

THIS IS OUR GOD: THE ONE WHO SAVES **(Isaiah 25:6-9)**

A proud and excited grandmother boarded a plane to go visit her grandchildren. She was seated next to a businessman who was trying to get some work done. He didn't get much accomplished because the grandmother couldn't stop talking about her grandkids. At one point in the flight, she started digging through her purse as she asked, "Have I shown you pictures of my grandkids?"

The businessman answered, "No, you haven't, and I want to thank you for that." We can't help but talk about what we love the most.

- A fan talks about his team.
- A traveler takes about the places he or she has visited.
- A satisfied customer talks about the store where she got a great deal.

And when we have a vibrant, joyous relationship with God, we are internally compelled to talk about Him.

Isaiah 25 opens with spontaneous praise from the pen of the prophet. Isaiah was as much a psalmist as he was a prophet. Songs of praise are scattered throughout his book. Look at 25:1. Notice the contrast between v. 1 and v. 9. In the first verse of the chapter, Isaiah writes of what he himself was personally doing in his day. Verse 9 speaks of what a far larger group will be doing on that day when God acts strongly on behalf of His people.

The focus of this message will be vv. 6-8, but I have drawn the title for the message from v. 9: "This Is Our God." Verses 6-8 announce three things that our God is going to do. Each act He performs serves to achieve what Isaiah and God's people were waiting for Him to do. They were waiting for God to save them.

Let's consider that word *save*. When we hear the words *save, saved, or salvation*, we immediately think in NT terms. We assume it means to be forgiven of our sin. We instinctively believe that to be saved is for our soul to be rescued from God's judgment, and that is true.

Most often, however, when David in the psalms or when the prophets in their writings ask God to save them, they are really petitioning God to deliver them from their enemies, to rescue them from foreign armies that are intent upon attacking and destroying them.

The NT authors took that word and baptized it. They invested it with spiritual meaning. Sometimes, however, I believe the OT prophets did use the words *save or salvation* in a spiritual sense.

Listen to what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:8-12. This comes from the New Living Translation:

⁸ You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. ¹¹ They

wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

¹² They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

In Isaiah 25, I believe the prophet is talking about more than victory over the Assyrians. We have before us an instance when a prophet of God is heralding the Good News that our great God is going to do great things on our behalf. Because of that, as we read at the end of v. 9, *we can be glad and rejoice in His salvation*. But we will have to wait for Him. In this message, I want to let you know three things that we are waiting for our saving God to do.

Our Saving God Will Host a Banquet

Look with me at v. 6. This sixth verse tells us where the banquet will be held, who will be hosting it, what the banquet will feature, and for whom the banquet is given.

It will be held on this mountain. What and where is this mountain? To answer that, we need to turn back to Isaiah 2:2-5. If you interview 5 different theologians and ask them to explain this passage, you will get six different explanations. Some will say this text is about the church age. I don't buy that. We are in the church age, and we have yet to see nations not rising up against nations. That still happens, sadly, with great regularity.

I believe this prophecy will be fulfilled after the return of Jesus, and I will leave it at that. To go beyond that is going to take us into the weeds, and I don't particularly want to go there this morning. It is enough to say, I believe this is a still future event. Jesus will be reigning and peace will prevail. I don't view the mountain of the YHWH as symbolic of something. I believe it is an actual place; so, I am looking for a literal fulfillment of this prophecy.

Going back to our text in Isaiah 25, at some point God is going to host a banquet to end all banquets. It will be the largest dinner party you could ever imagine. It also seems to me that Revelation 19:9 sounds a whole lot like this event. In that text, John wrote, "And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

In the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, weddings were huge, raucous affairs. A wedding party might go on for a week. There was eating, and drinking, and dancing, and celebrating, and the wine flowed freely, as people talked and laughed.

Scripture portrays Jesus as the Groom and His Church as the Bride. He promised to come for us, and when He does, there will be a great, wedding celebration.

This here in Isaiah 25 may be that which is spoken of in Revelation 19. This may be that. God is the host, and He will provide a feast of rich food and a feast of well-aged wine. God's not going to serve pigs-in-a-blanket and Kool-Aid. He's going to go all out, and He is going to serve the good stuff, the best stuff.

For whom is God hosting this banquet? Who is on the guest list? Our text says it is for

“all people.” How are we to interpret the words *all people*?

