

A Feast of Fat Things – Isaiah 25:1 – 26:19

Introduction – We mentioned that there was a similar flow of argument between Isaiah 24 and Romans 11. Old Jerusalem falls away and a New Jerusalem is established; the New Jerusalem is the church, the New Covenant people of God, Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ. Both Paul and Isaiah, getting a vision of this, break out in doxological songs of triumph (Rom 11:33-36, Isaiah 25:1ff, also 1 Tim 1:15-17). The City of Man comes down and the City of God is established, a great feast is given by the Lord, death is swallowed up, and perfect peace is given to those who find themselves in the Rock of Ages. These chapters are a feast of fat things. Bon Appetit!

Overview – The prophet begins with a Psalm-like praise to God, claiming Yahweh as his God, praising Him for the wonderful things He has done according to His counsels of old (v1). And what has He done? He has ruined a city so thoroughly that it never will be rebuilt (v2). But the effect has been to turn terrifying nations to fear Him and the poor and helpless to find their strength and refuge in Him (vv3-5). The LORD throws a victory feast for all people, full of the choicest pieces of meat and the finest, well-aged wines (v6). The LORD also eats at this feast, swallowing up the veil that had shadowed all nations as well as death itself (vv7-8). Great communal rejoicing ensues (v9), but Moab, that city with arrogance and trickery, God tramples down like straw and manure (vv10-12).

A song is raised again in the land of Judah for new city has been raised, its walls made of salvation, and its gates open for all who would come in righteousness (26:1-2). There, the Lord will keep those who trust in Him in perfect peace for they will rest upon the Rock of Ages (vv3-6). A new refrain of the song contrasts the ways of the righteous and the wicked (vv7-10). The wicked cannot see because of their envy of people and so they are dead and gone (v11, 14); the righteous realize that peace has been given to them and they have only turned to the LORD because He has given this (vv12-13). While the wicked perish, the LORD's nation increases (v15). They realize that before, in trying to bring forth their own deliverance, they were like a woman in labor who did not bring forth a child (vv16-18); but when God restores her, it will be as though the earth itself will bring forth the dead and they shall rise (v19).

The Victory Songs of Salvation – Songs fill the world. Songs tell us of history, of battles lost and won, of lovers lost and won. Ultimately, songs are a way of partaking of the glorious work of God and responding to the glorious work of God. At creation, the morning stars sang (Job 38:7). At the Incarnation, the heavenly host sang as though ushering in a New Creation (Luke 2:13-14). Related to our passage, when the city of Babylon (the city of man, the old covenant city, old Israel), the saints sang at her fall (Rev 19:1-5, Isaiah 25:2). And when the new bride replaces the old harlot (as when the City of God overcomes the city of man), there is great singing and rejoicing (Rev 19:6-8, Isaiah 25:9). People who are part of this bride, who dwell in this city, who know the peace of God, the forgiveness of sin, and the communion with His Son and His people, are people who sing. And they sing around a Table which is filled with the great feast.

The Ultimate Feast – In the first exodus, the people enjoyed the quick Passover feast (Exodus 12). When God affirmed His covenant with the people in the giving of the law, Moses and the seventy elders went up and feasted with God (Exodus 24:9-11). Before Jesus brought forth the New Exodus, He broke bread and instituted a new, simple feast. And when the bride is brought to the Bridegroom, there is a great wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14, Rev 21:1-3). Isaiah 25:6 is a feast “*on this mountain*” which is Mount Zion, the mountain of the Lord (Isaiah 2:1-4) and there the LORD provides for us. In order to describe the richness and abundance of His gracious, life-giving salvation, Isaiah uses images which (unfortunately) would be considered unhealthy for us (which may tell us something about how “off” our society is when it comes to understanding food, nutrition, wine and feasting). This is the taste of life, of salvation offered by God, of abundant pardon, grace and mercy. “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).

Death is Swallowed Up - Paul quotes this phrase from Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Cor 15:54 to describe the general resurrection at the end of the world. And so vv6-8 move from the establishment of the New Covenant through the millennium period to the final day of judgment, the vindication of Christ and His people in the second resurrection. While that day is still future, Isaiah and Paul both teach that its sureness takes away the sting of death now and grants us steadfast hope by which we live (1 Cor 15:54-58, Rom 8:23-25, Phil 1:21).

The City of Salvation and Peace – Yes, much of these images describe the mystery of after the final day of Jesus Christ. But this mountain, this city, has been established here and now and this has been done so that we might see salvation flourish. Isaiah sees a nation that increases, continually expanding its borders (25:15). That which was dead is coming to life (25:19). Why? “*We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks*” (25:1). The gates are open (v2), and the call from us to the world is that peace is found here in these walls because they are built on the Rock of Ages (vv3-4). The song in the city is one of delighted amazement at all our desires met in Him (vv8-9). But not just for us: “*The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*” (v9b).