

Advent Reading for Saturday, December 9, 2017 ***“Death Swallowed up for all Time” (Isaiah 25:8)***

Today’s prophecy contains an astounding promise which addresses a fear we all share, the fear of death. Seeking to add a little humor to this solemn issue, one person observed, *“The statistics on death are staggering; one out of one dies!”* And he was correct! The Bible simply declares, *“It is appointed unto man once to die...”* (Hebrews 9:27). Unless our Lord returns in our generation, death is the appointment we all will keep.

Earlier in Isaiah (5:14) as well as in Proverbs (1:12), death is terrifyingly portrayed as *swallower of human beings*. In contrast, Isaiah announces the coming of One who would be so powerful that He would swallow (consume) death forever: *“He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces....And it will be said in that day, ‘Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might come and save us...let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation’”* (25:8-9).

We again turn to the New Testament to note the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. When the Apostle Paul was describing in great detail the eternal implications of Christ’s resurrection to the church in Corinth, he included Isaiah’s exact quote in his explanation: *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable.... and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying, ‘DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY’”* (I Corinthians 15:51-54). And these realities are ours because our Lord conquered death for all time!

The writer of Hebrews further expands on the implications of Christ’s victory over death: *“Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives”* (2:14-15). We no longer have to be afraid of being *swallowed up* by death, for our Lord Himself, by His death and resurrection has *swallowed up death for all time!*

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12).

Isaiah also promised, *“And the Lord will wipe tears away from all faces”*. While we experience grief when we say goodbye to loved ones who have died; *“we do not grieve as those who have no hope”* (I Thessalonians 4:13). This is because our Lord will one day remove all sorrow associated with death.

The book of Revelation alludes to this tender action of our Lord on two occasions. The first is when he describes the bliss of the redeemed in heaven: *“And God will wipe every tear from their eyes”* (7:17). The second is when John describes the perfect conditions in the New Jerusalem: *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people...and He will wipe away every tear away from their eyes; and there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away”* (21:3-4).

How thankful we ought to be for these extraordinary promises of what awaits us after our time on earth has passed!

Giving Thanks – Thank You for freeing us from the fear of death, and for *swallowing up death*, our greatest enemy, for all time!