

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 14, Isa. 28-29

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 14, Isaiah chapters 28 and 29.

Let's begin with prayer. Father, we rejoice in your goodness. Your goodness is new every morning. Rain, snow, fog, gray, clouds, sun, warm breezes, green grass, you are the same. You do not change. Your intentions toward us are always good and we praise you. Thank you that though we are often as changeable as the dew, you are unchanging.

Thank you. Thank you for your presence here among us tonight. Thank you for your deep desire that we might understand your word and apply it to our lives and thus know you and know life.

Help us, Lord. Help me as I teach. Help all who listen and interact. Help us to learn from one another. Speak, oh Father, for we are listening. In your name, we pray, amen.

I have for many years used a book called the One Year Book of Hymns put out by Tyndale House Publishers. I've referred to it in the past. I have always loved the one for today.

They know the very day when the hymn was written, February 4th, and it was Francis Havergal's All for Jesus. And the commentator, William Peterson, says that she had been a guest at Ardley House, I presume a country home, I don't suppose as big as Downton Abbey, but anyway, a country home in England for five days. And she said I prayed when I came that everyone here would have an experience of Jesus before the days were over.

And it's true. Everyone here has been converted or has rededicated their life during these five days. And she said, I just spent all night thinking and praising and praying.

And these couplets came to me talking about the rest of the hymn and all I could think of was all for Jesus, all for Jesus, all my being's ransomed powers. And then the commentator, who I don't think is a Wesleyan, his last sentence is this. Two weeks before this event, she had given her life in full consecration to Christ.

She'd been sanctified. And 14 days later, she's winning everybody in the house to Jesus. That's what sanctification is ultimately about.

So anyway, great day. Isaiah 28 to 29. Karen reminded me that I have this great facility for spending 45 minutes on the first chapter and 15 minutes on the second chapter.

So, I wonder, are there questions on chapter 27 before we rush on? Anything that you wanted to talk about and we didn't, that I should? All right. Karen, they had their chance. Okay.

We're looking now at the next section of these lessons in trust. The first section was chapters 13 to 23. And what was the theme of those chapters? Oh my, maybe I will have to take up truck driving after all.

Don't trust the nations. Yes. The oracles of judgment against the nations.

And God is saying, don't trust them. They're all under judgment from your God, and several of them are going to turn in faith to your God. Then we looked at chapters 24 to 27.

What was the theme there? Continuing the lessons in trust. God is the sovereign actor on the stage of history. He's not the reactor.

It's not the nations who are deciding what happens and then God saying, well, I wonder what I should do about that. God is in control of history and is accomplishing his good purposes. Tonight then we turn to the third section in chapters 28 to 35.

We saw 13 to 23, 24 to 27. Now we're looking at 28 to 33. 34 and 35 are the conclusion.

So, we are beginning to look at that division. We said last week, these chapters are rather particular, talking about particular nations. These chapters are somewhat more general, talking about God's rule of the nations.

And now we go back to particular, talking particularly about Judah and Judah's situation now as time has passed. If you remember, chapter 6 can be dated to 739 BC, and we know that chapters 36 to 39 are roughly around 701 BC. So, these chapters between chapter 6 and chapter 36 are roughly following this chronology.

Now, not absolutely. In fact, the very first passage we'll talk about here tonight raises one question there. But generally, does anybody remember what happened in 722 BC? Samaria fell, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, the last holdout.

So, from this time on, Judah is on her own. The border of Assyria is six miles north of Jerusalem. Now, Assyria did not occupy like we think of an army today occupying.

They would establish a military unit there with a military governor, and they would soak the place for all the taxes they could get. But it wasn't really occupation in a sense. But still, after 722, Judah is really the only one of these little countries, with the exception of the Philistines, that are still in place.

And so, as I've said to you before, Assyria is headed toward Egypt. That's the ultimate goal. That's who they want to get to.

That's the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. And so, they are coming down the coast road. You've got, again, this ridge that runs up sort of like that, and then that way.

