

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26.3, 2 Kings 17, Part 3 Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26.3, 2 Kings 17, Part 3, Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on 2 Kings 17, particularly verses 24-41, examining the consequences of Israel's fall. He highlights the Assyrians' policy of relocating people to prevent rebellion and create a new imperial culture. **Oswalt emphasizes the critical distinction between "worship" and "fear" of the Lord,** suggesting the incoming people paid lip service without a true reverential awe. **The lecture explores how the desolation of the land after the exile led to wild animals attacking the new inhabitants,** which they interpreted as divine punishment. **The Assyrian king then sent a priest to teach the people "religious customs", resulting in a syncretistic blend of Yahwism and paganism.** Ultimately, Oswalt urges listeners to examine their own lives, questioning whether they truly fear the Lord or merely offer superficial worship while serving worldly desires.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26.3 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).**



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on26_3.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26.3, 2 Kings 17, Part 3

Briefing Document: Oswalt on 2 Kings 17 - The Fall of Israel and the Fear of the Lord

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Kings_EN_Session26_3.pdf" by Dr. John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

Date: 2024

Overview: This document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented by Dr. John Oswalt in his lecture on 2 Kings 17, focusing on the fall of Israel and the critical concept of "the fear of the Lord." Oswalt emphasizes that the Assyrian policy of mixing populations contributed to a religious mishmash, where the incomers did not genuinely fear the Lord, leading to consequences. He contrasts the fear of judgment with the "reverent awe" that should characterize a true relationship with God, and applies these lessons to contemporary Christian life.

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. Assyrian Imperial Policy and Religious Syncretism:

- Oswalt describes the Assyrian policy of relocating conquered populations as a strategy to prevent rebellion and create a new imperial culture. "As I've said to you multiple times, this was the Assyrian policy. How are you going to govern a huge empire of different cultures, different languages, different religions, different people groups? Well, you put them in the mix master. You move them all around."
- This policy led to a blend of religious practices among the new inhabitants of Samaria, who mixed the worship of Yahweh with their own pagan traditions.

1. The Importance of "Fear of the Lord" vs. Mere Worship:

- Oswalt argues that the core issue in 2 Kings 17 is not simply that the incomers did not worship the Lord, but that they did not *fear* Him. "These people did not fear the Lord. That's more than they did not worship the Lord. In fact, I rather suspect they did worship him."
- He defines "fear of the Lord" as "building our lives on the realization of who he really is—that's the fear of the Lord. To live, and the term that's often used, is not a bad one, to live in reverent awe, to live until we feel like we're prepared for life."

- He distinguishes this from the "fear of judgment" described in 1 John, emphasizing that love casts out the fear of punishment, but not the reverent awe of God's power and authority. "When 1 John says perfect love casts out fear, he's not talking about the fear of the Lord. He's talking about the fear of judgment."

1. **Consequences of Lacking the Fear of the Lord:**

- The initial consequence mentioned in 2 Kings 17 is that lions attacked the incomers. Oswalt interprets this not as a direct divine intervention, but as a natural outcome of the desolation of the land after the deportation of the Israelites. "The land is desolate...What happens? You got wild animals roaming around. Now, did God...Did God say, I'm going to get those people? I believe I'll send some lions to eat them up. I don't think so."
- This event led the incomers to seek a superficial understanding of God's "religious customs" rather than a genuine relationship based on the fear of the Lord.

1. **The Syncretistic Religion of the New Samaritans:**

- The Assyrian king sent an Israelite priest back to Samaria, but Oswalt believes that this priest taught a "mishmash of religious behavior...With a little Yahwism thrown in? Oh, sure. With a little paganism thrown in? Sure. Just enough to get by."
- This resulted in a syncretistic religion where the people "feared the Lord, but they also served their own gods" (2 Kings 17:33). Oswalt interprets this as "A very limited homage. We'll do the minimum that we think we have to keep that god happy. But hey, we're going to worship our own gods that we like and are familiar with and love."

1. **Application to Contemporary Christians:**

- Oswalt challenges listeners to examine their own lives and consider whether they truly fear the Lord or merely offer "lip service" while serving other gods. "I look in the mirror, and I say dear God, does that describe me? Oh, I fear the Lord. And am I worshipping the work of my hands? Am I trying to gain power so that I can be successful? Am I trying to manipulate the forces of this world to make myself comfortable and secure?"
- He concludes by emphasizing that fearing the Lord, rather than the forces of the world, leads to deliverance and security. "Rather, fear the Lord your God, and here it comes. It is He who will deliver you from the hand of your enemies."

