

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 12, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right. Welcome to another Deep Dive. This time we're going deep into Isaiah with Dr. John Oswalt.

Yes. Chapters 24 and 25. Buckle up.

Buckle up. Because it's intense. Yeah.

Desolate cities, drunken revelry. Moab face down in a barnyard. Yeah.

A nation face down in a barnyard. But don't worry, there's this really powerful message of hope. Yes, there is.

There's a lot of hope. Yeah. Yeah.

And it speaks to, I think, what it really means to live in alignment with God's reality. And I think what's interesting about these chapters is we shift from kind of focusing on individual nations, which we saw in the previous chapters, to God as the main player. Right.

Right. God is the primary actor, I would say, in chapters 24 and 25. Yeah.

Yeah. He's not just reacting. It's like he's actively shaping the narrative.

That's right. And that's kind of a shift in focus, which I think is really important. It is.

It is. It is. And Dr. Oswalt, he uses the analogy of a play.

And he describes God as not just a character, but the playwright, the director, and the stage manager all rolled into one. Yeah. I mean, it makes you think, right? Right.

Like, how do we view our own lives? I mean, are we just reacting to circumstances, or are we actively participating in a larger story? Absolutely. That's orchestrated by God, you know? Yeah. And if you're thinking about those implications, we're not just puppets on strings.

Right. But active participants in this cosmic drama with a divine author. Yeah.

So then the question comes, right? Like, if God is ultimately in control, where does free will come in? How do we reconcile that? Right. Right. Right.

Those two seemingly contradictory ideas, you know? That's a tension that theologians have wrestled with for centuries. And I don't think Isaiah offers an easy answer, but I think what these chapters do emphasize is that nothing happens outside of God's control. Right.

But within that framework, we still have the freedom to choose our paths. Okay. You know? It's kind of like, imagine it like a river flowing within its banks.

Okay. The river has a defined course. You know, the banks kind of give it its shape.

But within those boundaries, the water can swirl and eddy and change direction slightly. So our choices might create those little ripples and eddies, but the overall flow is determined by a higher power. Okay.

So God sets the parameters, so to speak, the boundaries of the river. But we have some freedom within those limits, but those choices aren't without consequences. And that's where Dr. Oswalt, in chapter 24, really dives into this cause and effect of what he calls transgression.

Yeah. And transgression, as he describes it, is essentially going over the boundaries that God has set for how the world operates. It's not about arbitrary rules, you know, meant to limit our fun or to, you know, keep us from having a good time, but it's more like an instruction manual for how life works best.

Yeah. You know? Yeah. Like, so if we ignore the instruction manual, then things break down.

That's right. Things fall apart. You know, if you try to build a house without following the blueprints, it's going to collapse eventually.

And the text uses vivid imagery to illustrate this breakdown. It does. It's intense.

Yes. Cities lie in ruins, the earth is defiled, joy is replaced with despair, and it's a sobering picture of what happens when humanity strays from God's intended order. Are we respecting the instruction manual for life? Are we contributing to desolation or are we building something different? Yeah, those are great questions.

What does that look like? I don't know. Yeah. And that leads us directly into Dr. Oswalt's message here.

He contrasts two types of joy in chapter 24. You know, the fleeting, superficial joy of those seeking to escape reality through drunkenness. Yeah.

Okay. And then he contrasts that with the lasting, profound joy found in recognizing God's majesty and aligning ourselves with his will. So it's kind of like choosing between a sugar rush and a nourishing meal.

Yes. Right. Yes.

One gives you a temporary high, but the other sustains you over the long haul. But how do we move from the fleeting to the lasting? Right. Right.

Especially in a world that often glorifies instant gratification? Well, he uses another powerful image to illustrate this point. Okay. And that's the contrast between two kinds of cities.

So on the one hand, you have the desolate city broken down and empty, a consequence of turning away from God's guidance. Yeah. And I feel like sometimes that desolate city feels very close to home.

Yes. Yes. Think about just, you know, brokenness we see in our communities and isolation and despair.

It's like, are we building desolate cities within our own hearts? Absolutely. And then on the other hand, we have the hope of Mount Zion and Jerusalem. Not just as physical locations, but as symbols of God's reign, places where justice and righteousness prevail and all nations gather in unity and peace.

