

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 27, Isa. 56-57

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 27, Isaiah chapters 56 and 57.

I think the time is here. So, let's begin. I heard a wonderful story this week about myself. A former student said he was packing to move and had little children around underfoot. So, I wanted to do something to keep them occupied.

So, he found some cassette tapes from his seminary education and a cassette player. So, he gave one to his six-year-old son and said after a while he was doing something else and he heard this rather familiar voice and looked out, and here came his son up the stairs with the cassette player just rapt, rapt attention. And he said it was me teaching a Hebrew exegesis course.

And the six-year-old said, Dad, this guy's good. Either the child was a genius or out of the mouths of babes, yes. Don't think I'll put that on my resume.

Let's pray together. Thank you, Father, for this day. Thank you for all that you've enabled us to accomplish today. Thank you for the energy, health, direction, and motivation. Thank you that you are with us in everything. And now as we come to the end of the day, we thank you that you're with us now.

And so, we pray that you'll manifest yourself to us. We come to your word humbly. We come acknowledging our need of your spirit to teach us its truth.

Oh, we can read it. We can figure out what the words mean, those things. But in the end, Lord, you must come and show us what it means for us. And we'll thank you in Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, we have looked at the problem and the promise of servanthood in chapters one through five, that Israel is called to be that pure, clean vessel through whom the Torah of God can go out to the world.

And yet Israel is rebellious, blind, arrogant. So, the issue is how is this Israel to become that Israel? And I suggested to you the answer is the call to servanthood in chapter six, where Isaiah offers his own experience as a model. If the man of unclean lips can have his lips cleansed so that he can bear a message to the nation, then the nation of unclean lips could have their lips cleansed to bear a message to the world.

We saw in chapters seven to thirty-nine, that the basis for servanthood, is trust in Yahweh as opposed to trust in the could somebody help with the door there? Thank

you. As opposed to trust in the nations of humanity. But as we saw, even if you've learned the lesson that God can be trusted, that doesn't necessarily mean you're going to do it all the time.

And so, we saw in chapters 40 through 48, grace, the motivation for service as the people are in captivity and God invites them to become his servants, to be his evidence in his lawsuit against the gods. But the question is raised there. How can God do that? What about our sin? How can God simply declare that we're his servants? And we saw the answer is also grace.

If grace is the motive for servanthood, it's also the means of servanthood. And we saw how in chapters forty-nine through fifty-five, the servant is revealed who is the ideal Israel, who will be for Israel what Israel could never be for himself. Now, then.

You might think that the book has ended there. I mean, they are the chosen servants of God, made possible by the sacrifice of the servant. And chapter fifty-five ends on a very high note.

But the book isn't over. We've got eleven chapters to go. Fifty-six to sixty-six.

Now, if this were a class at the seminary, I would not tell you what I'm going to tell you now. I'd make you try to figure it out yourself. But since you didn't pay any money, you have to get it.

When you read these chapters, fifty-six to sixty-six, you have a strange sense of anticlimax after chapter sixty-two. Chapters sixty-three, sixty-four, sixty-five, sixty-six are rather bleak. And we wonder what exactly is going on.

This idea is not original to me. Another student of Isaiah proposed it several years ago. And when he did, all of a sudden, I said, oh, sure, that's what's going on.

What you have in these chapters is what is technically called chiasm. That is, the ascending parts are paralleled by the descending parts. At the apex here in this section is chapter sixty-one, verses one to three, the verses that Jesus used to proclaim his messiahship in Nazareth.

The spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach good news. That's the center. And I used the wrong letter there.

I either side of that in chapters sixty and sixty-one and two, we have a picture of light dawning in Zion on either side of that. In chapter fifty-nine and in the opening chapters of sixty-three, you have the divine warrior, the warrior who comes to destroy his people's enemies. That's in fifty-nine, fifteen B through the end of chapter fifty-nine and chapter sixty-three, one through six.

On either side of that, so that's E, that's D, that's C, here comes B, the people's inability to do righteousness. So, in terms of the technical terms, this is D prime, this is, excuse me, this is D prime, this is C prime, this is B prime, and then at the very beginning and the very end, you have, and again I'm giving you the answers to the first questions here, righteous foreigners, foreigners. So that's A and A prime.

So, we're doubling the beginning and the end and we're going up to this peak here of the anointed Messiah. Righteous foreigners, the inability of the people to be righteous, the divine warrior, light dawning in Zion, the Messiah, light dawning in Zion, the divine warrior, inability to be righteous, and righteous foreigners. Now we'll see this played out in the next four weeks as we go through this, but what's happening is this kind of device makes it possible to stress what this is all about while retaining this understanding of climax.

