

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 11

Isaiah 22-23

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 11, Isaiah 22-23, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a recording of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah chapters 22 and 23, focusing on the theme of trust. He emphasizes the importance of trusting God rather than humanity or national entities, using examples from the text to illustrate the dangers of misplaced faith. Oswalt highlights Judah's shortsightedness and Hezekiah's failure to consult God despite his worldly successes. The lecture also explores the concept of "a pyrrhic victory" and the importance of maintaining a joyful yet realistic perspective in the face of impending judgment. Finally, the lecture analyzes the destruction of Tyre and Sidon as an example of God's ultimate power and control.

2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 11 – 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
on11.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 22-23:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 22-23

Date: October 26, 2023 **Source:** Excerpts from "Oswalt_Isaiah_EN_Session11.pdf"

Subject: Isaiah Chapters 22 and 23: The Futility of Trusting Human Power **Presenter:** Dr. John Oswalt

I. Introduction & The Importance of Trust (0:00-4:00)

- **Opening Prayer:** Oswalt begins with a prayer acknowledging the tragedy of the world and celebrating God's incarnation, emphasizing God's choice to enter our broken world. He asks for the Holy Spirit's guidance in understanding Isaiah's message.
- **Focus on Trust:** Oswalt emphasizes that the core message of these chapters is the necessity of trusting God completely. "If we will not trust God, if we don't trust God, there's no way we can ever be his servants." He states that trust involves believing God's intentions toward us are good and that His will is ultimately what we need, even when it is not understood.
- **Distrust of Humanity:** Building on this, Oswalt highlights that Isaiah's message throughout this section is to *not* trust humanity, a theme reflected in Jesus' own approach to people as described in John 2:24-25: "But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in man."
- **Rejection of National Glory:** Oswalt reviews previous oracles against nations, illustrating that Isaiah warns against trusting:
 - The glory of nations (Babylon, Chapters 13-14)
 - The pride of nations (Moab, Chapters 15-16)
 - The political scheming of nations (Syria, Israel, Cush, Chapters 17-18)
 - The religion, resources, and wisdom of nations (Egypt, Chapters 19-20)
 - The commerce of nations (Chapter 21)

II. The Oracle Against Judah (Isaiah 22) (4:00-13:00)

- **Surprise Inclusion:** Isaiah now turns to Judah, a surprising inclusion in this list of nations. Oswalt asks, "What is Isaiah saying by including Judah in this list? Don't trust yourself." This signifies that Judah is no better than any other nation when relying on earthly power for salvation.
- **The Valley of Vision:** Jerusalem is referred to as the "Valley of Vision," an oxymoron. Oswalt explains this is sarcasm; they see only the short term, the immediate, and not the big picture, like a tunnel vision view. It is contrasted to the high place of a mountain, from where you can see the big picture and have a long view.
- **Rejoicing and Short-Sightedness:** The people are rejoicing, possibly due to the temporary withdrawal of the Assyrian army either due to the Egyptians or after their devastating loss of 185,000 troops. However, Isaiah does not join in. He has a long-term view, he sees the bigger picture.
- **A Pyrrhic Victory:** Oswalt highlights that the people's joy is a "pyrrhic victory," a victory won at such a great cost that it is tantamount to defeat, referencing the Greek story.
- **God's Titles and Power:** Oswalt notes Isaiah's use of the title "Lord God of Hosts," (22:5, 12, 14, 15, 25) emphasizing God's absolute power. The "hosts" refer to the stars, that for the ancients were the Gods. In a very provocative statement, Isaiah, through the power of Yahweh, says that all those gods the pagans worship belong to Yahweh.
- **Prophetic Vision:** Isaiah sees 150 years into the future when Babylon will destroy Judah. While the people are partying, Isaiah is filled with grief.
- **True Joy:** Oswalt explores the nature of true Christian joy. It is not a delusional joy but a "realistic joy," a "peaceful joy" that comes from knowing the end and knowing the one who *is* the end. It is joy in ministry, joy in hope, but with sadness for those who are not prepared. He says, "He is filled with a sense of grief over what is going to happen to his people, though he himself knows that in his own relationship with God, there's comfort, there's confidence, there's assurance."
- **Hezekiah's Failures:** Oswalt reviews Hezekiah's actions in fortifying Jerusalem. While these were necessary and good, Hezekiah failed to consult God. Hezekiah was focused on the physical and material, and did not "look to the Lord." "You looked to the material stuff and you didn't look to the Lord."

