

Oswalt Isaiah Session30

Welcome to our deep dives today. We're so glad you sent us these lectures from Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah, and I think it'll be fun to kind of explore these together. Definitely.

So today, we're going to be looking at chapters 60 through 66. And specifically, we're going to be focusing on what Dr. Oswalt reveals about the character of God's servants. So are you ready to unpack some fascinating insights about how a people once swallowed by darkness emerge as these radiant beacons of hope? Absolutely.

Yeah. One of the things that's really striking about chapter 60 to 66 is just how different they feel from the earlier parts of Isaiah. It's like walking out of a dark tunnel into like dazzling sunlight.

I love that analogy. It really captures that shift, right? Well, it does. Because in those earlier chapters, especially chapter 59, verses 9 through 11, you see the people, they're lost.

They're stumbling in darkness, crying out for justice, longing for light. And then, bam, you hit chapter 60, and everything changes. That's right.

It's like, what happened? Yeah. So Isaiah 60, verses 1 through 3, introduce this redeemer figure, a divine warrior. And Dr. Oswalt argues that this warrior is key to understanding this dramatic transformation.

Hold on. A warrior bringing redemption. That's kind of an interesting combo.

It is. Makes you rethink that typical image of a gentle, merciful redeemer. Right.

And that's, I think, one of the things that makes Dr. Oswalt's analysis so compelling. He actually connects this shift back to the divine warrior that's described back in chapter 59, verses 15 through 21, where this divine warrior actually actively confronts and defeats the forces of sin and unrighteousness, which then clears the way for the people's redemption. Okay.

But I know that some scholars don't really buy that connection. Right. They're like, it's just a coincidence.

It's two separate ideas. Yeah. But Dr. Oswalt pushes back pretty hard against that, doesn't he? He does.

He argues that the placement of these verses is intentional. It's not random. It's like he's saying, look, these chapters are meant to be read together.

You can't understand the sudden transformation without understanding the role of the divine warrior. So we've got this powerful divine warrior who sets the stage for change. And then Dr. Oswalt goes on to highlight this incredible scene in Isaiah 60, verses 4 through 14, where you have nations flocking to Jerusalem, right? They're bringing their wealth, their children, essentially offering themselves to God.

And this isn't about mere tribute or political maneuvering, is it? It's not. Dr. Oswald really emphasizes that these nations are drawn to something remarkable that's happening within Israel. They're captivated by the light radiating from a people who were once lost and despairing.

Right. Exactly. So the question is, what is it about redeemed Israel that's so magnetic? What are the nations seeing that compels them to come and worship? That's where Dr. Oswald digs into this concept of the Holy One of Israel, which is a phrase that pops up quite a bit throughout Isaiah.

And he explains that it represents both God's transcendent essence, that sense of awe and mystery, and his unique character, those attributes that make him who he is. And so it's this character, this holiness, that is somehow reflected in the transformed people. Okay.

And that's what's drawing the nations in. So are we saying that by becoming more like God, the Israelites become this irresistible force? That's a great question. I mean, that sounds like a pretty high calling.

It is. How do you even begin to become more like, you know, God? Right. Yeah, that's a great question and one that Dr. Oswald explores by tracing how the perception of the Holy One of Israel actually evolves throughout the book of Isaiah.

Okay. So walk me through that evolution. Where does it start? Well, at the very beginning in Isaiah 1 verses 4 and 5, the people treat the Holy One honestly with contempt and mockery.

They're completely disconnected from his holiness. Then fast forward to Isaiah 30, and they're actually trying to silence him. They don't want to hear his message of truth.

They're pushing him away. They're pushing him away. Trying to silence God.

That's bold. But what's even more surprising is how God responds. Right.

Exactly. So instead of unleashing judgment, he offers grace. He calls them to repentance and rest to find their strength in him.

It's a beautiful picture of his patience and mercy. And by Isaiah 41.14, he proclaims himself as their redeemer. He doesn't abandon them even when they try to shut him out.

So we see this remarkable progression. We do. From blatant disregard.

Yeah. To this invitation to return to ultimately be embraced as redeemed. Right.

And Dr. Oswald emphasizes that this redemption isn't just about forgiveness. It's about transformation. And he points us to Isaiah 61 verses 1 through 3, where we see this anointed one bringing good news, healing, and liberation.

Dr. Oswald highlights the parallels between this passage and Jesus's ministry. Particularly the beatitude. Yeah.

It's interesting because both the anointed one in Isaiah and Jesus in the beatitudes, they focus on those who are hurting. Yeah. You know, who are marginalized.

Yes. It's not about reaching out to those who already have it all together. Yeah.

