

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 28

Isaiah 58-59

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 28, Isaiah 58-59, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcript of a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 58-59. **The lecture focuses on the hypocrisy of the Israelites**, who outwardly practiced religious rituals but inwardly lacked genuine repentance and love for others. **Oswalt contrasts their superficial piety with God's expectation of holistic righteousness**, encompassing both religious observance and ethical conduct towards the vulnerable. **He emphasizes the crucial role of the Messiah**, who would conquer their sins and empower them to live righteously, rejecting the notion of passive acceptance of sin. The lecture utilizes the structure of a chiasm to highlight the parallel between the initial and concluding sections of Isaiah 56-66, and explores the theme of "righteousness, the character of servanthood." Finally, **Oswalt challenges common evangelical interpretations** that downplay the need for personal righteousness after salvation.

2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 28 – 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
on28.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Briefing Document: Isaiah Chapters 58-59 - Dr. John Oswalt

Main Themes:

- **Hypocrisy vs. True Righteousness:** Chapter 58 exposes the hypocrisy of the Israelites who outwardly practice religious rituals like fasting but inwardly harbor selfish motives and mistreat others. True righteousness, as defined by Isaiah, involves demonstrating God's love through acts of compassion and justice, particularly towards the vulnerable.
- **God's Grace and Human Responsibility:** Chapter 59 paints a bleak picture of humanity's inability to achieve righteousness on its own. Our sinfulness creates a separation from God, leaving us incapable of producing true justice and shalom. However, God, in His grace, sends the Messiah as a warrior to defeat sin and empower us to live righteously.
- **The Messiah's Dual Role:** The Messiah is presented as both the suffering servant (referenced from Isaiah 53) who takes on the sins of the world and the conquering warrior who defeats the power of sin in our lives. This highlights the multifaceted nature of God's redemption: He offers forgiveness and empowers us to live transformed lives.

Key Ideas/Facts:

- **Fasting as an Act of Repentance, Not Manipulation:** Fasting should be an expression of genuine repentance and a turning towards God, not an attempt to manipulate Him for personal gain.
- **Mishpat - God's Divine Order:** The concept of "mishpat" encompasses justice but extends to God's all-encompassing order for life, which includes social justice and righteous living.
- **Love for God Inseparable from Love for Others:** True love for God manifests in compassionate action towards those in need, especially the powerless and marginalized. Serving others reflects God's grace, as they cannot repay us, mirroring His unconditional love for us.
- **Surrendering Needs to God:** The key to experiencing God's blessings lies in surrendering our own desires and allowing Him to determine and meet our true needs in His way and time.

- **Sabbath-Keeping as a Costly Act of Obedience:** Keeping the Sabbath demands sacrifice and prioritizes God over material gain, a stark contrast to the Israelites' focus on empty rituals.
- **The Consequences of Sin:** Chapter 59 vividly portrays the destructive nature of sin, leading to brokenness, injustice, and separation from God.
- **The Messiah's Victory Over Sin:** The Messiah comes as a powerful warrior, equipped with righteousness, salvation, and vengeance, to conquer the power of sin and enable us to live righteously.

Important Quotes:

- **Chapter 58:6:** "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"
- **Chapter 58:8:** "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall come speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."
- **Chapter 59:2:** "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."
- **Chapter 59:15b-16a:** "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him."
- **Chapter 59:20-21:** "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression... "“This is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.””"

