

understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

"The peace of God... will guard" — like a soldier standing guard, a reminder that the mind is a battle zone where fears and anxieties are like waves of enemy invaders trying to wrest control from God's peace.

**8-9 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is**

**SUMMARY** Here is a church which is growing and maturing well — although they are facing a sticky problem which has divided loyalties. The order of God's kingdom will be seen in how the church works together to reconcile this in a good way, keeping the emphasis on what is pure and peace-promoting.

**APPLICATION** We are called to be church, not just do church, and this passage sets out some key kingdom principles. In our humanity, conflicts will arise, and we are called to help those involved reconcile them with humility, so that our gentleness and grace are what shine out to others. Establishing a spiritual environment where Jesus is Lord puts us in a battle with the forces of darkness, who will try any way they can to deny His victory and rob His peace. Setting one believer against another, especially when they are exercising leadership is a good way to derail the witness of the church and damage a whole network of relationships — with things said which are neither noble nor true. Then the believers are doing the devil's work for him. The way out, teaches Paul, is to keep a clear focus on the Lord and our fellowship and agreement in Him. Praise and thanksgiving in the face of difficulty is effective spiritual warfare, and is what invites the return of God's peace.

**QUESTION** *Paul urges that every situation of anxiety be brought to God prayerfully — with thanksgiving. How can we do this with sincerity?*

**PRAYER** Lord we pray, "Your kingdom come" but we are not always good at living it. Forgive us for talking about church politics rather than talking about You — with rejoicing!

May your kingdom order and character be seen in our part of the body of Christ, such that others see the contrast with the ambitions and strong opinions of the world, and are attracted to a fellowship where harmony and agreement are prized.

As I examine my heart about tensions with others, help me to be quick to reconcile differences and ready to admit my fault and exercise toward others the grace and forgiveness I have found, coming into Your kingdom. In Jesus I pray this, Amen.

admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. **Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**

"If anything is praiseworthy" — further advice on the battle of the mind on how to avoid the spiral of negativity which can quickly undermine the guarding of our thought life with God's peace.

# The Living Word

Bible readings for Sunday, October 11, 2020, with explanatory notes

www.thelivingword.uk PRINT EDITION

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **October 11**  
*Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand — read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching*

Theme: **Invited to enter God's realm**

Isaiah 25:1-9 — Praise to the Lord who invites all people

Matthew 22:1-14 — The banquet that the initial guest list spurned

Philippians 4:1-9 — Kingdom principles to reconcile a church dispute

And also read: Psalm 23

## Isaiah 25:1-9 — Praise to the Lord who invites all people

*He will presence Himself in Zion, a great celebration that ends all disgrace*

**1 Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You and praise Your name, for in perfect faithfulness You have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.**

"I will exalt you" — introduces a chapter of praise which looks forward to the future millennial kingdom when Jesus returns.

"In perfect faithfulness" — throughout the OT, a defining mark of Yahweh is His utter reliability.

• *For further study, see Psalms 36:5, 89:5, 119:90; Lamentations 3:23; Hosea 2:20.*

**2 You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt.**

"The city" — a picture of any proud city, like Babylon, Tyre, Rome or Jerusalem.

**3 Therefore strong peoples will honour You; cities of ruthless nations will revere You.**

"Therefore" — removing ungodly human rule and control opens the way for God to be honoured.

"Strong peoples... ruthless nations" — like Assyria and Egypt, will come to exalt God.

**4-5 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall and like the heat of the desert. You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the**

**shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.**

"Refuge... shelter... shade" — God's quiet, strong protection, like a shading cloud, or a rock-face against a storm, quiet but powerful.

**6-7 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. On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;**

"On this mountain... a feast" — at the end of time, the great Messianic celebration, a banquet for all who accept His invitation, on Zion, the symbolic mountain of God's presence. This prophecy foresees the invitation of "all peoples" beyond the bounds of Judaism, a mark of the kingdom to come.

**8 He will swallow up death for ever. 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.**

"Destroy the shroud (v.7), swallow up death" — then, God's people will not be subject to death.

• *For further study, 1 Cor. 15:54; Revelation 21:4.*

**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."**

"Let us rejoice" — the praise of the new community of God's people.

"Salvation" — release from any constraint, from falling into a pit, Psalm 40:2, to sin and death.

