

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 24, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, strap in everybody, we're going deep into Isaiah today, chapters 49-51 to be exact. Oh yeah, those are dense. They are.

But you wanted to dig into that whole servant thing, right? How does it apply to Israel and to the Messiah? Yeah, the listener had some great questions about that. So we're using this lecture by Dr. John Oswalt; he's like the Isaiah guy, and he brings up some stuff about the servant that gets us thinking. Right off the bat, Isaiah throws this curveball. Israel is God's servant, chosen, special purpose, all that.

But then they keep messing up, failing. It's a pick-a-lane, right? Chosen or disobedient. Well, that's the tension.

Dr. Oswalt talks about this idea of a dual servant. Dual. Like two layers.

You've got the nation of Israel trying, but human, you know. I am a human. But then there's this ideal Israel, a perfect servant.

This one does fulfill God's plan. So it's not just the Israel we know from history class. It's deeper.

Is that where Messiah comes in? What our listener was asking about. Bingo. This ideal servant, the language Isaiah uses, it's powerful.

Polished arrow, hidden away, a light for the nations. Not exactly your everyday butler. No.

This is God's mission embodied. And it's huge. Isaiah 49.6 straight up says, this servant's work, it's for the whole world, not just one nation bouncing back. Okay.

And then there's that part where nature throws a party. Oh, yeah. Isaiah gets so poetic.

Mountains singing, heavens going wild. All because of this servant. I always love that part.

But it gets even cooler when you think about Isaiah chapter one. What's in chapter one? Nature is like the witness against Israel. It's groaning under their sin.

Oh, right. So chapter 49 flips that. Creation celebrating because redemption is coming.

The servant brings that. It makes you think, right? If nature is longing for this fixing, how does that impact us today? The environment and all that. Absolutely.

Sin's consequences, they don't stay neatly contained. And the servant's job, it's restoring everything. Big picture stuff.

Okay. Wow. That is big picture.

But before we get too cosmic, I got to go back to Israel for a sec. What about? Isaiah 49.1 scene. The Lord has forsaken me.

The Lord has forgotten me. Brutal. Talk about feeling abandoned.

Dr. Oswald uses this comparison like a divorce. Oof. That's rough.

Israel's relationship with God right then is that level of broken. Even if deep down they know God's there. But then God, uh, God brings the feels.

Oh yeah. The tattoo metaphor. I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

I cannot forget you. Isaiah 49.1 scene. Chills.

Every time. It hits hard when you remember those folks were in exile, terrified of vanishing. God's like, nope, you're etched into me.

Comforting. Right. Like even when we feel lost, he's got us.

For sure. But then things get kind of dark again. Isaiah 50.

The servant starts talking, and it's obedience, encouragement, but also suffering a lot of it. And not just random suffering either. It's unjust, accused falsely, mistreated.

And the way he talks about it, like he, he knows God's going to clear his name. Foreshadowing right. Big time.

This is pointing towards what Jesus goes through. Makes you ask that question. Why? Why would a perfect servant have to suffer like that? Well, that's the million-dollar question, isn't it? Isaiah seems to be saying it's not for nothing.

This suffering, it's tied to something way bigger that'll bring redemption eventually. Right. And it all ties back to this idea of walking in darkness.

Oh, you mean like Isaiah 50. Dale's 11. When you're surrounded by the unknown, what do you do? You got two choices.

One, try to make your OWN, rely on what you can figure out. Doesn't sound too great. Or two, trust in God's light, even if you can't see where it's going.

That theme of trust, it pops up all over Isaiah, doesn't it? Like, surrender the need to be in control. Totally. And I think that's what God's pushing in Isaiah 51.1-8, when he's talking to those who are seeking righteousness, trying to live right, even in exile.

That's that don't give up pep talk, right? Keep going. God's saying, my salvation is coming. And it's not just for you, it's for everybody.

Now, we've got this whole wake up thing happening in Isaiah 51. First, it's aimed at God's arm. His power.

Right. Like, time to flex, God. But then, it's awake.

Awake, O Zion. Like, hold on, maybe we're the sleepy ones here. I love that.

God's ready, but are we paying attention? Exactly. Okay, brace yourselves, things are about to get intense. Oh, what's coming? The cup of staggering, Isaiah 51.1, Sina 22.

This ain't your morning coffee. Sounds ominous. It's God's wrath, pure and unfiltered.

And guess who has to drink it? Israel, as God's servant. Whoa. Okay, so where does Dr. Oswalt take this? He said there's a big connection, right? Oh, yeah, he does.

And it changes everything. But I think we need a breather. This cup needs its own deep dive, for sure.

All right, that cup of staggering. We left off on a cliffhanger; Dr. Oswalt had this big connection, right? What's the deal with this cup? Okay, so it's God's wrath, no sugarcoating it. And Israel, as the servant, they got to drink it.

But then Dr. Oswalt brings up Gethsemane. Wait, Gethsemane. Like, Jesus praying, let this cup pass from me.

That cup. Yeah, the one Jesus begs to avoid, Dr. Oswalt connects it directly to the Isaiah cup. Heavy stuff.

But that cup was God's anger at sin, right? So you're saying Jesus is taking on humanity's punishment. That's the idea. Substitutionary atonement.

Jesus, the perfect servant, ideal Israel, all wrapped up in one. He takes our place. Okay, my brain's doing back flips here.

So because Jesus drank that cup, God can forgive us. Without, like, ignoring that sin happened. Justice is served, but mercy gets a chance too.