Conclusion:

These chapters challenge us to move beyond empty religious practices and embrace true righteousness that flows from a heart transformed by God's grace. Recognizing our own inability to achieve righteousness, we are invited to surrender to the Messiah, who both forgives our sins and empowers us to reflect His love and justice in the world.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 28, Isaiah 58-59

Righteousness: The Character of Servanthood in Isaiah 58-59

Short Answer Questions

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

1. What is the main problem Dr. Oswalt identifies with the people's religious practices in Isaiah 58:1-4?
2. What does the Hebrew word *mishpat* mean, and how does it relate to the people's behavior in Isaiah 58?
3. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the primary purpose of fasting in the Bible, and how does this differ from the way the people are fasting in Isaiah 58?
4. Why does Dr. Oswalt suggest that Sabbath-keeping was more genuinely costly than fasting for the people in Isaiah's time?
5. What is the connection between loving God and loving others, as described in Dr. Oswalt's commentary on Isaiah 58?
6. How does the imagery of "adder's eggs" and "spider's webs" in Isaiah 59:5-8 contribute to the overall message of the passage?
7. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the significance of the shift in perspective in Isaiah 59:15-16?
8. How does Dr. Oswalt compare the depiction of God's arm in Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 59:16?
9. Who or what is the "warrior" fighting in Isaiah 59, according to Dr. Oswalt?
10. Why does Dr. Oswalt disagree with the idea that God looks at believers through "Jesus-colored glasses" and considers them righteous even when they are not?

Short Answer Key

1. The main problem is hypocrisy. The people are performing outward acts of piety, but their hearts are not truly devoted to God. They are seeking their own pleasure and oppressing their workers, even while engaging in religious practices like fasting.
2. *Mishpat* means God's divine order for life and existence. It encompasses legal justice but goes beyond it to include all aspects of living in a way that reflects

God's will. The people are forsaking God's *mishpat* by mistreating others and seeking their own gain, contradicting their outward displays of righteousness.

3. Fasting in the Bible is primarily an act of repentance, expressing sorrow, regret, and a turning away from sin. However, the people in Isaiah 58 are fasting to manipulate God into blessing them, rather than out of genuine repentance for their wrongdoing.
4. Fasting was a relatively easy religious practice that allowed people to appear pious without significant sacrifice. Sabbath-keeping, on the other hand, required giving up a day's work, resulting in a direct financial loss. This made Sabbath-keeping a more genuine test of obedience and commitment to God.
5. Love for God and love for others are inseparable. Genuine love for God must manifest in outward acts of kindness and justice toward others, particularly the weak and vulnerable. Neglecting the needs of others reveals a lack of true love for God.
6. The imagery of "adder's eggs" and "spider's webs" depicts the people's actions as inherently destructive and harmful. Just as these objects offer no sustenance or protection, their works are ultimately worthless and bring about death and ruin, highlighting the pervasive wickedness in their society.
7. The shift in perspective in Isaiah 59:15-16 moves from the people's inability to achieve righteousness to God's intervention. God, seeing the lack of justice and the absence of anyone to intercede, takes action himself, becoming a warrior to bring salvation and righteousness.
8. In Isaiah 53:1, God's arm is presented as seemingly weak and rejected, embodying his suffering servant role. In contrast, Isaiah 59:16 depicts God's arm as powerful and mighty, symbolizing his active intervention to bring justice and defeat sin. This highlights the two aspects of God's work: suffering love in redemption and powerful action in sanctification.
9. The "warrior" in Isaiah 59 is fighting against the people's sin. Though they have returned from exile, their hearts remain captive to their own selfish desires and wickedness. The warrior comes to conquer their sin and enable them to live righteously.
10. Dr. Oswalt believes that while God declares believers righteous through Jesus' sacrifice, this does not negate the expectation of righteous living. True faith must result in transformed behavior, reflecting God's character in the world. The idea

