

# Isaiah 25:1-12

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Isaiah 25 is really telling us of a feast that is like no other feast. It's the banquet! It's the banquet to which all other banquets point. It's a feast that doesn't take place! In your home or in a restaurant or a function hall because it's much much bigger than that.

It is a feast that I hope will make our mouths water this morning. Just thinking about it. It's a feast that costs more than you can ever imagine. And it's a feast in which you can only participate in if you're on the guest list. And so that's what I want to think of.

I want to think about four headings this morning. The preparation for the feast, the feast itself, the guest list, and the final bill. Let's look at the preparations for the feast. Look at Isaiah 25. And we're into a new section that runs from Isaiah 24 to 27. And it's often referred to as the apocalypse of Isaiah. Sometimes when you and I hear that word, we think Hollywood, don't we? Apocalypse. And we think of buildings burning and bloody battles and things blowing up and monsters. But the word apocalypse really just means an unveiling. It means a revealing revelation. In fact, the Greek word is used for the title of the last page of the Bible.

And it comes from the Greek word apocalypsis. So that's where we get the word apocalypse. It's just revelation, a revealing, an unveiling. So here in Isaiah 24 to 27, you have Isaiah's apocalypse. And that's Isaiah's revelation. And in fact, as you read these chapters, which I hope you will, it mirrors a lot of what we find in the last book of the Bible. Lots of the themes of Isaiah 24 to 27 are picked up in the book of Revelation. Isaiah 24 begins, doesn't it, in the most sober of fashions. Can you see that? Look down at verse 1 of chapter 24. Behold, the Lord will empty the earth and make it desert. He'll twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. Look down at verse 23. The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken his word. Do you see, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it. He will ruin it. He will scatter its inhabitants. And the earth will be laid completely waste and totally plundered because the Lord has spoken his word. And if you've been with us during this series on Isaiah, you might have sensed, well, this is where everything is going. In chapters 13 to 23, you've got the 10 oracles, those 10 messages for Judah and the neighbouring cities and nations. Oracles of judgment. And people are trusting in anything but God. And here's where it all leads. It leads to utter devastation.

To utter destruction throughout the world. And if you work your way through chapter 4, which we're not going to do this morning, it is very chilling reading. There's no joy left.

[ 3 : 1 9 ] In Isaiah 25, 24, there's gloom. There's gloom in the world because people have lived their lives apart from God. They've lived their lives away from God and the consequences of judgment and devastation. And we've seen that again and again and again. But Isaiah won't just leave it there. There is a glimmer of hope. Look at verses 14 to 16 of Isaiah 24. Verse 14 to 16.

They lift up their voices and they sing for joy. Over the majesty of the Lord they shout from the west. Therefore in the east, give glory to God. In the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the Lord the God of Israel. From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise.

Of glory to the righteous one. But I say, I waste away. I waste away. Woe is me. For the traitors are betrayed. With betrayal the traitors are betrayed.

So the question is, in verse 14 of Isaiah 24, is who are they? Who are these people who are raising their voices? And it appears as you read through Isaiah that there is a remnant.

There is a small part of the people of Judah that Isaiah keeps coming back to. A remnant, a small group of people who have kept trusting in the Lord. And there is a sense here that they are spread out throughout the globe from the east to the west. And Isaiah says they are singing. And the title of the piece that they are singing is glory to the righteous one.

[ 5 : 0 3 ] Now, we don't get to that particular song. But I would want to suggest to you, in verse 25 and 26, we get some of the words, we get some of the lyrics of that song from Isaiah himself, who

breaks out. Look at Isaiah 25 verses 1 and 2. He says, Oh 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. For you have made the city a heap. The fortified city a ruin. The foreigner's palace is a city or more. It will never be rebuilt.