And so, the main highway comes down here, and across, and down the coast. So, here is Judah. Here are the Philistines.

And down here, of course, is Egypt. So, during these years, after 722, when Samaria had fallen, there was really nothing in the way for the Assyrians, except the Philistines, and their sometime ally, the Judeans. So, the issue is, what are we going to do? Syria is gone.

Israel is gone. These two nations that we were so terrified of back there in chapter 7. Ammon is pretty much out of the picture. Moab is pretty much out.

Edom is still there, but they're not going to do anything for anybody. The Philistines are being demolished year by year. And again, remember that during the rainy season, the winter season, armies tended not to campaign.

Do you remember David got in trouble? Because in the spring of the year, when kings go out to war, he didn't. He sent his army out, and he stayed home to look at the girls. So, what are we going to do? The Assyrians might wait until after they get the Philistines taken care of, but they're not going to go much farther south, as long as they've got a potential enemy in their rear here.

So, we know. We're slated. We're next.

What are we going to do? And these chapters, 28 to 33, are clearly focused on that time period from roughly 710 to 701 when the terror is mounting steadily. The Assyrians were not nice people. They made the Nazis look nice.

They ruled by terror and brute force. So, what are we going to do? And that's the challenge that is facing the Judean leadership at this time. This is exactly what Isaiah had predicted back there in 735 or so, in chapters 7 and 8. If you won't trust God now, Ahaz, the day will come when the Assyrians are flooding your nation right up to here.

It has happened. So, what are we going to do? And that's what these chapters are dealing with. Now, one of the repeated elements in these chapters is that Hebrew word that we've talked about before, woe.

Not W-H-O-A, but W-O-E. Now, I do not know why. I wasn't on the committee.

But, for some reason or other, the English Standard Version translates the first four of these as ah, and then goes back to woe for the next one. So, I don't know what they're doing. As I've said to you before, I know why they translated ah, because there is no contemporary English translation for that word.

The best English translation is alas, but it, of course, is archaic. None of us say that. But, this gets the sense of grief that is frequently, when we use the word woe or read the word woe now in the Bible, we often don't think of that.

We often just think of it as condemnation. Woe to you! You're going to get it, and I'm going to be glad. But, there is more of this sense of grief, and I'm sure that's what the ESV translators were trying to do, but I don't think it gets it either.

But, it is, there's a funeral coming here, folks. Does the word doom? Yeah, yeah. We, in the New Living Translation, struggle to try to come to some sort of a contemporary expression of it, and it's very difficult to do.

But, that's the idea. Yes, there's doom ahead of you. There's tragedy ahead of you.

And, this word is repeated. If you've got your Bible there, the first one is 28-1, the next one is 29-1, the third one is 29-15, the fourth one is 30-1, the fifth one is 31-1, and this is the one where ESV now, for some unknown reason, goes back to woe, and the last one, where ESV goes back to ah again, is 33-1. There is not one beginning chapter 32, and we'll talk about why I think that is the case when we get there.

But, so, woe. Now, the other thing that we're going to run into, and we'll see it, especially next week, but here's the whole issue of weight. And so, the title that I give this subdivision, 28-33, is Woe to Those Who Will Not Wait.

Woe to those who will not wait. Now, many of you have been so faithful at these sessions, so I hope you remember, what's the synonym for wait in Hebrew? Trust. Yes.

Give that woman a gold star. Woe to those who will not trust God. In this hour of crisis, in this hour of tragedy, there is a funeral ahead for those who won't trust God and demonstrate it by waiting for Him to give His guidance, reveal His solution, and demonstrate His power.

So, that's an overview of what we're seeing here. Two other things that I want to mention. I think you'll see an increasing specificity in the woes.

Just exactly what is the problem that we're dealing with here? Tonight, going to be still fairly general, but next week it'll be focused a little more, and the week after that it'll be focused even more sharply on what's going on. So, that's one thing, increasing specificity in the woes.

