

September 11  
Lesson 2

# THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

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DEVOTIONAL READING:: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 25

## ISAIAH 25:6-10A



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- <sup>6</sup> 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.**
- <sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;  
<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.**

**The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people's disgrace  
from all the earth.**

**The LORD has spoken.**

**<sup>9</sup> 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."  
<sup>10</sup> The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.**

## KEY VERSE

***He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.—Isaiah 25:8***

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List some characteristics of our final deliverance by God from oppression.
2. Compare and contrast [Isaiah 25:6-10a](#) with [1 Corinthians 15:54](#) and [Revelation 7:17; 21:4](#).
3. Identify an oppressive situation in his or her community and suggest a way to bring the love of Christ to bear on it.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Memories in the Mountains
- B. Lesson Background

### I. God's Graciousness ([Isaiah 25:6-8](#))

- A. Offering a Feast ([v. 6](#))  
*Christmas Down Under*
- B. Overcoming Death ([vv. 7, 8](#))  
*Forgiven and Free*

### II. People's Gratitude ([Isaiah 25:9, 10a](#))

- A. Words of Testimony ([v. 9](#))
- B. Words of Truth ([v. 10a](#))

### Conclusion

- A. A Somber Anniversary
- B. A Song of Hope
- C. Prayer
- D. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Memories in the Mountains

One weekend during the fall of 2013, our daughter and daughter-in-law planned a weekend getaway for our family at a cabin up in the Smoky Mountains near Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The cabin turned out to be much farther up in the mountains than we first had thought; once we turned off the main highway, it was still another 30 or 40 minutes of curving and swerving our way up the road until we finally arrived at the cabin.

Our family had never gone on an excursion like this, but it became one of our most memorable experiences. For my wife and me, having our children and grandchildren together in one place for three days created an array of truly precious memories. Of course, the day came when we

had to come down from the mountaintop and face life back in the real world. That is typical of any “mountaintop experience”; eventually one has to return to the valley below.

Many mountains are mentioned in the Bible, including Mounts Horeb, Gerizim, Ebal, Sinai, Nebo, Zion, Carmel, and Hermon (which may have been the mount of Jesus’ transfiguration). Some of the most significant events in Scripture occurred on those mountains. In today’s text Isaiah describes a mountain where some truly memorable events will take place in the future.

## B. Lesson Background

Our lesson title ties nicely into last week’s text from [Isaiah 11:1-9](#). That passage concluded with the statement that nothing harmful or destructive is to have any place in God’s “holy mountain.” Today’s text comes from a section of the book that is often called “The Isaiah Apocalypse” (

> chapters 24-27). This is because the scenes pictured are similar to the apocalyptic language (which is imagery describing the end of the world) found in the book of Revelation (compare [Zechariah 9-14](#); [Mark 13:24-27](#)).

Using the kind of vivid symbolism found there, the prophet pictures the whole earth coming under the judgment of God. [Isaiah 24](#) in particular uses such language, illustrated quite well by [verse 20](#). There Isaiah’s apocalypse opens with a description of the Lord’s plans to devastate utterly.

The tone shifts rather abruptly with [Isaiah 25](#), moving from somber words of judgment to words of praise to God. (Such a shift is not unusual in Isaiah or in other prophetic books.) God is praised for the “wonderful things” he has done ([25:1](#)), including being a source of strength to his people and bringing judgment on their enemies ([vv. 2-5](#)). The language at the conclusion of [verse 5](#) is especially noteworthy: “The song of the ruthless is stilled.” Last week’s lesson highlighted the marvelous things that God’s Branch would accomplish. “The branch” of chapter 25 has a very different future from the one of chapter 24!

Isaiah previously described “the mountain of the Lord” as a place where noteworthy events in God’s sovereign plan are to unfold. [Isaiah 2:2-4](#) pictures the place as “established as the highest of the mountains,” a place to which “all nations will stream.” They will do so because that is where the house of the Lord is located, a place where his Word is taught. The reference suggests Jerusalem, or Zion; indeed, both Jerusalem and Zion are mentioned in [Isaiah 2:3](#). This sets a backdrop for today’s study.

## I. God’s Graciousness

(ISAIAH 25:6-8)

### A. Offering a Feast (v. 6)

<sup>6a.</sup> **On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,**

## HOW TO SAY IT

apocalypse uh-*pock*-uh-lips.

