

# PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE

## BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 25; Daniel  
6:10–28

## A VERSE TO REMEMBER

On this mountain  
the LORD of hosts  
will make for all  
peoples

a feast of rich  
food, a feast of well-  
aged wines,  
of rich food filled  
with marrow, of  
well-aged wines  
strained clear.  
(Isa. 25:6).

## Daily Bible Readings

<b>M</b>	Oct. 14	Eph. 1:3–14	Redemption through Christ's Blood
<b>T</b>	Oct. 15	1 Pet. 1:3–12	Praise God for New Birth
<b>W</b>	Oct. 16	Dan. 6:10–17	May Your God Deliver You
<b>Th</b>	Oct. 17	Dan. 6:18–28	God Shut the Lions' Mouths
<b>F</b>	Oct. 18	Judg. 5:1–5, 12–22	Deborah's Song of Deliverance
<b>Sa</b>	Oct. 19	Luke 17:11–18	Praising God with a Loud Voice

## STEPPING INTO THE WORD

**D**eliverance, for me, evokes the age-old question of why a loving God allows suffering and injustice to exist in the first place. Many hospital chaplains learn to challenge traditional attempts to rationalize the presence of evil and suffering, especially challenging the idea that God causes them. We can shift focus toward acknowledging the reality of pain and brokenness and still respond with compassion and solidarity with those who are suffering.

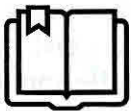
In Isaiah, the prophet grapples with the realities of brokenness, the ruins of fortified cities, and the oppressiveness of ruthless nations. It's natural for us to long for understanding of these issues while still seeking a deeper understanding of the full dimension of God's being.

This lesson doesn't attempt to answer all the complex questions about suffering in the world. Rather, we look at the ways that, even while yearning for deliverance from the brokenness, ruins, and oppression, the prophet celebrates the magnificent promise of a divine feast of rich food and well-aged wine, symbolizing abundance, joy, and communion with God. What can the symbolism offered by the prophet mean for us today?

By accepting the prophet's invitation to join the conversation, we can explore how these verses resonate, or not, with our own experiences and what we see in our world. The prophet offers us the opportunity to embrace the tension between the reality of suffering and the hope of God's redemption, seeking to find solace, wisdom, and renewed faith in the promise of a glorious future feast in the presence of our loving God.

Whether you are grappling with questions of suffering, seeking a deeper understanding of the Divine, or simply desiring to celebrate the hope found in Isaiah's prophecy, this Scripture spreads the table with a wide assortment of opportunities for inquiry, study, and growth.

*Abundant God, help us to set aside preconceived notions and open ourselves to the possibility of transformation. Help us deepen our understanding of you, challenge our perspectives, and renew our hope in your redemptive voice. Grant us clarity, so that we can respond to suffering with compassion, seek repair where there has been damage, and echo your love in our interactions with others. Amen.*



## SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 25:1–10a

**25:1** O 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.  
<sup>2</sup>For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of foreigners is a city no more;  
it will never be rebuilt.  
<sup>3</sup>Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.  
<sup>4</sup>For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.  
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,  
<sup>5</sup>the noise of foreigners like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.  
<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,

of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

<sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the covering that is spread over all nations;  
<sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the  
earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
“See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might  
save us.

This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

<sup>10a</sup>For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

*Note:* Find Scripture  
Notes for this  
reading on the  
final page of the  
lesson.

## A FEAST FOR ALL PEOPLES

**I**n Isaiah 25, the prophet speaks of a future time of celebration, where God will bring deliverance, wipe away tears, and make a joyous feast. Through praise and gratitude to God, the prophet emphasizes trust in the God Who Lives.


A starting point would be to build appreciation for the experience that led the prophet to offer this praise for deliverance. The prophet speaks of deliverance from the “ruthless” (Isa. 25:3, 4, 5). The Hebrew word *‘ariyts* refers to violent, powerful people or a violent autocratic tyrant. In verse 3, the prophet praises God for being the one whom strong peoples will praise and ruthless people will fear. In verse 4, the prophet gives thanks that God has been “a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress,” contrasting God’s deliverance with the “blast of the ruthless.” Then in verse 5, with the third repetition of “ruthless,” the prophet gives thanks for the quiet that God created.

The prophet’s words, describing both what has happened as well as what will be, indicate that the moment of writing is an in-between time. It’s a time of anticipation, trusting what God will do and giving thanks for what has already been done.

Anticipating the feast that the Living God will make, the prophet doubles up for emphasis on rich food with well-aged wines. The scene that the prophet describes might evoke the story of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu when they and seventy

elders went up on the mountain and saw God and ate and drank (Exod. 24:9–11). It might also evoke the metaphor of Psalm 23 in which the psalmist partakes in an abundant feast prepared by God in the presence of their enemies, and the psalmist is confident that God’s “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23:6). In each of these feasts there is communion with the divine. In Isaiah 25, the prophet says that this will be a feast “for all peoples” (Isa. 25:6)! The deliverance feast, which the prophet trusts will come from God’s faithfulness, assures readers that we will endure until the storms pass.

