

# The Book of ISAIAH – Chapters 1-39

## Catholic Scripture Study

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**Memory Verse: *Isaiah 26:3-4***

***You keep him in perfect peace,  
whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.  
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD  
is an everlasting rock.***

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## The Eschatological Banquet (Isaiah Chapter 25)

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### I. INTRODUCTION (ISAIAH 25)

Isaiah makes it clear that judgment and destruction are never God's intended last words. Rather, he intends that those harsh words will pave the way for the happier words of hope and redemption.

This is the case in Isaiah 24 and 25. From the silence and ruins of the shattered city – the consequences of judgment - we move to the joy of a feast where the host is the Lord.

The spectacular vision of a banquet on Mount Zion, to which ***all*** people will be invited and at which death will be swallowed up forever (vv. 6-9), is framed between:

- a prayer of thanksgiving for God's power over the "***cities of ruthless nations***" (vv. 1-5), and
- A prophecy about the fate of one such nation (vv. 10-12).

Mount Zion stands at the center, scene of unrestrained rejoicing, symbol of life and salvation, surrounded by silent, dusty ruins where once the proud cities of the nations had stood.

## II. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (25:1-5)

**Read:** Isaiah 25:1-5

### A. Overview

Isaiah praises God for fulfilling a long-ago promise of destroying the city of an unnamed enemy.

Because he has received the word (revelation) from God, Isaiah knows that judgment will surely fall upon the nations and that the Lord will triumph in the end.

Hence, as a prophet, he breaks out into the praise of his God. He makes a solemn profession of faith in One God, Yahweh!

**Read:** Isaiah 25:1-5

***[1] O LORD, thou art my God;***

***I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;  
for thou hast done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.***

***[2] For thou hast made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of aliens is a city no more,  
it will never be rebuilt.***

***[3] Therefore strong peoples will glorify thee;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear thee.***

***[4] For thou hast 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 blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall,***

**[5] like heat in a dry place.**

**Thou dost subdue the noise of the aliens;  
as heat by the shade of a cloud,  
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.**

## **B. The LORD God (Yahweh)**

The God the prophet worships, Yahweh, is his God, and He alone is the one whom Isaiah confesses as God. None other is deserving of his adoration and worship.

- There is a very personal element in his praise of God.

**Note:** To praise God's name is to praise God Himself.

Initially, the note of praise sounds like the praise we expect from redeemed Israel. Her Lord has been faithful to His promises and **"has done marvelous things"** (25:1).

He has completely destroyed the "ruthless city" (**thou hast made the city a heap**) of the wicked and the oppressors and in so doing has become a refuge for the poor and the needy from the **blast of the ruthless** (25:4-5).

Isaiah continues to praise God!

God is a stronghold, a shelter or refuge, **a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat** to the poor and needy. Their enemies and oppressors are a tempest, desert heat, a noise.

The threats and attacks of the ruthless are **like a storm against a wall**, like the wind beating against the walls of a house. But against the people of God no storm can prevail; the noise of the nations clamoring to break down the defenses of the city of God is eventually subdued, and the tempest stilled.

When justice is finally established on earth, ruthless nations will fear God. Others, **strong peoples** (v.3) like the Moabites (16:1-5),

the Ethiopians (18:1-7), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:34-37), Darius (Dan. 6:25-28) and Cyrus (Ezra 1:2-4) will glorify His name (see Is. 25:3).

### C. Destruction of the City

**For thou hast made the city a heap!** What city is Isaiah speaking about in verse 2?

It is possible that the reference maybe to one particular city, such as Babylon. However, the “city” is probably meant be a symbol of a hostile world power, not a real, identifiable city, and its fall illustrates the vulnerability of civilization as we know it.

## III. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL BANQUET (25:6-9)

### A. Overview

As mentioned before, judgment and destruction are never God's intended last words.

There is no sense in which God glories in the destruction of the wicked. If judgment and destruction cannot be avoided and God's justice prevails (God's permissive will), but that is not what God wants to happen (His perfect will).

- Rather, he wants to invite **all** peoples to his feast (Isaiah 25:6). Redemption and deliverance are not for Israel alone but for all peoples who turn to God in faith and humility.

After God's destruction of the ruthless and evil nations he will provide on the holy mountain of Zion, a magnificent banquet for **all** the people.

**Note:** This is a reference to the messianic banquet, an image often used in Old Testament literature.

On this mountain, the Lord will swallow up death, reversing the idea that death has swallowed up all things of the earth. It is a time for rejoicing in the Lord, who saved the people.