Carmel *Kar*-mul.

Ebal *Ee*-bull.

Gerizim *Gair*-ih-zeem or *Guh*-rye-zim.

Hermon *Her*-mun.

Horeb *Ho*-reb.

Lazarus *Laz*-uh-rus.

Nebo *Nee*-bo.

Sinai *Sigh*-nye or *Sigh*-nay-eye.

Zechariah *Zek*-uh-rye-uh.

Zion *Zi*-un.

Isaiah describes what is to happen on the holy mountain (see the Lesson Background). The depiction is that of a place of joyful fellowship. A banquet will be prepared by the ultimate master chef—the *Lord Almighty* himself!

What is to come is first of all depicted as *a feast of rich food*. In Old Testament times, rich food includes the fatty portions of meat, which are considered to be the best; this is why the fat portions of sacrifices are to be offered to the Lord ([Leviticus 3:12-16](#)). Such a banquet menu may not seem very appealing in our health-conscious era. But we can be assured that God will provide his best.

It is important to note as well that this feast will be available *for all peoples*. That phrase refers to all people groups, since the word *peoples* is plural. The guest list is limitless. No one is meant to be excluded, “on the outside looking in.”

*What Do You Think?*

What are some ways your church can foster, if not create, “mountaintop experiences”? Why is it important to do so?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- For its worship services
- For its social gatherings

**6b. a banquet of aged wine—**

*Aged wine* is of the highest quality. As Jesus will say centuries after Isaiah’s day, “No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better’” ([Luke 5:39](#)). Clearly God will be serving only the best to those who attend this very special banquet (compare [John 2:10](#)). No shortcuts here!

**6c. the best of meats and the finest of wines.**

These two phrases reinforce the description of the banquet to come. *The best of meats* includes the marrow, the innermost part of the bone; it symbolizes prosperity ([Job 21:24b](#)). Given the more spiritual significance attached to the mountain of the Lord elsewhere in this book ([Isaiah 2:2-4](#); [11:9](#); [65:25](#)), some propose that the menu items in the verse before us should be understood in spiritual terms.

### **CHRISTMAS DOWN UNDER**

Because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, Christmas Day comes during its summer. The temperature can be quite high on this festive day! But despite the heat, all of the Christmas paraphernalia is still snow related, with icicles, snowflakes, etc. And although the cyclone season is well underway in northern Australia at the time, that threat does not seem to dampen the celebration of Christmas. Australian Christians go all out to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is a great time of feasting, with “shrimp-on-the-barby” being a big hit, along with other grilled delicacies.

Isaiah prophesies that the coming of the Messiah will also bring a time of celebration that is marked by a great feast. “The wedding supper of the Lamb” ([Revelation 19:6-9](#)) will be the greatest banquet in all history! It will celebrate the fact that God has completed his plan for the world. It is in that light we wait and watch with great anticipation for the second coming of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To fail to be ready for his return would be the gravest of errors (see [Matthew 22:1-14](#); [25:13](#)).—D. C. S.

## **B. Overcoming Death (vv. 7, 8)**

**7. On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;**

God will take the steps necessary to make certain that nothing hinders the enjoyment of the feast that he will prepare. The Hebrew verb translated *destroy* is the same as that rendered “swallow up” in [verse 8](#), next. This suggests a complete, overwhelming victory.

That victory is over *the shroud that enfolds all peoples*. The Hebrew word translated *shroud* is used only here in the Old Testament, and the exact meaning is unclear. But since *the shroud* stands in parallel with *the sheet*, we logically conclude that it is something that hinders *all peoples and all nations*.

Since the word *sheet* is translated *veil* in other versions, some students propose that the reference is similar to *veil* in [2 Corinthians 3:12-18](#). There the apostle describes how truth about Jesus remains hidden (veiled) from unbelievers. But given the reference in our next verse to death being swallowed up, it is preferable to interpret the shroud and sheet in that light. Since death is what is being destroyed, the idea of a shroud that covers a corpse seems to capture the intent. Death shows no partiality toward peoples and nations. When God removes this covering, he will do it completely for all who reside on his mountain.

