all nations, and all individuals (“faces”) when the curse of Genesis 3:19 is reversed and Yahweh hosts his eschatological banquet.

The Masoretic Text indicates a paragraph break after 25:8, yet the referent of “that day” in 25:9 may be understood to be the time described in 25:6–8. The proper response to all that Yahweh will do on that future day is to offer this joyous declaration of faith—“Look, this is our God! We waited for him and he delivered us! This is Yahweh! We waited for him, so let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation!”

Considerations for Preaching

Given the eschatological nature of the context, it may be likely that the hearer/reader is to understand that this prophecy/vision does reference a final day and not just some singular deliverance of Israel in the past. The imagery of an eschatological banquet is used by Jesus as well to describe the consummation of the age (see, for instance, the gospel reading assigned for today). The concordance in Nestle Aland 28 indicates that Isaiah 25:8 is referenced in 1 Corinthians 15:54 (“death is swallowed up in victory”) and Revelation 7:17 (“and God will wipe every tear from their eyes”). This indicates that Yahweh’s final judgment upon death (and then the feast that follows!) is still yet to come.

Jesus’s own resurrection, however, is a first fruits and so a foreshadowing of that day. In his Son Jesus, Yahweh has initiated his eschatological reign of salvation on earth. In the resurrection of his Son Yahweh has judged death itself. The salvation Jesus has brought to Israel has since spilled out to all peoples, all nations. So now we too have new life since we have been baptized into Jesus’s death and resurrection. And so we too are now invited to await the great banquet that Yahweh will provide on that day when death will be swallowed up forever. We too can now rejoice in the salvation provided by Yahweh, our God.

The preacher can thus focus on both the now and the not-yet aspects of Isaiah 25 to comfort his hearers today.

David I. Lewis
day, people who “got it” and believed what the prophet was saying, beginning with chapter 1. So, there already was something for them to “get” from Isaiah 45 too.

I’m also not going to say much about Cyrus. He isn’t all that necessary to the prophet’s proclamation here. What’s more important are the self-attestations of the Lord, e.g., the closing “I, Yahweh, am doing all these (things)” (45:7).

For grammatical details, see Reed Lessing. He reads verse 8 as a concluding doxology, though the MT marks verse 7 as the end of a “closed paragraph” (setumah, ס).1

The noun messiah (משיח) does not occur as often in the Old Testament as we might think (thirty-eight times). It appears most often in 1 and 2 Samuel (seventeen times) and refers mainly to Saul or David. The psalms (ten times) echo the designation of the king as “the Lord’s anointed.” After these, it’s “here and there.” In the writing prophets, it occurs only in the present text and in Habakkuk 3. The verb (seventy times) exhibits similar distribution: twenty-nine times in Torah (re: tabernacle and priesthood); thirty-one times in the monarchical narratives (1 and 2 Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles); and the rest are scattered. Isaiah uses it twice: 21:5 and 61:1. The anointed-ness of the one who will rule well and serve well, even in suffering, and do completely what Yahweh sends him to do, seems to be a recessive trait.

The phrase “in whose right hand I put strength,” or “whose right hand I grasp” (45:1; the Hiphil of חז), is striking. One of the cultural and religious requirements for anyone who aspired to be king in Babylon was to “take the hand of Bel” (aka Marduk). This was a sign of homage, and yet any would-be king performed the ritual act. The annals of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II, kings of Assyria in Isaiah’s time, each of whom called himself at some point king not only of Assyria but also of Babylon, report their participation in this festival. So also did Cyrus’s son, Cambyses, in the first year after Persian conquest. By contrast, no king “takes” Yahweh’s hand; he takes theirs. The Lord alone subdues nations, disarms kings, and opens doors which no one else can shut.

In verse 2 the language shifts: Yahweh speaks, “I” to “you.” It is a gift to God’s people to “overhear” what Yahweh says to “his anointed,” but one who does not know (or acknowledge) Yahweh. Isaiah’s hearers and, now, readers are to understand that the Lord governs the affairs of all nations, even of those which do not acknowledge him—and in 2014 what nation is there that truly acknowledges the God of the Bible?

Yahweh declares either his intention (“I will go,” etc.) or his present activity (“I am going,” etc.); both are proper for the imperfect verb forms in verses 2 and 3. Emblems of pride (“exalted places”), of power (“doors of bronze” and “bars of iron”), and of wealth (secreted treasures) are not secure.

All happens “that you may know” (v. 3) and “that they may know” (v. 6) that Yahweh alone is God, and there is no other. Both purposes clauses evoke Exodus language: The Lord told Moses that when he went into action his people would know and the Egyptians would know that “I am Yahweh” (Ex 6:7; 7:5).

It may seem odd that the Lord declares he creates darkness” (v. 7). But since there was nothing before God began his creating activity, he “had to” create both. Perhaps even more striking is his (God’s) declaration that he “does peace” (שלום י佝; 26:25:7; 31:2) and also “creates calamity” (ESV, ירייה; 30:28). The word-pair we expect is מלחמה and מלחמה. The
pair and נֵעוֹן מַעֲשָׂה supersedes our ordinary moral categories of “good and evil” by introducing the orderliness and harmony of מַעֲשָׂה in contrast to the disarray of נֵעוֹן.

The clear point is that “God is God, and we are not,” nor is any human government. When we look at the world around us, watch or listen to the news, it is hard to find any truly righteous government at work, not even our own. The reign of Yahweh is Gospel for those who trust his devotion and mercy. He is superintending all that goes on in the world, even what disconcerts us. Above all, he is the God who, in OT terms, will send not just any messiah, but the One who knows him from before the foundation of the world. We have seen him: Jesus, whom God made both Lord and Christ (Χριστός, Χριστός; Acts 2:36).

William Carr


Reformation Day • Revelation 14:6–7 • October 26, 2014

Like the beginning of a great meal, Revelation 14:6–7 goes well with the psalm for this Sunday (Psalm 46) for the celebration of the Reformation. They are excellent companions because both express unshaking vision to see the presence and activity of God, even in the midst of great trial and calamity, even in the midst of terrible natural and human caused trauma. They both speak dramatically and forcefully to those who suffer calamity and suffering. Though “the earth be shaken and mountains quake to the depth of the sea,” we do not fear (Ps 46:3). Why? Because “God is our refuge and our strength, an ever present help in distress” (Ps 46:1) and because this God, “The Lord of Hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob” (Ps 46:7).

Who is the Lord of Hosts? “Then I saw another angel flying overhead, with everlasting good news to announce to those who dwell on earth, in every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, for His time has come to sit in judgment. Worship him who made heaven and earth and seas and springs of water” (Rv 14:6–7).

Served together they make a great pair, but this is not totally good news. The God who is our refuge and strength, who is the creator of all things, comes to judge. There does need to be something else added to the meal, and the preacher must do so as he uses the rest of the appointed readings to holistically speak both law and gospel. The preacher will find the additional ingredients in the epistle reading (Romans 3:19–28) or one of the two gospel readings (John 8:31–36 or Matthew 11:12–19) for the day. But can the preacher also find it further along in Revelation? “Here is what sustains the holy ones who keep God’s commandments and their faith in Jesus. I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ said the Spirit, ‘let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them’” (Rv 14:13). Even these additional verses from Revelation desperately need the additional ingredient of the pure and sweet gospel: “All have sinned and are deprived...