Just let it be, it's one again. Isaiah praises this covenant God who he says is his God. He is the personal God. He's not just our God, but is he your God? Individually. And the reason for praising God is because of his rescue for his people. That just as God had promised to bring his people out of Egypt to the promised land, so now God is going to bring his people through a ruined world, through devastation. Represented here as the city. And he'll bring them to the ultimate promised land. And God had acted on behalf of his people with every imaginable act of faithfulness. And in doing so he's performed marvellous deeds and marvellous things that could never have been achieved naturally. Isaiah goes on in the song to speak of how God was a refuge to the people. A refuge to the people from the shelter, from the storm.

He was a shelter. He was a shade from the heat. And nothing is going to stop this God from achieving what he planned long ago. And the end result is that the song of his enemies will be completely silent. They will sing no more. Because as you know you only sing when you're winning. While those who like Isaiah will sing. And they will sing a song that will never be silenced. Because God has done marvellous things in preparation. The question is in preparation for what? And when we come to verses 6-8 we see that God has been preparing for a feast.

So let's look at the feast. Verses 6-8. Verses 6-8 almost comes as a surprise. I don't think you would be expecting them if you've just read the first five verses. But in fact verses 6-8 is the heart of the chapter. In Isaiah 25 verse 6. On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all the peoples a feast of rich food. A feast of well aged wine. Of rich food full of marrow. Of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that's cast over all the peoples. The veil that's spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away all tears from their faces. And the reproach of his people he'll take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken.

Here is what the Lord Almighty is preparing for his people. It is a feast. It is the most magnificent banquet. I don't know what the most amazing meal you've ever had was. Where was it? Where's the most amazing meal you've ever had? Think about that for a minute. Maybe it was in a home. Maybe it was in a restaurant. Maybe it was at a wedding reception. And it depends doesn't it? As you think about that most amazing meal you've ever had, you're not just talking about the meal. But you're talking about the context and the setting and the guests.

[ 8 : 52 ] When you talk about that most amazing meal that you've ever had, you think about the context. You're not just talking about the food. But you can have eaten the greatest meal with your best friends in the most wonderful home or restaurant. And yet this meal, God promises, this trumps it. It will far surpass any restaurant you could ever go to. And Isaiah says, here there is food beyond your wildest imagination. That the wine will be aged to absolute perfection.

And at that table, you will feast. It's a picture, isn't it, of a world made perfect where you will enjoy God's presence for the full. A world where there will be total provision and plenty and satisfaction. And it is all represented by this lavish feast. But that is not all Isaiah says here. Because he says, actually no one will leave this feast. No one ever needs to get up from the table, as it were. There will never be a time when the host will say, okay, that's it. Time for you to go home. And the reason for that, Isaiah says, is that death itself is on the menu. Death itself is going to be there on the dessert table. And God is going to swallow up death itself. Death will be literally consumed by God. The shroud of pain and sorrow, Isaiah says, it will be removed. And God will and can wipe away all tears. And he will vindicate all those who belong to him. It is the most wonderful image of a life that is to come. It is a wonderful image of a new creation that has elements of this creation. But it is greater. It is better.

It is more colourful. It is more vibrant. So it's the most amazing feast. But Isaiah shows that if you want to be part of this banquet, you've got to know that there's a guest list.

Look at verse 6-8. Now initially when you look at verse 6-8 and you think about the guest list, it might appear that there is one. You may have noticed the alls. Can you see that in verse 6-8?

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. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will

swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces. And the reproach of all his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. You should notice the alls, pretty basic, vital hands, like I said, that you keep noticing the repetition. And so you should be asking, what's the deal with all the alls? Well there's two things that we need to think about. First of all, Isaiah's audience would be in absolute shock. That the invitation to eat with God is offered so widely here. And the reason they would have been in shock is because they would have remembered that after the Exodus, when they reached Mount Sinai, the 70 elders, the 70 leaders of Israel went up on the mountain. And we're told that in Exodus 24 verse 11 they beheld God and the elders, they ate and they drank with God. They ate in the presence of God. But it was only the leaders. The people were warned, don't even go close to the mountain or it will kill you.

