

Title: Isaiah Session 21: The Servant's Mission and the Divine "I Am" (Isaiah Chapters 42 and 43)

Author: Dr. John Oswalt

Session: Session 21

Source: Biblecallelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Servant, Mishpat, Cyrus, Idols, Witnesses, Redemption, New Thing, Anihu, Grace

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. John Oswalt covers Isaiah chapters 42 and 43, continuing the exploration of God's grace as the motive and means of salvation. Dr. Oswalt contrasts the blind, deaf nation of Israel with the promised ultimate Servant whose mission is to restore divine order (Mishpat) and ratify a new covenant written on the heart. The session examines God's unique ability to predict the future through the raising of Cyrus, challenging pagan idols to produce similar proof of sovereignty. Ultimately, the lecture highlights how God redeems His people by grace for His own sake, calling them to be living witnesses of His sovereign, unpredictable power.

Outline

I. Introduction and Contextual Review

- A. Review of Chapter 41: Cyrus, the panic of the nations, and the choice of Israel.
- B. The Purpose of the Exile: Refining rather than destruction (Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 parallel).
- C. Theme of Chapters 40-55: Grace as the motive and means of salvation.

II. The Case Against the Idols (Isaiah 41:21-29)

- A. The challenge to the gods: predict the future or explain the cosmos' origins and goals.
- B. Pagan circular worldview vs. Biblical linear worldview.
- C. God's specific prediction of the Babylonian exile (circa 701 BC) and the return via Cyrus.
- D. Critique of the 'Second Isaiah' theory.

III. The Two Servants (Isaiah 42:1-13)

- A. The Servant with a Mission (42:1-9):
 - 1. Contrast with Israel: this servant receives no material benefits but has a global mission.
 - 2. The mission: to bring forth Mishpat (divine order, far greater than legal equity) with gentleness.
 - 3. Role as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations (satisfying the old covenant, ratifying the new).
 - 4. Parallels with Isaiah 61.

B. The Structural 'Flip-Flop' of Servant References:

1. Chapters 41-48: Focus on the nation Israel and its benefits (with the exception of 42:1-9).
2. Chapters 49-55: Focus on the Servant with a mission (with one exception).

C. The Universal Song of Praise (42:10-13) in response to the delivering servant.

IV. The Blind Servant and Sovereign Exile (Isaiah 42:14-25)

- A. God's pain over the exile: restraining Himself like a woman in labor.
- B. Israel as the blind and deaf servant who fails to observe the Torah.
- C. God as the active sender of the exile: Babylon did not defeat Him; He sent Israel into exile and can easily get them out.

V. Redemption, the Second Case, and the Divine 'I Am' (Isaiah 43:1-13)

- A. The third 'Fear Not' (43:1): Redemption and Cyrus taking Egypt, Cush, and Sheba as a ransom.
- B. The second case against the idols (43:8-13).
- C. Israel as God's chosen witnesses to know, believe, and understand Anihu ('I am He' / ego eimi).
- D. God's absolute independence: self-existence vs. human dependence on external elements.
- E. Witnessing as being living evidence of God's transforming power in life.

VI. The New Thing and Empty Ritualism (Isaiah 43:14-28)

- A. The repetition of 'the Holy One of Israel' and 'Redeemer'.
- B. Remember the Exodus (God's character), but forget how He did it (43:16-21).
- C. God is always consistent but never predictable: utilizing Cyrus the pagan emperor instead of a Moses-figure.
- D. The indictment of weary, empty ritualism (43:22-24): offering sacrifices without the heart.
- E. Salvation by grace (43:25): God blotting out transgressions for His own sake, not human effort.
- F. The call to remembrance and the historical cause of the exile.