

"He Will Reign!"

Isaiah 25:1 – 27:13

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My dear husband Steve recently gave me a tote bag that I now carry when I leave the house for an extended period of time rather than just a quick trip "to town" as my Grandma would say. The writing on the bag reads "*Big Fan of God's Plan.*" This slogan has become very near and dear to me.

Steve surprisingly gave that bag to me because I have been talking about God's plan for some time now as I sit across from my mother-in-law trying to help her understand God's grace and God's glorious plan that He has for all of us who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Last week, Carol masterfully reviewed the judgments of the world spoken of in chapter 24 that will usher in a time of great suffering. During that time, those who trust the Lord will praise Him, even in the midst of God's judgment. Isaiah 24:14 states, "They shall lift up their voices, they shout for joy. They acclaim the Lord's majesty." All will sing the praise – the song of trust - that Jesus Christ reigns! This is a song that shows the kind of heart that praises God in the midst of tribulation. It is the kind of heart that we see in those who are part of God's remnant.

Today's message is so special because Chapter 25 moves us into the Kingdom Age. The focus of Isaiah's prophecies transforms from judgment to God's amazing plan for salvation.

This is the first chapter we have considered in a long time to be pure, undiluted joy. We are given a glimpse into the kingdom when Jesus Christ reigns on earth as king for one thousand years. He has been revealed at last in glory, and the holy angels with Him (Matthew 25:31).

I have organized this lecture into two parts – First, we will focus on and expand upon the song of praise presented in Isaiah chapter 25. In part 2, we will consider the blessings God's people will receive in the future in both chapters 26 and 27.

Let's start with Warren W. Wiersbe's description of chapter 25 as a "song of praise to the Lord from the believing remnant that He preserved during 'the Day of the Lord.'" "We know this to be the day when the Lord will exact His promised judgment upon the earth. The words of Dr. Alan B. Stringfellow so aptly describe this chapter as "a song of deliverance. It is the Hallelujah Chorus and the shout of victory."

In this song, five areas of praise for God's magnificent actions are brought to our attention. God is praised for:

- 1) Carrying Out his Wise Eternal Plan (25:1)
- 2) Converting Violent People and Nations (25:2-3)
- 3) Being a Refuge for Believers (25:4-5)
- 4) Swallowing Up Death Forever (25:6-9)
- 5) Condemning Arrogant Nations (25:10-12)

Verse 1 begins with a glorious praise. We read: "Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise Your name, for You have accomplished wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness."

From previous chapters, we have learned that God is indeed the Master Planner. In this verse, Isaiah reacts to God's eternal plan which is the final judgment of the world by acknowledging that His plans were made long before they would be accomplished. Isaiah also praises God for His glorious grace.

God is to be praised for crafting and carrying out His eternal plan. (25:1) Before the foundation of the earth, God had crafted a perfect plan for the universe. Because He is eternal, has perfect wisdom, and is omnipotent, He fashioned and is implementing this perfect plan. God's love would pour out to His creatures – human beings who could enjoy Him in a love relationship. It was out of love that God gave people the greatest gift He could give – Himself! Per Andrew M. Davis, God's perfect plan involves a "meticulous chain of events" resulting in a "tapestry of glory."

In verses 2 and 3, **God is to be praised for converting violent people and nations (25:2-3)**. We are reminded of the evil action of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of the Israelites which led to destruction in Isaiah chapter 14, verses 10-12. We see that there will be worldwide conversion because this is the promise of the millennium.

Wiersbe suggests that "the city" is a generic term for all cities. God will pour His wrath out on the nations. The rebellious cities will be forced to acknowledge the greatness of God and give their homage to Him.

In verse 3, God reveals that His purpose in destroying these cities is so that "a strong people will honor him. The cities of violent nations will fear him." This speaks of the power of God to convert formerly terrifying individuals such as Nebuchadnezzar who came to know God's great power, the Roman centurion who crucified Jesus and Saul of Tarsus who accepted the Gospel and became a genuine worshiper, to name a few. Courageous missionaries have faced death and persecution to spread the gospel to one terrifying, war-loving people after another. Until the violent are converted, God must protect His beloved people from the storm of their vicious attacks.

God is to be praised for being a refuge for the needy (25:4-5). According to verses 4 and 5, there will be those who are left behind who must endure the

tribulation. During this time, God will be a shelter from the storm and shade from the burning sun in the desert. God will be their rock of salvation.