Okay. Yeah. That's powerful.

Yes. And it's a beautiful image. But again, you know, it's easy to think about those cities as like far off, you know? Almost these mythical places.

Right. How do we bridge the gap between the desolate city that we see around us and that hope? Well, that's where waiting on God comes into play. Yeah.

And it's not passive resignation. Right. Like some might think.

Yeah. It's active trust and surrender, recognizing that we are not in control. Yeah.

And that's actually a good thing. It's choosing to align ourselves with God's reality, trusting that he's working even when we can't see the results. You know what I love about what Dr. Oswalt says? He uses this brilliant analogy.

Yes. Where he says, relying on ourselves instead of God is like sticking a paperclip. Yes.

In an electrical outlet. That's right. And it's just like, it goes against the natural order.

It does. It's going to lead to disaster. We weren't, we weren't designed to be self-sufficient.

That's right. We were made to depend on our creator. Yeah.

You know? Yeah. And it's precisely that dependence. Yes.

That willingness to wait on God that ultimately leads us to the hope of Zion. Yeah. Chapters 24 and 25 are full of these stark contrasts, you know, really pushing us to examine our own lives, to see where we're building desolate cities and where we're embracing the hope of a city built on righteousness and justice.

Yeah. It's like we're at this crossroads. We are.

And we have to choose. We do. Which path to take.

So how do we make choices that lead us towards that hopeful city, that sense of alignment with God's will? It feels like a daunting task. It is. Especially when we're surrounded by so much, so much brokenness.

Yeah, it is. It is. It is.

And that's where Dr. Oswalt, you know, introduces this rather challenging image. Oh, yeah. And one that I know might make some listeners uncomfortable.

Yeah. And that is the analogy of Moab being trampled in a barnyard. That one stopped me in my tracks.

I was like, what? Hold on a second. Yeah. It's a little intense.

Yeah. Like, it seems harsh. It does.

Almost vindictive, you know? Yeah. Why would God use such a graphic image? Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

And, you know, that's a very natural reaction, but Dr. Oswalt is quick to point out that this isn't about God being vengeful. Okay. Okay.

Moab, in the context of Isaiah, represents a nation known for its pride. Okay. And its defiance.

Yeah. Okay. A nation that repeatedly rejected God's offer of grace.

Right. And chose to go its own way. So the barnyard image is not, it's not about punishment as much as it is about just the natural consequence.

Right. Of rejecting God's reality. Right.

It's about what happens when you choose to live. Yeah. In a way that's fundamentally out of sync with God's design.

Yeah. It's like trying to swim against a powerful current. Right.

You know, you might struggle for a while. Yeah. But eventually, you'll be swept away.

Yeah. And it's a sobering reminder that our choices have consequences, and choosing to live apart from God's will inevitably leads to destruction. Okay.

Yeah. So it's not God punishing us. Right.

It's just we're experiencing the natural outcomes. Exactly. Of our decisions.

But even with this image of Moab's destruction, there's still this sense of hope that's woven throughout these chapters. Yes. Absolutely.

Chapters 24 and 25 highlight the tension between God's boundless grace and His unwavering justice. Yeah. Okay.

He offers us life, restoration, a place in His eternal city, but we have to choose. Yeah. To receive it.

And that choice, as we've seen, has profound implications, both for our present lives. Right. And for our eternal destinies.

Wow. Okay. We're going to take a quick break.

We'll be right back. Yeah. That Moab analogy, I mean, it's intense.

It is. But I think it really highlights an important point. Yeah.

It's not that God's this cosmic killjoy. Right. But it's about understanding that, like, aligning ourselves with His reality- yeah.

Leads to life. Right. And choosing to go our own way- yeah.

Ultimately leads to destruction. Absolutely. And it's a reminder that we're not just, like, free-floating individuals making these isolated choices.

Right. Our actions have ripple effects. Yeah.

Not just on our own lives, but on the world around us. Yeah. You know, it's like that butterfly effect you hear about.

Yeah. Yeah. Even the smallest decisions can have unforeseen consequences down the line.

