

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 3

Isaiah 4-5

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 3, Isaiah 4-5, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This transcript records a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah chapters four and five. **The lecture focuses on the contrasting themes of judgment and hope** present within these chapters, exploring the relationship between Israel's current corrupted state and its future restoration. **Oswalt analyzes specific verses**, interpreting the symbolism of "the branch," the promise of holiness, and the imagery of the vineyard. **He highlights the prophetic use of parallelism and wordplay** to convey God's passionate concern for his people and the consequences of their disobedience. **The lecture also connects these Old Testament themes to New Testament interpretations**, specifically relating the concept of holiness to transformation and the image of the new exodus to God's continuous offer of fresh starts.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Isaiah).



**Oswalt_Isaiah_Sessi
on03.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's teaching on Isaiah chapters 4 and 5:

Briefing Document: Isaiah Chapters 4 & 5 - Dr. John Oswalt

Date: October 26, 2023

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Isaiah_EN_Session03.pdf"

Overview: This document summarizes Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah chapters 4 and 5, focusing on the key themes of hope and judgment, the nature of holiness, the consequences of sin, and God's sovereignty over history. Oswalt emphasizes the contrasting nature of these chapters, the importance of understanding the historical context, and the application of these passages to contemporary life.

Key Themes and Concepts:

1. **Interchange of Hope and Judgment:** Oswalt highlights the recurring pattern of alternating between positive pronouncements of hope and negative prophecies of judgment. This is a structural element found throughout Isaiah and is particularly evident in the contrast between Isaiah 4:2-6 and 5:1-30.
 - Oswalt states: "So, we see a relationship that can be called interchange. That is where you go from A to B, to A to B, and A to B. So, you have the contrast and the contrast is repeated."
 - He also notes, "He's never going to stop with the future hope so that we can say, oh, everything's going to be fine. He drags us back to the present where everything is not fine and some things are going to have to change if that glorious hope is ever to be realized."
1. **The Branch and Fruitfulness:** Isaiah 4:2 speaks of "the branch of the Lord" and "the fruit of the land." Oswalt discusses the debate whether "the Branch" is a reference to the Messiah or simply a parallel to the fruit of the land.
 - He notes that, in Jeremiah 33:15, the "righteous branch" refers to the Messiah.
 - Oswalt: "The question is are we talking about a literal fruitfulness and abundance or a spiritual fruitfulness and abundance? And this is a situation where as the man says, you pay your money and take your choice. I think either one is possible and you can find reputable commentators on both sides of the issue there."

- He also states: "Either way, Branch is talking about fruitfulness."
1. **The Meaning of Holiness:** Oswalt explains that holiness, in the context of the covenant, is not merely about being "set apart" but also about transformation into the character of God. It involves embodying God's righteousness, justice, and love. He emphasizes the idea that the transformed condition of the remnant in Isaiah 4 is to mirror God's character.
 - Oswalt: "The Bible very, very clearly tells us that we are expected to share the character of Yahweh. That's what it means when over and over again he says you must be holy as I am holy. It's not just religious. It's not just dedicated. It is transformed."
 - Oswalt states, "This is the ultimate work of the Messiah. Not merely to restore us to God, but to transform us into the character of God. That's his goal."
 - He also explains that "Holy in its base meaning refers to otherness," but with Yahweh, holiness has a moral connotation, unlike in pagan belief systems.
 1. **Judgment as Cleansing:** The "spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire" in Isaiah 4:4 are not meant to solely punish but to cleanse. Oswalt emphasizes that judgment is necessary for restoration. He connects this to the Exile and the cleansing fire of Pentecost.
 - Oswalt says, "For these people, the only hope is through judgment. The hope is not that they can avoid judgment. There is no avoiding judgment. It's coming. The hope is that by means of the judgment, they'll not be destroyed, but they'll be cleansed."
 1. **Exodus Imagery and Fresh Starts:** The use of Exodus language in Isaiah 4:5 (cloud by day, fire by night) points to a new start, connecting the return from exile to the original Exodus. Oswalt sees the history of Israel as a series of cycles of blessing, forgetting God, oppression, crying out, and deliverance, and this return is a new chance for Israel to become the holy nation.
 - Oswalt: "In a real sense, the Old Testament prophets see the exile, the return from exile, as a new Exodus."
 - He also states, "The Bible is the book of fresh starts. God does not say, well, you had a chance. You blew it. I'm done with you. Fresh start."
 1. **God's Shekinah and Tabernacled Presence:** Oswalt discusses the Shekinah, the visible presence and glory of God, specifically in the cloud and fire imagery in

Isaiah 4:5. This is related to the Hebrew word root meaning "to shelter or to the tabernacle," connecting to the idea of God dwelling among his people.