[12:41] Or more accurately, God will kill you. So the people, they were terrified of God's presence. Because God said, if you come near, you will die, I'm too holy. They were terrified by God's presence. Because God in their mind was dangerous. But now Isaiah says, folks, there is a day coming when everyone will eat. All will eat. The second thing we need to notice about the alls comes in the context of Isaiah 25. When we read the word all, our immediate reaction is to think, well, that means all, right? Doesn't it? All means all. All means all without exception.

But to rip these verses out and think that somehow everyone in the end will all be okay. Everyone will eat with God is, well, it does untold damage. And that's not what Isaiah is talking about. We are told who the all are. Look at verse 9. Who are the all? Verse 9.

It will be said on that day, behold, this is our God. 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. So who are the all? Who are they? It turns out that the people who are on the grace list for the feast are those who have waited for the Lord, which means trusted for him.

That means hoped for him. That means relied upon him. They are those who have banked all their lives on God. They are people who have trusted in God. Whom God has saved. They are people whom God has rescued. They are people who have not tried to save themselves. Can you see that in verse 9?

What have they done? They have waited for the Lord. They have not tried to save themselves. They have not trusted in their own abilities. They have not said, by my own strength, I will get to God. By my reputation, I will get to God. Or my status. No. These are people who have waited in confidence for what the Lord would do and they rejoice when he does it. And in that beautiful context, this truth Isaiah is telling us, that the remnant of people, this little group of people that have remained true to the Lord, who have trusted God, they will come from every nation. This feast will be the ultimate international banquet of those who trusted in God.

[15:30] God. That will be those from Cameroon to India, from Poland to Somalia, from Hungary to Brazil, they will all be there. Every country in the world, God will gather those people who have trusted in him, who have relied upon him, who have banked on him, and they will feast with him. And they are the ones who are on the guest list. And there is a sobering truth, isn't there? There is a sobering truth for those who have not waited on the Lord. For those who have not lived their lives relying, depending on the Lord. There is a sobering truth. Because on that day they will come to the doorman and they will give their name. And the reply will be, your name is not on the list. And so you are not coming in. Sorry man. Sorry sir. You have not relied on him. You have not trusted in him. And these are the people that Isaiah describes in verses 10 to 12. Let me read you those verses. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain, and Moab, or better, but Moab, shall be trampled down in his place. As straw is trampled in a dunghill. And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it. That's the person of Moab.

And he will swim. He will spread his hands out to swim. But the Lord will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill of his hands. And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down. He will lay low. He will cast it to the ground, to the dust. You see at the start of verse 10, God's hand will rest pastorally and lovingly and caringly upon Zion. Upon Zion though, upon Moab though is his foot. Do you remember old wrestling? Wrestling used to be on Saturday afternoons on ITV or if you're a bit younger, kind of WWF or WWE or whatever it's called, isn't it? And one of the things that would happen was the person who was winning occasionally would put his foot on the neck of the person. And they would put their neck on the person.

Of course it's all stage, sorry to ruin it. But that is what would happen, isn't it? It was a sign of absolute triumph. That the person was laid low. And the victor would put his foot on the neck to

show his victory. That's the picture in Isaiah 25.10. Lovingly his hand is upon Zion. His foot is on Moab's neck. And that wouldn't seem to be fair. But as you look a little bit more, it's a little bit more involved than that. It's the enemy of Israel.

It's the enemy of God's people. What's the problem? What have we seen? What's been the problem in all these cities that we've looked at? Nations over the Isaiah 13 to 23. It's this unceasing attitude of pride and self-grande. It's not where they come from, not at all.