So how do we make sure our choices are leading us towards that flourishing life, towards that city on a hill- yeah. Instead of that desolate wasteland? And I have to admit, like, Dr. Oswald keeps coming back to this idea of waiting on God. Yeah.

And I wrestle with that. It's easy to say, okay, God, I'm just going to sit back and let you handle everything. Right.

But honestly, that feels a little passive for me. Yeah. I understand that.

You know? Yeah. Like, what does that look like in real life? Well, and I think the word wait- yeah. Can sometimes evoke images of, you know, inactivity- right.

Or resignation. But I think what Dr. Oswald's emphasizing here is that it's not about passively sitting on the sidelines. Okay.

It's about this act of trust. Okay. And surrender.

Yeah. Recognizing that we're not always meant to understand the bigger picture or force things to happen on our own timeline. So, it's more about surrendering our need to control- right.

And trusting that God is working behind the scenes- That's right. Even when we can't see the immediate results. Exactly.

It's about shifting our perspective from, I need to make this happen- Yeah. To, God, I trust you to work this out- in your perfect way and timing. Yeah.

It requires a certain level of humility. Right. Acknowledging that we're not always the best judge of what's best for us.

Dr. Oswald shared a really poignant story- yeah. About his own mother- yes. Waiting on God during a time of great uncertainty and difficulty.

Yeah. And it wasn't about her sitting around doing nothing. Right.

It was about actively choosing to trust God's goodness and provision, even when things were tough. Yes. And he contrasts that with the story of King Saul.

Right. Right. Yes.

Who couldn't wait on God. Right. And ended up making a rash decision, which ultimately cost him his kingdom.

Exactly. Exactly. And it's that reminder that impatience and self-reliance can lead us down some pretty destructive paths.

Yeah. But then that begs the question, right? How do we cultivate that active trust- right? Right.

In our own lives? Yeah. What does it look like to wait on God- right. When we're facing real life challenges? When we're feeling anxious? Yeah.

When we're uncertain? Exactly. Well, I think it starts with recognizing our limitations. Okay.

Surrendering that need for control- yeah. Yeah. And choosing to believe that God's ways are ultimately better- Right.

Than our own. Yeah. It's a daily practice of aligning our hearts and minds with his will- Yeah.

Knowing that he's working all things together for our good- Yeah. Even when we can't see it. So it's a continuous process of letting go and choosing to trust- That's right.

Even when it feels hard. Yeah. Or when we don't see immediate answers.

Exactly. And that's where faith comes in. You know, Hebrews 11.1 describes faith as- yeah.

The assurance of things hoped for. Right. The conviction of things not seen.

Yeah. It's about holding onto that hope- yeah. That unwavering belief in God's goodness and faithfulness- right.

Even when we're walking through valleys of uncertainty- Or doubt. What about those times when it feels like God is silent- Right. Or distant? Yeah, yeah.

When we're praying, seeking his guidance- yeah. But we don't feel his presence or see any evidence of his hand at work. Yeah.

That's a question that a lot of us wrestle with. Yeah. And honestly, there are no easy answers.

Yeah. But I think it's in those moments- Yeah. Of silence and uncertainty- right.

That our faith is truly tested- Okay. And refined. Yeah.

It's about choosing to believe- Yeah. That even when we don't feel it- Right. God is still there.

Right. And his promises remain true. So, it's about digging in our heels- Yeah.

Clinging to that anchor of hope- yeah. Even when the storms are raging around us. That's right.

And the writer of Hebrews goes on to say that hope is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. Right. It's what keeps us grounded when everything else feels like it's falling apart.

Yeah. It's what allows us to weather the storms of life knowing that there's a safe harbor- right. waiting for us on the other side.

And speaking of safe harbors, chapter 25 paints this incredible picture of God's ultimate salvation. Yes. Right, this vision of complete restoration where he wipes away every tear and swallows up death forever.

It's a pretty mind-blowing concept. It is. And honestly, it's a bit hard to wrap my head around.

It is, yeah. It's like, whoa, what does that even look like? And what's so striking is the universal scope of this salvation. You know, it's not limited to a select few.

It's for all people, all nations, every face under the sun. It's amazing to think that this message of hope and universal salvation is coming from the God of this relatively small nation of Judah, which, geographically speaking, was no bigger than Jesuit County. Right, right.