See what would have happened if the book had simply been 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, and stopped there. Oh, we would end on this wonderful climax of the revelation of the Messiah, but we wouldn't understand what the issue was, that the Messiah has come to make it possible for his people to live righteous lives so that the world can be one. So, we're keeping the climactic point, but we're also keeping the focus on what the issue is and what the goal is.

This goes then right back to where we were all the way back there at chapter two. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the highest of the mountains shall be lifted up above the hills and all the nations will flow to it. Many peoples will come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths.

So indeed, the final section of the book deals with that issue. Why has the Messiah come? No, he's come to get us, his special people, out of difficulty and make us rich. No, that's not why he's come.

So that is just an overview as we begin this section, please keep this in mind as we work. Now what we're going to do is next week, Memorial Day, sorry, we're going to do chapters 58 and 59. We're going to complete this segment here.

Then the next week, the first week in June, we're going to do chapters 63 through 66, which in many ways repeat these thoughts. We're going to cover a round there. Then we're going to come back and we're going to finish with 60 through 62 on June 10th, whatever that is, the second Monday in June and we'll complete our study.

So, this is why we're jumping around a bit because of this odd structure. Okay, questions, comments, is that clear enough? Okay, don't hesitate to ask. All right, tonight then 56 to 57.

Chapters 56 to 66 background are generally believed to have been addressed to the Judeans in the post-exilic period. They seem to be addressed to people who believe that they are accepted by God simply because of their birthright and that righteous behavior does not really matter, a conclusion they might have drawn from their deliverance from Babylon. They didn't have to become righteous for God to deliver them.

He just delivered them. So, it doesn't matter how you live, huh? But there seem to have been others who were sincerely troubled that their return to the land had produced no real change in their behavior. Isaiah seems to speak for them at various points.

God encourages these people to believe he will deal with their problems and will shine through them to be a light to the nations. So once again, no concrete historical details just like 40 to 55 except for Cyrus, you have no concrete historical details related to the exile. Why? I think because Isaiah didn't know them.

By the inspiration of the Spirit, he was able to speak to the situation out there in the future, but he didn't know the details of what their life would be like. And I think the same is true here. No details of the post-exilic period, but by inspiration, understanding what the situation will be there, theologically, and behaviorally, that's going to need to be addressed.

Yes? Aren't we seeing that pattern even in contemporary times right now? Israel, they've come back to the land, but they are looking at it as their birthright. That's where we started, but they don't connect it to God's message to the majority of the secular nations. Yes, yes, yes.

And they will use the Holocaust as the justification for that. Does God want to treat us like that? That's fine. We'll have nothing to do with him.

But it's very fascinating that at least for a core of people who suffered not as extensively horrible things, but certainly horrible things at the hands of the Babylonians, they turned around and said, no, we're going to be different. That hasn't happened to modern Israel yet. Okay.

In chapter 56, verses 1 to 8, two groups are addressed here in these verses. Verse 3, who's he talking to? The foreigner. And also verse 3, another group.

The eunuchs, the foreigners, and the eunuchs. Now in Deuteronomy 23, verses 7 and 8, these two are forbidden from having anything to do with the worship of God. But here, let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, the Lord will surely separate me from his people.

Let not the eunuchs say, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord. Now, what are the behaviors that these foreigners and eunuchs are engaging in that God approves of? Keep the Sabbath.

Second, choose what is right. Maintain justice. Keep the covenant.

In other words, objective, righteous behavior. Now, I'm going to say more about Sabbath next week, so I'll not lean on that at this point, but God says, I want your behavior to be like mine. If you were here through our Exodus study, I hope you remember that I argued that the purpose of the covenant is to teach God's character by doing.

If you keep the covenant, you are replicating God's behavior. You're acting like God. You're walking in his path.

You're following his instructions. So, these people, eunuchs, foreigners, who in fact keep my covenant are welcome. They're pleasing to me.

Well, how does that apply to us? I think that's exactly right, and that's going to be played out in detail in this next section. That's exactly right. I mean, hey, we're the people of God.

I've been to the altar. I've joined the church. I'm a member of the elect, so it doesn't matter how I live or not.

Keep my covenant. What does it mean to keep God's covenant for you, for me, today? Obviously, we cut the hair at the corners of our temples, trust and obey. What else? What does it mean to be covenant keepers today? All right.

