

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 13

Isaiah 26-27

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 13, Isaiah 26-27, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah chapters 26 and 27, focusing on themes of trust in God, the nature of judgment and salvation, and the concept of *shalom*. Oswalt uses various literary devices, including allusions to pagan myths, to interpret the text. He emphasizes the importance of righteousness, faithfulness, steadfastness, and trust as prerequisites for experiencing God's peace and security. The lecture also highlights the transformative power of God's grace to overcome sin and chaos, using illustrative examples and analogies to elucidate his points. Finally, the lecture explains the difference between punishment and discipline within a theological context.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 13 – 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
on13.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's teaching on Isaiah 26-27:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 26-27

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Isaiah_EN_Session13.pdf"

Overview: This session focuses on Isaiah chapters 26 and 27, continuing the theme of trust in God amidst judgment and chaos. Oswalt emphasizes the contrast between worldly powers and God's secure city, the importance of a steadfast faith, the nature of divine discipline, and God's ultimate victory over chaos and sin.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Importance of Translation and Interpretation:

- Oswalt highlights the difference between literal and thought-for-thought translations of the Bible, noting that a strictly literal approach can miss the intended meaning.
- He explains, "Sometimes literal translations may be word for word for word, and you really miss the thought." He uses the example of Exodus 34:6, where the Hebrew literally describes God as having "a really long nose," an idiom for patience.
- He recommends using both types of translations: a literal translation for close study and a thought-for-thought translation like the New Living Translation (NLT) for grasping the flow of the text.

1. Context Within Isaiah:

- This section of Isaiah (chapters 26-27) falls within a larger section (7-39) focused on "trust the basis of servanthood".
- It's also part of the sub-section (13-35) exploring "lessons in trust," where King Ahaz's failure to trust God serves as a backdrop.
- Chapters 13-23 address not trusting nations, with judgment being passed on them.
- Chapters 24-27 shift to a more general treatment about God's lordship over the world.

- Chapters 24 and 25 provide context, depicting the destruction of earthly powers and a feast on God's holy mountain for all who are redeemable. Oswalt notes the "Semitic hyperbole" of everyone being destroyed and yet a feast for all peoples.

1. **Contrast of Cities: The City of Earth vs. God's City:**

- Chapter 26 begins with a song praising God's "strong city" as opposed to the city of the earth, which is built on oppression and human strength and is ultimately destroyed.
- "Here again is the contrast. There's the city of earth in all of its power, power built on oppression, power built on human strength, and it has been flattened, but we have a city, and that city is a cause for singing."
- God's city's walls are salvation, not physical walls, and offer security to those inside.

1. **Characteristics of the Inhabitants of God's City:**

- Oswalt identifies four key characteristics of those who dwell within God's secure city. They are:
- **Righteous:** Committed to doing what is right.
- **Faithful:** Reliable and dependable. He emphasizes that "truth is a way of living."
- **Steadfast:** Their minds are fixed on God with a clear focus. This point is illustrated with the story of runner Jim Ryan who lost his focus, looking back, and lost the race.
- **Trusting:** They trust fully in God.

1. **The Result of Steadfast Faith: Shalom:**

- Oswalt emphasizes that the result of this kind of living is "shalom of shalom," which is often translated as "perfect peace" but conveys a much deeper sense of wholeness, being made complete and pulled together. "Shalom is to be put together, to be made whole, to have all of the disparate parts of your life pulled together into one."
- He shares an anecdote about a man who described his own conversion by praying for God to gather his life into a "big snowball and hurl it at the target of Jesus," capturing the idea of shalom.

- It's not an absence of conflict but being made whole through God's love and grace.
- He notes that shalom comes from embodying these characteristics of righteousness, faithfulness, steadfastness, and trust, not as a gift dropped from the heavens without any requirement on our part.

1. **The Fate of the Arrogant:**

- Those who exalt themselves and their own powers will be humbled and laid low, like a "sand castle" crushed by God's foot.
- The "lofty city" represents human pride and is contrasted with the "secure city" of God.

1. **The Path of the Righteous:**

- Oswalt brings back the theme of the straight and level path, previously seen in chapter 40 and other parts of Isaiah.
- God, as a "great earth mover," can create a straight path for the righteous through life's hills and valleys, if one is fixed on Him.