Exactly. It's this cosmic balancing act, grace and injustice, both happening because of what Jesus did. That changes how you see God's love, you know? It's not just warm, fuzzy feelings.

It's this hardcore, self-sacrificing action. Absolutely. And it raises the question, if the servant's suffering is what opened the door for us, how should we view our own suffering? Whoa, yeah.

Do we just try to avoid it at all costs, or is there something else going on? Well, we can't just ignore that suffering is part of life. But maybe, instead of running from it, we can look at the servant's example. His pain had a purpose.

It led to redemption for others, fixing what was broken. So, like, our struggles can have meaning if they're connected to something bigger, helping someone, making the world a little less messed up. That's the idea.

It's not about seeking out pain, but if it comes, maybe we can offer it up, like the servant did, for something good. Okay, I got to rewind for a sec, though. We talked about Israel's relationship with God being like a divorce.

Yeah, that analogy really gets at that feeling of abandonment, doesn't it? The separation. But then God comes back with that line: I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. So powerful.

He doesn't stay mad. He pursues them relentlessly. And it's not just talk, right? God promises to bring them back from exile, make them flourish again.

Action speaks louder than words, right? And it all ties into the servant's role. How so? Rescuing Israel from Babylon, that's one thing. But the servant's job is deeper.

It's about fixing their connection with God, healing what sin did. Ah, so going back to the promised land isn't enough. It's about that inner reconciliation, too.

That's where Messiah comes in, right? Exactly. Only he can bridge that gap for good. Mind blown.

So when Isaiah says stuff like, " My righteousness is near, my salvation has gone out. It's not just political freedom. It's about being right with God because of the servant.

And that has huge implications. Justice flowing like a river, Isaiah says. It's a picture of the world made new, sin dealt with, peace and fairness ruling.

OK, so for our listener trying to wrap their head around this servant, there are levels to this. Totally. You've got Israel trying their best, but human.

Then this ideal servant taking on suffering so freedom can happen. And that ultimately points us to Jesus. It's like Isaiah is dropping hints, but the full picture doesn't come into focus until Jesus arrives on the scene.

The Bible does that, you know; it speaks on multiple levels. The more you look, the more you find. Makes you wonder, right? Knowing Jesus is that servant, how does that change how I live my life? Do I have to suffer? Serve others? What is following a servant king even look like these days? Tough questions, but good ones.

That's how faith grows by wrestling with these ideas. Isaiah pushes us to do that. This deep dive has been a trip.

We've been through so much, nature celebrating Israel's pain. God's tattoo promise, then that crazy cup of wrath and how Jesus takes it on so we can be free. Yeah.

Isaiah packs a punch. So to our listener, keep digging into this book, keep asking those tough questions and see how God might be calling you to live out that servant heart, whatever that looks like for you. All right.

Last leg of the journey. We've unpacked a lot about the servant, how it all points to Jesus, but let's bring it back down to earth. Israel in exile.

They're stuck feeling abandoned. How does all this high-level theology connect to their situation? Isaiah 51, you really feel their desperation. God, do something.

We're drowning here. They want out of Babylon like yesterday, but the way they phrase it is interesting. Yeah.

It's not just help, right? It starts with awake, awake, put on strength. Oh, arm of the Lord. Like they're trying to jumpstart God's power.

Oh God. Time to flex. But then a few verses later, awake, awake, oh Zion, clothe yourself with strength.

Subtle shift, right? It's like, hold up. Maybe we're the ones snoozing. God's ready, but are we ready for what he's doing? Remember that whole trust thing we talked about? True freedom isn't just a change of address.

It's about escaping sin, the root of the problem. So even if they poofed out of Babylon, if their hearts were still messed up, rebellious, no real freedom. Exactly.

That's where the servant's role gets really key. It's not just a cosmic side story, his suffering. It's the unlock to the real cage they're in.

Because he takes that cup, right? The consequences. So they can experience God's forgiveness, a reset on their relationship. Exile wasn't just a location; it was spiritual too.

And Dr. Oswald highlights this. The servant's work doesn't stop with Israel; it's worldwide. Broken connection between God and humans all the way back to the beginning.

This is about fixing that. So when Isaiah's all, my righteousness is near, my salvation has gone out. It's more than just going home.

It's being made right with God because of what the servant does. And that rightness, it spreads. Justice flowing like a river, righteousness like a never-ending stream.

It's the world renewed because sin's been dealt with. God's peace can finally take over. Okay.

So for our listener, wrapping their head around this servant, it's multilayered. For sure. You've got Israel trying, but flawed.

Then this ideal servant suffering so freedom's possible. And that ultimately leads us to Jesus. It's like Isaiah was giving spoilers, but they wouldn't get the full reveal until centuries later.

That's the Bible for you. Always working on multiple levels. The deeper you go, the more you discover.

And for a listener, maybe this sparks even more questions like knowing Jesus is that servant. What does that mean for me? Am I supposed to suffer? To serve? What does following a servant King look like in this world? Great questions. And Isaiah wants us to wrestle with them.

The answers aren't always easy, but that wrestling, that's how we grow in faith. Man, this deep dive has been a wild ride. We started with Israel's whole chosen, but messy thing, explored nature, celebrating that feeling of being forgotten, but God's promise engraved right on his hand.

Then that intense cup of wrath and how Jesus takes it so we can be free. Isaiah, he doesn't mess around. That's for sure.

So to our listener, we hope this deep dive has been mind-expanding. Keep exploring Isaiah. Keep asking those tough questions and keep your eyes peeled for how God might be nudging you to live out that servant heart.

However that looks for you, that's the adventure.