Another thing that I want you to be looking for is, to look at the proportions between judgment and hope. We can illustrate it like this, I think. When we start out in chapter 28, the majority of attention is given to judgment, and the minority to hope.

But by the time you come to the end at chapter 33, the majority emphasis is on hope. So, it's not as neat as that, but broadly speaking, it is so. You've got almost no hope in these chapters, you've got very little judgment by the time you get to 33.

So, those two things to watch for, increasing specificity in the woes, what's the problem, and the shift in proportion between judgment and hope. Okay, any questions on that sort of rapid survey? Alright, let's look at tonight then. Chapter 28, verses 1 to 6. Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine.

Behold, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong, like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters. He casts down to the earth with his hand the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim. The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot.

The fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley, will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer. When someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it is in his hand. Now, Ephraim is Israel, the northern kingdom.

Judah is the major tribe in the southern kingdom. Ephraim is the major tribe in the northern kingdom. So, when you see Ephraim, that's code, and you're talking about the northern kingdom.

So, in other words, this particular prophecy must have been given before 722. Now, I said on the grounds of the rest of the material here, it looks like this is focused on Judah sometime after 710. So, that's one of the things we'll want to think about.

Now, why has Isaiah or one of his disciples, an editor, why have they brought it here into this section? What's the purpose of it? We'll want to talk about that as we go farther along. Okay, now, why is this crown, and I think, yeah, I talked about some

area looking like a crown on the top of the hill, the crenellated walls looking like a crown on the top of the hill, and that was the way the cities were built. They were built on hills.

Then, when they were destroyed, you simply had the rubble. You didn't have any R.G. Letourneau to come along with an earth mover to move the rubble away. You just built the next city on top of that.

So, the natural hill built up, and ultimately, you've got this sort of a thing. So, here's this crown at the head of a rich valley, and the valley of which Samaria is up toward the top is a very, very rich valley. Now, why are they being judged? Verse 3, they are proud and what? Drunk.

Proud and drunk. Now, how do those two issues relate to each other? Okay, when you're proud, you think you can drink as much as you want. Yeah, I can handle my liquor, yeah.

Until you're rolling on the floor. You think you're more intelligent. Yes, sir, you're the smartest, most charming person that's ever been around.

Celebrate an achievement. Yes, I can imagine there are some drunk people in New Orleans tonight. They can't make the right decisions.

Yes, yes. It's a great irony that the rest of the world is laughing at you, and you think you're the smartest, best-looking, most charming person in the world. And, in fact, you're being laughed at as a fool.

So, here we have these two elements of pride and drunkenness. There are two words for crown here. The one is, it can be translated as a wreath.

Verse 3, the proud wreath. You know, the partygoer who has a wreath of flowers on his or her head, or a lampshade, and the morning after, there it is, trampled in the mud. And Isaiah says, that's what's going to happen to your wreath of celebration, your crown that you've been wearing.

Okay, now let's go to verses 5 and 6. On that day, the Lord of heaven's armies will be a crown of glory, a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. Now, I ask you, what's the relationship between verses 1 to 4 and verses 5 and 6? What word would we use to describe that relationship? Contrast, yes. A contrast between two different crowns.

The crown of my drunken arrogance and the crown of the Lord. And what does the Lord give when he is king? Justice and strength. Yes, yes.

Now, I've talked about this a lot, it's up there in the background, but remember that again, we've got a translation problem. You've got a Hebrew word, and the word is Mishpat. Not a very elegant-sounding word in English transliteration.

But the three consonants, the SH consonant, the P consonant, and the emphatic T consonant, have to do with the idea of order. A judge, a shofet, is somebody who restores the proper order to a society. And Mishpat, then, is that proper order.

It will be translated, it's the same word, but it's translated two different ways here. It's translated justice, it's also translated judgment. Both of those are not wrong, but the problem is, if we think that's all that's intended, then it's too narrow.

The spirit of justice is not merely legal equity. Now, I know I've said this several times, but repetition is the heart of education. In case you didn't get that, repetition is the heart of education.

