

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 25:1-12

Topic

God will “will swallow up death forever, and...will wipe away tears from all faces”

Title

“You Take My Death Away”

Fashion giant Lyst has a line of ‘coffin couture’ for burial that they call the Six Feet Under Collection.¹

Before you rush to purchase your outfit, consider going green. Irish designer Francesca Rea has created a series of eco-friendly burial garments.

After speaking with someone who had recently attended a funeral where a wicker basket was used instead of a coffin for environmental reasons, Rea started to consider the ecological impact of funerals. She wanted to create garments which were actively beneficial for the environment. “The natural fibers of the designs will decompose and add to the ground where the deceased is buried,” Rea says, “and plants can grow from this which continues the cycle of life.”

If you are really into the cycle of life, you can have your dead body turned into soil. Also known as ‘natural organic reduction,’ your body decomposes over several weeks after being shut in a container.

¹ <https://www.theclothesmaiden.com/lysts-new-over-my-dead-body-fashion-range/>

If you've priced caskets, a wicker basket sounds pretty good. If you want to stick with a traditional casket, two big retailers can help:

1. you can get a casket for under \$1200 at WalMart. Shipping is free, but it does not include set-up.
2. Costco sells coffins. Be aware, however, that they will *not* honor their usual policy of returning any item for any reason.

In verse seven of Isaiah twenty-five, the prophet said that God "will destroy... the **covering** cast over all people, And the **veil** that is spread over all nations."

- The "covering" is a burial shroud, sometimes called "graveclothes."
- The "veil" is the face covering placed on the deceased.

Isaiah then says something full of wonder: "He will swallow up death forever" (v8).

We ought to have an amazed reaction to the swallowing up of Death.

The apostle Paul did. He borrowed from Isaiah twenty-five and shouted, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O [GRAVE], WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" (First Corinthians 15:54-55).

Paul also pointed out that, "The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death" (First Corinthians 15:26).

Death won't go down without a fight.

It will make stands in the Time of Jacob's Trouble, and in the Millennial Kingdom.

Death wants to take as many as it can to the Second Death. The Second Death describes the sorry plight of all those who die without trusting Jesus for salvation. They will be resurrected and cast into the Lake of Fire for an eternity of conscious punishment.

Our mission, should we decide to accept it, is to live in the power of the resurrection and give everyone an answer for the hope we have in Jesus.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Death Mounts An Offensive In The Time Of Jacob's Trouble**, and **#2 Death Makes A Last Stand In The Time Of David's Kingdom**.

#1 - Death Mounts An Offensive In The Time Of Jacob's Trouble (v1-5)

Let's review the the historic context:

- God's chosen nation had split apart in a civil war between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes. The north was called Israel, the south, Judah.
- The Assyrian Empire would utterly destroy the northern kingdom of Israel.
- They were intent upon doing the same to Judah.
- Isaiah saw beyond Assyria to invasion by Babylon.
- The Jews in Judah were idolaters who refused to repent.

You might say, "It was the worst of times; it was the woorest of times."

In the midst of that kind of *personal* and *political* turmoil, God's message to His people was to teach them Bible prophecy. Isn't it just like our Heavenly Father to know what we need to hear?

Prophecy it can be a good reset button. We tend to get drawn in to the world's suggested solutions for our personal and political troubles. Without realizing it, we get off mission. Or I should say, off Great Commission, which is to first concentrate on making disciples.

There are lots of references in God's Word to the fact that prophecy, the Doctrine of Last Things, provides incredible comfort to us.

Isa 25:1 O LORD, You *are* my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful *things*; Your counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.

- "O LORD, You are my God." Isaiah knew the LORD. He had a relationship with the living God. Do you? If you do, how's it going?
- "I exalt You, I will praise Your Name." In those 'worrest' of times, Isaiah could rest in the LORD.
- It was "wonderful" that the LORD can be counted upon to be faithful and true to His "counsels of old."

Those “counsels” took place between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit before Creation. A huge component in those counsels was the plan of salvation should mankind fail in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah understood God’s plans could not fail. He decided he’d be a *worshipper* rather than a *worrier*.

Isa 25:2 For You have made a city a ruin, A fortified city a ruin, A palace of foreigners to be a city no more; It will never be rebuilt.

You wonder if Isaiah received an advanced copy of chapters seventeen & eighteen of the Revelation. The “city” God will destroy that “will never be rebuilt” is future Babylon. It will be the HQ, ground zero, the home office, the “palace of foreigners,” for the global commerce and government of the antichrist.

