

that God prepares for all nations -- the blessing of salvation made available through the death of Christ, through shedding of His blood -- a salvation well represented by a banquet of the finest of wines. This sacrifice would occur on the very mountain where Abraham had been ready to sacrifice Isaac, but God Himself had provided the sacrifice. The sacrifice represented by this banquet is the source of every blessing described in these four chapters.

Verse 7 says that in this mountain God will destroy "the veil that is spread over all nations." This verse is misunderstood by a considerable number of commentators, who think of it as primarily connected with the following verse rather than the preceding one. They point to some instances in the Scripture where men have covered their heads to express sorrow in the face of death, and say that this verse promises the removal of such a covering.[†] In the light of the entire context it is much more reasonable to consider it as predicting the removal of the veil that so blinds all the nations as to prevent them from truly seeing the glory of God and the wonders of His plan. Thus the verse suggests Paul's assertion in Acts 17:30 that "in the past God overlooked such ignorance" and his statement in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the things of God are foolishness to the natural man. In 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, Paul said that the minds of many are blinded by the veil of ignorance that covers the hearts of those who do not receive the promises, but that this veil is taken away in Christ.

Thus the great feast provided by Christ's sacrifice leads directly to removal of the veil that keeps all nations from seeing God's truth, a veil that can be removed only through Christ.

These two verses are appropriately followed by the promise that God will swallow up death forever and will wipe away all tears. It should be noted that the last part of the verse emphasizes removal of His people's reproach or disgrace. The

[†]This false interpretation of the verse is probably the reason why the NIV here translated the words and as "shroud" and "sheet," though there is no evidence that either of these words for "covering" or "woven material" included a specific reference to sorrow or death.