- Oswalt: "This word does not actually occur in the Bible. It occurs in the Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament and it occurs all over there, the glory of God, the tabernacled glory of God. And probably John is thinking of this when he says he tabernacled among us."
1. **Love Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5):** Isaiah 5:1-7 uses the parable of the vineyard to illustrate God's love and care for Israel and their unfaithfulness. Oswalt points out Isaiah's intimate relationship with God, as he identifies with God's love for His people.
 - Oswalt: "It suggests that Isaiah has had some intimate experience with God that has drawn him into God's heart. This is one of the things that the scholars have commented upon, that the Hebrew prophets seem to be touched by the pathos of God."
 1. **The Bitter Grapes (Woes):** Oswalt explores the "bitter grapes" in Isaiah 5, which represent the sins of the people. He outlines the series of "woes" that Isaiah pronounces, which aren't gleeful judgments, but rather expressions of grief over the people's sin:
 - **Greed:** Accumulating wealth at the expense of others (5:8-10).
 - **Self-Indulgence:** Living for pleasure and ignoring God (5:11-12).
 - **Mockery of God:** Daring God to act (5:18-19).
 - **Reversal of Morality:** Calling good evil and evil good (5:20-21).
 - **Corruption of Leadership:** Leaders perverting justice and engaging in excess (5:22-23).
 - Oswalt says, "...woe is a word of regret and grief... If Isaiah cries woe to you, he doesn't do it with glee. He does it with a tear."
 1. **Consequences of Sin (Cause and Effect):** Isaiah 5:13-30 shows the consequences of these sins, including exile, destruction, and the desolation of the land. These verses also show the justice of God, where even the haughty are humbled, but God is exalted in His righteousness. Oswalt highlights that God is the one who calls the nations as well. He sees this as not only a consequence, but also as the result of cause and effect in that the people's actions result in judgement.

- Oswalt: "Here's another relationship, cause and effect. And this relates to the old preacherly line, when you see a therefore ask what it's there for. Because it is telling you that something has happened and this is the result."
 - He also says, "My people go into exile for lack of knowledge... We're not talking about intellectual knowledge here. We're talking about personal knowledge of God and his ways."
1. **God's Sovereignty over History:** Oswalt discusses the historical context of the rise of Assyria, emphasizing that God is in control and uses even powerful nations to fulfill his purposes. The Assyrian invasion was not because they were powerful, but because the nation has opened its doors to it.
- Oswalt states, "He'll whistle for them. Come on. This is the fulfillment of the imagery of verses five and six. He has taken down the wall. He's calling in the wild animals to come and trample the vineyard."

Key Quotes:

- "So, we see a relationship that can be called interchange. That is where you go from A to B, to A to B, and A to B. So, you have the contrast and the contrast is repeated."
- "The Bible very, very clearly tells us that we are expected to share the character of Yahweh. That's what it means when over and over again he says you must be holy as I am holy. It's not just religious. It's not just dedicated. It is transformed."
- "For these people, the only hope is through judgment. The hope is not that they can avoid judgment. There is no avoiding judgment. It's coming. The hope is that by means of the judgment, they'll not be destroyed, but they'll be cleansed."
- "In a real sense, the Old Testament prophets see the exile, the return from exile, as a new Exodus."
- "It suggests that Isaiah has had some intimate experience with God that has drawn him into God's heart. This is one of the things that the scholars have commented upon, that the Hebrew prophets seem to be touched by the pathos of God."
- "...woe is a word of regret and grief... If Isaiah cries woe to you, he doesn't do it with glee. He does it with a tear."

- "My people go into exile for lack of knowledge... We're not talking about intellectual knowledge here. We're talking about personal knowledge of God and his ways."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah 4 and 5 emphasizes the cyclical nature of sin and redemption, the importance of a right relationship with God, and the consequences of national unfaithfulness. The call is not just for a physical restoration, but for a spiritual transformation that mirrors God's character. He highlights the reality of God's judgement, but also emphasizes its necessity for cleansing. The use of contrasting imagery and historical context provides a powerful message about the nature of God and humanity's need for repentance and a transformed relationship with Him.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 3, Isaiah 4-5