But those who are broken and in need. Exactly. And Dr. Oswald points out that the ultimate goal of this transformation is to become oaks of righteousness.

Okay. Now, remember that image of a dried up forest back in Isaiah 1. Yeah. This is the complete opposite.

It's about becoming deeply rooted, strong, and fruitful, ultimately reflecting God's glory. So it's not just about individual change, but about becoming these vibrant, life-giving presences in the world. Yes.

Almost like a forest reclaiming a barren wasteland. Precisely. And you know, that image of the oaks of righteousness really resonated with me.

Yeah. It's not just about being morally good. It's about being firmly planted, drawing strength from God, and bearing fruit that nourishes others.

I love that. It's such a powerful visual and so much richer than just saying, you know, be good. Okay.

So we've got this transformation happening, but what does it mean for their salvation? Yeah. Dr. Oswald kind of grapples with this passage in Isaiah 60.21, where it says, your people shall all be righteous. Right.

He asks whether this is a declaration of their position before God or a genuine condition of their hearts. Yeah. That's a crucial distinction.

Yeah. Are they considered righteous simply because they're in a covenant relationship with God? Okay. Or is there a real change in their character? So it's like, are they just declared righteous or are they actually righteous? Right.

And Dr. Oswald argues that while justification grants believers the righteousness of Christ, meaning God sees them as righteous because of Jesus, this positional righteousness must manifest in their lives. It's not enough to just be declared righteous. True righteousness involves a transformation of character.

Okay. So it's both. It is.

A declaration from God and a change that happens within. But doesn't that create a bit of a tension? It does. I mean, how can we be declared righteous and still have to work towards becoming righteous? Right.

It's like saying you're already healthy while you're still going through treatment. That's a great point. And this is where the role of faith becomes essential.

Okay. So it's through faith that we receive that declaration of righteousness from God. But it's also through faith that we're empowered to live out that transformed life.

Okay. It's a process, a journey of becoming more and more like Christ. So faith is kind of like the bridge- Yes.

Between being declared righteous and actually becoming righteous. I like that. Faith is the bridge and transformation is the journey we take on that bridge.

And it's this transformed life radiating God's glory that becomes the ultimate testament to the power of his grace. It's what attracts those nations we were talking about earlier. Not because of anything that people have done, but because of what God has done in and through them.

Wow. So it's not about earning salvation. It's not.

But about becoming living proof of God's transformative power. That's right. What a powerful concept.

It is. Now, Dr. Oswald unpacks some really striking imagery in Isaiah 60.18. Okay. He talks about walls of salvation and gates of praise.

What do you think of when you hear walls of salvation? I picture a city protected by these massive impenetrable walls. Yeah. A place of safety and security.

That's exactly it. Dr. Oswald says these walls symbolize the protection and security we find in God's salvation. Okay.

But the gates represent something different. They represent the outflow of praise and gratitude that naturally comes from a life transformed by God's grace. It's this outward expression, this radiant joy that captures the attention of those outside the city.

Yeah. They see it and they're drawn to it. So the walls provide security.

Yes. And the gates allow the transformed life to flow out into the world. That's right.

Like the city can't contain its own joy. So it spills out, beckoning others to come and experience the source of that joy. Now remember that idea of becoming priests of God that we touched on earlier.

Yeah. We see this come up again in Isaiah 61.6. Okay. Where the redeemed people are called priests of God and ministers of our God.

Yeah. I remember this reminded me of God's promise to Israel in Exodus 19. Right.

Where he tells them they will become a kingdom of priests. What's interesting is that being a priest isn't usually associated with being radiant or joyful. You're right.

But Dr. Oswald suggests that true priesthood, the kind we see in Isaiah, involves mediating God's grace and truth to the world. And he's saying that's the very purpose behind the people's transformation. Okay.

They are transformed not just for their own benefit, but to become instruments of God's grace, reaching out to a world in need. Okay. But what does that mean practically? Yeah.

What does it look like to mediate God's grace and truth? Imagine a bridge connecting two sides of a deep canyon. That bridge makes it possible to cross over from one side to the other. In the same way Dr. Oswalt is saying that the transformed people are meant to be a bridge for the nations to come to know God, their lives, their actions, their words.

Everything about them becomes a way for God's grace and truth to reach those who are separated from him. So it's not just about personal salvation, but about becoming a conduit of God's love and truth to others. Yes.

It's a beautiful picture of how individual transformation can have a ripple effect throughout the world. And Dr. Oswalt doesn't stop at the imagery of the priest. He also brings in the image of the bride in Isaiah 61.10, portraying a relationship of deep intimacy and delight between God and his redeemed people.

