

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18

Isaiah 36-37

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18, Isaiah 36-37, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. John Oswalt examines Isaiah chapters 36 and 37, focusing on the theme of trust in God. The lecture analyzes the Rabshakeh's attempt to undermine Judah's faith through psychological warfare, highlighting the Assyrian's strategic use of language and manipulation of religious beliefs. Oswalt contrasts this with Hezekiah's response of humility, prayer, and reliance on God. The lecture further explores the contrasting viewpoints of human self-exaltation versus the exaltation of Yahweh, concluding with God's ultimate intervention and the destruction of the Assyrian army. The overarching message emphasizes the importance of unwavering trust in God despite overwhelming opposition.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18 – 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).



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on18.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

A Briefing Doc on Trust and the Power of Yahweh: Examining Isaiah 36-37

This briefing document analyzes Isaiah chapters 36-37 based on Dr. John Oswalt's lecture (Session 18). These chapters, framed within the broader theme of "Trust" in Isaiah 7-39, present a critical juncture: "Trust, Yes But." The narrative centers around the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and the stark contrast between human pride and the unrivaled power of Yahweh.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Trust as the central issue:** The Assyrian commander, Rabshakeh, repeatedly questions Hezekiah's trust in various sources: Egyptian alliance, military strength, and even Yahweh Himself. The repetition of "trust" (nine times) underscores this as the core conflict.
- **Psychological Warfare:** Rabshakeh utilizes manipulative tactics, spreading misinformation and attempting to sow doubt within the besieged city. He claims Yahweh is angry with Hezekiah's religious reforms and that Yahweh, like other conquered gods, is powerless against the Assyrian king.
- **Hezekiah's Response: Repentance and Prayer:** Faced with this existential threat, Hezekiah demonstrates true repentance by humbling himself, seeking refuge in the temple, and consulting the prophet Isaiah. His prayer acknowledges Yahweh's unique power as the Creator and the only "Living God."
- **Yahweh's Sovereignty and Power:** Isaiah delivers Yahweh's response, mocking Sennacherib's arrogance and highlighting the folly of challenging the "Holy One of Israel." Yahweh asserts His control over history, declaring that Assyria is merely a tool in His preordained plan.
- **The Climax: Divine Intervention and the Fall of Sennacherib:** The narrative culminates in the dramatic annihilation of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers by the Angel of the Lord. Sennacherib, despite boasting of his victory, never campaigns in the West again. Years later, he is assassinated while worshipping his god, showcasing the ultimate futility of defying Yahweh.

Important Facts:

- The events occur in 701 BC, 35 years after Isaiah's initial warning to Ahaz about trusting Assyria.

- Rabshakeh strategically speaks Hebrew to demoralize the common people.
- Sennacherib's claim that Yahweh "sent" him ironically reveals the enemy's tactic of twisting truth to create confusion.
- Hezekiah's prayer recognizes that the situation is not about Judah's worthiness, but about Yahweh's glory and reputation. This selfless plea resonates with Isaiah's message in Chapter 2 about the nations coming to learn from a transformed Jerusalem.
- The Assyrian annals corroborate the biblical account, albeit with Sennacherib attempting to downplay his failure to conquer Jerusalem.

Quotes:

- **Rabshakeh:** "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you...On what are you basing this confidence of yours?" (36:14, 15)
- **Rabshakeh:** "Yahweh himself told me to come up and destroy this land." (36:10)
- **Hezekiah:** "It may be that the Lord your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to mock the living God..." (37:4)
- **Hezekiah:** "Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God." (37:20)
- **Isaiah:** "The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and mocks you. The daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee." (37:22)
- **Isaiah:** "Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone." (37:26)

Conclusion:

Isaiah 36-37 powerfully demonstrates the consequences of human pride when contrasted with the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh. The narrative serves as a potent reminder that true security and victory are found only in complete trust and reliance upon the Living God. It also emphasizes the importance of discerning truth amidst the enemy's deceptive tactics and clinging to the promises of God in times of crisis.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 18, Isaiah 36-37

Trust in Yahweh: A Study Guide for Isaiah 36-37

Short Answer Quiz

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

1. What is the symbolic significance of the Assyrian officer standing in the same location where Isaiah challenged King Ahaz to trust God?
2. What does the Rabshakeh's repeated mention of "trust" reveal about the central theme of these chapters?
3. What arguments does the Rabshakeh use to convince the people of Judah not to trust in Yahweh?
4. How does the Rabshakeh's understanding of Yahweh differ from the true nature of God?
5. What specific actions does Hezekiah take in response to the Assyrian threat?
6. How does Hezekiah's prayer in chapter 37 differ from his initial response in chapter 36?
7. What is the significance of Hezekiah's statement, "Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone" (Isaiah 37:20)?
8. How does God respond to Hezekiah's prayer?
9. What does Sennacherib's account of his campaign against Judah reveal about the Assyrian perspective on the conflict?
10. What is the ultimate message of these chapters regarding trust in God?

Answer Key

1. The Assyrian officer standing in the same location emphasizes the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz. It highlights the consequences of misplaced trust and serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness.
2. The Rabshakeh's repeated use of "trust" underscores the central theme of choosing where to place one's faith. It sets up a contrast between trusting in human power (Assyria, Egypt) and trusting in God.

