

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 11, Audio Overview Podcast

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All right. So are you ready to really get into some Isaiah with me today? Always ready for some Isaiah. Okay, good.

Because we're going to be looking at chapters 22 and 23. And let me tell you, these chapters, they kind of hit different. Oh, yeah.

They do. They're all about trust, or really more like where we shouldn't be putting our trust. Yeah.

And what's really wild is that it's not just talking about, you know, other nations, but also our own. Like, it's this whole idea of shortsightedness, which I think we can all probably relate to on some level. Oh, absolutely.

It's amazing how relevant these ancient texts still are, right? Isaiah was basically dropping these truth bombs about the dangers of putting your faith in things that can't ultimately deliver. Totally. And there's this phrase in there that really stopped me in my tracks.

Valley of vision. Oh, yeah. You'd think it would be something positive.

Right. Like some beautiful vista. Yeah, but it's actually the opposite.

So what's the deal with that? Well, it's like Isaiah is throwing some serious shade here. He's calling out Judah's leaders for being so focused on the immediate problems that they've completely lost sight of the bigger picture. They're stuck in this metaphorical valley, blind to the consequences of their actions.

So it's not just about physical sight, but spiritual blindness, too. Exactly. And that's where the whole trust issue comes in throughout Isaiah.

There's this recurring theme, you know, don't put your faith in human nations, their power, their glory, their schemes. He's already warned about falling for the allure of Babylon, the pride of Moab, the political maneuvering of all the surrounding nations. He even calls out Egypt, you know, with all its wisdom and resources.

So basically, Isaiah is saying don't trust the hype centuries before Instagram even existed. Right. And what's really shocking is that in chapter 22, he adds Judah to that list.

Oh, wow. He's telling his own people, hey, don't think you're exempt from this. Your nation isn't any different when it comes to ultimate security.

Wow. That must have been a tough pill to swallow. You know, it makes me think about how we often put our trust in things like political systems, the economy, technology, even celebrities.

Yeah. We think they'll bring us stability and happiness, but ultimately they always fall short. It's so easy to get caught up in those things, isn't it? We look for security and meaning in places that can't truly provide it.

Right. It's like building your house on sand, as Jesus said. OK, so we've got this valley of vision thing going on, and Isaiah is telling everyone to stop trusting in shaky foundations.

Right. Then we've got this weird situation where there's all this partying and celebration going on in Judah, but the country's been devastated. So what's the deal with that? Well, it's one of those laugh so you don't cry moments.

OK. There are a couple of theories about this. Some scholars believe they were celebrating the Assyrian general, the Rabshakeh, withdrawing from Jerusalem.

Others think it was more about Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, retreating after losing a big chunk of his army. But either way, it's pretty ironic. They're rejoicing over survival while the rest of the country is in ruins.

It's like they're celebrating dodging a bullet, but completely ignoring the gaping wound. A classic case of shortsightedness, and Isaiah is not having it. No.

He refuses to join the party. He's like, I'm not celebrating this. Yeah.

He sees the bigger picture. He sees the long-term consequences of putting their trust in human power. He's grieving not just for the physical destruction, but for their spiritual blindness.

Which is where that whole like Pyrrhic victory thing comes in. They might have technically won this battle, but at what cost? Exactly. They've lost sight of what really matters.

And to emphasize that point, Isaiah keeps hammering on this phrase: the Lord God of hosts. He's reminding them and us that there's a higher power at work. So instead of looking to kings and armies, he's saying we need to look to our maker.

But what does that actually look like in everyday life? Well, it's more than just a nice saying or a religious platitude. It's about a fundamental shift in perspective. It's about recognizing that we're not in control, and that's okay.

Okay. It's about prayer, seeking guidance, and trusting in God's long-term plan, even when we don't understand it. It's almost like surrendering the illusion of control in order to find true security.

Which brings us to Hezekiah. He's generally considered one of the good kings, right? Definitely. He made some smart moves, prepared well for the Assyrian threat, but he made a crucial mistake.

Uh-oh. He didn't consult God. He got caught up in the valley of vision too.

He did. And it's a reminder that even the best of us, even those with good intentions, can get things wrong. Yeah.

We can put our trust in the wrong things. We can let fear, pride, or ambition cloud our judgment. So even good leaders like Hezekiah can't be our ultimate source of security.

Right. It reminds me of that famous line, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Oh, yeah.

I mean, it sounds fun on the surface, but in this context, it feels a lot darker. It's definitely not about enjoying life in a healthy way. It's about escapism.

It's about choosing instant gratification over facing the consequences of your actions. In a way, it's the ultimate act of shortsightedness. It's like saying, I'm going to ignore the reality around me because it's too painful to deal with.

Which honestly is something we all do sometimes, right? Oh, for sure. Whether it's scrolling through social media to avoid dealing with a problem or reaching for that extra glass of wine at the end of a long day. Absolutely.

We all have our coping mechanisms, our ways of numbing ourselves to the things that make us uncomfortable. But Isaiah is warning us that this kind of avoidance comes with a hefty price tag. He even talks about a sin unto death, which is a pretty intense concept.

It's like we've smashed our receiver to God's voice, unable to hear his guidance or warnings. And speaking of ignoring warnings, Isaiah uses this fascinating character Shebna to drive home his point. Oh, yeah.

