comes to sin. We cannot pay them. We can’t even pay the interest. And God’s law demands justice. And God Himself is righteous, and He demands justice. So there has to be a way to pay that price. And how is it paid? How, then, can the curse of death be lifted?

Well then we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t we—that one who is truly God and truly man; that one who came as the Saviour of humanity; that person who is without sin, utterly without sin, righteous in all that He did; the one man who truly loved the Lord His God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength. He paid the price. He went to the cross. The judgments of God fell upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The judgments for all of the sin of the elect fell upon one who was innocent. He willingly paid the price of our sins. He willingly suffered the judgments of God so that God’s righteous law could be fulfilled.

One of the ways that Christians are described in the New Testament, again and again and again, especially by the Apostle Paul, is that Christians are people who are in Christ. He says we’ve been united to Christ, we’ve been baptized into Christ. By faith we are in Christ. The judgment which we deserved fell upon Christ, in whom we are hidden. The death which we had to pay was paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom our life is hidden. So God’s justice has been fulfilled. Death has been swallowed up. Why? Because death fell upon one who was innocent. Death fell upon one in whom it had no hold. Death fell upon one whom it had no right to claim, and so it’s been swallowed up. How do we know it’s been swallowed up? Christ was resurrected on the third day. Death had no claim on Him. Death had no grip upon Him. Death could not hold Him down, for He is righteous, and His righteousness was vindicated by God the Father, who by the power of the Holy Spirit, resurrected the Lord Jesus Christ. He willingly laid down His life, and it was taken up again because He is the Saviour.

So Death has been swallowed up forever and the tears are wiped away from all faces, and the reproach of God's people has been taken away from all the earth. The reproach, the shame, the things of which we are accused, the things which hold us down have been taken away from God's people, for the Lord has spoken. He has spoken. He's looked upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is satisfied in His works, and He is satisfied in the things that He has done. So death has died. We still die, and yet we live. There's still only one way out of this world. There's still only one way into the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We started the sermon off with a reading from First Corinthians chapter 15, where it said, among other things, that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. We must pass through death, and we must also receive a resurrected body suitable to eternal life in the presence of God Himself.

We'll keep moving in Isaiah chapter 25, looking at verse 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.'" There are echoes there of Isaiah chapter 12: "¹ You will say in that day, 'I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.'" People are rejoicing in the presence of God, for death has been swallowed up and the tears have been wiped away. People rejoice because the judgment of God has fallen upon the Lord Jesus Christ. People rejoice, for the reproach has been taken away.

And in Isaiah chapter 25, verse 10 we read, "For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain." The hand of the Lord will rest. Now what is that telling us? Well if we turn to Isaiah chapter 5, we read that the hand of Lord is against His people. Isaiah 5, verse 25: "Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still."

So we've got this picture of the Lord's anger being aroused against people by their sins. But in this day that Isaiah sees coming, in this day when death is swallowed up, the Lord's hand comes to rest. It rests upon this mountain. It's no longer stretched out. It's no longer striking His people. His anger is no longer kindled. His anger has been satisfied—satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. The wrath of God has been turned aside. Propitiation has been made, that New Testament word which speaks of the turning away of righteous anger and judgment.

And in the remainder of our chapter, Isaiah 25, we come back once again to God's judgment upon the rebels. Starting at verse 10: "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."

Now there's some fairly dark humour there. If you don't see it, it's there. Isaiah's saying that the pride of these nations that hate God are like someone trying to swim in a sewer pit. The pride of these nations that think that they can stand up against the will God and that they can resist the work of God is like someone trying to swim in a sea of sewage, a sea of dung. And as I

said, there's a bit of dark humour there. They're in a sea of dung, and they're trying to swim—anything rather than submit to the judgment of God, anything rather than submit to the will of God, anything rather than to repent and confess their sins and turn to God, seeking salvation. Such is the wickedness of humanity.

Why does Isaiah speak specifically of the nation of Moab? Well Moab is one of the long-term enemies of God's people, actually coming from the same line as God's people, from the people of Abraham. I think Moab has been chosen as a representative. I don't think it's any different from any other nation that is in rebellion against God and is the enemy of God's people. All of them will be humbled. All of them will be cast down. All of them will be just so much refuse and rubbish. Though they appear mighty, though their cities appear great, high fortifications of the walls will be brought down. They'll be laid low and cast to the ground and to the dust.

So let's just close it up then. Let's think about this a little bit. What have we got. Well once again, in Isaiah you've got that familiar theme—Judgment and salvation. We've picked it up again and again and again in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah is always looking forward to the day of salvation, the day when the Lord will save His people, the day when God's people will dwell at peace in the presence of God, with nothing to fear.

And Isaiah is always looking to the Saviour, the one who comes from the line of David, the one who comes from the stump of Jesse, the child who is born, the Son was given, the one who'll be clothed in righteousness and in the power of the Holy Spirit. And he speaks to us now of one of the things that this Saviour will do. He will remove death from His people. He will take death from His people.

Turn to John chapter 11. Here, Lazarus takes ill and dies, and Jesus goes to where Lazarus is, near Bethlehem. John chapter 11, reading from verse 17: ¹⁷“Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’ ²³Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ ²⁴Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’”

And we'll stop there just to consider that. What's Martha saying? Martha's saying, “I'm a faithful believing Jew. I believe the things that I have been taught. I believe that on the last day, all will rise and face God. I believe there is a final day coming.” So she's saying, “I believe that my brother Lazarus will be raised on that last day.” But Jesus wants to take her further. He wants to show her more. He wants to teach her a little more.

²⁵“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ ²⁷She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.’”

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” Death swallowed up in victory. Death destroyed. Death itself has died. Why? Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, and He has paid the price of our sins and the price of the sins of any who will put their faith and their trust in Him, repent of their sins, and seek forgiveness in His name—any.

And you will have eternal life. Why? What has Jesus just said about Himself? He is the resurrection and the life. You see, the way it works is, we are in Christ. What happened to Him in the past is counted as though it happened to us. And it’s reality, because God says that this is real. This is the way it is.

And here’s the way it is, my friends. We are in Christ. Christ died, paying the death for our sins. We are counted as having died. God is satisfied that in Christ we have died. You can find that in Galatians chapter 2. God is satisfied that in Christ, we have died. Christ was without sin. And He was raised on the third day, according to the will of the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And He lives eternally, enthroned at the right hand of God the Father.

What happened to Christ happens to us. Where He is, there we are going. The way He got there, that’s the way we get there. We pass through death into resurrection. We pass through death into life, in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in Christ, for all eternity. It happened to Him; we are in Him; it is even now happening to us, and we are on the way. And death has been swallowed up, for our Saviour is the resurrection and the life. And though we die, yet we live. And because we believe in His name, we shall never die. Amen. Amen.

These things are spoken of in our Old Testaments. You’ve just got to dig deep enough, as the apostles learnt, and as we must learn. Isaiah speaks to us of the end of death. What good news that is. Let’s close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do indeed thank you that we have life in Christ Jesus our Lord, your eternally begotten Son. We thank you that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you have applied His work and His life and His grace to us, that we know that we are surely in Him, and that in Him we shall never die. Though we die in this life, we look forward to eternal life in the presence of God, in the presence of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask that we would be made to live lives worthy of our calling. We have been given the title, or the name, “Christian.” I pray, Father, that we would be Christian, not in name only, but Christian indeed, by the power of your Holy Spirit. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.