The Living Word online with click-through links, every Wednesday for the week following — [www.thelivingword.uk](http://www.thelivingword.uk)

*See also other Living Word Publications*

[www.glowweobley.com](http://www.glowweobley.com) — join others in the latest suggested prayers for our community  
[believethegoodnews.com](http://believethegoodnews.com) — fresh encouragement from God's word today

**SUMMARY** Isaiah's word sees a time when all people, including formerly strong proud nations, will acknowledge and exalt the Lord. At the end time there will be a banquet celebration in the place of God's presence to which those graciously invited to become God's new community of faith will be present. It is a prophecy quoted in the NT.

**APPLICATION** The prophecy looks ahead to Jesus' return and the establishment of His kingdom at the end-time – biblical scholarship acknowledges a diversity of interpretations about that. There are several hints here of the inauguration of the kingdom at Jesus first coming, which is our experience of knowing Jesus – worldwide evangelism, the social justice of the gospel and the lifting of the condemnation of sin.

**QUESTION** *Starting with "You are my God, I will exalt You and praise Your name for..." what aspects of God's character or promises can we declare?*

### Matthew 22:1-14 – The banquet that the initial guest list spurned

*The wedding hall was eventually filled with a motley assortment of new guests*

1-3 **Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.**

"Wedding banquet" — a country-wide invitation, and lasting for many days. It speaks of being invited to enjoy ongoing fellowship with God in His kingdom; coming to the feast represents entering the kingdom.

4 **"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'**

"He sent... more servants" — the parallel with Israel's history unfolds with the sending of the prophets, and then Jesus' disciples, as God patiently persists with those who reject Him.

5-7 **"But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**

"They paid no attention" — those who have already accepted the initial invitation dismiss the customary follow-up to say that the banquet was

ready. To insult a king in this way would be seen as treason. The burning of the city presages the burning of the temple in AD70 which ended Israel as God's covenant nation. It also speaks of eternal judgment.

8-10 **"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.**

"Did not deserve to come" — those who reject God's invitation are not worthy to enter His kingdom, compare Matthew 3:8, 10:13, 10:37-38.

"Gathered... the bad as well as the good" — Gentiles as well as Jews; both groups included a mixture of moral conditions; all have the same need to respond to the gospel. Jesus' disciples are invited into the kingdom despite their apparent unworthiness.

11-12 **"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless.**

"Not wearing wedding clothes" — for such a royal occasion these would be provided for those needing the right attire. Attending gave the appearance of honouring the son, but refusing to wear wedding dress was not honouring the son. In kingdom terms, this man was an imposter.

**13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**

"Weeping and gnashing of teeth" — a common Jewish description of eternal judgment.

**14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."**

**SUMMARY** This follows the parable of the two sons, an indictment of the Jewish leaders, and the parable of the wicked tenants, their sentencing. It speaks of their betrayal of God and what He has given them, for their own pursuits. A similar account in Luke 16:13-24 follows a remark about who will share in the feast in the kingdom of God – an allusion to Isaiah 25:6-9 (in the OT reading above).

**APPLICATION** This story goes to the heart of how we accept, or resist, the rule of the kingdom of God. And it is a heart tussle! The original invitees paid lip-service to the call to the banquet, but when it came to turning up to honour the king's son, their heart was elsewhere. They busied themselves with their own activities and treated the king's messengers violently. This speaks to those who have rejected the Jesus of the Bible, perhaps adopting a notional Christianity that follows the form without the commitment of faith. We can be very busy with church and worthy activities without giving the Lord of the Church the honour He warrants. Others who have hardly entered a church door, hear the Good News with the message of Christ and His kingdom – and receive it. Heaven is looking for those who are sincere about receiving the rule and new life of heaven's Lord of lords, and we can't enter without admitting that we need to put on His righteousness.

**QUESTION** *How free are we to talk about our accepting, not being able to accept, the rule of the kingdom of God – and for that matter, the Lordship of Jesus?*

### Philippians 4:1-9 – Kingdom principles to reconcile a church dispute

*Be careful to focus what is good, praying with thanksgiving to the God of peace*

**1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!**

"My joy and crown" — like the laurel head-wreath that was part of a winner's prize.

2-3 **I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.**

"Invited... chosen" — all Israel had been invited, but few responded. In today's world, the invitation to the kingdom is general, but a genuine heart response to Jesus in faithful obedience is needed to enter. Many claim to be followers, but on their own terms — like this man who wanted to be at the banquet without being a proper guest.

"Be of the same mind in the Lord" — the same word as "like-minded" in Phil. 2:2. Paul doesn't comment on the reason for the tension, but assumes reconciliation "in the Lord".

**4-5 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**

"Rejoice... always" — in all circumstances. This is a church working through a difficult dispute. Christian joy does not arise from good feeling but is a response to God's love through relationship with Him.

6-7 **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all**