It just shows you that God can work through the most unexpected people and places to accomplish his purposes. That's such a good point. Right? It's a reminder that God's ways are not our ways, you know? He often chooses the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and strong, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians.

OK, so we've covered a lot of ground here. We talked about God's sovereignty, the consequences of transgression, the importance of waiting on God, and the promise of universal salvation. What are some key takeaways? What do you think listeners should walk away with from these chapters? Well, first and foremost, I think it's crucial to remember that God is the ultimate authority, the one who holds the reins of history in his hands.

Our lives aren't random or meaningless. We are part of a much bigger story that God is writing, and a story that ultimately culminates in redemption and hope, even though we will experience seasons of judgment and suffering along the way. It's that reminder that even though we might experience brokenness and pain in this life, God's still in control.

That's right. He's working all things together for good, you know? For those who love him, it's not about denying the reality of suffering, but about holding on to the hope that it's not the end of the story. Absolutely, and that's where the choice comes in, right? We have the freedom to choose whether we will align ourselves with God's plan or try to go our own way.

And as we saw with Moab, those choices have consequences. Yeah, but the good news is that God's grace is always available to us, no matter how far we've strayed, no matter how many wrong turns we've made. It's about recognizing that tension between his grace and his justice, right? Understanding that he's both loving and holy.

He longs to restore us to a right relationship with himself while also allowing us to experience the natural consequences of our actions. That's the paradox, right? At the heart of the Christian faith, we serve a God who is both merciful and just, a God who offers us the gift of salvation while also holding us accountable for our choices. Yeah, it's a lot to chew on.

And Dr. Oswalt, he ends his lecture on Chapter 25 by posing this question. He says, receiving God's life is conditional, but what is the condition, according to this chapter? And I think, as we've been discussing, it's about that act of trust. It's about the willingness to wait on God, to surrender our self-reliance.

Moab refused to do that, and the result was disastrous. So the challenge for us is to examine our own lives and ask ourselves, where am I trying to be God? Where am I resisting his will or trying to force things to happen on my own timeline? Those are excellent questions. And I think they lead us very naturally into our discussion of Chapters 26 and 27, where we'll see these themes of trust, surrender, and God's ultimate victory over evil.

Oh, this is getting good. Explored even further. Yeah.

I can't wait to dive into those chapters next week. Yeah, it's going to be good. But for now, I think we've given our listeners plenty to chew on.

Yes, we have. OK, so now we're moving into Chapters 26 and 27. And I'm already sensing a shift in tone, kind of a deepening of the themes that we've been talking about.

Yeah, these chapters offer a fascinating blend of trust, judgment, and ultimately, a resounding message of hope. It's like watching a tapestry being woven with threads of darkness and light kind of intertwining to create this beautiful, intricate picture of God's power and love. Oh, I love that image, the tapestry of trust and judgment.

Yes. And speaking of intricate details, Chapter 26 opens with this incredible song of praise. Yes.

It's like the people of Jerusalem are just overflowing with gratitude. Right. For God's protection and deliverance, even as they acknowledge the harsh realities of the world around them.

Yeah, what's striking is the way that this song holds those two seemingly opposite experiences together, the joy of deliverance and the awareness of ongoing hardship. It's not about ignoring the difficulties or pretending that everything is perfect. But it's about recognizing that even in the midst of struggles, God is still in control and working for our ultimate good.

So it's about finding that unshakable sense of security in God's presence, knowing that he's got us covered, no matter what storms we're facing. Exactly. And the song also highlights the importance of righteousness and justice as key elements of that secure life.

Verse 7 says, "The path of the righteous is level. You, the upright one, make the way of the righteous smooth. Oh, OK.

It's a reminder that aligning ourselves with God's ways, pursuing justice and righteousness in our own lives is essential for experiencing true peace and flourishing. So it's not just about waiting passively for God to act. It's about actively participating in creating a world that reflects his values of justice and righteousness.

Absolutely, it's about partnering with God in the restoration of all things. And that brings us back to this theme of waiting on God, which takes on an even deeper dimension in chapter 26, with this incredible image of the dead being raised to life. Yes.

Verses 19 and 20 paint this vivid picture of resurrection. Your dead shall live. Their bodies shall rise.