Isaiah Chapters 4 and 5 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the main relationship between Isaiah 4:2-6 and Isaiah 5:1-30?
2. In Isaiah 4:2, what two possible interpretations are given for the "branch of the Lord"?
3. According to Isaiah 4:3, who will be called holy?
4. What imagery is used in Isaiah 4:4 to describe how God will cleanse the filth of Zion?
5. How does Isaiah 4:5-6 connect to the Exodus story?
6. In Isaiah 5:1, why does Isaiah refer to God as "my beloved" and the song a "love song"?
7. What does the vineyard represent in Isaiah 5:7?
8. According to Isaiah 5, what is the first "woe" and why is it significant?
9. Explain the cause and effect relationship described in Isaiah 5:13-14.
10. In Isaiah 5:26-30, how does the prophet describe Yahweh's lordship of history using imagery?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The main relationship between these two sections is one of contrast. Isaiah 4:2-6 presents a message of positive hope and restoration for Israel, while Isaiah 5:1-30 details the negative judgment and consequences of their corruption and sin. This contrast illustrates the pattern of interchange throughout the book of Isaiah.
2. The "branch of the Lord" can be interpreted either as a direct reference to the Messiah or as a parallel to the fruit of the land, representing the land's coming abundance and fruitfulness. Both interpretations suggest a renewal of life for God's people.

3. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, and are recorded for life in Jerusalem will be called holy. This emphasizes a remnant that has been cleansed and is therefore set apart.
4. God will cleanse the filth of Zion with a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. This imagery describes a powerful, purifying firestorm that will burn away corruption, making them holy.
5. Isaiah 4:5-6 uses imagery from the Exodus story, such as a cloud by day and fire by night, to represent God's divine presence and protection over his people after their cleansing, symbolizing a new Exodus and fresh start.
6. Isaiah refers to God as "my beloved" to illustrate the intimate and personal relationship he has with God, and the song is a "love song" because it expresses God's passionate love for his people, highlighting his desire for them to return to him.
7. In Isaiah 5:7, the vineyard represents the house of Israel. This metaphor highlights God's care for Israel and the subsequent disappointment in their failure to produce good fruit (righteousness and justice).
8. The first "woe" in Isaiah 5 is the greed and covetousness of the people. This is significant because it is the root of many of their problems and directly tied to idolatry, where they worship the things of this world rather than God.
9. Isaiah 5:13-14 describes a cause and effect relationship where the people's lack of knowledge and understanding of God's ways leads to their exile and humiliation. Their rejection of God's instruction directly results in their downfall.
10. In Isaiah 5:26-30, Yahweh's lordship of history is described through the imagery of him whistling for a powerful army and calling in wild animals to trample the vineyard. This demonstrates his complete control over nations and their fates, emphasizing that he is actively in charge.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the "interchange" pattern in Isaiah chapters 4 and 5. How does this pattern contribute to the overall message of the text?
2. Discuss the different meanings of "holiness" as presented in Isaiah 4, referencing both the negative and positive aspects. How does the idea of transformation relate to holiness in this chapter?

3. Compare and contrast the descriptions of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. How do these descriptions reveal God's attitude and expectations toward Israel?
4. Trace the connection between the specific sins mentioned in the "woes" of Isaiah 5:8-23, and the consequences described in 5:13-30. How do the "woes" illustrate the cycle of sin and judgment?
5. Explore the role of the Exodus imagery in Isaiah 4 and 5. How does the reference to the Exodus enhance the message of hope and/or judgment in these chapters?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Branch of the Lord:** A term in Isaiah 4:2, possibly referring to the Messiah or the fruitfulness of the land, symbolizing new life and abundance.
- **Interchange:** A literary pattern where the text alternates between contrasting ideas or themes, such as hope and judgment, seen throughout Isaiah.
- **Ruach:** The Hebrew word for spirit, breath, or wind, often used to describe the means by which God works. Its precise meaning is determined by context.
- **Shekinah:** The visible presence or glory of God, often associated with a cloud, fire, or tabernacle, though the word doesn't appear in the Hebrew bible.
- **Mishpat:** A Hebrew word for justice, but it's more than simple legal justice; it refers to the restoration of God's divine order.
- **Tzedakah:** A Hebrew word for righteousness. It goes beyond simply doing what is right, but indicates the proper relationship of an individual to God and others.
- **Woe:** A term used by the prophets expressing regret and grief over sin and its consequences, not gleeful condemnation.
- **Exile:** The forced removal of the Israelites from their homeland, used as both a literal historical event and a metaphor for God's judgment.
- **Torah:** The Hebrew word for instruction or law, refers to the teachings and guidelines given by God, especially through Moses.
- **Reprobate:** An individual who has been rejected, or morally abandoned, by God.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 3, Isaiah 4-5, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Isaiah 4 and 5