Respecting God and each other. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. Paul said it.

The whole law can be summed up in one word, love. Now, by this point, you know everything I know, but let me remind you. All right.

You have learned something, Fred. Love, affection, sentiment, and feeling is one pole of our relationship to God. What's the other pole? Obedience, yes.

There's a word, though, that's commonly used. It's actually a phrase that's mechanical. I'm going to do what God wants.

I'm not going to displease God. I'm not going to disobey him, but without the fear of the Lord, love can very easily descend to sentimentalism. Oh, I feel so warm and fuzzy about God, and I live like hell because God will always say, I forgive.

So, these two go together. This is not what John is talking about when he says perfect love casts out fear. What he's talking about there is fear of condemnation.

Fear of the Lord says I don't want to displease the Lord. Fear of condemnation says I don't want to go to hell. Relationship to the Lord doesn't enter into it.

You're simply trying to do the minimum to avoid punishment. Fear of the Lord, you're doing the maximum to please him. So, for us to live in the covenant means, if I love the Lord, then I don't take his name in vain.

If I love the Lord, again, I'm going to talk about this next time more, I don't work on Sunday. If I love the Lord, I don't take your stuff. If I love the Lord, I keep faith with my wife.

If I love the Lord, you see where I'm going. So, the fear of the Lord gives the content, the love of the Lord gives the motivation and the joy. So, we live in the covenant.

We live in that relationship with God and choose what pleases him. I think that's such an interesting phrase. Okay, let's push on.

No, I got to go back and talk about one a minute. If in fact God ultimately intended to include the foreigners and the eunuchs in worship of him, why did he exclude them in the beginning? I mean, Harry Emerson Fosdick could say, oh well, Deuteronomy was wrong and Isaiah has now corrected Deuteronomy because of progressive revelation. Well, I don't believe that for a minute.

Deuteronomy is right and Isaiah is right, but why did they disagree? Jay? I think that could be part of it. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Pagan worship.

Anything else? Any other ideas? He wanted to set aside his people so they would learn that they were the line through whom the Messiah would come. Yes. Yes.

I think the only other thing I would add to all of those would be this, when you are in the basics of education, you don't nuance things. You paint them in the starker

colors you can to make the point. So, eunuchs, I made your bodies you can't manipulate yourself.

Excuse me, not manipulate. You cannot do things to your body to somehow deprive yourself and make yourself more acceptable to me. But Deuteronomy also speaks about excellence.

Yeah, but again, it's trying to make this point that God made us whole and we worship him as whole people. So, you're trying to make that point. Now he's talking about spiritual wholeness, but he's using the physical point to make that point.

You see that again and again in the Old Testament. How do you get blessed in the Old Testament? You become rich, you have a lot of land, you have a lot of children, and you become old. That's blessing.

Actually, it isn't. Blessing is a matter of the heart. And unless God has blessed you from within, there's not enough stuff in the whole world to satisfy you.

But he's not going to talk about spiritual blessing with these infants. He's using concrete examples to make his point. And I'm confident that's what's going on here too.

Okay, now let's push on. What do verses 7 and 8 tell us about the ultimate purpose of the Judeans and their temple? A temple for all nations. What's the house to be called? A house of prayer.

I think that's quite significant. It has always struck me as kind of amazing that in Solomon's dedication of the temple, he says, now he's just sacrificed something like a hundred thousand bulls or something like that, some incredible number, but his prayer says nothing about the temple as a place of sacrifice. It's entirely as a place of prayer.

I think that's significant. Oh yes, I'll go to this temple and I'll do these rituals and I'll manipulate God and I'll keep my heart for myself. No, no, you won't.

It's a place of relationship and relationship is expressed through communication. It's a house of... Yes. Never.

No. Oh well, it just happened this week that at the Wailing Wall, they finally allow women to go to a special section of the Wailing Wall, which is an amazing development, which the Orthodox are fighting tooth and nail and everything else. That's that new poem.

Yeah. Herod's Temple. This is the temple building.

This is the court of the priests. This is where the altar was and the This is the court of the men. This is the court of the women and this is the court of the Gentiles.

And we have one of the warning stones from along here that says any Gentile who passes this line is responsible for his own death. So, you don't go there. So that was the situation.

The levels of distinction. Okay. Yes, yes, men and women could have been together here as Gentiles.

They're all unclean. So, it doesn't make any difference. The Hebrew women are less unclean than the Gentile men, etc.