Pride is the ultimate thing that keeps people off the guest list. Pride is the ultimate thing that keeps people coming to the Lord Jesus in heaven and dependence. It keeps people from coming to this feast of all feasts. Because pride is what? It's about trusting yourself instead of God. And pride is the way of self-salvation. And you can do that religiously. You can do that in church. You can keep the rules. You can turn up when you want. You can follow the regulations. And you hope that maybe God will accept you by your performance. But that is basically the way of every other religion. Here are the rules. You keep them and God will accept you. That is the way of pride. But it's possible to go the way of pride in an irreligious way as well. Where you have no rules. You live as you please. You figure out, don't you?

[19:51] As our culture says, all you have to do is be true to yourself. My way is best. God's word says something. But actually, no, I'm in charge. I will go my way. And both the religious way and the irreligious way of self-salvation are parts of pride. It's the same thing.

And they will keep your name off the guest list for the banquet. And I don't think any of us here, if we're honest this morning, want to be off the guest list for this banquet.

It's worse than that. There is, isn't there, one of the most graphic pictures. I don't know whether you picked it up. The ESV has sanitised it a little bit. There's one of the most graphic pictures of judgment here. So if you look at verse 10, Moab is trampled down in his place. And a straw is trampled down in a dunghill. I don't need to tell you what it's done. Here's the right. So look at verse 11. And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it. As a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim. It's revolting. It's absolutely revolting. It's stomach-turning. Isaiah portrays the Moabites here as swimming in sewage. And that's a polite way of putting it. He says, that's your choice. That is your choice. Come to the banquet or swim in your own sewage. That's your choice. It's very, very stark. That's the alternative to the banquet. This ultimate feast, it's the swim in the sewer of your own efforts. Are you willing to recognise that? Your own efforts, they are the sewer. And to swim and to get out, well, it's absolutely in vain. That is the destination of all those who refuse to trust in the Lord. The Lord who saves. Isaiah shows us the preparation.

He shows us the feast. He shows us the guest list, which brings us lastly to the bill. Because every great menu has a bill, doesn't it? Sometimes your host ends up paying the bill for yourself.

You know when you go to the bar, isn't it, and somebody orders the drinks and everybody kind of checks their wallet, isn't it, before somebody says, oh no, I'll pay. There's a breath of relief. You breathe a sigh of relief. You go to the restaurant and the person brings the bill, the waitress brings the bill and puts it in the middle of the table. But here, the bill is brought to the table and it's handed out, but there's no price on it. There's no price on it. In fact, here is how Isaiah sends out the invitations to the banquet later on in the book of Isaiah. In chapter 55, he says, come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come by and eat, come by wine and milk, without money and without cost. Why do you spend your money on bread which doesn't satisfy? Why do you labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me. And eat what is good.

Delight yourself in the richest of food. And it looks like, doesn't it, as you read through Isaiah and you see that in Isaiah 55, that the participation in this feast, it is free. Or at least it's free for you and I. It's free for you. It's free for me. But it still came at a cost, isn't it, for someone? Let's wind the tape forward to Luke chapter 9. We're told in Luke chapter 9 that King Herod is asking questions about who this man Jesus is. And the answer given by the disciples is that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the anointed King. He is the Messiah.

[23:54] And interestingly, in Luke's Gospel, it's at that point that Luke introduces the well-known story of the feeding of the 5,000. And Luke tells us that the crowds were following Jesus.

And Luke tells us that Jesus welcomed them. It's the language of a host in Luke 9. And when the disciples tell Jesus, Jesus, it's the end of the day. You should really be sending the people home. They haven't got the means to take care of the people. We haven't got the sheer ability to feed this amount. Jesus says, no, you are going to feed the crowd.

The disciples object. They say, we've got five loaves and two fish. There are 5,000 men here, which probably means there were about 20,000 people in the crowd that day. And Jesus says to them, have them sit down in groups of 50. Groups of 50. And the word sit there could easily be translated as recline, which is probably better. So what we're being given is not just some afternoon picnic. This was to be a banquet. They would sit back. And they would enjoy the food with Jesus as the host. And Jesus is setting this up because he wants to prove to them, for them to understand that he is the Messiah. That he is giving them a glimpse of what the Messiah is going to do on that great day. One day he will host the banquet.