So what we're talking about here is God will come as the king to establish the order in human society, in creation, that he intended as the creator. Now, that'll involve legal equity, of course. But legal equity is only a part of what God comes to do for us.

When God brings Mishpat into your life, he restores that order that was intended to be there, which drunkenness, in fact, flies directly in the face of, just as arrogance flies in the face of. So he will come as the king, and he will do what these drunkards, in Ephraim, these leaders, have failed to do. Okay, let's push on.

28.7-13 These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They're swallowed by wine.

They stagger with strong drink. They reel in vision. They stumble in giving judgment.

All the tables are full of filthy vomit with no space left. To whom will he teach knowledge? To whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? For it is... Now, this is the Hebrew. Kav Vakav.

Kav Vakav. And I've forgotten the next word, but it's... Leiv V'leiv. Leiv V'leiv.

People have struggled, ever since Isaiah wrote this, to figure out what he's talking about. Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, probably isn't right. Probably these are nonsense syllables.

The one possibility is that they might be the simple syllables that could be used to teach reading and writing. But it's not precept and line. That's saying way too much.

His point is, just like Paul in Corinthians, you guys ought to be way past milk. You ought to be onto the meat of the gospel. But hey, I can't give you anything but milk.

It's Kav Vakav. Leiv V'leiv. That's all you folks are up for.

Verse 11, For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to his people, to whom he has said, This is rest. Give rest to the weary. This is repose.

Yet they would not hear, so the word of the Lord will be to them, Kav Vakav. Kav Vakav. Leiv V'leiv.

Leiv V'leiv. That they may go and fall backward and be broken and snared and taken. Whoa.

Now, how does this relate to verses 1 to 4? I know that, but what's the answer? If you're so drunken and disorderly and stuff, you've got no judgment, you act like a kid. Okay. Verses 1 to 4 give us sort of that general picture.

Now we're being much more particular. We're being much more specific. Who is it that's drunk? It's all the leadership.

That's who. The priest, the prophet, the king, the noble, everybody. And, if that's true of the leadership, what's going to happen to the people? Look at verse 9. They're going to be left in the dark, aren't they? They can't understand what these drunks are supposedly trying to teach them.

The people, with the failure of the leadership, are going to be left as little babies with no understanding of what the real issues of life are. Isaiah is, and this is true of all the prophets, they are bitterly antagonistic toward the leadership who have failed the people, and the people, therefore, are in this tragic situation because the leaders are. And here the question has to be asked, are they literally drunk or are they metaphorically drunk? Are they drunk on their own pride? Are they drunk on their own achievements? Are they drunk on their own degrees? I can't answer that.

I think it may be both and I think it may be literal drunkenness, but I think also it's very possible it's spiritual drunkenness. The point being, that they are focused on their own self-gratification and not on their responsibilities to their people.

And the people, then, are in this position of infants who really... ..make more sense, it is to me if they weren't pride and all that. Because people could be deceived by that... Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that's a good point.

I don't know whether you all heard that. She's saying that it might make more sense if it is metaphorical because people cannot understand what the leaders are drunk

on if it's metaphorical drunkenness. Whereas if they're really drunk, then it's real obvious.

They vote and you believe and you push. And the people follow because you said so. Yeah, yeah, he's the leader, so he must know what's going on.

He believes what's being said. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Verse 11.

The people of strange lips, this is the Assyrians. Now, Assyrian is a Semitic language that is fairly closely related to Hebrew but still, it's enough different that the common people are not going to know what's going on. So he says, you know, since your leaders have not taught you the truth about reality and life, I'm going to have to bring in these folks to teach you the realities of life.

And I ask here, who are some of the strange-lipped people God may be speaking to us with? How about Arabs? What might God be trying to say through these strange-lipped people to us? We think they're just our enemies. We just think they're terrorists who are out to get us. And that's certainly true.