1. **Waiting on God:**

- Trust and wait are synonyms in the Old Testament, as waiting is seen as "confident expectation" and a refusal to run ahead of God and solve problems oneself.
- This "waiting" involves a desire for God's name (character, nature, reputation) to be glorified through us.

1. **The Paradox of Judgment:**

- Isaiah, speaking both to God and for the people, expresses a desire for God's judgment. This is not to be cruel, but because "If favor is shown to the wicked, he doesn't learn righteousness."
- Oswalt states, "unless you bring your judgment upon the wicked, they're going to just keep on doing what they're doing."
- He reflects on the condition of America, suggesting that God's prolonged favor can lead to a sense of entitlement and a lack of understanding of true righteousness.

- The prophets are portrayed as flexible - speaking for God, to God, to the people, and for the people.

1. **God's Work in Us:**

- True spiritual maturity recognizes that any work or accomplishments in life are ultimately God's doing.
- Oswalt notes that it's hard to be arrogant when one truly believes that all good comes from God.
- He emphasizes the importance of remembering whose we are, much like Jesus' command to remember him in communion.

1. **Failure and Deliverance:**

- Isaiah laments that the people have not delivered the world to righteousness, noting that they are like a pregnant woman who gives birth to wind, signifying their lack of impact in the world.
- He emphasizes the need for our deliverance to be so clear that it becomes a condemnation to those who are not delivered, much like the smell of life to the living and the smell of death to the lost, as stated by Paul.
- It's about the power of a changed life, not necessarily words, that brings condemnation. He uses the example of Mother Teresa.

1. **The Promise of Resurrection:**

- Chapter 26 ends with a promise of resurrection: "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise... the earth will give birth to the dead."
- Oswalt highlights that this promise underscores that death is not the end of the story and encourages the listener that their failings aren't the last word.
- He emphasizes that God doesn't "grade on the curve," but based on whether or not one has accepted Christ's covering.

1. **Leviathan and the Chaos Story:**

- Chapter 27 introduces the theme of God's victory over chaos, using the image of Leviathan, a sea monster from ancient Near Eastern mythology.

- Oswalt clarifies that the Hebrews *allude* to these myths without believing them. He uses the illustration of saying "He's a real Hercules" without actually believing in the Greek myth.
- This is used as a parable for God's power to bring salvation out of sin, differing sharply from pagan creation myths where gods bring order to chaos, not salvation from sin.
- God's act of deliverance at the Red Sea is framed as an allusion to this defeating of the "sea monster".

1. **God's Transformation of Chaos into Order:**

- Oswalt uses the true story of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner who survived a plane crash, a long time at sea on a raft, and torture in a Japanese prison camp as an illustration of how God can transform chaos into order.
- Zamperini's life, riddled with the chaos of sin, was ultimately transformed through faith and he became an evangelist.

1. **God as the Keeper of the Vineyard:**

- The imagery shifts to a vineyard, recalling chapter 5's bitter vineyard. However, now God is a caring keeper, watering it, protecting it, and seeking shalom with it.
- God's vineyard will never cease to be His vineyard.

1. **Discipline and Love:**

- Oswalt stresses that God's discipline is an act of love, not simply punishment.
- He references Hebrews 12, explaining that discipline is to allow us to suffer consequences "in order that", contrasted with punishment that just inflicts suffering for wrongdoing.
- God's intended last word is not destruction, but redemption and growth.

Concluding Thoughts:

This session provides a rich exploration of Isaiah 26-27. Oswalt skillfully weaves together theological insights, biblical context, and practical applications. He underscores the importance of trust, steadfast faith, and the transformative power of God amidst the chaos of life. He stresses that true shalom comes from living righteously, faithfully, steadfastly, and trustingly, and that God's intended last word is always redemption.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 13, Isaiah 26-27