- **Looking to the Maker:** Oswalt asks the question, "What does it mean to look to your maker?" He discusses different answers including: putting your trust in him, asking for guidance, and being alert, putting yourself in God's keeping and hands. The people in Jerusalem were not looking to their maker, but they had a short term view and wanted to enjoy themselves. They choose to ignore the greater circumstances, with the mindset of "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."
- **Unforgivable Sin:** Oswalt discusses the harsh pronouncement in 22:14, "Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you till you die." This is a deliberate rejection of God, a "blinding of oneself" to God's guidance. He compares it to smashing a radio receiver that can no longer receive the music that surrounds us. He uses Christopher Dawkins, a famous atheist who died, as an example of someone who has smashed his receiver. The unpardonable sin is not merely saying bad things about the Holy Spirit, but rather putting oneself in a place where you are saying that the Holy Spirit means nothing to you. He also talks about keeping short accounts with God, continually repenting. He says that if you are afraid that you have committed the unpardonable sin, then you haven't. It's when you don't worry about it that you should be concerned.
- **Shebna's Downfall:** Oswalt uses Shebna, the prime minister, as a graphic illustration. Shebna is focused on building a lavish tomb, epitomizing the "eat, drink, and be merry" attitude. Isaiah prophesies that Shebna will die in a foreign land, and Eliakim will replace him, which is later fulfilled.
- **Eliakim's Example:** The installation of Eliakim is described as him being a peg in a secure place. However, that peg is not guaranteed to remain forever, showing that success is not guaranteed from a human perspective, even in faithful ministry. Oswalt says "We're called to be faithful and leave the outcome in God's hands." He uses his experience as president of Asbury College as an example of this principle.

III. The Oracle Against Tyre and Sidon (Isaiah 23) (13:00-16:00)

- **Graphic Illustration:** Chapter 23 uses Tyre and Sidon as a graphic illustration of the fleeting nature of worldly power. These cities, twin port cities in Phoenicia, controlled the trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- **Wealth and Commerce:** The wealth of these cities is described, highlighting their monopoly on seaborne commerce. Their destruction is the point.

- **God's Purpose:** The destruction of Tyre is described as being God's purpose, “the Lord of hosts has purposed it to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth” (23:9), reinforcing the theme of God as the only one to be honored, and not to put your trust in human power and wealth.
- **God's Sovereignty:** Oswalt emphasizes that events are not due to chance, but due to God's sovereign planning. Even human sinfulness is not outside of God's purpose.
- **Religious and Political Leaders:** Oswalt notes that both religious and political leaders can fall into the same pattern of rejecting God. Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, castigates the whole leadership including nobles, prophets, and priests for being corrupt.
- **Biblical Religion vs Israelite Religion:** Oswalt highlights that it is not the whole of Israel that has the true religion, but a remnant who represent the thread of truth. He makes a distinction between Israelite religion and biblical religion, with the latter being represented by this remnant.
- **Cycles of History:** Oswalt describes how the Bible does not show a straight line of progress but a cycle of explosion and decline.

IV. Conclusion

- **The message:** Don't trust in the world and its systems (nations, power, wealth) because they will ultimately fail you. Focus on God, who is the one who is truly in control.
- **Call to faithfulness:** We are called to be faithful and to trust God even when we cannot see the outcome, putting our trust in God and His long term plan.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Oswalt's insights from Isaiah 22-23, highlighting the dangers of placing trust in human institutions and the paramount importance of relying on God.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 11, Isaiah 22-23

Isaiah 22-23 Study Guide

Quiz

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

1. What is the significance of Isaiah referring to Jerusalem as the "Valley of Vision"?
2. What are the two possible reasons for the jubilation in Jerusalem described in Isaiah 22:2-3?
3. Why does Isaiah not join in the general jubilation of the people?
4. What does the phrase "Lord God of hosts" signify in the context of Isaiah's message?
5. What actions did Hezekiah take to prepare Jerusalem for a siege, and what was the key thing he failed to do?
6. What does the phrase "eat, drink, for tomorrow we die" represent in the passage?
7. According to the text, what is the consequence for the iniquity described in verses 12-14 of Isaiah 22?
8. Who is Shebna, and what is his fate according to Isaiah's prophecy?
9. Who replaces Shebna, and how does the text describe his role?
10. What does Isaiah emphasize about the destruction of Tyre and Sidon?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Isaiah uses the term "Valley of Vision" sarcastically, highlighting the people's short-sightedness. They are focused on the immediate situation rather than the long-term implications, like someone stuck in a valley and unable to see the larger picture. The phrase is an oxymoron since valleys are typically associated with being low, and vision is associated with being high.
2. The jubilation in Jerusalem was likely caused by either the withdrawal of the Assyrian officer (Rabshakeh) or the defeat of the Assyrian army. Both events would have given the people a false sense of security and temporary relief.

