

Isaiah 25:1

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/isa/isa-25/isaiah-251/>

Isaiah begins a prophetic song of praise by proclaiming to the LORD that He is God. And he promises to exalt His name for the wonderful things He has done—things which were planned long ago that have been performed with perfect faithfulness.

Isaiah continues his string of prophecies concerning God's judgement of the heavens and the earth that began in Chapter 24. But his tone seems to shift in the first verse of Chapter 25 from dark and terrifying to a tone of praise and joyful worship.

The first verse of Isaiah 25 consists of a praise; two promises; and a proclamation.

- The praise is: *O LORD, You are my God;*
- The two promises are: *I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name;*
- The proclamation is: *For You have worked wonders, Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.*

It is fitting that Isaiah begins this chapter with a song of praise to *God*.

The first line of this song identifies the *LORD* as the recipient of Isaiah's praise. The prophetic song is addressed to Him. The word for *LORD* in this verse is the divine name of *God*. It is the name that could be translated "the Existent One," that God used to describe Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14-15). *LORD* is the name transliterated from Hebrew as "Yahweh." Yahweh means "He Is" and is translated in the NASB as LORD, with all capitals. In Exodus 3:14, God answers Moses's question as to who he should say sent him by saying, "I Am" which is from the same root word as Yahweh, but in the first person.

Isaiah prophetically sings: *O LORD, You are my God*. Here the prophet is proclaiming to the *Lord*, that the *LORD* Yahweh is his *God* and there is no other. This proclamation *You are my God* is a variation of a common refrain found in psalms of praise and petition (Psalm 31:14; 40:5; 71:5; 104:1; 140:6).

Next, Isaiah promises what he *will* do for the *LORD* his *God*. Isaiah promises two things:

1. *I will exalt You*
2. *I will give thanks to Your name;*

The first thing Isaiah promises *God* is to personally *exalt* the *Lord*.

To exalt something means to lift it up and elevate it. Obviously, as a mortal man, Isaiah is not able to physically elevate almighty *God*. What he means by this phrase, is that he *will exalt the LORD* with his words and actions. He *will give the LORD* the most exalted place in his heart.

The second thing Isaiah promises the *LORD* is to *give thanks to Your name*.

In Israel's culture a person's *name* is more than just what they happen to be called. A name includes the sum of who they are: what they have accomplished, their character, reputation, and capabilities.

Giving *thanks* to someone's *name* means to expressively recognize their goodness and to be glad for their presence. This can be done by directly telling them, "Thank you for who you are and what you have done." Or it can be done any number of ways that a person recognizes and appreciates the gifts and character of another. In this case Isaiah is giving *thanks* directly to *You* the *LORD God* for *Your name*—the *LORD's* character, accomplishments, reputation, and His capabilities.

Isaiah proclaims to *God* why he *will exalt* and give thanks to the *LORD's name* in the remainder of this verse:

*For You have worked wonders,
Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.*

Isaiah will give *thanks* for Who *God* is and the wonderful things the *LORD* has worked.

One might (incorrectly) assume that the *wonders* Isaiah has in mind that he is praising *God* for in this prophetic song might include the creation of the world and God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by means of miracles, such as the ten plagues or the parting of the Red Sea. Perhaps also the sustainment of Israel in the wilderness; or God miraculously knocking the walls down at Jericho. Isaiah could have in mind any number of wonders from Israel's history. But the context indicates that this is not so. Isaiah has in mind future events. They are so certain to occur that Isaiah speaks of them in the past tense.

It is natural to initially assume Isaiah is speaking of past events because of the prophet's use of past tense—*You have already worked wonders*. Moreover, Isaiah says that the *LORD* has *formed* these *plans long ago with perfect faithfulness*. But the context will show otherwise. It will show that God is speaking of future events with the same certainty as a past event. It is because the future is a part of God's *plans formed long ago*.

The expression *formed long ago* hearkens back to the distant past, all the way back to the period before the creation itself when "the earth was formless and void" (Genesis 1:2). All that is, has occurred because of the *plans* God made *long ago* or due to the freedoms He allows others to exercise (such as the choice Adam and Eve made in the Garden of Eden). God is the ultimate authority; all things happen because He permits them to, or because He is directly acting out His will.

As a prophet of the *Lord*, Isaiah expressed gratitude to God for these *wonders*. But as the rest of the chapter clearly indicates, Isaiah is not thanking God for *the wonders* the *LORD* has already accomplished *with perfect faithfulness* in Israel's past. Rather, Isaiah is praising *God* for what

wonders the LORD has already done in Israel's future. The *wonders* Isaiah is referring to are the LORD's *perfect* and terrible judgment of all wickedness in the earth.

The tense in which Isaiah appears to be speaking can be described as the "prophetic past." The prophetic past speaks of future events as though they have already happened. Isaiah's use of the prophetic past in his song of praise does three things:

First, it is a prophetic expression of certitude. By speaking of future events as though they have already happened is a way of expressing supreme confidence in what is to come.

Second, it is an attempt to describe the eternal nature of *God* in human terms.

As finite beings, humans live in time. That is, we experience reality in a continuum of one moment at a time, followed by another moment, and then another, and so on. The present is the moment we live in right now. The past consists of all the moments that have come and gone. And the future contains all the moments humanity has yet to experience. As an eternal being, *God* does not exist in time. He simply is. He exists in all time and places (Revelation 22:13, Psalm 139:7-10). He exists before time itself, for time was created by Him. Time is part of "the foundation of the world" talked about in Ephesians 1:4. And if there could be a setting after time is no more, *God* will exist there also.

God is eternally present in all moments. What is future to us is somehow past, present, and future to *God*. Even the LORD's name "Yahweh," which means "He Exists," indicates His eternal presence in all moments and places. Because *God* is eternally present in all moments, *He* has already *worked wonders* in our future *with perfect faithfulness* to the good *plans* *He formed long ago* in eternity past before the foundations of the world.

And third, it appears to be a way for Isaiah to shift the prophetic perspective from describing the events of the LORD's wrathful reckoning of earth (described in Isaiah 24) to its immediate aftermath (described in Isaiah 25:2-6).

This paradox of time is joined with a paradox of choice. Much of the book of Isaiah warns Israel to repent, giving them an opportunity to avoid destruction. *God* does this often throughout the Bible, and when people heed Him, He relents, as with Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). *God's* offer is always genuine, but *God* speaks of the future with certainty, knowing the choice Israel will make.

These paradoxes simply provide tangible evidence to us that *God's* ways are above our ways (Romans 11:33-36). What is paradoxical to us flows from His existence. The idea that a person (*God*) can also be existence itself is also paradoxical to us. In *God's* sovereignty, He exists outside of time, and makes *plans long ago*, while also giving people true choices ([for more, read our Tough Topics Explained article: Founding Paradox](#)).

Biblical Text

**1 O Lord, You are my God;
I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name;
For You have worked wonders,
Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.**