God is to be praised for Swallowing Up Death Forever (25:6-9). Many commentators agree that Isaiah 25:6-9 is one of the clearest predictions in the Old Testament of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Romans 5:12 informs us that sin and death spread to all human beings. The human race is covered with shame because of this death penalty.

Verse 8 states, "He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove His people's disgrace from all the earth." When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:54).

This chapter continues with a marvelous prophecy in verse 6 that all peoples – Gentiles and Jews – will feast at the table provided by God. This will be a lavish feast provided by the Almighty Lord, a banquet with the best of wines and choice meats. This feast is spread for "all peoples," for the entire human race, laid out "on this mountain."

Davis describes this feast as metaphorical, as it symbolizes a future time of joy, abundance, and salvation in God's kingdom. He believes that the "feast" represents the inauguration of Jesus' reign, the removal of death and tears, and the spiritual and physical blessings that will be fully realized in the new creation. It is a metaphorical feast because it consists of God destroying the burial shroud that covers all nations – death itself!

David Guzik explains that the Bible alludes to this feast as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:9 says, those who are called to this feast are blessed! For God's people, this will be the "victory banquet" or the "awards banquet" when the final battle is over. What a feast that will be!

Praise God for Condemning Arrogant Nations (25:10-12). Chapter 25 ends in a strange way, with Isaiah speaking words of condemnation against Moab, which probably represents those who are destined for damnation among the nations, those who will never believe. God will bring down Moab's pride as if he were a swimmer drowning in a dung pile.

Moabite cities had highly fortified and elevated walls; yet, not even these will withstand God's judgment.

In David Guzik's words, "God will reach out and bring low every proud, rebelling heart. Those who oppose His rule He will bring to the ground down to the dust."

In a final word about Chapter 25, we appreciate it as a song and a praise of sheer delight and worship. This comes from a heart full to overflowing because the worshiper has come into a new knowledge of who God is and what God has done. As we turn to chapters 26 and 27, we will continue to unfold God's plan of blessing through His son, Jesus Christ.

Chapters 26 and 27

The song of praise for God continues in Chapters 26 and 27. This time the emphasis is on righteousness and peace. What many of us miss in this life is that there can be no true peace apart from righteousness and there can be no righteousness apart from God's salvation in Jesus Christ.

In these two chapters, the prophet encourages God's suffering people by describing in seven pictures the kingdom blessings that await them in the future.

The *first picture* is one of a strong city (Isaiah 26:1-6). – The description of this picture is painted in verse 1 which opens with these words: "We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts." While Samaria fell to the Assyrians and Jerusalem to the Babylonians, the New Jerusalem will be impregnable.

During the "day of the Lord," the lofty cities of the earth will be leveled, but Zion will be exalted to the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 2:1-5). It will no longer be the sinful city described in Isaiah chapter 1. The first blessing introduces **Jerusalem as a righteous city for a holy nation.**

Only those who have trusted Jesus Christ will enter into the city. Because of their faithful trust, they will have peace. Verses 2-4 state:

2"Open the gates,
That the righteous nation may enter,
the nation that keeps faith.
3You will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you.
4Trust in the Lord forever,
For the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal."

Peace with God means that we have been reconciled with His Son. Peace with God is possible only because He paid the price for us.

Romans 5:1 tells us: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Warren Wiersbe explained, "The Hebrew word for 'peace' (shalom) includes blessings for wholeness, health, quietness of soul, preservation, and completeness. Jews often greet one another with the question, 'What is your peace?' Isaiah's reply would be, 'My peace is from the Lord, for I trust wholly in Him!'"

The *second blessing* is described in Chapter 26:7-11 as **the level path** and the picture is one of a rough road that the Jews have traveled throughout history, but when the kingdom is established, **God will give them level paths and a smooth way**. They will be walking in the will of the Lord; they will yearn for the Lord and worship Him even in the night (Ps. 119:55).

According to Isaiah 26:7-11, God wants the world to learn righteousness, but there are many who will not repent. Isaiah prays that God will reveal Himself through His people as He works on their behalf.

The *next picture* is of a woman in travail (Isaiah 26:12-18) The agony of the "Day of the Lord" is compared to the pain of a woman giving childbirth. Because of their sins, the Jews had been subject to many evil Gentile tyrants, but now these tyrants were dead and could no longer enslave them. God disciplined His people and brought them to a place where all they could do was whisper their prayers (Isaiah 26:16). God heard them and delivered them.