3. Isaiah does not join the jubilation because he can see the larger picture and the future destruction that awaits Judah. He understands that the temporary relief is not a sign of ultimate victory. He sees both the physical and spiritual destruction coming.
4. The phrase "Lord God of hosts" signifies God's absolute power over all creation, including the celestial bodies (stars), which the pagans considered deities. It emphasizes that everything, even the hosts of heaven, is under His control.
5. Hezekiah fortified Jerusalem by repairing the walls, securing the water supply, and tearing down homes to fortify the walls with rubble. However, he failed to consult with God, relying solely on his own strategies. He relied on the physical and material and failed to look to his maker.
6. The phrase "eat, drink, for tomorrow we die" represents a cynical attitude of living for the moment and ignoring any long-term consequences of one's choices. It reflects a lack of faith and trust in God. It highlights a lack of concern for how their actions today will affect the future.
7. The iniquity described in the passage, which is a rejection of the Lord and a focus on physical pleasure and worldly security, will not be atoned for until their death. This highlights the seriousness of rejecting God.
8. Shebna is the prime minister who is focused on building a fancy tomb for himself rather than looking to God. Isaiah prophesies that he will die in a foreign land, highlighting the futility of trusting in earthly possessions and vanity.
9. Eliakim, a servant of the Lord, replaces Shebna as prime minister. He is described as a peg in a secure place who will bear the honor of his father's house. He is ultimately like a peg that is ultimately cut down.
10. Isaiah emphasizes that the destruction of Tyre and Sidon is God's doing, meant to defile their pompous pride and demonstrate that all human efforts to exalt themselves against God will fail. He also emphasizes that what happens is not the result of chance.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Respond to the following questions in essay format, drawing upon the source material provided.

1. Discuss the role of trust in Isaiah's message in chapters 22-23, focusing on the distinction between trust in God and trust in earthly powers.
2. Analyze the contrasting perspectives of the people of Jerusalem and the prophet Isaiah concerning their immediate situation and their future.
3. Explore the concept of a "Valley of Vision" as presented in Isaiah 22, discussing its symbolic meaning and the critique it presents of the human perspective.
4. Examine the significance of the "Lord God of Hosts" in the text, how it underscores the themes of divine power and judgment.
5. How does the fate of Shebna and the appointment of Eliakim as his replacement demonstrate a larger theological principle at work?

Glossary of Key Terms

Chutzpah: Boldness or audacity, often used in a negative or sarcastic way, as in having nerve.

Cush: An ancient kingdom located in the southern part of modern-day Egypt and northern Sudan.

Eminent Domain: The right of a government or its agent to expropriate private property for public use, with payment of compensation.

Eliakim: A servant of God who replaces Shebna as prime minister. His time in power is ultimately limited, as a peg in a secure place that falls down.

Hezekiah: A king of Judah who is commended in the books of Kings and Chronicles for his devotion to God. However, Isaiah highlights his failure to consult God during his preparations for a siege.

Hostages: Individuals held as prisoners to ensure compliance, typically in political or military situations.

House of the Forest: A part of Solomon's temple that was filled with cedar columns, which served as the armory and treasury.

Kidron Valley: A valley located east of Jerusalem, which contains a spring that provided water to the city.

Lachish: A heavily fortified city in Judah, located on the edge of the coastal plain, a strategic city in the military strategies described in the session.

Lord God of Hosts: A divine title that emphasizes God's absolute power over all creation, including the celestial armies.

Moab: An ancient kingdom located east of the Dead Sea.

Oracle: A prophetic declaration or message delivered by a prophet or religious figure.

Phoenicians: An ancient civilization that established major port cities like Tyre and Sidon, known for their trade and seafaring capabilities.

Pyrrhic Victory: A victory gained at such a great cost that it is practically a defeat.

Rabshakeh: An Assyrian officer who demands Jerusalem's surrender.

Sargon: An Assyrian king.

Sennacherib: An Assyrian emperor whose army besieged Jerusalem.

Shebna: The prime minister of Judah who was focused on building a tomb for himself rather than looking to God.

Sophia Perennis: The "perennial wisdom," a thread of truth that runs through all cultures.

Syria: An ancient kingdom located north of Israel.

Tarshish: A location likely on the eastern coast of Spain, which was a major trading

destination for ships.

Tyre and Sidon: Two major port cities on the coast north of Israel, known for their wealth and trade, destroyed because of their pride.

Valley of Vision: A sarcastic term used by Isaiah to describe Jerusalem, highlighting the people's short-sightedness and failure to see the bigger picture of the future.

