

The Resurrection of Our Lord

AWAY, TEARS*

Isaiah 25:6-9

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Analysis by Marcus Felde

6On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. 7And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; 8he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. 9It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Introduction: To “cross” this text, i.e., to clarify the distinctive way it manifests the work God did for the world in raising the Crucified One from the dead, I have worked backward and forward from a key phrase: “Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears....” That is one way of saying what the Lord God did that Easter Day. The tears the prophet was talking about were the tears of a people whose holy of holies (on “this mountain”) had been destroyed in the second invasion from Babylon, and who were being taken away from the land promised to their forebears. Isaiah proclaimed that no matter how important this land, this mountain, this city, and this temple had been to the people of the covenants, there was a promising God whose commitment to people was way deeper and way higher than any of its earthy

expressions. God's promise in this passage would be fulfilled, on a particular day, "on this mountain."

DIAGNOSIS: Something Worth Crying About

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Tears All Round

The curtain opens on a people in tears. I imagine a whole nation crying through the nights, waking with little salt stains on their cheeks where the tears have not stopped trickling out even when with exhaustion the sorrowful did finally manage to fall asleep. It's over. Judah may have stood, thanks to Jerusalem, when the northern kingdom fell. Jerusalem may have been spared the worst of the first Babylonian incursion. But now she lay in ruins, and her people were inconsolable. (But Isaiah is working on them.)

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : No Hopers

They had never had it easy, but they had always had this hope, that the God who had brought them through the Red Sea would be with them (i.e., on their side) with his glory. This trust was now laid as low as it could be, and their hearts were broken, because they felt not just that God was far away, but—and this was worse—that the fate they now suffered was God's righteous will. Not fate, but the Lord God, had humiliated them.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : Reason to Weep

For those weeping in Jerusalem, and not only for them but for "all people" and "all nations," for any people who are "without God in the world," if you do not have a god who can rescue you when the chips are down, finally you just get swallowed up—by death. Why do people cry? Because a verity of some sort, an assumption, a certainty comes apart. Like the punch line that cracks us up with mirth, this "punch line" hits us as we "fall apart," or "break down" in tears. We have been punched. And the

blow that has struck Jerusalem has made them doubt even that God loves them. A good reason to cry.

PROGNOSIS: A Reason for the Hope That Is in Us

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Salvation!*

This prophecy anticipates what Easter delivers, and it expresses it several ways: wiping away tears, destroying the shroud, taking away disgrace, bringing salvation. And Easter delivers it, as promised here—for all nations. The promise comes to this mountain, since, as Jesus said, “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). On the holy mountain, which once vibrated with the weight of a foreign army’s chariots, the angel of the Lord has rolled away the stone from the tomb, to liberate from death his only-begotten Son, and take away the disgrace of the defeated and destroy death itself.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution) : *Waiting for This God*

“It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us” (v. 9). The operative word is “this.” This One, who always was there in the background beseeching and promising, is finally defined, nailed down, by being present in the Crucified-Resurrected One. And those who have seen this one, have seen the Father. Whoever wait for this one will not be disappointed. So our hearts, ever faithful, rejoice that Jesus is here.*

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Feast That Passes All Understanding*

Partly because it is “for all peoples,” even though it is “on this mountain,” this is an unbelievable feast, which is (a la Psalm 23) spread before us in the presence of all that is still wrong with our world. Even if the earth be shaken, even if we do sometimes walk through the valley of the shadow of death, or the “Bad Lands” (originally named, in French, the “Bad Lands to

Cross”), we will not fear. In fact, we will have another glass of that well-aged wine. And those are tears of joy, as God surprises us and the earth shifts just enough for us to notice that death is now dead. Our God reigns. This is a good land, this entire earth, all nations.

**I wish you could hear this great line from Bach’s aria “Mein gläubiges Herzen” (My Heart Ever Faithful) in the cantata Also hat Gott: “Weg Jammer, weg Klagen....”*