**Read:** Isaiah 25:6-9

***[6] On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.***

***[7] And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.***

***[8] He will swallow up death for ever, 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.***

***[9] It will be said on that day, "Lo, 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."***

## **B. The Lord's Banquet (Isaiah 25:6-9)**

The Lord has prepared a special feast for all the nations on Mount Zion, which symbolizes the Church (25:6).

There he will provide succulent food and fine wine - ***fat things*** includes choice meat, fruit and vegetables, all sorts of dishes, rich and full of goodness ("marrow").

***Wine on the lees*** suggests rich, strong wine and unrestrained drinking (draining it to the dregs). The wine has been allowed to strengthen by leaving the dregs in the wine after the fermentation process.

This rich food and drink is a symbolic reference to the divine fare that God will provide and which surpasses anything that man could imagine.

**Typology:** These words also prefigure the Eucharistic banquet, instituted by Jesus in Jerusalem, in which he provides divine nourishment, his own Body and Blood, which strengthens the soul and is a pledge of future glory.

To share in “the Lord’s Supper” is to anticipate the eschatological feast of the “marriage supper of the Lamb” in heaven (Rev. 19:9).

### **C. Death Will be Swallowed Up (25:6-8)**

At this great feast on Mount Zion, God announces that the reign of death which has ruled the earth since Adam and Eve, drenching it with sorrow and tears, is going to be swallowed up forever.

But before human beings can experience the joy of God’s great feast, something must be done about this universal curse – the shroud of death: ***the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations*** (25:7).

- God is going to destroy death forever!

### **D. Rejoicing in God’s Salvation (25:9)**

Verse 9 describes the jubilant response of the nations. The banquet, the vision of God’s glory, the swallowing up of death forever – these add up to the final mighty act in the salvation-history of the world.

This is what the world has been waiting for: now at last we can “***be glad and rejoice in his salvation.***”

## **IV. THE FATE OF THE WICKED (25:10-12)**

### **A. Overview**

Sadly, verses 10-12 do not end on the glorious note of the preceding verses.

In stunning contrast, the theme turns once more from the salvation of the nations to judgment, with Moab symbolizing the rest of the nations.

Why does Isaiah introduce such a contrast at this particular point?

The answer is that Moab has been a determined, long-time enemy of Israel, and is here mentioned by way of example to show that the haughty enemies of God's people will be destroyed.

- **God wishes to save and deliver all the peoples of the world. But this does not mean all will respond to his invitation.**
- **For those who refuse to do so, the grim final word is judgment.**

No one must be lulled into apathetic unconcern because of God's offer of limitless love. Any nation or person must either run with God or run into him. There is no other way.

Those who are tempted to ignore God's generous and compassionate heart (vv. 6-8) will learn to regret that decision.

The same hand which will rest on Zion in blessing will strike Moab down. This is not the result of favoritism or arbitrary resentment on God's behalf. It is a result of two different attitudes:

- Those who commit themselves to God in patient trust will experience his hand of blessing, shading them from the oppressive heat of the sun,
- But those who exalt themselves against God in their own self-sufficiency and pride must sooner or later be crushed under His hand (vv. 11, 12).

**Read:** Isaiah 25:10-12

**[10] For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.**

**[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 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, even to the dust.**

## **B. Two Mountains – Zion and Moab**

With verse 10 the picture changes and a contrast is introduced. On Mount Zion all is peace and blessedness, for the kingdom of God is there.

Across the Jordan, however, there is another mountain, that of Moab. Between these mountains there is a great gulf fixed like that between the rich man and Lazarus.

Moab, the enemy of God will be trampled down. Moab is to be completely subjugated. No longer, therefore, need Israel fear any invasion or even harassment from this enemy, for it'll be completely subdued.

## **C. Destruction and Degradation of Moab**

To show how thoroughly Moab will be trodden down, the prophet introduces a comparison which points out the great degradation as well as the destruction that is to come upon Moab.

The picture of degradation is clear. Moab, representing all who oppose God, instead of having the shroud of death removed from its face, finds itself face down and drowning in a barnyard of liquid manure **(as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit).**

The wicked who find themselves in the cesspool (dung-pit) spread out their hands to swim in the manure, but despite all their skills, they will be unable to save themselves.

**Note:** Moab is no worse than any other nation here. They have simply been singled out to represent the rest of the proud human race that refuses to recognize the right and authority of their Maker.