that believers can continue in sin contradicts the biblical call to holiness and discipleship.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the concept of *mishpat* in Isaiah 58-59. How does it relate to the people's actions, God's expectations, and the role of the Messiah?
2. Explore the tension between the people's outward religious practices and their inner condition in Isaiah 58. How does this passage critique hypocrisy and challenge modern readers to examine their own motives for religious observance?
3. Compare and contrast the descriptions of the people's behavior in Isaiah 59:1-15a with the attributes and actions of the "warrior" in Isaiah 59:15b-21. What does this reveal about the nature of true righteousness and the need for divine intervention?
4. Discuss the relationship between God's grace and human responsibility in light of Dr. Oswalt's commentary on Isaiah 58-59. How does this passage address the potential for misunderstanding the doctrine of justification by faith?
5. Connect the themes of light and darkness in Isaiah 58-59 to the broader message of the book. How does the Messiah's coming bring light into a world consumed by darkness, and what implications does this have for the lives of believers today?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Chiasm:** A literary structure where elements are presented in an A-B-C-B-A pattern, creating parallelism and emphasis.
- **Mishpat:** God's divine order for life and existence, encompassing justice, righteousness, and right relationships.
- **Hypocrisy:** The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behavior does not conform.
- **Fasting:** Abstaining from food for a period of time, often as a religious practice for repentance or seeking God's favor.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship, observed by Jews from Friday evening to Saturday evening, commanded by God as a sign of the covenant.
- **Grace:** God's unmerited favor and love toward humanity, freely given despite our sinfulness.
- **Redeemer:** One who delivers or rescues another from captivity, danger, or sin. In Isaiah, the Redeemer refers to the Messiah.
- **Messiah:** The anointed one, the promised deliverer of Israel, believed by Christians to be Jesus Christ.
- **Justification:** The act of God declaring a sinner righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, based on his atoning sacrifice.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process of being made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 28, Isaiah 58-59, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Isaiah Chapters 58 and 59

1. What is the main problem Isaiah addresses in chapter 58?

Isaiah highlights the hypocrisy of the people of Judah in chapter 58. While they outwardly engage in religious practices like fasting and seeking God, their hearts are far from him. They exploit their workers and engage in conflict, demonstrating a lack of true repentance and genuine love for God.

2. What kind of fast does God desire, according to Isaiah 58?

God desires a fast that is not merely an external act of deprivation but a genuine expression of repentance. He wants his people to loosen the bonds of wickedness, care for the poor and oppressed, share their bread with the hungry, and clothe the naked. True fasting, according to Isaiah, should be characterized by acts of love and justice.

3. Why is the right treatment of others, particularly those who are vulnerable, so important to God?

The right treatment of others is inseparable from love for God. Those who are marginalized and powerless reflect God's own heart of grace, as they cannot repay acts of kindness. By showing compassion to those in need, we emulate God's grace and demonstrate true righteousness.

4. What is the significance of Sabbath-keeping in Isaiah 58?

Isaiah emphasizes Sabbath-keeping as a genuine act of obedience that often involves personal sacrifice. Unlike fasting, which can be easily manipulated for personal gain, observing the Sabbath requires a genuine commitment to God's commands and a willingness to forego potential economic gain.

5. What is the bleak picture of Judah painted in Isaiah 59:1-15a?

Isaiah paints a bleak picture of Judah's moral decay. He describes their sins: violence, injustice, lies, oppression, and a complete departure from God's ways. Their actions have created a separation between them and God, leading to a sense of hopelessness and darkness.

6. What is God's response to Judah's sinfulness in Isaiah 59?

In response to Judah's sinfulness, God, in his righteousness, becomes a warrior. He puts on righteousness as armor and salvation as a helmet, coming to fight against the sin that has enslaved his people. His intervention is an act of grace and redemption.

7. How does Isaiah 59 connect the Messiah's mission with the call for righteousness in Isaiah 56:1?

Isaiah 59 reveals that while humanity is incapable of achieving true righteousness on its own, the Messiah comes as a redeemer to empower his people to live righteously. This connects directly with the call to "do righteousness and keep justice" in Isaiah 56:1, emphasizing that true righteousness is a gift from God made possible through the Messiah's work.

8. What is the ultimate hope offered in Isaiah 59?

The ultimate hope in Isaiah 59 lies in the coming redeemer. This warrior Messiah will defeat the power of sin and bring salvation to those who repent. He will restore justice and righteousness, making it possible for God's light to shine through his people, transforming darkness into light.