

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 29

Isaiah 60-62

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 29, Isaiah 60-62, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah 60-66 focuses on the book's concluding sections, exploring the themes of **righteousness and servanthood**. He highlights a **stair-step structure** in the text, emphasizing the parallel between chapters 56-59 and 63-66, both featuring the **divine warrior** motif. Oswalt discusses the **Judeans' rebellion** despite God's grace and their subsequent pleas for divine intervention. Finally, he analyzes the concept of a **new heaven and a new earth**, concluding that it's necessary for God to fully fulfill his promises of blessing for the righteous and curses for the wicked.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 29 – 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
on29.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah 60-66:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 60-66

Overall Theme: Righteousness and Servanthood in the Context of Grace

Dr. Oswalt emphasizes the structural parallels within the final section of Isaiah (40-66), particularly the mirroring between chapters 56-59 and 63-66. This structure serves to highlight the goal of servanthood: that the world may come to worship God. While chapters 40-55 emphasize salvation by grace, chapters 56-66 stress the necessity of righteousness and the role of grace in enabling it.

Key Concepts and Ideas

1. Divine Warrior:

- Chapters 63:1-6 opens with the image of the Divine Warrior, whose robes are stained red with blood, similar to the imagery of chapter 59.
- The warrior's blood-stained garments are not from the blood of external enemies but symbolic of his taking on the sins of his people. As Dr. Oswalt says, *"He who knew no sin became sin for our sakes. This warrior has become the sins of his enemies. He's become the sins of his people. And in so doing, it is his own blood that covers his garments."*
- This figure acts as a contrast to the suffering servant: the warrior actively destroys sin, whereas the servant meekly takes on the world's sins. *"When it comes to defeating sin in his people, he doesn't come as the suffering servant. He comes as the warrior. He comes to destroy the power of sin in our lives."*
- The shift from third-person (59) to first-person (63) emphasizes the personal and concrete nature of the warrior's actions.

1. God's Heseḏ and the People's Rebellion:

- Chapters 63:7-14 focus on God's *heseḏ* (steadfast love, undeserved devotion) and grace in the past.
- Despite God's past faithfulness, the people rebelled, as noted in 63:10: *"But they rebelled."* This sets the stage for the people's recognition of their own unrighteousness.

- The recurring presence of the Holy Spirit in this section is interpreted by Oswalt as the people's growing awareness of their need for the Spirit to enable them to keep God's law.
- *"God, we love our Torah, but we don't keep it. Therefore, it condemns us at every spot. But God, we've seen some people in whom a different spirit is at work. Is there any chance that you might be willing to put that spirit in all of us and enable us to keep Torah? And God says I thought you were never going to ask."*

1. The People's Accusations and God's Response:

- In 63:15-64:12, the people cry out to God, blaming him for their lack of righteousness and their current situation.
- They question God's zeal and power, essentially saying, "You owe us because we're Abraham's children," demonstrating a sense of entitlement rooted in their election.
- The people's pleas for God to "rend the heavens and come down" (64:1) highlight their passive expectations, a desire for God to fix them rather than actively participating in change. They were blaming God rather than taking personal responsibility. As Oswalt says, *"The theme that's running through here is this cry of the people that God will do something to make them righteous. But the underlying note is, it's his fault that we're not righteous."*
- God's response in 65:1 is that he reveals himself to those who seek him. He points out that they weren't seeking him with a genuine heart. *"I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me. I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, here am I, here am I, to a nation that wasn't called by my name."*

1. True vs. False Righteousness:

- God accuses them of hypocrisy and outward displays of piety (sacrificing in gardens, eating pig's flesh, claiming to be too holy to approach). These actions were likely not literal.
- Oswalt suggests that God is not condemning the actions themselves, but the attitude behind them - that their "righteousness" is done for themselves, rather than to please God, and it thus becomes worthless. *"It may well be that God is saying, all those good things you're doing, good things that are commanded, are*

rotten because you're doing them for yourself. You don't want to be like God, you want to be holy."