And there in Luke 9 is a taste of the messianic banquet. Jesus decides right now I'm going to reveal myself as the Messiah and I will do it through catering. It's the most amazing thing in the world. The anointed king is going to show that he is king by catering for the people. And of course, the feeding of the 5,000 men was not the full deal or 20,000 people.

It's a lot, isn't it? But 20,000 people is not like all of God's people as Isaiah 25 promises. The people that Jesus found in Luke 9, they will go away and they will be hungry again. But it is a foretaste. It is a picture of the real thing. And here is how Luke tells us what Jesus did on that day. Let me read it to you from Luke chapter 9 and verse 16. He says this.

[ 26 : 31 ] And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. And then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. Now let's wind the tape just on a little bit more. Let's wind it on to the night before Jesus' death. And here is how Luke, the same writer, describes what Jesus did with the disciples in the upper room that night. Jesus took bread and gave thanks, said a blessing. And he gave it to them and said, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Do you see those four things? Taking, thanking, breaking, giving. Do you get that? Taking, thanking, breaking, giving. It's the same words that Jesus uses in the feeding of the 5,000 as he does at the Lord's Supper. And that is not by accident. It's the same words in the same order because

Luke wants you and I to make the connection. That Jesus is announcing himself as the Messiah who's going to host one day God's great banquet. But the way that he's going to make that great banquet possible is by his death. That is going to come the day after the Lord's Supper.

You see, this feast is free to us only because the final bill has been paid by someone else.

And it was paid by Jesus. The feast cost the host his life. So Jesus the next day would go to the cross. And he would bear the judgment that you and I deserve for our sins that separates us from God. It was the sin, wasn't it, that kept Israelites off the mountain after the exodus.

It was sin that will prevent you and I ever coming close to this banquet table. It's the sin that says, if you do not have this sin dealt with, your name will not be on the guest list.

[ 28 : 56 ] But you see, Jesus takes the punishment for that sin. So that all who trust in him for salvation will find that their names are on the guest list. The final bill for the banquet is not paid in pennies.

And it's not paid in pounds. The final bill is paid in blood. And Jesus gives his blood as the final payment. Jesus sacrifices even to death to enable you and I to come to the table. To the messianic banquet of which he is the host.

There's a novel and a film called *The Beth's Feast*. Some of you will have seen it or read it. The story is told of an 18th century Danish nun. Of a woman who has lost its way.

Sorry, I've messed that up. There's a Christian community in Denmark. And the Christian community has become pretty joyless. Pretty lifeless. It's become very legalistic in this community. And very much rules orientated. But Beth is a refugee. And she comes to live in that community from Paris. With her two sisters in this Danish village.

[ 30 : 14 ] For 12 years. Beth serves as a housekeeper. Learning how to prepare humble food. And then she wins 10,000 francs in the lottery. And she asks the community Whether she can prepare a banquet.

A feast for the whole community. And then they agree. She serves up course after course Of the most exquisite food. And it climaxes in the dish of baby quail.

And the visiting general exclaimed at the meal That he'd only tasted food like this At the famous Café Anglais in Paris. And as the meal unfolds The community rediscovers joy.

Foods are ended. And sins are confessed. And the evening ends with the community Hand in hand around the village fountain.

Singing the old songs of faith. And while that is going on The two sisters go looking for Babette In the chaos of the kitchen. And with a far away look in her eyes Babette says You know I was once that cook In the Café Anglais.

[ 31 : 23 ] The sisters say You know Babette We will all remember this evening When you've gone back to Paris. But Babette would never return to Paris. Because she'd spent every last franc On that feast.

She'd spent it all. So that they could come to the feast. Jesus did not give 10,000 francs To host the banquet.