But at the same time, it's just so fascinating to me how instantly the repentance that followed 9-1-1 disappeared. Churches were full for two weeks. And what is God trying to say to us? I killed you, then you saw me.

Well, how long are you going to live in your materialism? How long are you going to live with your passion for entertainment? And with your pride? Yes, yes, yes, yes. We're the greatest nation in the world. Anybody ought to know that.

Yes? Yes? Yeah, yeah. You can certainly find illustrations of that through the course of history. So, hear me.

I'm not suggesting that I think, quote, we deserve terrorism or anything of that sort. I'm simply saying God, in his rule of the world, is able to use all of these kinds of incidents if we've got ears to hear. If we're not drunk.

And I'm afraid America is pretty drunk. We're not listening. Let's just destroy those people and we'll be fine.

And God says, well, maybe you can destroy them, but you won't be fine when you do. All right, end of sermon. This sermon, anyway.

Okay. Now, I ask, in the end of verse 13, that they may go and fall backward and be broken and snared and taken. Doesn't God want them to be healed? Do you remember our discussion in chapter six? Of course, he wants us to be healed.

But, like Isaiah's generation, we may be to the point where the only hope is to go through the fires of judgment. Deliver us, O Lord, because we're such nice people. Deliver us, O Lord, because we're the best servants you've got.

Deliver us, O Lord, because what are you going to do if we're not around to go to church for you? Kav, v'kav. Lav, v'lav. Strong stuff.

Okay. Now, look at the change in verse 14. Who is he talking to in verse 14? Where? Yes.

Yes. We have gone from talking about Ephraim to talking about Jerusalem. My hunch here is that Isaiah or one of his disciples, his editor, has pulled a speech that he gave to Ephraim sometime before 722, which has now been fulfilled in spades and has brought it down here now to join with this section speaking to Jerusalem about 710.

In other words, folks, 15 years ago, Isaiah said this about Samaria. Where is Samaria today trampled on the ground like one of those party wreaths? Jerusalem? Can you hear anything? Now, I say I cannot prove that, but it's just very interesting that the rest of this whole section is going to be addressed to Jerusalem and Judah, but just these first 13 verses were addressed to the northern kingdom. As I say, I think it's been pulled in to say that one was fulfilled.

What do you think is going to happen to this message? Okay. Now, I mentioned in the background scoffer is the worst word of condemnation in the Old Testament, and it is sometimes translated as fool. That's why Jesus says in the New Testament, don't go around calling people fools.

Now, for us, you know, that's just a clown. You fool. But here, no, this is the person who not only does wrong, but mocks the right, and they are the fool.

You know, the psalm, the fool has said in his heart there is no God. The scoffer, the mocker, and in Psalm 1, you don't want to sit, you don't want to walk, with the sinner, you don't want to sit with the wicked, excuse me, I'll get it right, stand with the wicked, or sit with the scoffer. So, this is strong language.

Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. What have they done? Verse 15, they have made an agreement with the devil, with death. Now, it's interesting to wonder, I think there are two possibilities.

One is, that Isaiah is mocking them. He says, you've made an agreement with Egypt, but I want to tell you, what you've really agreed with is death. That's one possibility, that he's mocking them.

The other possibility though is, and I'm a little bit more inclined in this direction, there is a god, among the Canaanites, who is called Death, Mot. And in the Canaanite myths, Baal, the storm god, and Mot, the god of death, fight. And in the early going, Mot defeats Baal and eats him up.

His sister has to go and make Mot cough him back up again. You know, big sisters. But it's not at all impossible, that they actually have entered into a covenant with the god of death, who can protect them then from death, supposedly.

And Isaiah is saying, in any case, whether Egypt or this god, he's going to fail you. What are some of the lies we sometimes are tempted to take refuge in? Military strength? Yeah. If we've got enough armaments, nobody can hurt us.

Money? Oh yes. Oh yes. Materialism? Yes.

If I've got enough money in the bank, if I've got enough stuff in my house, Peace? Yes. Gated communities? God is on our side? Yes. We've got him in our back pocket.