*What Do You Think?*

When was a time you sensed God destroying something that threatened your security in him?  
How did you grow spiritually from this?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Regarding a time when you were alone
- Regarding a time when you were part of a group

**8a. he will swallow up death forever.**

Here we see stated more clearly the impact of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the language of [verse 8](#) appears in two New Testament passages. First, in [1 Corinthians 15:54](#) the apostle Paul draws on the majestic phrase before us to celebrate the results of Jesus' triumph over death: "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'"

Death is itself dealt the death blow when the one "who holds the power of death—that is, the devil," is destroyed by Christ ([Hebrews 2:14](#)).

**8b. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;**

Second, [verse 8](#) is also found in [Revelation 7:17](#); [21:4](#). The latter verse is part of the apostle John's view of "a new heaven and a new earth," which begins at [21:1](#) ([lesson 10](#)). John mentions no mountain in his description, but that should not be allowed to diminish the wonder of what life will be like in that far better place. The most important thing to note in John's testimony is that "the old order of things has passed away" ([21:4](#)). Anything that causes weeping in this world will have no place in the one to come. The punishment linked to the first sin ("you will certainly die," [Genesis 2:17](#)) is removed.

**8c. he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.**

While living in a sinful world, God's people often face rebuke and shameful treatment from scoffers and opponents of their faith. Peter writes of such scoffers who question whether the return of Jesus will ever occur ([2 Peter 3:3, 4](#)). But when he does return and when death is swallowed up in victory, all cynics and critics will have to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ([Philippians 2:9-11](#)). Those who have poked fun at, harassed, or persecuted Christians will be silenced. God's sovereignty will no longer be denied.

***FORGIVEN AND FREE***

"We're married in God's eyes." That was the line Donna's boyfriend used to convince her to have intimate relations with him. Then Donna got pregnant, and everything changed.

Donna's father was a well-known businessman and a leader in their church. In his mind, news of Donna's out-of-wedlock pregnancy would damage his business and tarnish his reputation in the church. So at the insistence of her parents and in spite of her own better instincts, Donna got an abortion.

Years later, Donna found herself involved in a program called "Forgiven and Set Free." As she moved through the healing and grieving process, she gave the name *Doug* to the little boy she never held, and she wrote a loving letter to him. She then held a small memorial service for her baby and put up a figurine to remind her of his presence in Heaven. Donna eventually coauthored a book on abortion recovery to help other young women who had made the same regrettable decision as she had. As Donna explains, "Our prayer is that younger women will find healing so they can become the women God desires of them."



Visual for Lessons 2 & 10. As you discuss [verse 8](#), point to this visual and ask, “What causes the most tears? Why?”

Isaiah tells us the Messiah will swallow up death and wipe away the tears of those who have borne rebuke. God calls us to show compassion to the spiritually injured (compare [2 Corinthians 2:6-8](#) following [1 Corinthians 5:11-13](#)); doing so will keep us from “shooting the wounded” regarding our fellow Christians. We can and should help wipe away tears in the here and now even as we anticipate the day when God dries the tears of his people for all eternity.—D. C. S.

**8d. The LORD has spoken.**

This is the ultimate assurance that the prophecy will come true. Isaiah is not engaging in wishful thinking! The Lord can do the things described. He will do them because he has said he will. After being privileged to view the new Jerusalem, John’s words of assurance are similar: “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” ([Revelation 21:5](#)). And they are.

## II. People’s Gratitude

([ISAIAH 25:9, 10A](#))

### A. Words of Testimony ([v. 9](#))

**9. 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.”**

[Isaiah 25](#) begins with Isaiah’s personal tribute of praise, “Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name.” Now the praise

extends to the lips of all who will come to the mountain of the Lord to share in all the “wonderful things” (again, [25:1](#)) provided there. Note the use of the pronouns *our*, *we* (twice), and *us* (twice). The language is similar to the familiar and often sung words of [Psalm 118:24](#): “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (*King James Version*).

We should note that the Hebrew name *Isaiah* means “the Lord saves” or “the Lord is salvation.” Both *saved* and *salvation* appear in this verse. Consider also that the name *Jesus* means the same thing ([Matthew 1:21](#)). He will be the one who accomplishes the wonders that Isaiah is describing.