He gave his life. He shed his blood. The only innocent person In the history of the human race Who did not deserve to die Died.

But you see As a result of all the other promises Of Isaiah 25 They're going to come true. Jesus wants you to understand This morning. Isaiah wants you to understand Here is the place Where it ends Happily ever after.

Here is the place Because Jesus Not only died But he rose again And he defeated death. And so it is That the Apostle Paul Quotes from Isaiah 25 And 1 Corinthians 15 That in the light of Jesus' resurrection He says When the perishable Has clothed itself With imperishable The mortal With immortality Then the saying That is written Will come true Death has been Swallowed up in victory Where oh death Is your victory Where oh death Is your sting The sting of death Is sin And the power of sin Is the Lord But thanks be to God He gives us The victory Through our Lord Jesus Christ That by Jesus' resurrection Death has been Swallowed up in victory Jesus has eaten it up And we don't need To fear it anymore That death Was on the menu But God Has swallowed it up Through Jesus Christ And then at the end Of the Bible In the Apocalypse of John

[ 33 : 23 ] He rejoices In the language Of the Apocalypse of Isaiah That because of The victory of Jesus There is going to be A great wedding supper On the Lamb In Revelation 19.19 And at this wedding Unlike any other wedding That you or I Have been to There will be All dry eyes In the house Because God Will wipe every tear From their eyes That everything Isaiah predicted Will come true Everything will be Made true At the Messianic banquet And that banquet We get a glimpse of Every time We come to the Lord's Supper That's why we're Having the Lord's Supper this morning Every time That we come To this table We eat the bread And we drink the cup And one of the things We are saying As we come to the Lord's table Is I'm getting ready For the final banquet I'm getting ready Jesus says This sign Is a sign Of the banquet

Of the future Where we will eat Of the finest foods And we will drink On the most wonderful White And it's a banquet That points To a world That is perfect A world Where every need Will be fulfilled Where you and I Will be satisfied In every way As we eat of the bread Now And as we drink Of the cup It's as if we are Saying to God And one another As we pass the cup Of the bread To one another You know You know No matter what the Struggles are in my life And there are many No matter what the Struggles are in my life Right now No matter what the Stresses are right now One day One day we will live Happily ever after And we know That our needs Are going to be fulfilled We talk about The feast Don't we It looks so Insignificant Doesn't it

A little bit of bread And a mouthful Of wine But to share In this meal To share in this meal Is to share in the Messiah Banquet But your name Needs to be on the Guest list It's not a guest list For this meal And then a different Meal And a different Guest list For Messiah Banquet It's the same It is for those Who trust in the Lord It's for those Who bank their Light on him It is for those Who recognise That Jesus Is the host At this meal And that he Is the one Who gave up Everything To share this Meal with us This morning And so we Can share this Meal And if you're Still wondering Is my name On the guest list Well at this time Have you

Given up your Life to the Lord Jesus Christ We want this Morning to be Meaningful to you And we would Ask if you Recognise your Name is not On the guest list Don't eat of the Bread and drink of The wine It's not for you But come to the Host Come to the Lord Jesus Christ The one who Says you Come unto me All of you Who are weary And heavy Laid Come and I Will give you Rest And say Jesus I Want to be on That guest list I want to Follow you Luke tells us That on the Night As he shared This meal The Lord Jesus Cooked the bread And he said I have Earnestly Desired to Eat this With you Before I Suffer If I tell you I will not Eat of it Until the Kingdom of God Is fulfilled And he Took the Cup And when He Gave Thanks He Said When he Took the Bread And he Gave Thanks And said Divide it Amongst Yourselves For I

Tell you That from Now on I will Not Drink of The Fruit of The Vine Until The Kingdom Of God  
Camps In other words Jesus Says To the disciples He Says The Next Time I Eat This Meal I Will Be  
At The Banquet To So As a Taste And as A glimpse Of That day And that Great Reality We Come  
To The Lord's Table