Basically, I believe there are two ways to look at this. I have some friends who are what has been called “hopeful universalists.” They believe that in the end, everybody will make it to heaven. They believe Jesus’ death atoned for the sin of the whole world. I suppose when they sing the hymn, “Jesus Paid It All,” they might add the phrase “and for everybody.” I would like to believe that. I wish that were true. You would have to be hard-hearted jerk to not want everyone to make it to heaven.

We read in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God our Savior “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Two verses later, Paul adds that Jesus “gave Himself as a ransom for all.”

The hopeful universalist would say that when God says *all*, He means *all*. The passage in Isaiah 25 employs universalistic language. Our text, vv. 6-9 speaks of all peoples, all nations, all faces, and all the earth.

I only have one problem with the universalist view—I find too many passages in the Bible that contradict it. We read some terrifying words in Revelation 20. Listen to vv. 11-15:

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

2 Peter 2:7 speaks of the “destruction of the ungodly.” John 3:16 promises that if we believe in Jesus we will not perish. The implication is that if we do not believe in Him, we will perish. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way.” He added, “But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few find it.” It seems clear to me that not everybody is going to make it to heaven, and according to Jesus, more won’t than will.

If not everybody makes it, what are to make of this universal language? What does *all* mean if it doesn’t mean *all*? *All* either means, everyone without exception, or it means everyone without distinction. Everyone without exception is the universal all. That all does mean everybody. No one is excluded for any reason.

Everyone without distinction, however, means all classes of people and all races of people. That means God doesn’t discriminate. God saves the rich and the poor. God saves the educated and the uneducated. God saves the powerful and the weak. God saves people from North American and South America, from Asia and Africa, from Europe and the land down under. Revelation 5:9 teaches that Jesus ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” That does not mean everybody is going

to heaven, but it does mean that individuals from every people group and every ethnicity will be there.

This past week, I went to two birthday dinners. Both were hosted by my brother and his wife in their home. The first was for our oldest brother, and two days later, we had another dinner for our mother who turned 89 on Thursday. Each meal was delicious, and the fellowship was even better. We had family from Arizona, Colorado, Texas, as well as Edmond, Enid, and OKC who attended. Although there was no well-aged wine at either meal, there was a feast of rich food at both. And while the second feast had more attendees than the first, it wasn't for all people. I'm sorry, but none of you were invited. My two brothers are each business owners, but they didn't invite their employees. My sister has plenty of friends in Texas, but she didn't invite any of her neighbors or fellow church members. This was a family celebration.

God's family is much bigger than mine. He has family members scattered all over the world. When Jesus comes back, His Father is going to host a family dinner, and all His family from all over the world will have a place setting prepared for them. In order to go to that dinner, in order to get an invitation to that celebration, in order to have a place at that table, you must be a member of the family. John wrote in the first chapter of his gospel, "But to all who did receive Him [Jesus], who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

Have you received Jesus? Have you believed in His name? That is the only way to get an invitation to this great banquet God is going to host. It is a party that you simply don't want to miss.

There is a second aspect of our salvation upon which we are waiting.

Our Saving God Will Swallow Up Death

The beginning of 25:8 is a restatement of the truth found in v. 7. It is simply expressed in different words. I believe both verses are saying essentially the same thing. There are many who say the veil of v. 7 refers to us being blinded from truth, and when Jesus comes, He will be a light to the nations, and He will give us understanding. That is all well and good, but that is to impose meaning on the text rather than to draw meaning from the text.

Verse 7 says that God is going to swallow up a veil, but it doesn't tell us what that veil is. The next verse promises that God is going to swallow up death. I believe that statement throws light on what v. 7 says. In Isaiah's day, as in our day, when someone dies, they are covered up. They are shrouded. They are veiled. To swallow the veil is to swallow death. Both mean the same thing, but just what does it mean?

To answer that question, we should go to where that exact phrase is quoted in the NT. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 15. We call this chapter the Resurrection Chapter. It deals first with the resurrection of Jesus, but then it discusses the resurrection of all believers which will take place when Jesus returns. Let's read vv. 50-57.

For God to swallow up death means that God gains the victory over death. Jesus won that victory by dying and then rising from the dead three days later. Jesus wasn't simply resuscitated; He was raised. He has a resurrection body. There is a huge difference between the two. A resuscitated body will die again eventually.

Lazarus was resuscitated after being dead for four days. I imagine he wasn't too happy about that. He was in paradise, enjoying being in a perfect place, having been freed from the toil and frustration of this life. Then, all of a sudden, Jesus cries out, "Lazarus, come forth." Without getting a say in the matter, the spirit of Lazarus is returned to his body that is wrapped in strips of linen. He comes waddling out of his tomb. Jesus orders, "Unbind him, and let him go."