- **What is the main literary structure employed in Isaiah 4 and 5?** The primary structure in these chapters is a contrast or "interchange" between hope and judgment. Chapter 4, verses 2-6, presents a vision of future blessing and restoration, while chapter 5, verses 1-30, focuses on the current state of corruption and the resulting judgment. This contrast highlights the difference between God's intentions and Israel's reality, and this pattern is intentionally repeated throughout the passage to emphasize the tension between present behavior and future hope.
- **In Isaiah 4:2, what is meant by the "Branch of the Lord," and how does it relate to the "fruit of the land?"** The "Branch of the Lord" is a term that can be interpreted in two ways. Some believe it directly refers to the Messiah, drawing parallels with passages in Jeremiah and Zechariah where a righteous "branch" from David is prophesied. Others argue that "the fruit of the land," which parallels the "branch" in the Hebrew poetic structure, suggests a literal abundance of the land's produce and a time of great fruitfulness. Both are possibilities, however the underlying meaning is that God is promising a time of fruitfulness and abundance instead of the wasteland they are experiencing.
- **How is the concept of "holiness" presented in Isaiah 4, and what does it entail?** Holiness, as used in Isaiah 4, is not merely about being set apart, but rather about transformation into the character of God. It is not just a religious position or a state of being, it is a condition that God intends for his people through the work of the Messiah. In the Old Testament and pagan environments, holiness can refer to the otherness of a god but has no moral connotation. However, because Yahweh is the only one truly "other," the definition of holiness is informed by his character, which is the idea that holiness means sharing the character of God and is ultimately tied to moral transformation.
- **What is the significance of the "spirit of judgment and fire" in Isaiah 4:4?** The "spirit of judgment and fire" refers to a powerful force, often interpreted as God's means of purifying and cleansing his people. It is not a gentle process, but rather a transformative firestorm that burns away the filth and corruption. The Hebrew word "ruach" used here means wind, breath, and spirit, and the interpretation of

the word affects the understanding of how this judgment is brought about, but the core concept is that the judgment is intended to cleanse, not destroy. The fire imagery also ties back to Pentecost, indicating the continuing fulfillment of God's word across both Old and New Testaments.

- **Why does Isaiah use Exodus imagery in Isaiah 4:5-6 to describe the future restoration of Israel?** Isaiah uses Exodus imagery to depict the return from exile as a new Exodus, emphasizing that God is offering Israel another chance. The prophets view Israel's history as a recurring cycle—blessing, forgetting God, idolatry, oppression, crying out to God, deliverance, and then repeating the cycle. The return from exile is seen as another opportunity to become a holy nation, a royal priesthood. The Exodus imagery reminds the people of God's past deliverance and implies he'll act again, but he will do it through fire of judgement first.
- **In Isaiah 5, why does the prophet refer to God as "my beloved" and the message as a "love song?"** The use of "my beloved" and "love song" indicates a close, intimate relationship between Isaiah and God, portraying the prophet as entering into God's heart and sharing His pathos for his people. The message being delivered is not a diatribe from an angry god, but rather it is from a being whose heart is breaking over a people that he longs to bless. The love-song rhetoric is designed to draw the listeners into sharing God's longing and disappointment in the vineyard, which serves as a metaphor for Israel.
- **What is the symbolism of the "vineyard" in Isaiah 5, and what does its failure represent?** The vineyard is a powerful metaphor for Israel, specifically Judah. God has done everything necessary to cultivate a fruitful vineyard, but it has yielded "wild grapes"— a clear image of Israel's corruption and failure to produce justice and righteousness. The vineyard's failure illustrates Israel's rejection of God and their perversion of justice. The "wild grapes" are then explicitly identified as various forms of wickedness in the subsequent "woe" poems.
- **What are the "woes" in Isaiah 5, and what do they reveal about the sins of Israel and their consequences?** The "woes" in Isaiah 5 are a series of laments that express grief and regret for the various forms of injustice committed by Israel. These woes include greed and covetousness, self-indulgence, mocking God's justice, reversing moral values and leaders who are drunk and perverting justice. Each woe is followed by a description of the resulting judgment. Ultimately, the failure to live righteously will result in exile, destruction, and a loss of meaning, as God is not just and holy, but will reveal his holiness through righteous judgment