*What Do You Think?*

What tends to rob you of joy as you serve Christ? How do you overcome this problem?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In a work or school context

In social contexts

In family life

Other

## B. Words of Truth (v. 10a)

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

*The hand of the Lord* is active throughout the Bible. Sometimes it is associated with blessing ([Joshua 4:23, 24](#); [Ezra 7:6](#); [Luke 1:66](#); [Acts 11:21](#)); at other times it is extended for discipline or punishment ([Exodus 9:3](#); [Judges 2:15](#); [Ruth 1:13](#); [1 Samuel 5:6](#)).

Here, however, the focus is on the hand being at rest (contrast [Isaiah 5:25](#); [9:21](#); [11:15](#); [19:16](#); [23:11](#)). God *will rest* after he ushers in his new creation—the new Heaven and the new earth. Before that rest occurs, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” ([1 Corinthians 15:26](#)). When death is defeated for good at the return of Jesus, it will be cast into the lake of fire ([Revelation 20:14](#)), never again to cause pain and tears.

*What Do You Think?*

How is the hand of the Lord active in your life right now? Why do you think so?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In your family relationships

In your personal service to Jesus

Other

It is important at this point to add a couple of other New Testament passages that aid in our understanding of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. One is [Hebrews 12:22](#), where the inspired writer tells Christians that “you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels.” According to the writer, Christians are *now* at that mount!

Christians have arrived at the mountain Isaiah describes. For those who claim Jesus as Lord, death is a beaten foe. Our trust in Jesus means we need not fear death (see [John 11:25](#)). When death comes to fellow Christians, the ideal is not to “grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope” ([1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)). We await the day when death is fully and completely vanquished, never again to cause sorrow or tears.

*What Do You Think?*

How should a Christian’s expression of grief differ from that of unbelievers? Why?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In reaction to acts of violence perpetrated by humans

In reaction to forces of nature that result in death and destruction

Other

The feast language in today’s passage is also used by John in Revelation to picture the great gathering at the “wedding supper of the Lamb” ([Revelation 19:9](#)). Anyone can have a close fellowship with Jesus here on earth, if he or she “opens the door” ([Revelation 3:20](#)). The ultimate realization of that will come about when the church—the bride of Christ—joins him in his dwelling place in feasting eternally on the best God has to offer.

## Conclusion

## A. A Somber Anniversary

The news programs will not let anyone go unreminded that today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many can recall exactly where they were or what they were doing on that dreadful morning in 2001 when news of the attacks began to roll in.

Death is difficult in any circumstance, but especially so when it involves a tragedy like the attacks of 9/11, when 2,977 victims lost their lives. Yet death occurs regularly; about 7,000 people die each day in the U.S. alone. You can be sure that people are dealing with death's bitter sting everywhere in the world at the very moment you are reading this. They are planning or taking part in funeral services, visiting gravesites of loved ones, going through the belongings of deceased family members, and taking all the other difficult steps that accompany death's unwelcome presence.

It can be hard in the face of death (particularly an unexpected or tragic death) to think of promises such as those in today's text from Isaiah. We should not try to hide or mask our grief or act as if all is well. The presence of death in this world is a sign that all is not well. This world is still suffering the effects of sin's terrible curse. Yes, in Christ there is personal victory and peace in all circumstances (as we noted in last week's study); but Christians still reside in this broken world and are not immune to its heartaches.

Jesus' weeping at the grave of Lazarus was evidence of the Son of God's distress regarding death ([John 11:35](#)). Yet the resurrection of Lazarus that followed was indisputable proof of Jesus' claim to be the resurrection and the life ([11:25](#)). Jesus' enemies could not deny what he had done ([11:45, 46](#)); consequently, they plotted his death to put a stop to his growing influence ([11:47-53](#)). Their efforts proved futile, however, when Jesus himself arose from the dead. That was the ultimate validation of all his claims ([Romans 1:4](#)).

Death can leave us shaken and staggering. But the historical certainty of Jesus' resurrection gives ultimate credibility to his many promises, including this one: "Because I live, you also will live" ([John 14:19](#)). Rest assured that Jesus will have the last and best word regarding death. At his return he will put death to death—forever.

## B. A Song of Hope

Bill Gaither and his wife, Gloria, have written numerous popular Christian songs over the last five decades. One of their most beloved is "Because He Lives." Bill once recounted the story behind this particular song:

We wrote "Because He Lives" after a period of time when we had had a kind of dry spell and hadn't written any songs for a while. ... Also at the end of the 1960s, our country was going through some great turmoil with the height of the drug culture, and the whole "God is Dead" theory was running wild in our country. Also it was the peak of the Vietnam War.