It’s a feast of abundance, symbolic of God’s grace. It’s a meal with plenty for everyone, consistent with God’s affection for those who know suffering all too well. It is reason to give praise and say with the psalmist, “Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (v. 9).

 **What stands out to you from the prophet’s words about the confidence they feel in God’s deliverance? As you contemplate the storms you have faced in your life, what image, if any, do you find most assuring in the prophet’s words?**

## **GOD WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH**

**N**aming one of God’s most powerful promises, the prophet says that God “will swallow up death forever” (v. 8). This inverts any idea that death swallows all, and it praises God, the giver of life, as the one who has no equal.


God’s defeat of death is not merely about this side or the other side of glory. It’s about the ways that God removes divisions between us and each other and between us and the divine. The prophet says, “He will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the covering that is spread over all nations” (v. 7).

The prophet repeats the image of God removing a covering two times in verse 7. The first word for covering is *lot*, which appears only here except as the name of Abraham’s nephew in Genesis. The second word that the prophet uses, *massekah*, appears in other places in the writings of Isaiah. In Isaiah 30, the prophet talks about the futility of relying on a particular ally, saying, “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that *cover* with a *covering*, but not of my spirit” (Isa. 30:1 KJV, emphasis added). The NRSVue translation makes the literary connection less apparent, but in the Hebrew text, the

word for covering is present in Isaiah 25 and 30. In both cases, the *covering* is something that creates a separation between God and the people.

As the prophet imagines the mountain feast that God prepares, no sheet or covering will get in the way. God will remove the shroud, death will be swallowed up forever, and God “will wipe away the tears from all faces” (Isa. 25:8). In Christian traditions, we can find echoes of these promises in the writings of Ephesians and Revelation. On the promise of God taking down every division or separation, the author of Ephesians writes of breaking down the dividing wall between the devout Jewish people of the time and non-Jewish Jesus followers (Eph. 2:14). Certainly, the meaning of Christ breaking down walls of division extends beyond a single, binary understanding of separation. Then, in Revelation, we find more than once the echoes of the promise of God to wipe away all tears. (Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

God’s defeat of death is not merely about the afterlife, but about removing the things that separate us from the divine, so that the ultimate destiny of humanity, in the language of the prophet, is a feast on the mountain in the presence of God.

 **What coverings do you recognize that create a haze for your own spiritual growth? How, if at all, is it helpful to imagine that God is the one who removes these coverings?**

## STEPPING INTO THE WORLD

**I**f we’re seeking to apply the prophet’s vision of the feast on the mountain to our lives, we don’t need to take it literally, although a great meal with a great view together with people that we love in the presence of God sounds pretty good! If we take the prophet’s vision more metaphorically, then we can accept the invitation within the prophetic vision, noticing the ways that God lifts the shrouds of fear, distrust, and grievance.

As humans, we go on making life complicated for each other, and that’s putting it in euphemistic terms. God is not the one who harms us. We harm each other and ourselves. Whether we look to the Bible, our confessional statements, or just to the newspaper, it’s all too easy to find examples of the ways that we fail to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We keep putting up walls and drawing lines. We tend to denigrate the common good.

Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, and interpretation are gifts of the Spirit that Paul mentions in his letter to the

Corinthians. These are gifts that God covers us with in place of the shrouds of separation that we put on ourselves. In modern terms, the gifts of the Spirit are the talents of community building, relational work, problem-solving, generosity, compassion, empathy, the ability to grieve and to help others do the same, emotional intelligence, forethought, truth-telling, listening, understanding, kindness, vision, and mutual encouragement.

When we allow ourselves to be covered with these gifts instead of the shrouds of our own making, then we discover ways that God has opened pathways of connection. We discover patience in conversations and the benefits of different perspectives and options. We find ourselves working plans that we never thought could get off the ground, and we discover life in our faith communities where we thought it was gone. We find ourselves being reminded that, even when we are forced to seek refuge, God continues to be present, to lift the shrouds that obscure our consciousness of God, and to prepare the feast of abundance that awaits all peoples in the presence of the One Who Gives Life.



**Consider keeping a journal about the ways that you notice God lifting the shroud that obscures your consciousness of God. What do you think the prophet would say about the expression, “Hope for the best but expect the worst”?**

## SCRIPTURE NOTES

*The following notes from the Church Uniform Series provide additional information about today’s Scripture.*

1. In Isaiah 24:1–25:12, God judges the earth and provides a great feast on Mount Zion for all peoples who recognize his lordship. Royalty and people of means sponsored banquets to honor victories and special occasions. The gods also did this, especially when one of them was enthroned. Though these banquets are for the gods, the people would join in the feasting when the enthronement was celebrated annually.
2. Death is personified in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yahweh “will swallow up death forever” (Isa. 25:8; see Rev. 7:17; 21:4) for “all peoples” (Isa. 25:6–7), not just the chosen people of Israel.
3. “All peoples” (mentioned in vv. 6–7) does not include everyone indiscriminately. Those who continue to defy God will not feel God’s hand of deliverance.