What hindered Israel from being the blessing to the world as God wanted them to be was their insincere worship as they gave their devotion to idols. During the Kingdom Age, **Israel and Mt. Zion will be the source of blessing for the whole world as they return to the Lord**.

The *fourth picture* is one of life-giving dew (Isaiah 26:19-21). Just as the dew brings new life to the soil and vegetation, so God will raise the dead out of the earth. In Isaiah 25:7-8, the prophet had already announced God's great victory over death. Now he tells us God will do it again through the miracle of resurrection.

The remnant has been praying to God (Isaiah 26:11-19,) and now God speaks to them and gives them the assurance they need (vv. 20-21). He promises to shelter His people from the terrible attacks of the enemy (Revelation 12). God will punish His enemies who have slain His people, whose blood cries out from the earth for vengeance.

God's protection of His people is the fourth blessing. God counsels His people to come, as in the days of Noah, into the ark and be protected. Jehovah himself is to be their protector. In the words of the Psalmist, "For in the day of trouble, He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His sacred tent and set me high upon a rock" (Psalm 27:5).

As we continue on to Isaiah Chapter 27, we see that the promise of blessings and assurances continues.

Blessing number 5 is explained in Isaiah 27:1. The picture is that of a conquered beast. The nations around Israel had many myths about sea monsters, one of which was compared to "Leviathan," probably the crocodile "look alike" mentioned in Job 41:1. It was a great achievement to slay "Leviathan" who is described as having many heads in Psalm 74:14, and the Lord promised to do just that. God's people today are set free from bondage to Satan and the false gods he uses to seduce people to worship him rather than the Lord. When the battle is over and the Lord has conquered evil, **Israel can enter her glorious kingdom without fear.**

The *sixth picture* is that of a fruitful vineyard (Isaiah 27:2-11). The vineyard in these verses is Israel, but here the prophet sees both the Israel of his day and the Israel of the future day when the kingdom will be established. God was not angry with His people in verse 4. He yearned for them to return to Him and trust Him.

We find the blessing for this section to be in Isaiah 27:6.... **"In the days to come, Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit."** In Isaiah's day, the vineyard was producing wild grapes, but in the future kingdom, Israel will be fruitful and flourishing. God will guard His people and give them all that they need to bring glory to His name. **Through Israel, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.**

The *seventh picture* that we are presented with is the holy and happy feast mentioned in Isaiah 27:12-13. The camp of Israel was directed by the blowing of trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets took place on the first day of the seventh month and prepared Israel for the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:23-32). The Day of Atonement prepared God's people for the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a picture of the joy of the future kingdom. The blessing will come through Christ alone as **the scattered people of God gather together with the trumpet call of the Gospel, assembled to worship God in the New Jerusalem** (John 11:51-52; Matthew 24:31).

Let me close with some words of encouragement . . .

I am sure that we can all agree that we live in a world full of hostility, frustration, and problems. It is a world that is far from being a world of perfect peace. I have grown weary of the protestors who exude hatred and violence. I have grown weary of negative campaigns and verbal smear attacks. I have grown weary of arrogant leaders who are not respectful of others.

But wait, I said that I wanted to close with words of encouragement didn't I - so here goes . . .

Isaiah 26:3 is one of the great verses in the Bible regarding an abiding peace in the midst of afflictions. As we face trials, it is important for us to “keep in perfect peace” by keeping our minds focused on the Lord, remaining faithful to Him and not to worldly idols, to be a student of God’s Word, and a *Fan of God’s Plan*. In addition, it is important for us to use times of pain and problems as an opportunity for prayer.

I know I am preaching to the choir, but we all need encouragement through these days. Let us recommit to Philippians 4:4-9 which tells us:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things...And the God of peace will be with you.”

Let me encourage you to persevere in your study of the Book of Isaiah which I am finding not only challenging, but extremely timely and relevant for our lives today. I am compelled to congratulate you for “hanging in there.” We are almost halfway through this amazing book of the Bible which many theologians deem to be the “deepest book of the Old Testament.”

I know that the group discussions and lectures have contributed to my understanding of the lessons perhaps more than for any other book of the Bible that I have studied and I hope that you can take advantage of all of the opportunities provided through People of the Word.

Finally, when we see Jesus face-to-face, we’ll say, “We have waited for Him – and here He is. This is our God!” How I look forward to moving into the kingdom and into eternity. Don’t give up, dear Saints. Don’t live for this planet. Keep your hearts and minds on things above. Get ready to sing the “Hallelujah Chorus” and shout for victory. We’re almost there!