

What's the best meal you ever ate? Where did you eat it? As you think about that, I'll try to jog your memory. Was it ... Lobster? ... Shrimp and Pasta? ... Steak and Baked Potato? ... Juicy Burger with Fries? ... Bar-B-Q Chicken or Ribs? Where did you eat it? Restaurant? ... Friend's House ... Wedding Reception? ... Backyard?

That wasn't intended to make your mouth water. It was intended to draw you into our lesson from Isaiah, where he talks about attending a banquet that is hands-down: "**The Best Meal We Will Ever Eat.**"

1) *It's guaranteed by the Lord.* 2) *It's paid for by the Lord.*

Isaiah shifts our attention away from this world where God's enemies battle against God and God's people to a place with pleasant thoughts and warm memories: **On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine — the best of meats and the finest of wines.**

This mountain ... for the OT people would have been Mt. Zion. That's where the city of Jerusalem and God's temple were built. Jerusalem or Mt. Zion are terms that can also apply to God's Church of believers on earth, or even heaven itself.

Since Isaiah is writing to God's people who left Jerusalem and the temple behind when they were carted off into captivity by the Assyrians, Isaiah is reminding them of the hope they still have in the Lord. It's a hope that goes beyond their earthly homes, to a home in heaven.

The one preparing this feast in heaven for all people from all backgrounds is **the LORD Almighty. The LORD**, the God of free and faithful grace is a familiar name to us. **Almighty** is attached. So, in addition to being faithful to his Word, he's fully qualified to stand behind his Word. If someone is trustworthy or, a "*man of his word*," we usually ignore the times they have failed to keep their word. For **the LORD Almighty**, whatever he promises, it will absolutely happen, every time.

That means his feast, which included the finest aged wines and the best cuts of meat has been prepared. For people who never got that type of meal, yet always complained against the Lord, he loved them anyway and was going to prepare this feast.

Looking at what our faithful and powerful God prepared, we need to be aware of the verb tense in the Hebrew, even if we're not into grammar. The tense is perfect, which means although these are all future actions ... **he will do something ...** they are all as good as done.

For good measure, **the LORD** combines a familiar name with another one we learned about recently **Sovereign**. Reminding us that our gracious God rules all things for the good of his believers.

Why does he treat his people then and his believers now so wonderfully? Because he's completely taken away anything and everything that is wrong between us and him. Let's call it his "**To Do**" list. Maybe better, call it his "**All Done**" list.

1) He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations. Back at Israel's time they'd wrap a corpse in a piece of cloth called a *shroud*. While the *sheet, or the veil* was used to cover the face and the head of those who were mourning the death of a loved one.

No matter who we are, or where we live, or how great we become, death's icy grip will eventually clamp down on us. But **the LORD Almighty**, he's got the answer to death. We won't need to use a shroud, or a veil. Death is "**All Done.**"

Think about the choices your Savior Jesus made for you. He was living in heaven enjoying a feast of power and glory. He was surrounded by everything good and perfect. Yet, he decided to be born in a cattle stall. For over 30 years he lived in this sinful world. The worst was still to come. God called on his Son to drink the cup of suffering and death. That's what Isaiah was talking about.

2) He will swallow up death forever. When someone swallows something, it disappears. It's

gone. Human effort and medicine may prolong life and remove some of our aches and pains, but it can't immunize us from death. It can't stop death. Only Jesus can swallow up death.

That's what he did. And because of that **the LORD guarantees, 3) He will wipe away the tears from all faces.** Adults shed tears when their hearts get broken. Children shed tears when they get hurt. Sometimes, tears are the only response we can produce when there are things we can't change. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated his power over death once and for all, for all believers of all time.

What a remarkable and comforting promise from God. Could we get any more good news? Well, yes. As our sinful bodies break down. As our brains forget more. As our eyes see less. We're becoming less strong and more tired. It's humiliating and disgraceful. That makes God's last promise, **4) so meaningful: He will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.** All that changes when the Lord equips us with a perfect glorified body. Not even the slightest weakness anywhere.

If Jesus came to your house for supper, you'd serve him the best meal you could, like Mary and Martha did. Jesus did come to your house. What did you offer him? You served him your anger, your jealousy, your guilt, your complaining words and your hateful thoughts on a platter. Yet, being the perfect Guest, he ate the meal you served. In exchange, he serves you a meal.

What did he prepare for you and me? The juiciest steak of salvation. The most pleasing wine of forgiveness. They satisfy your hunger for holiness, your thirst for peace and your desire for eternity. **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** We give Jesus a meal of death, and he gives us a meal of eternal life ... Hands-down, it is **The Best Meal We Will Ever Eat!**

This is no telemarketer promising us eternity. **The Lord has spoken!** It's as good as done. Isaiah predicted that this would affect God's people in two ways: we trust and we rejoice: **In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."**

Do you know what makes his song so sad? Many hear about an eternal feast prepared for them in heaven but say: *"I wish it were true. It's too good to be true. Salvation can't be a gift. It can't be free. That's too easy."*

And there are many more who are living with guilt and sorrow and starving to death because "they" can't believe salvation is free in Jesus. They are right. "They" can't believe it. The Bible says: **"The person without the Spirit cannot accept the things that come from the Spirit of God."** Faith is not something we provide or supply to complete God's salvation solution. God the Holy Spirit, provides and supplies the faith in a believer's heart.

He's the One who has given us the faith to believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead for us. He's the One who has given us the appetite to taste God's Word as we read it, study it and listen to it ... and as we savor it when we dine at his Supper.

The promises God's OT people treasured are no different from the promises we treasure. That's why the song Isaiah recorded for God's OT people to sing is no different from what we sing. **"Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."**

We may not use the exact same words, but we offer our songs of praise for his blessings of grace and forgiveness, and for his victory over death and the eternal life we have with him ... hands-down, it is **The Best Meal We Will Ever Eat!**