I am sure that his sisters were ecstatic. His friends were happy. But Lazarus? Not so much. We are not told, but I think he glared at Jesus and thought to himself, "Really? You gotta be kidding me." In time, Lazarus died again, because all he had was a resuscitated body.

Jesus, however, came back in a resurrected body—a body that will never die again. Jesus conquered death. One day, we who trust in Jesus will receive such a body, and we will share in that victory that Jesus won.

Have you ever sat at home in front of the TV and watched your team play a football play game against another team that is equally matched? It is a tight game. It goes back and forth, but in the closing seconds of the game, the place kicker from your team boots a winning field goal. As the ball goes through the uprights, you jump up and begin cheering, "We won! We Won!"

Think about that for a moment. We won? You didn't win anything. Your team won the game. All you did was sit on the couch eating potato chips. From the comfort of your living room, your team couldn't even hear you cheering. You did absolutely nothing to help your team win, but as a loyal fan, you get to celebrate and experience the joy of winning.

In the same way, God, through His Son Jesus, has swallowed up death. He has won the victory over our greatest foe. We did nothing to help Him achieve that victory, yet one day, we will share in the joy of that victory.

Right now, however, death is still a reality. Death still stalks us and our friends and our family. Death still intrudes upon our family as an uninvited and unwelcome guest, and when he leaves, he takes with him what we cherish most. What is even worse is that we know he won't stay gone. He will come back again and again.

What can we do? We can't stop death from coming, but we can do two things. First, we can look back and remember what Jesus did. Jesus died a real, physical, brutal, painful death, and then He rose again with a resurrection body. He defeated death that day.

After having looked back, we can do a second thing. We can look forward and remember what Jesus promised. He is coming back again, and when He does, we will share in His victory over death. We will receive resurrection bodies—bodies that will never die again. These are bodies that will never age and show the ravages of time. These are bodies that will not betray you. These are bodies that will never get sick and require medical intervention.

Never again will we get a dreaded phone call at night. Never again will a state trooper appear at our front door. Never again will an ER doctor hold our hands and say, "I'm sorry. We did our best." Funeral directors will have to take up a new line of work. Casket makers will just have to make something else. That will be so because God has swallowed up our final foe.

That leads us to the third truth concerning the salvation for which we wait.

Our Saving God Will Wipe Away All Tears

Look at the last half of v. 8. What a beautiful promise! Here is bit of Bible trivia. Did you know that the Bible never says there will be no tears in heaven? What the Bible promises is that God will wipe away our tears.

In Revelation 21, John echoes the words of Isaiah from today's text. Verse 4 tells us, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

You might arrive in heaven with some tears. There may be tears of regret in your eyes, or tears of pain, or tears of sorrow, or tears of joy. Regardless of the cause, the Bible promises that God will wipe away those tears.

Have you ever wiped away someone's tears? Maybe it was the tears of a child who fell and skinned his knees. You scooped them up, held them tight, and wiped away the tears. Maybe it was the tears of a spouse who had a bad day and needed a good cry. You hugged him or her, reassured your loved on, and wiped away the tears.

There is something tender in wiping away someone else's tears or in having your tears wiped away by someone who loves you and someone you trust.

We serve a tender God.

We naturally enjoy being proud of those we love, and we want others to know that they belong to us.

- When your son distinguishes himself on the field of play, as you sit in the stands, you look around and say, "That's my boy."
- When you daughter walks across the stage and receives that hard-earned diploma, you holler, smile, and say, "That's my girl."
- When your wife enters the restaurant looking ravishing and turning heads, you stand a little taller and say, "That's my wife."
- When your husband does something embarrassing in public, you turn around and pretend you don't know him. (No. I'm sure there is something husbands do that make their wives proud; I just couldn't come up with one).

In Isaiah 25, Isaiah voiced his pride in his God, and he gave voice to us who are proud of our God. Our God is the One who saves.

My question for you today is, "Do you qualify to use the personal pronoun *our*?" Have you owned the God of the Bible as your God? Have you aligned yourself with Him? If you have, you have plenty of reason to be proud of your God.

If YHWH is not your God, you are going to miss out on a feast. Instead of swallowing death for you, you will be swallowed by death. And instead of God wiping away your tears, you will forfeit His tender mercy.

Don't miss out on what God is going to do.