## V. APPLICATION

### A. Presuming on God's Mercy

What is the point being made in the above verses? It is similar to the one made in exodus 34:6-7.

*“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*

*Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”*

Yes, God is merciful and compassionate; slow to anger, and quick to forgive. But no one dare presume on that grace to live a depraved and corrupt life, assuming God will overlook it.

- Sin will be punished, and its deadly **consequences** will continue **to the third and fourth generation**.

That is the point being made here.

Yes, God intends to make his salvation available to all persons from all nations. He intends to remove the shroud of death from all people, not just those he chose as his own.

But there is one qualification!

- Those benefits are available to all who abandon their trust in themselves or in any other created thing;
- They are not available to those who persist in **“pride”** (25:11) or who trust in their own mighty achievements (25:12).

So if the end of time will be marked by a great feast when God's blessings will be made available to all, it will also be marked by the terrible destruction of those who refuse to turn to God in trust.

- Once again, destruction is not God's intended last word, but we have the choice of making it his last word.

## **B. Death and Resurrection**

One of the clearest teachings on resurrection in the Old Testament is presented in this chapter.

- As such it speaks to the greatest issue in the modern world – the issue of death.

The choices that face the human race are placed in bold relief.

- No matter what we have done to one another, if we will turn to God in trust, there is hope for us.
- Death, the last enemy has been conquered.

But if we insist that we need no redemption, that we can take care of ourselves, God himself will assist the death angel as he carries us off.

## **C. Death**

Given the insistence today that this world and this life are all there is, death makes a mockery of the whole thing.

All our achievements and accomplishments, all our troubles and pain, are meaningless because we all die, the saint and the sinner, the winner and the loser, together (Eccl. 9:3-4).

- Death takes away the possibility of individual human significance.

The only alternative is to say that humanity will go on after I die and that therefore I have some significance as part of the race. But that is my only significance, and a very small one.

This chapter and its fulfillment in the New Testament tell us that the world's view of life is false.

- We have not been created for death but for life.
- Death has lost its sting, as St. Paul tells us, and the grave has been robbed of its victory (1 Cor. 15: 55).
- God the father has defeated death forever in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

To be sure we await the final day when the King will make his promised announcement and death will cease to be. But until then we can live in the assurance that we do have individual significance and death cannot destroy that.

Furthermore we can know that trust in God and renunciation of our pride are ultimate values that will make all the difference in **whether we conquer death or death conquers us.**

When will that pronouncement occur?

The book of Revelation gives us more details. The feast of the King portrayed here will be the **wedding supper of the Lamb** (Rev. 19:7-9). It is the feast of the Lamb because it is through his death and resurrection that death is conquered.

- This imagery extends back to the Exodus, when a lamb's death made it possible for the firstborn of Israel to escape death in Egypt (Exodus 12:12-13).
- So it is not accidental that Jesus instructed those who followed him to eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:53-56) to escape eternal death.
- He was consciously associating himself with the **Passover** lamb, but because death could not conquer him and the

Father has raised him to new life, **“the lamb who was slain”** (Rev. 5: 12) is alive to be both host and bridegroom at the last day.

#### **D. The Conquest of Death**

Immediately following the announcement of the wedding supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19, is a discussion of the conquest of death, culminating in the statement in 20:14 that **“death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire,”** and in 21:4 that **“there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

It is significant that the imagery of Christ changes from **Lamb** to **Conquer** immediately after the announcement of the wedding supper.

He (Christ the Conqueror) rides on a white horse (19:11) and leads the armies of heaven (19:14) to a great battle, which is called “the great supper of God” (19:17), when the vultures eat the corpses of those who have opposed the King (19:21).

We think here immediately of what Isaiah said about Moab. Death will be conquered and destroyed, but those who refuse the offer of the Lamb will be met by the Conqueror and will go down to a worse fate than death, namely, **“the second death”** (Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 14; 21:8).

God offers deliverance from death to all, but those who refuse his offer will find an eternity of torment.

# Preparation for Isaiah Week 19

## The Resurrection of the Dead (Isaiah 26)

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1. Read Isaiah, Chapter 26
2. Read Chapter 6, pg 53, in *Come and See Catholic Bible Study – Isaiah*.
3. Answer questions 10-15 in *Come and See* (pg. 58-59).
4. Read the following paragraphs from the CCC:

***Article 3 – Sacred Scripture, Section IV – The Canon of Scripture –***

***Paragraphs: 120-123 – The Old Testament: and***

***Paragraphs 124-130 – The New Testament***