3. The Rabshakeh argues that Yahweh is helpless to save Jerusalem, citing the destruction of Samaria and the futility of trusting in a god who seemingly allowed the destruction of His own places of worship.
4. The Rabshakeh views Yahweh as just another weak, localized deity like the gods of the nations Assyria has conquered. He fails to understand Yahweh as the one true, all-powerful Creator God.
5. Hezekiah tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth, goes to the Temple, and sends messengers to Isaiah, demonstrating humility, repentance, seeking God's presence, and consulting God's prophet.
6. In chapter 37, Hezekiah's prayer directly addresses Yahweh as the one true God and acknowledges God's power over all nations. He emphasizes that God's deliverance is not about Judah's merit but about glorifying God's name.
7. This statement signifies a shift in Hezekiah's focus. He now understands that the situation is not just about Judah's survival but about demonstrating God's power and sovereignty to the entire world.
8. God responds by sending an angel who strikes down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, forcing Sennacherib to retreat and ultimately leading to his death at the hands of his own sons.
9. Sennacherib's annals boastfully describe his victories and downplay his failure to conquer Jerusalem, attributing it to Hezekiah's isolation rather than divine intervention. This demonstrates the Assyrian king's attempt to preserve his image and conceal his defeat.
10. The chapters powerfully demonstrate that trusting in God, even when facing seemingly insurmountable odds, leads to deliverance and the glorification of God's name. It emphasizes that true security and hope are found in Yahweh alone.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the character of the Rabshakeh. What motivates him, and what rhetorical strategies does he employ to achieve his goals? How does his character contrast with Hezekiah's?
2. Explore the theme of idolatry in Isaiah 36-37. How does the Rabshakeh's perspective on the gods reflect the dangers of idolatry? How does Hezekiah's response exemplify genuine faith in the one true God?

3. Discuss the concept of "the living God" as presented in these chapters. What does this phrase reveal about the nature of Yahweh in contrast to the false gods of the nations?
4. How do Isaiah 36-37 relate to the broader themes of the book of Isaiah? Consider the concepts of judgment, salvation, the sovereignty of God, and the role of the Davidic king.
5. Compare and contrast the accounts of the Assyrian campaign found in the biblical text with those found in Sennacherib's annals. What insights can be gained from examining these differing perspectives?

Glossary of Key Terms

1. **Rabshakeh:** A high-ranking Assyrian official, likely the chief cupbearer, who acted as a spokesperson for the king.
2. **Sennacherib:** The king of Assyria during the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE.
3. **Hezekiah:** The king of Judah who trusted in God for deliverance from the Assyrians.
4. **Ahaz:** Hezekiah's father and previous king of Judah, who chose to rely on Assyria instead of God.
5. **High places:** Elevated areas used for worship, often associated with pagan practices.
6. **Virgin daughter of Zion/Jerusalem:** A poetic personification of the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.
7. **Living God:** A designation for Yahweh emphasizing his active presence, power, and involvement in the world, contrasting him with the lifeless idols of other nations.
8. **Angel of the Lord:** A divine messenger and agent of God's power.
9. **Assyrian annals:** Official records inscribed on monuments and tablets, detailing the achievements and conquests of Assyrian kings.
10. **Lingua Franca:** A common language used for communication between people who speak different native languages. In this context, Aramaic served as the lingua franca of the Assyrian empire.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18, Isaiah 36-37, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Trusting God in the Face of Adversity

1. What is the main theme of Isaiah chapters 36-37?

These chapters primarily deal with the theme of **trust in God versus trust in human power**. They recount the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem under King Sennacherib and Hezekiah's struggle to trust God amidst a seemingly hopeless situation. The Assyrians, confident in their military might, attempt to undermine Hezekiah's faith by boasting of their victories over other nations and gods.

2. What tactics does the Assyrian Rabshakeh use to try and break Hezekiah's faith?

The Rabshakeh employs a variety of **psychological warfare tactics**. He:

- **Downplays Hezekiah's authority** by refusing to call him "King."
- **Ridicules trust in Egypt**, portraying it as a weak and unreliable ally.
- **Claims that Yahweh is angry** with Hezekiah for destroying local shrines.
- **Boasts that Yahweh is powerless** to stop the Assyrian army, just like other nations' gods.
- **Attempts to sow fear and confusion** by using a mixture of threats, false promises, and distorted biblical interpretations.

3. How does Hezekiah respond to the Assyrian threats?

Hezekiah demonstrates **true faith in action**. He:

- **Humbles himself** before God by tearing his clothes and wearing sackcloth.
- **Seeks God's presence** by going to the Temple.
- **Consults God's prophet**, Isaiah, for guidance.
- **Prays fervently** to Yahweh, acknowledging His power and sovereignty.

4. What is significant about Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah 37:20?

Hezekiah's prayer reveals a **mature understanding of God's priority**. He doesn't plead for deliverance based on his own merit or goodness. Instead, he asks God to act **for His own sake and reputation** so that all nations would know the truth about the living God.

5. How does God respond to Hezekiah's prayer?

God responds decisively by:

- **Sending an angel** who strikes down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.
- **Turning Sennacherib back** to Assyria, where he is later assassinated by his own sons.

6. What does the Assyrian account of the siege tell us?

Sennacherib's annals, while boasting of his victories, **conspicuously omit any mention of conquering Jerusalem**. He only claims to have "shut Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage." This omission speaks volumes about the **truth of God's intervention**.

7. What is the significance of the "virgin daughter of Zion" imagery in Isaiah 37:22?

This imagery depicts Jerusalem as a **defenseless young woman** facing a powerful and brutal attacker. It highlights the **contrast between human vulnerability and divine power**, emphasizing the need for complete reliance on God for protection.

8. What key lesson can we learn from Hezekiah's experience?

Hezekiah's story teaches us that even in the most desperate circumstances, **true faith in God leads to ultimate victory**. When we humble ourselves, seek His presence, consult His word, and pray with right motives, God will act for His glory and our good.