- He emphasizes that genuine righteousness requires humility and a contrite heart, a willingness to seek God's will over one's own. He uses the passage in chapter 66 where it says that the Lord looks to "he who is humble and contrite in heart."

1. **New Heavens and New Earth:**

- Chapter 65 introduces the concept of new heavens and a new earth (65:17), completely new compared to the first section of the book. This serves to emphasize that the emphasis in the latter section is on what God will do, rather than human inability.
- The new creation is not just a future hope; it is the *cause* for why people will bless themselves by the God of truth, signifying a radical transformation brought by God.
- This new creation is necessary because the current life does not always fulfill the promise that righteousness will be rewarded and wickedness punished. It provides a necessary space for God's promises to be fully realized. *"There's a real sense in which heaven is necessary if God is to keep His promises that righteousness empowered by Him, enabled by Him will result in blessing."*

1. **Final Judgment and Choice:**

- Chapter 66 mirrors Chapter 1 in its back and forth movement between judgment and hope.
- The chapter concludes with the image of judgment for those who have rebelled, while the faithful will enter a new reality where they worship God and his glory is declared among the nations.
- The ending emphasizes that ultimately, everyone has to make a choice. As Oswalt says, *"Choice. Choice. Make the right choice."*

Key Quotes

- *"And the goal of servanthood is that all the world might come and worship God."*
- *"Just as salvation was by grace in chapters 40 to 55, so the character of righteousness is by grace."*

- *"When it comes to defeating sin in his people, he doesn't come as the suffering servant. He comes as the warrior. He comes to destroy the power of sin in our lives."*
- *"He who knew no sin became sin for our sakes. This warrior has become the sins of his enemies. He's become the sins of his people. And in so doing, it is his own blood that covers his garments."*
- *"It may well be that God is saying, all those good things you're doing, good things that are commanded, are rotten because you're doing them for yourself."*
- *"There's a real sense in which heaven is necessary if God is to keep His promises that righteousness empowered by Him, enabled by Him will result in blessing."*

Implications

Oswalt's lecture highlights the importance of understanding salvation and righteousness in their proper biblical context. Salvation is a gift of grace, but it leads to a life of service, and a pursuit of righteousness. Righteousness is not merely an external act of obedience, but a heart posture of humility that seeks to please God, and is enabled by the Holy Spirit. The hope of new creation provides meaning and purpose for faithful living. The choice to follow God is set in stark contrast with those who live in rebellion.

This briefing provides a thorough overview of the main concepts discussed by Dr. Oswalt. Let me know if you need any clarification or further details.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 29, Isaiah 60-62

Isaiah Study Guide: Chapters 63-66

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the immediate similarity between Isaiah 63-66 and 56-59, according to Oswalt?
2. In Isaiah 63:1-6, who is the divine warrior depicted as and what does the imagery of his blood-stained garments symbolize?
3. What does Oswalt suggest the people are doing in Isaiah 63:7-14 when they recount God's past hesed and recall the Holy Spirit's work?
4. According to Isaiah 63:15-19, what do the people blame God for?
5. How does Oswalt interpret God's response in Isaiah 65:1-2 to the people's cry for help?
6. In Isaiah 65, what is the distinction between "my servants" and "you" in verses 13-14?
7. What new element appears in Isaiah 65:17 that was not present in the first part of this section of the book?
8. According to the text, what does the concept of "new heavens and a new earth" necessitate, and how does it connect to God's promises?
9. How does Oswalt interpret the descriptions of the "you" in Isaiah 65 (sacrificing in gardens, etc.) in light of the concept of holiness?
10. How does chapter 66 end and what overall message does this ending convey?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The immediate similarity is the presence of the divine warrior. In Isaiah 63-66, the section begins with the divine warrior, while in 56-59, it concludes with him.
2. The divine warrior is depicted as having his garments stained with blood, which symbolizes the warrior taking on the sins of his people, thus it is his own blood covering his garments.