Key Quotes:

- "These people did not fear the Lord. That's more than they did not worship the Lord. In fact, I rather suspect they did worship him."
- "building our lives on the realization of who he really is—that's the fear of the Lord. To live, and the term that's often used, is not a bad one, to live in reverent awe, to live until we feel like we're prepared for life."
- "I look in the mirror, and I say dear God, does that describe me? Oh, I fear the Lord. And am I worshipping the work of my hands? Am I trying to gain power so that I can be successful? Am I trying to manipulate the forces of this world to make myself comfortable and secure?"
- "Rather, fear the Lord your God, and here it comes. It is He who will deliver you from the hand of your enemies."

Conclusion: Oswalt's lecture offers a nuanced understanding of 2 Kings 17, highlighting the distinction between outward religious practice and the genuine "fear of the Lord." He uses the historical narrative of the fall of Israel to challenge contemporary Christians to examine their own hearts and ensure that their lives are rooted in reverent awe of God, rather than a superficial adherence to religious customs or the pursuit of worldly security.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26.3, 2 Kings 17, Part 3

Study Guide: 2 Kings 17, Part 3 - The Fall of Israel and the Fear of the Lord

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Oswalt, what was the Assyrian policy for governing their empire, and what were its two primary purposes?
2. What is the crucial distinction Dr. Oswalt makes between the "fear of the Lord" and the fear that 1 John says perfect love casts out?
3. How does Dr. Oswalt explain the situation of lions attacking the new inhabitants of the land after the Israelites were exiled?
4. What does Dr. Oswalt suggest the Israelite priest who returned to Samaria taught the new inhabitants?
5. How did the new inhabitants combine their own religious practices with the worship of the Lord, and what motivated this approach?
6. Explain the meaning of "covering their bases" in the context of the religious practices of the new inhabitants.
7. What self-reflective question does Dr. Oswalt encourage listeners to ask themselves regarding the fear of the Lord and their own worship?
8. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the meaning of "reverent awe" in the context of fearing the Lord?
9. What does Dr. Oswalt say is the good news about fearing the Lord?
10. What did the Lord do that the Israelites should remember and how should this impact them?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Assyrian policy was to relocate people groups throughout their empire. This served two main purposes: to keep the conquered populations off balance and less likely to revolt, and to create a new imperial culture through the mixing of different traditions.

2. The "fear of the Lord" is a reverent awe and recognition of God's power and authority, influencing one's life choices, while the fear that 1 John discusses is the fear of judgment and punishment, which is overcome by God's love.
3. Dr. Oswalt argues that the lions' attacks were not directly sent by God as punishment but were a natural consequence of the land being desolate and the ecosystem being disrupted after the Israelite exile. The wild animals had space to thrive and roam.
4. Dr. Oswalt suggests the Israelite priest taught a mishmash of religious behavior, combining elements of Yahwism with pagan practices, enough for the people to "get by."
5. The new inhabitants combined their own gods and customs with a minimal homage to the Lord, doing just enough to appease Him and prevent further misfortune, while continuing to worship their familiar deities.
6. "Covering their bases" refers to the new inhabitants' strategy of worshiping both the Lord and their own gods as a form of insurance, ensuring they wouldn't anger any deity and face potential consequences like the lion attacks.
7. Dr. Oswalt encourages listeners to ask themselves whether they truly fear the Lord or if they are, in fact, worshiping the work of their own hands, seeking power, comfort, and security through worldly means.
8. "Reverent awe" in the context of fearing the Lord means conducting one's life with the constant awareness and understanding that there is a powerful and holy God, and one must live accordingly, knowing that He is not you.
9. The good news is that if one fears the Lord, remembering His works and His covenant, they do not need to fear anything else, as He will deliver them from their enemies.
10. The Lord brought the Israelites up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm. This should impact them by causing them to fear Him, bow down to Him, and offer sacrifices to Him alone.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the implications of the Assyrian policy of relocation on the religious identity and practices of the people involved, referencing specific details from 2 Kings 17.
2. Analyze Dr. Oswalt's interpretation of the "fear of the Lord" in 2 Kings 17, contrasting it with other types of fear and explaining its significance for believers today.
3. Critically evaluate Dr. Oswalt's perspective on God's involvement in the events described in 2 Kings 17, specifically the role of the lions, considering alternative interpretations and theological implications.
4. Explore the concept of religious syncretism in 2 Kings 17, examining the motivations behind it, its consequences, and its relevance to contemporary religious contexts.
5. Reflect on Dr. Oswalt's challenge to examine one's own worship practices in light of 2 Kings 17, considering the potential for idolatry and the importance of genuine fear of the Lord in the modern world.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Fear of the Lord:** A deep reverence, awe, and respect for God that influences one's actions and decisions, recognizing His power, holiness, and authority.
- **Assyrian Policy:** The practice of the Assyrian Empire to relocate conquered populations within its territories, aiming to prevent rebellions and create a unified imperial culture.
- **Religious Syncretism:** The blending or merging of different religious beliefs and practices, often resulting in a hybrid system that combines elements from multiple traditions.
- **Yahwism:** The worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel, often used in the text to describe a corrupted or diluted form of the true faith mixed with pagan practices.
- **Appeasement:** The act of trying to satisfy or pacify a deity or power through offerings, sacrifices, or other means, often motivated by fear of punishment or retribution.
- **Reverent Awe:** The feeling of deep respect, wonder, and veneration inspired by something powerful, holy, or majestic, particularly in relation to God.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or images as gods, or the excessive devotion to anything that takes the place of God in one's life.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or promise between God and His people, outlining the terms of their relationship and the obligations of each party.
- **Torah:** Hebrew word often translated as "law," refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible and can also refer to the entirety of God's teachings and instructions.
- **Mishmash:** A confused mixture of different things.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 26, 2 Kings 17, Part 3, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Fear of the Lord and Religious Syncretism

Here are some frequently asked questions addressing the concept of the "fear of the Lord" and the dangers of religious syncretism, as discussed in the provided text.

Questions

1. What does it mean to "fear the Lord," and how does it differ from simply worshipping Him?

The "fear of the Lord," as used in the text, goes beyond mere worship. It signifies a profound, reverent awe and recognition of God's power and authority. It involves structuring one's life based on the understanding that God is an all-powerful being who will ultimately hold us accountable for our actions. It's about living with the awareness of His presence and His commandments, not just offering lip service or performing religious rituals.

2. How did the Assyrian policy of relocating populations contribute to the religious issues in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria)?

The Assyrian policy of relocating diverse populations within their empire aimed to destabilize conquered peoples and create a unified imperial culture. In Samaria, this resulted in a mix of people with different religious backgrounds. These newcomers, unfamiliar with the God of Israel, initially suffered from the wild animals. This led them to seek religious guidance and adopt a syncretistic approach, blending their own pagan practices with a superficial understanding of Yahwism, rather than truly fearing the Lord.

3. What is religious syncretism, and how was it manifested in the actions of the people resettled in Samaria?

Religious syncretism is the blending of different religious beliefs and practices. In Samaria, the resettled people feared the Lord (Yahweh) to some extent, but they also continued to worship their own gods, each national group establishing idols and customs alongside the worship of Yahweh. This "covering their bases" approach was driven by a desire to appease the local deity and avoid further misfortune, rather than a genuine commitment to following God's commandments.

4. Why did the Assyrian king send an Israelite priest back to Samaria, and what was the result of his teaching?

The Assyrian king sent an Israelite priest back to Samaria in response to the lion attacks, hoping the priest could teach the people "the practices that this God wants us to engage in" so as to avoid further issues. However, instead of teaching the true word of God, the priest likely taught a mixture of Yahwism, idolatry, and historical traditions. This further contributed to religious syncretism, creating a superficial and distorted understanding of the God of Israel.

5. What does the example of the people in Samaria teach us about the dangers of "limited homage" to God?

The example of the Samaritans, who offered only a "limited homage" to God while continuing to serve their own gods, illustrates the dangers of a half-hearted or superficial faith. It demonstrates the temptation to do the bare minimum to appease God while prioritizing personal comfort, security, and worldly desires. This approach ultimately falls short of true devotion and obedience.

6. How can we avoid falling into the trap of religious syncretism in our own lives?

To avoid religious syncretism, we must constantly examine our hearts and motivations. We should ask ourselves if we truly fear the Lord by living in reverent awe of Him, or if we are merely giving Him lip service while prioritizing other "gods" such as personal gain, power, or comfort. This requires a commitment to knowing and following God's commands, resisting the temptation to compromise our faith, and constantly seeking deeper understanding.

7. What does the text mean when it states that perfect love casts out fear, and what kind of fear is being referenced?

The text clarifies that when 1 John states that perfect love casts out fear, it is referring to the fear of judgment or punishment, not the fear of the Lord. Perfect love delivers us from the anxiety that God is "out to get us" and condemns us to hell. However, the fear of the Lord—the reverent awe and recognition of His power and authority—remains essential for a healthy relationship with God.

8. According to the text, how does fearing the Lord lead to deliverance from our enemies and a more confident life?

The text emphasizes that fearing the Lord, rather than the forces of the world, is the key to deliverance from our enemies. By remembering God's covenant and fearing Him, we can live with clear commitments, confident trust, and joyous abandon, knowing that He is the one who ultimately protects and provides for us. This does not mean that we won't face challenges, but it does mean we can face them with a trust that God is with us.