You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy. It's like a glimpse into the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises, a reminder that our hope extends beyond this earthly life. It's a powerful foreshadowing of the hope we have in Christ.

Absolutely. Right. Who conquered death and offers us eternal life.

Yes, so waiting on God isn't just about waiting for him to act in our present circumstances. It's about waiting for the ultimate realization of his kingdom, a kingdom where death is defeated, and life reigns supreme. Wow, that's pretty mind-blowing.

It is. But in the meantime, we're still living in a world where death is a reality, right? Yeah. We're suffering, and uncertainty is all around us.

So how do we hold on to that hope, that sense of security when things feel chaotic and out of control? Right, and that's where the invitation in verse 20 comes in. It says, go, my people. Enter your chambers and shut your doors behind you.

Hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. You know, it's a call to find refuge in God's presence, to rest in his peace and protection amidst the storms of life. I love that image of finding shelter in God's presence, like seeking refuge in a safe haven when the storms are raging outside.

It's that reminder that even when the world feels like it's falling apart, we can find peace and security in him. Yes, and while we wait and trust in him, he promises to bring about justice and righteousness in the world. Verse 21 says, for behold, the Lord is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

So even though it may feel like evil is winning at times, you can be confident that God will ultimately hold everyone accountable for their actions. That's right. There's a day of reckoning coming.

And that sense of accountability leads us into chapter 27, which shifts the focus from judgment to restoration. It speaks of God's tender care for his vineyard, which is a metaphor for his people, and his unwavering commitment to protecting and nurturing them. Oh, I love this.

The image of God as a gardener, carefully tending to his vines. Yeah, it speaks to his deep love, his personal involvement in our lives, his desire to see us flourish and bear fruit. And he promises to remove any obstacles that hinder our growth and fruitfulness.

Yes, he does. Verse 9 says, therefore, by this, the iniquity of Jacob will be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin. When he makes all the stones of the altars, like chalk stones that are burned to pieces, no asherim or incense altars will remain standing.

Yeah. Hold on, can we pause for a second? What are asherim? Right, it sounds a little mystical, doesn't it? Yeah, well, is this like a magic spell or something? But asherim, in this context, refers to wooden idols that were associated with the worship of false gods in ancient Canaanite culture. So when the text talks about removing them, it signifies a turning away from idolatry and a return to the worship of the one true God.

OK, so it's like God's clearing out all the spiritual clutter, all the things that are hindering. Yeah, all the things that are keeping us in a relationship with him. From truly connecting with him.

Right, and making space for genuine worship and growth. It's like he's clearing out the weeds and debris that are choking the life out of his vineyard, creating space for new life to flourish. So looking back at chapters 26 and 27, what's the overall message? Like, if you had to sum it up in a few sentences, what would you say? I think it's a message of hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

It's a reminder that even though we live in a world marked by brokenness and suffering, God is sovereign, just, and merciful. He is working all things together for the good of those who love him. And he invites us to find refuge and security in his presence.

Wow, that's a powerful summary. And it's a message I think we all need to hear. Yes, we do.

Especially, you know, just in the midst of life. Right. The challenges and uncertainties of just being alive.

It's a reminder that we're not alone. We have a God who loves us, protects us, and is ultimately working to redeem and restore all things. This deep dive into Isaiah has been incredible.

It has. I mean, we've explored themes of judgment, salvation, trust, and the ultimate victory of God's kingdom. Yes, we have.

It's a reminder that even though things may look bleak at times, we can always hold on to hope because God is in control. That's right. And His plans are always for our good.

Yes, and that hope isn't just, you know, wishful thinking. It's rooted in the character and promises of a God who has proven himself faithful. Time and time again.

Yes, he has. So as we wrap up this deep dive, I encourage you to keep reflecting on these powerful truths from Isaiah. Yes.

Let them shape your perspective, inform your choices, and fuel your hope. Absolutely. In the days ahead.

Yeah. Those are great words. Thanks for joining us on this journey of discovery.

Yes, thank you. And until next time. Yeah.

Keep seeking. Keep seeking. Keep questioning.

Keep questioning. And keep diving deep. And keep diving deep.

Absolutely. What?