3. Oswalt suggests they are recognizing a growing theme in the Old Testament: that while they love the Torah, they cannot keep it. They are realizing they need the Holy Spirit within them, rather than just externally.
4. The people blame God for lacking zeal and passion for them, and for hardening their hearts, claiming it's God's fault that they are not righteous.
5. Oswalt interprets it as God revealing himself to those who truly seek him, implying that the people's prior appeals were not genuine. They were blaming God instead of taking personal responsibility.
6. "My servants" are those who are humble, contrite, and truly seeking God, while "you" refers to those who are proud of their own self-righteousness, which is actually unrighteous.
7. The new element is the concept of new heavens and a new earth. This concept was not present in the parallel section of chapters 56-59.
8. The new heavens and earth are necessary because the promises of God—that righteousness leads to blessing and wickedness to curses—aren't always fulfilled in this life; they become a necessity in the light of God's promises.
9. Oswalt interprets these actions as not simply literal acts but as representative of an attitude of self-righteousness. God says their practices might as well be "tainted" because they are not about God but about their own attempts to manipulate God and self-achieve holiness.
10. The chapter ends with a vision of both restoration and judgment. All nations will come to worship the Lord, but those who rebel against him will face eternal punishment. This conveys the message of choice, where the end results depend on the choices people make.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the themes of divine action and human responsibility in Isaiah 40-55 and 56-66, as described by Oswalt. How does the concept of grace function in both sections?
2. Discuss the significance of the divine warrior imagery in Isaiah 63:1-6 and how it relates to the concept of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah. How does Oswalt understand the warrior's blood-stained garments in this context?
3. Analyze the people's complaints and accusations against God in Isaiah 63:7-64:12. How do these complaints reveal their understanding (or misunderstanding) of their relationship with God? How does God respond to their accusations?
4. Explore the contrast between those who are "my servants" and those who are "you" in Isaiah 65. What are the characteristics of each group, and what does this distinction reveal about the nature of true righteousness and devotion to God?
5. Explain how the concept of the "new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17ff.) functions in relation to the promises of God in the book of Isaiah. According to Oswalt, why is the concept necessary and what does it signify about the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Hesed:** A Hebrew term referring to God's steadfast love, loyalty, mercy, and covenant faithfulness, often expressed as undeserved favor toward the inferior.
- **Divine Warrior:** A recurring image in the Old Testament where God is depicted as a powerful warrior who defeats his enemies, representing his righteous judgment and his defense of his people.
- **Suffering Servant:** A figure in Isaiah who bears the sins of others, often associated with Jesus Christ. This figure contrasts with the image of the Divine Warrior.
- **Righteousness:** Living in accordance with God's will; a state of being morally right and just before God.
- **Election:** The idea that God has chosen a particular people for a special purpose, often leading to the idea that this group may believe they have a "lock" on God or that God "owes them" something.
- **Holy Spirit:** In the Old Testament, God's presence with and empowerment of his people. In the passage, the people are recognizing they need the Holy Spirit internally, not just externally.
- **New Heavens and New Earth:** A promise in Isaiah of a renewed creation where God's presence and reign will be fully realized, often understood as representing the ultimate state of redemption and restoration.
- **Contrite:** Feeling or expressing remorse for sins or shortcomings; a humble, broken-hearted state before God.
- **Kavod:** A Hebrew word for "glory," referring to the manifestation of God's presence, significance, weightiness, and importance.
- **Basra:** The capital of Edom. In Isaiah, Edom is used as a symbol of the enemies of God.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 29, Isaiah 60-62, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Isaiah 60-66

1. **What is the overall structure of Isaiah 60-66, and why is it presented this way?**

Isaiah 60-66 employs a stair-step structure, where the beginning and end parallel each other, and each step up has a parallel, culminating in a unique apex. This structure serves to reinforce the central goal of servanthood: that all the world might come and worship God. It reminds readers that salvation, initially presented as a gift of grace in earlier chapters (40-55), must be followed by a life of righteousness, also enabled by grace. The structure highlights both the promise of God's salvation and the necessity of righteous living for those who are saved.