Wow. It's a picture of pure joy, a celebration of the union between God and his people. It's a powerful shift, isn't it? It is.

From a people trying to silence God to a people basking in his love, closed in his righteousness and radiating his glory. It really is. And that image of the bride helps us understand that this transformation isn't just about duty or obligation.

It's about love. It's about delighting in God and allowing his love to transform us from the inside out. So it's about relationship, not just rules.

Right. It's about experiencing God's love and letting that love overflow into our lives and into the world around us. Exactly.

It's about becoming so captivated by God's beauty and grace that we can't help but reflect it in everything we do. Yeah. And, you know, this reminds me of something Dr. Oswalt said about the redeemed city in Isaiah 62.11. He describes it as no longer being forsaken, but sought after a beacon of righteousness and salvation.

This is a far cry from the desolate wasteland we saw in the earlier chapter. Yes, it is. It's like watching a city rise from the ashes, transformed by the power of God's grace.

What a powerful picture of redemption. It is. And Dr. Oswalt emphasizes the connection between the people's transformation and the attraction it holds for the nations.

It's this transformed life reflecting the character of the Holy One that ultimately draws them to God. It's not about force or coercion, but about a radiant beauty that captivates the heart. You know, it strikes me that this idea of radiating God's glory, attracting people to him rather than forcing them, is a really powerful concept.

But is it realistic? Right. I mean, can our lives really be that compelling? Well, it's a good question. And I think Dr. Oswalt would say that it's not about us being compelling in and of ourselves.

It's about letting God's light shine through us. Remember that analogy we used earlier about a mirror reflecting the sun? The mirror itself doesn't generate light, but it can reflect it in a way that eliminates everything around it. I see what you mean.

So it's not about trying to be like super impressive or perfect, but about becoming more and more transparent to God's presence in our lives. Exactly. And as that happens, as we surrender to God's transforming work in us, we naturally become more radiant, more attractive.

Not because of anything we've done, but because of what God is doing through us. That's encouraging because it kind of takes the pressure off of us, right? It's not about like striving to be good enough. It's not.

But about allowing God to work in and through us. That's right. Yeah.

Dr. Oswalt reminds us that we are declared righteous by faith, but true righteousness involves a transformation of character, a process of becoming more and more like Christ. So it's a journey, not a destination. Yes.

It's about continually surrendering to God's transforming grace and allowing him to shape us into the people he created us to be. And that journey, as Dr. Oswalt points out, isn't always easy or straightforward. He acknowledges the struggles, the failures, even the times we resist God's work in us.

Yeah. We all do that. But he also highlights God's incredible patience and persistence.

He doesn't give up on us even when we mess up or push him away. Exactly. It's a message of hope and encouragement for all of us.

Yeah. Because let's face it, none of us have it all figured out. Right.

We all stumble and fall along the way. We do. But God's grace is sufficient.

His love is unwavering and his power is at work within us, transforming us into the people he created us to be. You know, it's easy to get bogged down in the how-tos of becoming more like God. Yeah.

We get so focused on doing the right things that we kind of miss the heart of transformation, which is about relationship with him. That's a great point. I think sometimes we forget that transformation isn't just about behavior modification.

It's about allowing God's love to change us from the inside out. It's about experiencing his grace, his mercy, his presence in a way that transforms our desires, our motivations, our very being. So if someone is listening to this and they're feeling kind of overwhelmed, like, how can I possibly be a beacon of light? What would you say to them? Well, I would say start with the simple act of surrender.

Surrender your heart to God. Ask him to reveal himself to you, to fill you with his love, and to guide you on this journey of transformation. It's not about having all the answers or being perfect.

It's about taking one step at a time, trusting in God's grace, and allowing his love to transform you from the inside out. I love that. Yeah.

Surrender, not strive. Trust, not try. Yes.

It reminds me of that amazing image that Dr. Oswald painted of the redeemed city in Isaiah. Yeah. A city bathed in light, radiating God's glory and drawing the nations to its brilliance.

It's a powerful picture of hope and redemption, isn't it? Yeah. And it's a vision that's available to each one of us. So as we wrap up this deep dive into Isaiah, what's the one takeaway you hope our listener will hold on to? Well, I hope they'll remember that they are not alone on this journey of transformation.

God is with them, loving them, guiding them, and empowering them to become more and more like Christ. And as they surrender to his work in their lives, they will become beacons of light, radiating his glory and drawing others to the source of their joy and hope. That's a beautiful message.

Thank you. It's been an incredible journey exploring these chapters with you. It has been.

And to our listener, thank you for joining us on this deep dive. Yes. Thank you.

We hope you've gained some valuable insights and renewed sense of hope in God's transformative power. Thank you. Thank you.