A lot of these kinds of things that prevent us from facing reality by our own lies. And Isaiah says, frighteningly, in many ways, that's to become a scoffer. You have denied real goodness and replaced it with this other stuff.

Now again, again, thank God for this wonderful country of ours. Thank God for all the blessings that he has given to us. I think though again and again of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words, you can really only truly own something if in your heart of hearts you know you would be better off without it.

Isn't that interesting? As long as I think I have to have something, it owns me. When I know, hey, this is a gift. If it's gone, I'd probably be better off.

Now I, I'm talking to myself as much as I'm talking to any of you here. But I think we in this blessed country are walking on the edge of a cliff. And that every one of us has got to constantly be aware of what is it I am really depending on.

Again, hymns. The hymn for yesterday was Spofford. It is well with my soul.

It's often, the story is often told of him losing the four daughters on their way to England. But it's not often told that in fact he had lost a fortune in the Chicago fire. And their only son had died.

When peace like a river attendeth my soul, when sorrows like sea billows roll. Wow. That guy knew what mattered.

He could lose everything and still sing. Oh, that's where I want to be. Pardon? This is, it's probably not exact.

But it was, you can only safely own anything if you can honestly feel yourself better off without it. Okay. In verse 16 then is God's antidote.

You've made lies your shelter, but I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not be in haste. I always forget that last line.

I remember you've laid this cornerstone in Zion, a tested stone. Yes, that's Jesus. And that means whoever believes will not be in haste.

Yes. There is a cornerstone that lasts, and that will stand regardless of what else happens. And if we know that, then we can live in confidence.

We don't have to rush off to our Egypts to somehow solve our problems. I got the Peterson message again. Yes.

He has in all capital letters a trusting life won't topple. A trusting life won't topple. That's Peterson.

Yeah. Good. Okay.

Well, we come to the end. Yes, and yeah, I've spent 50 minutes on the three-quarters of a chapter. Okay.

We come to the end of chapter 28 with a long graphic illustration. Now remember that because I'm going to ask it again next week. I know because I wrote next week's study guide this afternoon.

What is Isaiah famous for? Graphic illustrations. He will draw an extended picture to try to make a point. He did that with the women of Jerusalem back in chapter 3 with all their list of finery that they were depending on.

He did it again with the vineyard in chapter 5 when this beautiful expensive vineyard all it produced was bitter grapes. Here it is again. Now, God has been saying, look, the world is made to operate in certain ways.

If you live in accord with those ways, you can be secure. The world can be flying to pieces around you, but you can be fixed on that cornerstone and you know who you are, you know where you are, you know what you are. That's the way the world is made.

But these drunks in Ephraim, these scoffers in Jerusalem, they can't seem to get it through their heads. No, no, no, no. The world exists for me.

It exists for my pleasure, for my desires. I think always of 1 John. He captures it so well.

The lust of the flesh, physical pleasure is all I really need, the lust of the eyes, if I could just own everything I see, and the pride of life. That's it. That's it.

No. If pleasure is taken away, if things are taken away, if all positions and achievements are taken away, you stand forever, and I'm secure in you, and I don't have to run around from here to there and the other place trying to nail it down. Now, what's the lesson then that he's teaching in these seven verses, 23 to 29? Well, I think it's a pretty simple lesson.

Look at this ignorant farmer out here. He doesn't have any of the education that all these drunk scoffers in the capital city have, but he's smart enough to know you don't harrow and then plow. He's smart enough to know you don't plant the seed before you plow.

He's smart enough to know you don't plant the seed in the hot summer. He's smart enough to know the world is made to work in certain ways. Why can't you people get this through your heads? Yeah.

And you see how it ends, the last verse there in 28. This also comes from the Lord. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

Yeah. The world is made to operate in certain ways. You live those ways, you're going to be secure.

You don't live those ways, nothing's going to work and you wonder why it doesn't work. Again, you look at our world and you say, oh my, Isaiah, where are you now? We need you now. All right.