The guy who's busy building himself a lavish tomb while everyone else is, you know, facing the Assyrian threat. Talk about misplaced priorities. But right.

It's like he's saying, hey, death, not a problem for me. I've got this all figured out with my fancy burial plans. But the irony is he ends up dying in a foreign land far from his carefully constructed tomb.

Karma's a boomerang, huh? Isaiah uses Shebna as a symbol of those who trust in their own efforts, their own resources to secure their future. He's basically saying you can build all the fancy tombs, amass all the wealth, achieve all the worldly success you want. But if you're not right with God, it's all for nothing.

It makes you wonder what our modern-day tombs are, right? What are the things we invest in, the things we cling to that give us that false sense of security? That's a great question for all of us to ponder. What are the things we prioritize above our relationship with God? Is it our careers or possessions or social status? It's definitely food for thought. So Shebna gets the boot and Eliakim steps in as the new prime minister, new leadership, fresh start, right? Well, not so fast.

Isaiah makes it clear that even Eliakim's success isn't guaranteed. He uses this image of a peg that was fastened in a secure place. But even that peg can give way.

Okay, that's a bit unsettling. It's like saying even if you're doing your best, even if you're in a position of authority, you're not immune to failure. It challenges our whole notion of what

success really means, doesn't it? Isaiah is suggesting that true success isn't about outward appearances or worldly achievements.

It's about faithfulness, obedience, and trusting in God's plan, even when things don't go our way. You know, that reminds me of a time when I was a college president. I put everything I had into that job, but things didn't go as planned.

It felt like a huge failure at the time. But looking back, I can see how God used that experience to teach me valuable lessons about humility, perseverance, and trusting in his timing. It's often in those moments of perceived failure that we learn the most about ourselves and about God's faithfulness.

It's like the old saying: when one door closes, another opens. Absolutely. So let's shift gears a bit and talk about Tyre and Sidon.

These were major players in the ancient world. Powerful, wealthy cities famous for their trading empire and control of the seas. But Isaiah doesn't paint a pretty picture of their future.

What's the deal with that? Their story is a classic example of pride coming before a fall. They were known for their opulence, their self-sufficiency, their we-can-handle-it-ourselves attitude. But Isaiah prophesied their sudden and utter destruction.

And it wasn't just bad luck or a change in the economic winds, right? This is a direct judgment from God on their pride and arrogance. Exactly. Isaiah says, The Lord of hosts has purposed it to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth.

He's making it clear that no matter how powerful or wealthy we may be, ultimately, we are accountable to God. It's a sobering thought. And it makes you wonder, why does God allow these things to happen? Why does he orchestrate events, even those that seem tragic and unfair? It's the age-old question, isn't it? And honestly, it's one we may never fully understand this side of eternity.

But I think what's important to remember is that God is sovereign. He is in control, even when we don't understand his ways. And while we may not always see the reason behind his actions, we can trust that he is working all things together for good.

So instead of getting stuck in the why, we should focus on our own response. How are we living in light of this truth? Right. Are we trusting in him? Are we seeking his guidance? Are we aligning our lives with his will? It all circles back to that idea of looking to our maker, like we were talking about earlier.

But it's so much easier said than done. Oh, it definitely takes a conscious effort. It's about recognizing those moments when we're tempted to put our trust in things that can't ultimately deliver.

So taking a step back, what's the big takeaway from all of this? What does Isaiah want us to understand about trust and short-sightedness? I think it's this: true security and lasting joy.

They aren't found in nations, political systems, economic prosperity, or even our own abilities. It's a relationship with God.

It's about recognizing our limitations, acknowledging that we don't have all the answers, and placing our trust in a power that's bigger than ourselves. It's about humility, isn't it? Admitting that we need help, that we can't do this life alone. Absolutely.

And I think that's a message that resonates deeply with people today. You know, we're living in a world that's full of uncertainty, anxiety, and division. People are searching for something to hold on to, something to believe in.

And Isaiah is offering us a way forward. He's not sugarcoating things. He's not saying it's going to be easy, but he's pointing us toward a source of hope and strength that can sustain us even in the midst of difficult circumstances.

It's like he's saying, look, I know you're tempted to put your trust in these other things. I get it. They seem appealing.

They promise security and happiness, but they're ultimately empty promises. They'll leave you feeling disillusioned and disappointed. But there's another way.

There's a better way. Choose to trust in God, align your life with his will, and you'll find true peace and fulfillment. You know, when you put it like that, it almost sounds too simple.

But I think there's a profound truth in that simplicity. I agree. It's not about complicated rituals or religious formulas.

It's about a heart posture. It's about surrender, humility, and a willingness to let go of our own limited perspective. And that's something we can all work on no matter where we are in our spiritual journey.

Absolutely. It's a lifelong process of learning to trust God more and more each day. This has been an incredibly insightful deep dive.

Thanks for walking us through these powerful chapters of Isaiah. And for our listeners out there, here's something to ponder as you go about your day. If God is indeed directing events, even in the midst of chaos and tragedy, what does that reveal about his character? And how does that knowledge shape the way you approach life's challenges? Think about it.