During that time our little son was born. ... I can remember at the time we thought, "Brother, this is really a poor time to bring a child into the world." At times we were even quite discouraged by the whole thing. And then Benjy did come. We had two little girls whom we love very much, but this was our first son, and so that lyric came to us, "How sweet to hold our newborn baby and feel the pride and joy he gives; but better still the calm assurance that this child can face uncertain days because Christ lives." And it gave us the courage to say, "Because Christ lives we can face tomorrow" and keep our heads high.

(Taken from *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions*, © 1990 by Kenneth W. Osbeck. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.)

In some respects, little has changed in the world since the Gaithers composed "Because He Lives" over 40 years ago. There is still much turmoil. Wars are still fought. Skepticism and doubt about the existence or relevance of God are still voiced, sometimes with great boldness. People still become discouraged by their circumstances. Anniversaries such as today's, remembering what occurred 15 years ago, can be very painful. But in the midst of all of this, Jesus still lives and his promises are still true.

## C. Prayer

Father, help us to take heart from Jesus' conquest of death and the many precious promises that we know will come to pass because he lives. Especially in times of tragedy and great loss, may his words provide a hope that the world can never offer. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## D. Thought to Remember

When discouraged, think of the mountain!

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

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## Into the Lesson

Display pictures of various famous mountains such as the Matterhorn, Everest, Denali, Vesuvius, Yosemite's Half Dome, the Smokies, Rushmore. As class begins, say, "Look around and guess what today's lesson theme object might be." Next, display this question: "How many



biblical mountains can you name?” Let the group make a list.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “God on the Mountain” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students pair off and share their answers to the last question.

## Into the Word

Prepare copies of today’s text divided into segments for responsive reading. For example, [verse 6](#) can be divided after “for all peoples.” Look for similarly obvious dividing places in each verse through [verse 9](#). Save [verse 10a](#) to be read by all in unison. Divide your group into two smaller groups and have them read aloud the responsive reading.

Have learners flip this responsive reading sheet over for the second text activity. Ask learners to write in large letters, *THE LORD WILL ...* across the top. Direct your students to look at the text and write as many conclusions to that statement as they can find. For example, from [verse 6](#), “The Lord will make a feast” is obvious.

As you solicit entries from the lists made, be prepared to ask, “Where else in Scripture do you find an example of God doing the same essential thing?” For example, for God making a feast, one might refer to the wedding supper of the Lamb in [Revelation 19:9](#). From [Isaiah 25:8](#), a second example would be, “The Lord will wipe away tears.” Learners might note such occasions as Jesus raising the widow of Nain’s son or raising Lazarus or even the second citation of this “wipe away tears” phenomenon in [Revelation 7:17](#) or the third time in [Revelation 21:4](#).

What should God’s people do in response to what God has done? The obvious answer is in the end of [verse 9](#): rejoicing, being glad in our salvation accomplished in him. Ask, “How should we demonstrate that internal attitude of gladness and that external demonstration in rejoicing?” One obvious answer is in singing the songs of gladness. Ask your class to identify hymns, choruses, and gospel songs that express such affirmations. If response is slow, have two or three class members ready to “break into song” with such songs as “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above” or “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart” or others of your choosing from selections your class may know from your worship assemblies.

*Option.* Distribute copies of “Sound Familiar?” from the reproducible page, and ask students to form groups of three or four to complete the activity. It allows your learners to look at key ideas of the text and relate them to other biblical revelations of God’s plan for his people.

## Into Life

Say, “Oppression is everywhere. Such matters as schoolyard bullying, spousal abuse, abandonment of the elderly, taking advantage of workers on job sites—all are, at their core, matters of oppression. Whereas Isaiah writes of God’s plan to lift the oppression of his people (from enemies and from sin), we are in a position, to and need to, deal with the oppression of those near us. How do we do that?”

Note that the world is filled with oppressed groups, many of whom are refugees forced from their homes and country. Ask the class, “Can you name a Christian agency active in helping such oppressed groups?” Then, “Is there some way our class or you individually could help?” In the closing prayer time, be certain to include a call for God’s protection of those being oppressed, in any way.