Four minutes, chapter 29. Ariel, John Derr was asking about this yesterday. We really don't know for sure what that means.

It could be the city of God. Ari is city and El is God. It could be that, although if it is, this is the only place it would be used that way.

The other, there is a word, Ariel, which means a hearth. And some people think that, but it's clear enough that we're talking about Jerusalem. The city where David encamped, add year to year, let the feasts run their round.

It's not going to do you any good. As I've said to you before, the problem was the people said, well, hey, what's God going to eat if we're not here to give him sacrifices? Where's God going to sleep if his house is burned down? So he's got to have our sacrifices. He can't let the house get burned down.

And God said, just watch. Verse four, you will be brought low. From the earth you'll speak.

From the dust, your speech will be bowed down. Your voice will come from the ground like the voice of a ghost. From the dust, your speech will whisper.

That's low. As the man said, I'm so low, I have to look up to see the worms. But now look, verse five.

But the multitude of your foreign foes will be like small dust and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. In an instant, suddenly, you'll be visited by the Lord of hosts. Contrast, dramatic contrast.

And now, for the first time, we begin to get a longer passage of hope. And it goes down through verse eight. Verse seven, the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her will be like a dream, a vision of the night.

So yes, judgment is coming. But judgment is never God's intended last word. I hope when we're through with this, you'll say, I remember one or two things Oswald said.

I hope that'll be one of them. Let's say it together. Judgment is never God's intended last word.

Now, it may be if I will not allow his refining fire to do its work. Judgment may be his last word, but it's not his intended last word. Judgment is always intended to lead to repentance and cleansing and renewal.

And that's what you see here. But then, verse nine, astonish yourself and be astonished, blind yourselves and be blind, be drunk, but not with wine. I think that supports what Mary Jo was saying earlier.

Stagger, but not with strong drink, for the Lord has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. Here again is something that's typical of Isaiah. Whenever he presents a gray picture of hope, of coming redemption, coming renewal, he brings us right back to the present.

Don't say, oh well, everything's going to be fine so I can continue in my sin. There's good news at the end. We win, so I can live like hell.

And Isaiah's going to call you back every time and say, no you can't. No, you can't. There is hope out there, but it's hope for people who are refined, not for people who continue in their arrogance.

So again, you get this picture of people who are ignorant. Verse 11, The vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, read this, he says, I can't, for it's sealed.

When they give it to someone who can't read, saying, read this, he says, I can't read. Yes? And then this verse 13 is one that I can't personally get away from. This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me and their fear of me, that is, their behavior, is a commandment taught by men.

Why am I living a godly life? Well, because my parents were Christian. Because I went to a Christian college, went to a Christian seminary, teach at a seminary that has an ethics statement. Is it an outgrowth of my relationship to God? Oh, my Savior, I don't want to offend you.

I don't want to nail you to the cross again. I want to be like you, my Savior. Externally, the two behaviors may look a lot alike.

But if you trace them back to their sources, this one is a result of habit and pride. That one is a result of love for the Lord. All right, I think we'll stop there.

We'll pick up this next woe next week, 2915, and we'll try to do two and a half chapters in an hour. And why are you laughing? Let me pray. Father, thank you.

Thank you for words of admonition, words that challenge us. Oh, it is so easy here in this blessed country, in this blessed small town, how easy it is for us to draw near you with our mouth. For our hearts actually to be far, far away from you.

Have mercy upon us, oh Lord. Help us not to be those drunks who are so stupid they cannot learn even something that a farmer knows. There is a way that leads unto life, and there is a way that leads unto death.

Help us, Lord, to be on the way of life, not because we're afraid you're going to send us to hell, but because we love you for having found us in the darkness and sticking with us through thick and thin. Thank you. In your name, amen.

Thanks so much. I really do appreciate your coming out Monday after Monday. I have to do this, and it would be difficult if there were nobody here.

So, thank you.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 14, Isaiah chapters 28 and 29.