The Tower of Babel marked a significant rebellion of mankind against God. Since then, there has been a struggle between the two most mentioned cities in the Bible - Jerusalem & Babylon.

At Babel, God confounded human language, creating nations, scattering them all over the globe. Then God birthed a brand new nation through Abraham. The history of the world can only be comprehended if we keep Israel as its focus. It is the most important nation, the apple of God’s eye. It was through Israel that the world would receive its Savior.

The Revelation predicts, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! Therefore her plagues will come in one day - death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her” (18:2&8).

Babylon will be destroyed. As Cletus Kasady once said, “There will be carnage.”

Isa 25:3 Therefore the strong people will glorify You; The city of the terrible nations [Babylon] will fear You.

We immediately read that as, “You gotta be strong!” We put the emphasis on our developing strength so God can use us. In the next verse, we see that our “strength” comes from God. Those who “glorify” Him *are* the strong. Here is the difference:

- Recently I heard some dialog in which one of the characters said to another, "Go build something great for God."
- Francis Schaeffer said, "We are not building God's Kingdom. He is building His Kingdom, and we are praying for the privilege of being involved."

Yes, you must cooperate with God the Holy Spirit to grow and mature. It's called sanctification. But too much emphasis can be put on you, and not enough on the Lord. It is why the apostle Paul exhorted the Galatian believers that having begun in the Spirit, they should not attempt to be made perfect, to be sanctified, by self-effort and self-discipline.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "*The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with grace. Grace wondrous grace. By the grace of God I am what I am. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"

Isa 25:4 For You have been a strength to the poor, A strength to the needy in his distress, A refuge from the storm, A shade from the heat; For the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm *against* the wall.

Believers in the Time of Jacob's Trouble will be "poor," "needy," "in distress," refugees. The "terrible ones" in the last years of tribulation are the Satan-empowered antichrist, his false prophet, his somehow alive Image of the Beast, and all those who receive the Mark of the Beast. Their persecution of believers will be like a category 5 hurricane pounding on the wall.

Isa 25:5 You will reduce the noise of aliens, As heat in a dry place; As heat in the shadow of a cloud, The song of the terrible ones will be diminished.

This is a promise of *limited divine protection* during the Tribulation:

- The efforts of "aliens," meaning *foreigners*, to persecute the Jews will be "reduced," but not totally eliminated. We know that, in the future Time of Jacob's Trouble, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Jews will be killed.
- "Heat in the shadow of a cloud" is still heat, albeit diminished by shade. Many, many Gentile saints will die, too. We see "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" (Revelation 6:9).
- The victory "song of the terrible ones," their persecutors, will not be as boisterous as it could be, but they will sing, at least for a time before their own destruction. God's two Tribulation witnesses will experience death. It will result in the whole

world rejoicing, celebrating. Their mirth will be cut short when the two witnesses rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven with the world watching.

Today, prior to the Time of Jacob's Trouble, you will have tribulation, but it's with a little 't.'

You will suffer within the limitations and restrictions God places upon you... Like He did with His servant, Job.

In 40 years, I've officiated several hundred memorial services and graveside services:

- Too many are confirmed unbelievers.
- Too many are those you weren't really certain of their salvation.
- Many are believers.

I say they "are," not they "were," *because they are alive*. In Acts 24:15, we learn there will be resurrections of both believers and unbelievers.

- Believers are raised to eternal life.
- Unbelievers are raised to experience what is called the Second Death for eternity.

If Death (personified) can get unbelievers into the Great Tribulation, they will be in serious peril:

- For one thing, that period of time is characterized by a strong delusion.
- If a person receives the Lord, they'll be persecuted and martyred.
- Not to forget the cosmic and geographical disasters that will kill millions upon millions.

Now is the time to come to Jesus, not later.

#2 - Death Makes A Last Stand In The Time Of David's Kingdom (v6-12)

"The clouds of the Great Tribulation have rolled away and the sun of righteousness is shining."

The Millennial Kingdom is as close to utopia as any time in history since the Garden of Eden.

What is "the Millennium," you ask? Jesus will return at the end of the Time of Jacob's Trouble. It is called the Second Coming. He will establish the kingdom promised to David and Israel. We are told it lasts one-thousand years. "Millennium" is one-thousand years in Latin, hence the Millennial Kingdom.

Death is alive in the Millennium.

For example: Satan is incarcerated for the thousand years in a place called the Abyss. He is released from his incarceration at the end of the thousand years to lead a final rebellion against Jesus.