2. **What is the role of the "divine warrior" in Isaiah 63 and how does this compare to the "suffering servant" image?** The divine warrior appears in both Isaiah 59 and 63, but with a shift in emphasis. In chapter 59, the divine warrior's righteousness upholds him; in 63, it is his righteous wrath. This warrior, whose garments are stained with the blood of his enemies, is symbolic of God himself taking on the sins of his people. This contrasts with the suffering servant, who meekly takes sins upon himself. The divine warrior actively destroys the power of sin in our lives, while the suffering servant takes the punishment for sins. Both are essential pictures of Christ: one dealing with past sins, the other conquering sin's power in the present.

3. **How do the people in Isaiah 63-64 appeal to God, and what is their underlying sentiment?** The people appeal to God based on His past faithfulness and covenant with Abraham, asking why God has seemingly withdrawn His zeal and might. Their underlying sentiment is that they are unable to do righteousness, and they blame God for their lack of repentance. They believe God owes them something because of His previous actions and His choice of Abraham's descendants. They are asking God to act and make them righteous, without a genuine acknowledgement of their own responsibility or need for true repentance.

4. **What is the significance of the repeated references to the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 63:7-14?** The repeated references to the Holy Spirit in this section suggest a growing recognition of the Spirit's active presence and power. The people acknowledge that they both rebel against and need the Holy Spirit, linking their past deliverance from Egypt and entry into the Promised Land to the work of the Spirit. They recognize that they need the Spirit not only for group deliverance but also for individual transformation and the ability to keep God's Torah. They are implicitly asking for the Spirit to work within them individually.
5. **In Isaiah 65, how does God respond to the people's complaints and accusations?** God responds to the people's complaints by declaring that He was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for him. This indicates that the people were not earnestly seeking Him. God directly accuses them of provoking Him, sacrificing in gardens, eating forbidden foods, and being prideful in their alleged holiness. He differentiates between those who are truly His servants and those who are merely claiming to be. God promises blessings for his true servants and judgment for those who falsely believe they are righteous. God makes clear that outward acts of worship mean nothing if the heart is not right with him.
6. **What is the distinction between the "you" and "my servants" in Isaiah 65, and how does it relate to the concept of righteousness?** The "you" refers to those who are proud of their own righteousness and act in ways that provoke God. This righteousness is a "stench" because it is about self-achievement, not a genuine desire to be like God. "My servants," on the other hand, are the humble and contrite who know their need for God and are genuinely seeking Him. This distinction highlights that true righteousness is not about external acts but about an internal transformation and humble heart that seeks God's will.
7. **Why is the concept of a "new heaven and a new earth" introduced in Isaiah 65, and what is its significance?** The concept of a "new heaven and a new earth" is introduced in Isaiah 65 to ensure God keeps His promises for blessing those who live righteously. Since righteousness does not always result in physical blessings in this life and wickedness can prosper, the promise of a new creation becomes essential. The new heaven and earth create the conditions where God's promise can be fully realized and lived out. It is a place where faithfulness to God will undoubtedly result in blessing and wickedness will be fully judged. The idea of a new creation goes beyond the physical and represents a hope beyond this life.

8. **How does Isaiah 66 conclude, and what is the overarching message?** Isaiah 66 concludes with a mix of hope and warning, similar to chapter 1. It foretells a time when all nations will come to see God's glory, and even Gentiles will be among God's priests. All will worship God in the new creation. However, the chapter does not end solely on that hopeful note; it includes the grim picture of the fate of those who rebelled, where their "worm will not die" and their "fire will not be quenched." This stark contrast underscores the importance of choice. The overarching message is the necessity of choosing to follow God in humility and contrite spirit, rather than prideful, self-righteousness. Ultimately, God's judgment is just, and the blessings are for those who turn to Him in truth.