Isaiah Chapters 26-27 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Oswalt, what are the two types of Bible translations that are most useful for study and why?
2. What is the central theme of Isaiah 7-39 and how does the failure of King Ahaz relate to it?
3. In Isaiah 24 and 25, what is the fate of the nations and what is the feast on God's holy mountain about?
4. What is the significance of the "song" mentioned at the beginning of Isaiah 26?
5. According to Oswalt, what are the four characteristics of the people who enter the secure city in Isaiah 26?
6. What does Oswalt say about "shalom" and how is it more than just peace?
7. How does Oswalt describe the relationship between cause and effect and God's actions?
8. What do the verses in Isaiah 26 about God's judgment and the wicked teach about the necessity of judgment?
9. How does Isaiah 27 reference the ancient Near East creation myths and what point does it make?
10. In Isaiah 27, what is the significance of the vineyard imagery and how has it changed from Chapter 5?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Oswalt recommends using a literal translation (like the ESV) for close, verse-by-verse study and a thought-for-thought translation (like the NLT) for reading larger sections and understanding the flow of the text. He emphasizes that both types are valuable and no translation is truly literal.
2. The central theme is trusting in the Lord's servanthood. King Ahaz failed this test by trusting Assyria instead of God, which led to the need for lessons in trust in the subsequent chapters.

3. In chapter 24, all nations will be destroyed and the city of earth broken down; the feast in Chapter 25 is not just for the righteous but symbolizes the possibility of redemption for all people. This shows that judgment is universal, while redemption is offered to everyone.
4. The "song" at the beginning of Isaiah 26 is a song of praise, contrasting with songs of terror and oppression mentioned earlier in the text, signifying hope and salvation. This praise is directed to God for the security and refuge He provides.
5. The four characteristics are: being righteous (committed to doing what is right), keeping faith (reliable and dependable), having a steadfast mind (fixed on God), and trusting in the Lord. These qualities are necessary for entering God's city of salvation.
6. Shalom is more than just the absence of conflict; it means wholeness, being put together, and having all parts of life integrated. It is not merely about peace, but a state of complete well-being and unity.
7. While God performs miracles, He also works within cause and effect. Oswalt says we must fulfill the causes (i.e., living according to God's principles) before we have a right to expect the effects (i.e., God's blessings and deliverance).
8. These verses suggest that showing favor to the wicked without judgment does not lead them to righteousness. Judgment is necessary for the wicked to recognize their wrong and learn true righteousness.
9. Isaiah alludes to ancient Near East creation myths to use familiar language to illustrate God's power to save from sin, not to create order from chaos. The point is that God can redeem the chaos of sin.
10. The vineyard image shifts from one of bitter grapes (in Chapter 5) to one of care and nurture, reflecting God's intent to cultivate and protect his people. It emphasizes God's commitment to the vineyard, even though they had been a disappointment.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Develop a well-supported essay addressing each of the following questions.

1. Discuss the role of trust in Isaiah chapters 26-27, as emphasized by Oswalt. How does he show trust as both a theological and a practical concept for individuals?
2. Analyze Oswalt's interpretation of Isaiah 26:3-4 and the concept of "perfect peace." How does he connect this idea with daily life and challenges faced by believers?
3. Compare and contrast Oswalt's understanding of the "city of earth" and the "secure city." How do these concepts reflect the themes of pride, judgment, and salvation?
4. Explain the significance of the resurrection in Isaiah 26-27, according to Oswalt. How does it relate to both individual experiences of suffering and the larger narrative of redemption?
5. How does Oswalt use the themes of discipline and love in Isaiah 27 to illustrate God's relationship with His people?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Literal Translation:** A Bible translation that attempts to adhere closely to the original word-for-word text.
- **Thought-for-Thought Translation:** A Bible translation that focuses on conveying the meaning of the original text rather than a strict word-for-word approach.
- **Servanthood:** A concept that emphasizes serving God and others as a core component of the relationship with God.
- **Shalom:** A Hebrew word encompassing wholeness, completeness, well-being, and peace; it is more than just the absence of conflict.
- **Eternal Security:** The theological belief that once a person has accepted Christ, they are eternally secure in their salvation and cannot lose it.
- **Steadfast:** Firmly fixed or not moving; resolute. In this context, refers to a mind fixed on God.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
- **Universalism:** The theological belief that all people will eventually be saved and go to heaven.
- **Allusion:** An indirect or passing reference to something.
- **Leviathan:** A sea monster in ancient Near East mythology, used in the Bible to symbolize chaos and evil.
- **Discipline:** Training that corrects or improves; also includes the act of experiencing the consequences of our actions with a redemptive intention.
- **Punishment:** Imposing suffering or penalty for wrongdoing, typically without a redemptive purpose.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 13, Isaiah 26-27, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Isaiah Chapters 26-27 Based on Dr. John Oswalt's Teaching

1. Why does Dr. Oswalt prefer using a more literal translation like the ESV for close study and the NLT for general reading?