We read that "he will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth... to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea." Jesus puts down the rebellion: "fire came down from God out of Heaven and devour[s] them" (Revelation 20:9).

There will be mega-death at the end of the Millennium.

Isa 25:6 And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees.

The "mountain" is the city of Jerusalem, situated 2500 feet in elevation on Mount Zion. This is not a specific banquet, but an illustration to say that the Lord invites all the citizens of Earth to His table, to be saved. It is a thousand-year spiritual repast.

"Of fat things, full of marrow." In Psalm 36:8, certain versions read, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." Seems under the latest guidelines, almost everyone is obese. Or, as we once said, fat. Spiritually, *fatness is good!* Maybe we should incorporate "fatness" in our encouragement to one another. Next time your wife asks you, "How do I look,?" tell her, "Honey, *I've never seen you so fatness.*"

Isa 25:7 And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations.

The shroud and the veil symbolize death. They are "cast" over all people, and "spread" over all nations.

Where did Death come from? Who brought it to life, as it were? God created our original parents with free will, and gave them one simple command: "Of every tree of

the Garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

They ate; they died in three ways:

1. They immediately died **spiritually** in the sense that their fellowship with God was lost.
2. They began dying **physically** as Creation came under a curse.
3. They would die **eternally**, separated from God in their sin, unless He intervened.

God *did* intervene in a big way. Immediately after their sin, He provided a way for them to approach Him, to know Him. It involved the sacrificial death of an innocent substitute, an animal. That system would continue until God the Son would come as a man to be the once-for-all, innocent, substitute.

In His incarnation, Jesus would die to take away the sins of the world.

Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

"The rebuke of His people" certainly describes Jews. Hated, harassed, hassled, harangued, hunted, harmed, like no other people in history. The Millennial Kingdom will end that. Israel will take her rightful place.

Isa 25:9 And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this *is* our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This *is* the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Israel "waited" for their LORD through the centuries. At His Second Coming, they will look upon Jesus and realize He is their Savior & Lord.

Much of their waiting was on account of their own rebellion. Stephen, first martyr of the Church Age, recalled their history as God's chosen nation. Then he said to Israel's officials, "*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*" (Acts 7:51-53).

Isa 25:10 For on this mountain the hand of the LORD will rest, And Moab shall be trampled down under Him, As straw is trampled down for the refuse heap.

Why single out Moab? Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes,

Isaiah centered his attention on Moab because with her perpetual animosity toward Israel, Moab could be used as a representative of all of Israel's enemies. So, while YHWH's hand will be upon Mount Zion for protection, it will be on Moab and Israel's other enemies for destruction. As a result, Moab will be trampled and will become like a watery cesspool.

Isa 25:11 And He will spread out His hands in their midst As a swimmer reaches out to swim, And He will bring down their pride Together with the trickery of their hands.

Moab is depicted as a man trying to swim through a cesspool. One of the Bible paraphrases puts it, "Thrash away as they will, like swimmers trying to stay afloat, They'll sink in the sewage. Their pride will pull them under."

(This is starting to effect my lunch plans.)

Isa 25:12 The fortress of the high fort of your walls He will bring down, lay low, And bring to the ground, down to the dust.

Another prophet, Zephaniah, wrote, "Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah - Overrun with weeds and saltpits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them" (2:9).

I don't want to take anything away from the joy of the Millennial Kingdom. But a lot of things will be going on besides kids safely playing with ferocious animals.

The first inhabitants of the Millennium will be mortal believers who survive the Tribulation. Their offspring will be born with a sin nature. They will need to be saved.

Death will, in the end, be cast into the Lake of Fire. Its last stand will fail.

I expect us to be raptured. As I patiently wait, I will be officiating more memorials and graveside services. *Or you will be attending mine.*

We die even though Death is defeated.

The apostle Paul alluded to Isaiah when he said, "The bodies we now have are weak and can die. But they will be changed into bodies that are eternal. Then the Scriptures will come true, "Death has lost the battle!" (First Corinthians 15:54 CEV).

Charles Spurgeon said, "Never fear dying, beloved. Dying is the last, but the least matter that a Christian has to be anxious about. **Fear living** - that is a hard battle to fight, a stern discipline to endure, a rough voyage to undergo."

We would qualify what Spurgeon said by pointing out that those particular words apply to believers.

Unbeliever - You ought to be gripped with the fear of God who can send your soul to Hell.

What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ.