

Title: Isaiah Session 12: Isaiah Chapters 24 and 25

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. John Oswalt covers Isaiah chapters 24 and 25, focusing on the shift from localized national oracles to a universal perspective on God's absolute sovereignty over history. Dr. Oswalt explains the theological tension between divine control and human free will, illustrating how transgression of the everlasting covenant leads to cosmic judgment. The session explores the contrast between empty worldly revelry and the joyful songs of those who wait on the Lord's majesty, concluding with the promise of death's destruction and the humbling of prideful self-reliance.

Outline

I. Introduction and Structural Context

A. Opening and Prayer

1. Need for God's Spirit to reveal truth in a world of unreality and falsehood.
2. Dr. Oswalt's acknowledgment of student support and class materials.

B. Overarching Structure of Isaiah

1. Chapters 1-6: Problem of sinful Israel and the solution of servanthood (purification through experiences of clean lips).
2. Chapters 7-39: Trust as the basis of servanthood (putting destiny in God's hands).
3. Chapters 7-12: Ahaz's failure to trust, choosing Assyria over God.
 - a. *Implications of refusing to trust and the revelation of the Messiah.*
 - b. *Chapter 12 hymn of trust: 'God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.'*
4. Chapters 13-23: 'Lessons in Trust' (warning not to trust foreign nations that are under judgment).

C. The Shift in Chapters 24-27

1. Exploding the misconception that nations are the primary actors and God is merely a reactor.
2. God as the sovereign actor and ruler of history, calling the shots.
3. The theological conundrum of divine sovereignty and human freedom.

- a. The ditch of determinism (attributing every microscopic action to divine decree).*
- b. The ditch of extreme human freedom (reducing God to an anxious bystander).*
- c. The biblical reality: nothing happens apart from God's hand, yet He grants genuine freedom to choose.*

II. Chapter 24: Universal Judgment and Cosmic Sovereign Reign

A. Transition and Universal Scope (Verses 1-3)

1. Transition looking both backward and forward.
2. Yahweh is the active agent of emptying and desolating the earth.
3. Complete collapse of social distinctions: priests, slaves, masters, maids, buyers, and sellers all face the same destiny.

B. The Moral Cause and Cosmic Effect of Judgment (Verses 4-6)

1. Cause-and-effect relationships in scripture: causation versus substantiation.
2. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants.
3. Specific spiritual definitions of human rebellion:
 - a. 'Transgression' (transgress): intentionally crossing or jumping over God's established boundaries.*
 - b. Violating the 'Torah' (which means divine 'instruction' rather than merely negative restriction).*
 - c. Breaking the 'everlasting covenant': violating the unspoken agreement of how creatures are designed to live with their Creator.*
4. Application to modern believers: looking at instructions rather than blaming others.

C. The Contrasting Cities and Songs (Verses 7-16)

1. Themes of the city and singing that run through these chapters.
2. The hollow revelry of drunkards silenced by desolation in the wasted city.
3. The 'elliptical' harvest metaphor: only a tiny remnant of pieces left behind, like a few olives on the highest branch.
4. Lifting up voices to sing for joy over the Lord's majesty.
 - a. Understanding why God's majesty brings joy: He is righteous, loving, and reliable (unlike cruel, corrupt, or duplicitous pagan deities).*
 - b. The prophetic realism of Isaiah: refusing to ignore present pain and betrayal while anticipating future promises.*

D. Apocalyptic Cosmos-Scale Devastation (Verses 17-23)

1. Over-the-top prophetic language portraying judgment of the entire world and cosmos.
2. Earth staggers under the heavy guilt of its transgressions.
3. The sun and moon confounded as the Lord of Hosts reigns on Mount Zion before His elders.

4. Meaning of 'Lord of Hosts': Yahweh of heaven's armies, who names and rules the stars that pagans worshiped as gods.
5. Realizing the Kingdom through Jesus Christ now.

III. Chapter 25: Exalting God's Perfect Plan and Infinite Grace

A. God's Plans Formed of Old (Verses 1-5)

1. Confirming the sovereign decrees of Chapter 14:24—God's plans cannot be annulled.
2. Humans can alter the path of implementation but cannot cancel the ultimate divine end result.
3. The fortified city made a ruin, prompting strong and ruthless nations to glorify God.
4. Yahweh's character as a stronghold to the poor and needy in distress.

B. The Great Mountain Feast and Universal Salvation (Verses 6-8)

1. A banquet on Mount Zion for 'all people' and 'all nations'.
2. The biblical use of hyperbole: overstating points to capture radical spiritual truth.
3. The ultimate promise of salvation: swallowing up death forever and wiping away tears from all faces.

C. The Spiritual Discipline of Waiting (Verse 9)

1. The confession of the faithful remnant: 'This is our God; we have waited for him'.
2. Linguistic differences in Hebrew words for waiting/trust:
 - a. *Baza*: standard trust.
 - b. *Kava* and *Haka*: confident anticipation and expectation, coupled with a refusal to run ahead of God to solve problems our own way.
3. Examples of failing to wait (King Saul, King Ahaz) vs. examples of waiting (Hezekiah, the disciples, hospital waiting room faith).

D. The Trampling of Pride: The Moab Metaphor (Verses 10-12)

1. The graphic, unglamorous barnyard metaphor: Moab trampled down like straw in a manure pit, trying to swim but failing.
2. Theme of the book: God alone is exalted, and human self-exaltation (modeled by Moab, Hitler, Stalin, Hirohito) is doomed to disaster.
3. The law of the Creator and the creature: crossing natural boundaries is self-destructive.
4. Salvation is conditional on trust and self-denial; rejecting God's authority in favor of self-sufficiency results in judgment.
5. Harmonizing grace and justice: Moab's fate does not contradict God's grace, as both are realities of His character.