Dr. Oswalt explains that literal translations, like the ESV, are useful for verse-by-verse analysis because they maintain the original structure of the text. However, they can sometimes miss the broader thought and flow of the passage. Thought-for-thought translations like the NLT are better for grasping the overall message and flow of larger sections of scripture, making them ideal for devotional reading. He suggests using both types of translations to gain a full understanding. He clarifies there are no purely literal translations, as sometimes the literal word to word translations can obscure the intended thought behind the original language.

2. In the context of Isaiah, what is the significance of the "city" mentioned in chapter 26, and how does it relate to the "city of earth"?

The "city" in Isaiah 26 represents a secure and protected place built on God's salvation. It is contrasted with the "city of earth," which is built on human power, oppression, and ultimately destined to be flattened. The walls of this secure city are salvation itself, symbolizing the protection and security that God provides to His people. The movement throughout the Bible from a garden to a city points toward the establishment of this secure city.

3. What are the four characteristics of the people who enter the secure city, and what is the result of embodying those characteristics?

The people who enter the secure city are described as righteous, faithful, steadfast in mind, and trusting in the Lord. The result of embodying these characteristics is described as "shalom of shalom," which is more than just peace but a wholeness, a unity, and a gathering of all the disparate parts of one's life into a harmonious whole, being put together by God. It is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of the wholeness that God brings to life when someone has these qualities.

4. How does Isaiah's understanding of "trust" differ from merely waiting passively, and how does "waiting" relate to trust?

Isaiah uses trust and waiting as synonyms. It is not a passive "sooner or later" mentality, but an active, confident expectation. It means not running ahead to solve problems on your own but letting God solve them in His way. This active waiting demonstrates a confident anticipation of God's work, characterized by not needing to solve things yourself. It shows an eagerness to see how God will act rather than trying to take control.

5. How does the concept of "name" function in the passage?

In Isaiah, the term "name" refers not to a label, but to God's character, nature, and reputation. The people's desire is for God's name to be glorified through them. This means that they want to be a reflection of His character and that others would be drawn to Him because of their actions and lives. God's name is what people should ultimately remember as being over their own lives.

6. How does Isaiah explain why God sometimes allows judgments to come upon the wicked, and what is the implication of God being overly gracious to the wicked?

Isaiah suggests that if God shows too much favor to the wicked, they don't learn righteousness. Instead, they perceive their actions to be affirmed and right, rather than seeing the need for a relationship with God. This highlights the role of judgment in calling people to acknowledge God's ways and turn away from wickedness. When God is overly gracious to the wicked it has the potential to cause a loss of focus on God within those who are already striving towards the path of righteousness.

7. What is the significance of the allusion to the chaos monster Leviathan in chapter 27, and how does it differ from pagan creation stories?

The allusion to Leviathan, a chaos monster in pagan mythologies, is used by Isaiah as a metaphor for God's power to bring salvation from sin-induced chaos, not to create order from pre-existing chaotic matter. While pagans believed the gods defeated the monster to impose order, the Bible uses this imagery to emphasize that God overcomes the chaos brought about by human sin and that is a display of God's salvific power rather than merely a creative power. God made an orderly world, and humanity brought chaos to it.

8. How does the image of the vineyard shift from chapter 5 to chapter 27, and what does it mean for believers in the context of discipline vs. punishment?

In chapter 5, the vineyard represents Israel, producing bitter grapes and deserving destruction. In chapter 27, the vineyard is redeemed. God is its keeper, actively watering and protecting it. He is willing to fight any threat to His vineyard. God's discipline comes from love, intended to correct and restore rather than just impose suffering for wrongdoing. God's intention is to remove any hindrances and restore growth to His vineyard, ensuring the good vines can flourish, bearing fruit. He intends to use discipline to transform chaotic areas into order, not to completely destroy them.