Vassal: A person or state in a subordinate position to another.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 11, Isaiah 22-23, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Isaiah 22-23

- Why does Isaiah include Judah in his list of nations not to be trusted?** Isaiah's inclusion of Judah in the list of nations not to be trusted is a powerful and unexpected move. He is telling the people that they should not trust in their own nation, their own power, or their own perceived righteousness, because they are just as prone to failure and idolatry as any other nation. It's a call to acknowledge that trusting in a national entity to save them, even their own, is a mistake. Judah is no better than any other nation in this respect. This is a dramatic statement that would likely have made Isaiah unpopular with his contemporaries. It's a recognition that national identity is not a path to salvation.
- What does Isaiah mean by "the Valley of Vision" and why is it a sarcastic term?** The phrase "Valley of Vision" is an oxymoron, a combination of two contradictory ideas. A valley is a low place, often associated with limited perspective, while vision is something that is typically expansive and far-reaching. Isaiah uses it sarcastically to describe the short-sightedness of the people of Judah. Instead of having a broad view, like being on a mountain top, they are trapped in the narrow perspective of their immediate situation, unable to see the larger picture and God's plan for the future. They believe they have great insight, but in reality, they are very near-sighted.
- Why is Isaiah not joining in the jubilation of the people after the apparent relief from the Assyrians?** Isaiah does not join in the jubilation because he has a long-term view and recognizes the deeper issues at play. The rejoicing of the people is based on either the temporary withdrawal of the Assyrian officer or the retreat of Sennacherib's army. These events might seem like victories, but Isaiah sees that these are temporary respites in a longer story of destruction and judgment. He does not see genuine repentance or lasting peace, and he grieves the destruction his people will ultimately face. He sees the spiritual and physical destruction. He recognizes that the people are focused on immediate relief rather than the overall, more important, picture. He views their celebration as short-sighted and delusional.

- What is the significance of the phrase "The Lord God of hosts" in these chapters?** "The Lord God of hosts" is a powerful title for God that emphasizes His absolute power and authority over the entire universe. The 'hosts' refer to the armies of heaven, which in the ancient worldview, were the stars and the spiritual forces. This phrase highlights that all cosmic powers belong to God and exist to do His bidding. It's a declaration that God is not just one of many gods, but the ultimate power, supreme over all creation and over all the other so-called gods of other nations. It serves to emphasize God's complete control over everything, and that even the powerful armies of the world are no match for His authority.
- How did King Hezekiah fail despite doing good things for Jerusalem's defense?** Hezekiah was a good king who did much to prepare Jerusalem for a siege by strengthening the walls, securing the water supply, and building a reservoir. However, according to Isaiah, his fundamental flaw was that he did not consult his maker, the Lord. He was looking at the physical and material actions, the things he could control and see. He relied solely on his own efforts and failed to seek God's guidance or place his trust in Him. He looked at the weapons and fortifications, not the ultimate source of power and protection. This highlights the idea that success in God's eyes is not just about external achievements, but about our attitude and our dependence on Him.
- What does it mean to "look to your maker" and why is it so critical?** To "look to your maker" means to have an attitude of total dependence on God. It means to be in constant communication with him through prayer, to trust in his plans, and seek his guidance in all that we do, setting up a way of thinking that takes his view. It involves an active and ongoing engagement with God's will, not just a passive recognition of his existence. This approach cultivates a long-term vision, a recognition that temporary successes or failures don't define us, nor are our lives lived independent of God. It means avoiding the trap of simply focusing on immediate gratification. It requires us to align our lives with God's long-term plan, not just our own short term desires. It's critical because without this perspective, we are prone to self-reliance and short-sighted decisions that can lead to spiritual destruction.

- **What is the unpardonable sin, and why is the attitude of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" connected to it?** The unpardonable sin involves a deliberate rejection of God after having known him. It is likened to someone who has had the ability to receive the truth, but then intentionally smashes that receiver and shuts it off. It's a hardening of the heart to the point of being unable to hear God's voice or receive His grace. The phrase "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" represents the mindset of someone who is deliberately ignoring the spiritual realities of life, choosing instead to focus only on immediate pleasures. It's a rejection of accountability and a refusal to repent, which leads to the hardening of the heart. This deliberate blindness makes one unable to receive forgiveness.
- **How does the imagery of the peg in a secure place and its eventual failure illustrate the nature of human success in God's kingdom?** The illustration of Eliakim being like a peg in a secure place, and then that peg giving way and falling, emphasizes that success in God's kingdom is not guaranteed by human standards. While Eliakim is set in a position of power and stability, even a faithful servant can experience failure in a worldly sense. It highlights that our faithfulness to God does not necessarily mean we will always achieve worldly success or have a long, stable reign. Instead, our focus should be on remaining faithful to God and leaving the results in his hands. This illustrates that the outcome is not what makes us faithful; rather, our faithfulness and obedience to God regardless of results is what defines us. We are called to be faithful, not necessarily successful.