

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 16, 6-min. Video Overview

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome to This Explainer. Today, we're diving deep, and I mean really deep, into Dr. John Oswalt's teaching on Isaiah chapters 32 and 33. It's a fascinating look at these ancient texts, but more than that, it's about the profound spiritual lessons of waiting on God, especially when, you know, everything around you feels like it's just completely falling apart.

But hey, before we jump right into the text itself, I want you to ask yourself a question. Seriously, think about this. When a crisis hits, who do you actually trust? How do you handle those moments of intense, overwhelming pressure? Because let's be real, immediate human solutions almost always seem way more appealing and logical than waiting around for divine timing.

Just hold on to that thought for a second, alright? It's basically the anchor for this whole thing we're about to unpack. Now, everything we're covering today comes straight from Dr. John Oswalt's academic study of these pivotal prophetic chapters. Specifically, this is drawn from session 16 of his larger teaching series, and wow, it just provides an absolutely incredible lens into the historical and spiritual realities of what's going on in the text.

So here's our roadmap. We're going to start with a lesson in trust, then look at a new righteous kingdom, discuss the danger of complacency, the pouring of the Spirit, explore judge, lawgiver, and king, and we'll wrap up with dwelling in consuming fire. Alright, section one, a lesson in trust.

To really understand what's happening here, we first need to set the historical stage around 710 to 705 BC. Okay, picture this. The northern kingdom of Israel, it's already gone.

Judah is the very last remnant left, and they are staring down an absolute existential crisis. You've got this terrifying Assyrian army campaigning right down the coast, heading straight for them. So what does the leadership of Judah do in a panic? Well, they make this fateful decision to put their trust in an alliance with Egypt.

They want chariots, they want horses, basically anything to save them instead of just waiting for the Lord's deliverance. In short, they sought a quick political solution to what was actually a deep spiritual problem. Moving to section two, a new righteous kingdom.

In response to all this reliance on human military power, Isaiah shifts his tone pretty dramatically as we move into chapter 32. Dr. Oswalt highlights a super stark contrast here. Isaiah comes in and promises a radically different kind of kingdom.

He compares the failing human leaders of the time, who frankly are described as metaphorically drunk, blind, deaf, and just leading the whole nation straight into disaster by trusting Egypt, with this promised king. This coming king, though, is going to rule in pure righteousness. He's bringing perfect clarity, insight, and wisdom.

It's literally night and day. Oswald actually digs into the Hebrew here, and it's absolutely brilliant. See, under that failing human leadership, the fool, which literally translates to a stumbler who just falls over everything, that guy is somehow elevated.

It makes no sense. But in the promised kingdom, the noble person is the one characterized by absolute trustworthiness and this radical openness, total transparency. As Oswald points out, in this kingdom of light, you don't have to remember your lies because the transparency of the Lord's rule just makes everything bright.

Now for section three, the danger of complacency. Right after laying out these beautiful positive promises, Dr. Oswald points out a pretty massive pitfall. The crucial point here is that oddly enough, good news often breeds spiritual complacency.

Dr. Oswald observes how incredibly easy it is for us to just, you know, read the end of the book, realize that, hey, we win, and then passively assume we don't need to let God deal with the messy, sinful parts of our actual daily lives. We start taking those amazing promises for granted, and what happens? We slip right into this sloppy, empty routine, totally losing all sense of conviction. This idea is brilliantly illustrated by a story Oswald shares about the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

A friend once told Coleridge that, hey, children should just be allowed to grow naturally, right, without any strict spiritual guidance. So Coleridge takes this guy outside and shows him his garden, which he had decided to just let grow naturally, and guess what? It was completely full of weeds. The lesson? If you just let things go naturally, painful thorns and briars are inevitably going to take over your spiritual soil.

You literally have to fight to cultivate the flowers. You have to fight to get the good stuff to come up. That brings us to section four, the pouring of the Spirit.

So how exactly do we break out of all that spiritual desolation? Well, Isaiah explains that true, lasting transformation only happens when the Holy Spirit is poured out, and Dr. Oswald makes a really fascinating distinction here. He notes that the primary work of the spirit isn't actually about those flashy, utilitarian gifts, you know, things like specific spiritual abilities or utilities that, frankly, can sometimes be counterfeited or misused. Instead, the primary work is about reproducing the undeniable fruit of God's character right inside of us.

And the beautiful thing about spiritual fruit, it cannot be counterfeited. All right, section five: judge, lawgiver, and king. As we move into chapter 33, the text shifts toward the ultimate answer for life's biggest problems.

Isaiah gives a strong warning here against exalting human ability. He uses the Hebrew word *ruach*, which can mean wind, breath, or spirit. Here's the catch.

When humanity relies on its own unaided *ruach*, our own human spirit, to solve our massive problems, Isaiah says that spirit simply becomes a fire that consumes itself. It's like chaff. It just gives birth to stubble.

Basically, exalting ourselves and our own abilities just leads straight to our own destruction. So what's the alternative? Well, true order, according to Oswald's reading, is only found by exalting God in three very distinct roles. First up, as judge.

Now, this doesn't just mean some legal officer in a courtroom, but the ultimate restorer of order. Second, as lawgiver. Think of him as the creator who literally wrote the instruction manual for how the entire cosmos is supposed to operate.

And finally, as king. He is the one who ultimately holds the whole shebang together in its proper relationship. And that brings us to section six, dwelling in consuming fire.

This is really the climax of the explainer, leading to a deeply provocative conclusion about the very nature of God's holiness. Isaiah paints this absolutely terrifying, awe-inspiring picture of God here. He actually describes God as a blast furnace of holiness, literally everlasting burnings.

And then he turns around and asks the ultimate question: who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Seriously, if God is this intense, raging furnace of purity, who on earth could possibly survive living in his presence? Well, here is the powerful twist at the end of Dr. Oswald's teaching: gaining entry into that fire. It is absolutely not about presenting a resume of your own self-righteous achievements. As Oswald notes, trying to use our own righteousness is totally pointless.

Rather, surviving that fire is entirely about fully relying on the transforming righteousness that only the Holy Spirit can provide. It's about stepping back and letting the spirit reproduce God's character right there inside you. So as we wrap up, I want to leave you with this.

Are you trying to stand before that consuming fire, clutching your own human resume? Or are you resting in the quiet trust of a spirit-transformed character? Thanks so much for joining me for this explainer. Keep learning and keep asking those big questions.