But now, let's look over at chapter 66, the conclusion, the A-prime section, verses 18, and following. I know their works and their thoughts. Their time is coming to gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory.

Remember Isaiah 6? The whole earth is full of his glory. The day is going to come when the Gentiles will come and see it. I'll set a sign among them.

From them, I'll send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pol, Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they will declare my glory among the nations. And they, the nations, will bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord and so forth.

And some of them, in the context, that's the nations, the Gentiles. Also, I will take four priests and four Levites. Wow.

For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain from new moon to new moon, from sabbath to sabbath. All flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord. Beginning 56, 1 through 8, end 66, 18 to 23.

What's the goal of this whole thing? That all the nations might come and see the glory of the Lord. All right. Now, having said all this, I want to go back to 56 verse 1. And I want you to look at the reasoning in this verse.

Remember that for signals a cause. Keep justice and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come and my deliverance will be revealed. Now, what's the logical connection in that sentence? Salvation is coming and what should be our response to that free salvation? Justice and righteousness.

Yes. Yes. Instead of the argument, since I'm saved by grace, it doesn't matter how I live.

In fact, it's the very opposite. Since I'm saved by grace, I will live his life in justice and righteousness. And again, remember what I've said so many times.

The problem with the word justice is it's not wide enough for the Hebrew idea. The Hebrew idea includes legal justice, and equity. It includes that, but it's bigger than that.

It is God's divine order for life. In God's divine order for life, you cannot oppress the poor. In God's divine order for life, you cannot deprive the innocent of their right to justice.

But it's bigger than merely legal justice as we tend to think of that word in English. So, living God's life because we're saved by grace. This is the point that Paul is driving at in all of his letters.

Thank God you've been delivered from that old attempt to justify yourself by being good enough for God by keeping the law. Thank God you've been delivered from that. You're saved by grace.

So then, of course, you're going to quit your old sinful life, aren't you? It's amazing to me how many people will get into a complex theology of salvation and miss the whole point that Paul's making in virtually every one of his letters. You're saved by grace. Now stop living that way.

You're dead to that way. Now die to it. You put those old clothes off.

Now take them off. You put these new clothes on. Now put them on.

A life of mishpat justice and righteousness is the logical conclusion of salvation by grace. All right, let's rush on. Chapter 56 verses 9 through 12.

Who's he talking to here? These blind watchmen, these silent dogs, the dogs with a big appetite, stupid shepherds. Who's he talking about? The leaders of the people, isn't he? The religious leaders, the prophets, the priests. At this point, you don't have a king, but you have a governor.

Yes, these, in a real sense, he's saying not much has changed. He had harsh words for these prophets and priests and civil rulers in the past, and he's got harsh words for them now. They are living for themselves, and I'll avoid any further political comments.

Now look at 57, 1, and 2. What is happening here? I didn't hear that. What's happening? What's happening? Well, no, no, let's just, what's happening? The righteous people are perishing. Good people are dying, partly because of those false leaders, yeah.

Now what are we supposed to conclude from that? Why is the righteous person dying? To be spared from evil, taken away from calamity. Now how often do you and I think that when righteous people die? Most of the time we accuse God of being unfair. Here's this good person.

I remember when my good friend Everett Hunt died, 63 as I recall, young man, mere child, and I thought at the time, God, if you needed to take somebody, I've got a shortlist. But then I remember this. Oh, sure it is, sure it is, but again, and I don't want to get too far off on this, but a lovely Christian kid dies at 16, and we say, oh no, maybe that was the best thing in the world.

That could have happened to that boy. Who knows what the future might have held for him? We don't know the future. We don't know what could happen.

So again, he's saying, you think God is unjust because these good people are dying. Well, let me tell you something. God is being kind to them because of what's lying ahead for you folks.

Wow, wow. Okay, pushing on. Now these people, these returned Jews, they clearly are saying we are the children of Abraham.

So God delivered us, not because we were righteous, not because we did anything particular, but it's just because we happened to be in the right bunch. What does God say about their heritage according to verse 3? You're the sons of an adulteress. Talking about Zion, I think.

Remember Hosea? Hosea marries the prostitute, and they have children, but they're not Hosea's children. This picture of Zion as the woman who has prostituted herself to every other lover under the sun, and God says that's who you're descended from. You're so proud of your birthright, but in fact, in fact, your birthright stinks.

So then in the next verses, he describes verses 3 through 13. He describes their religious practices as basically pagan idolatry. Again, this language is pretty familiar from earlier parts of the book, also from Ezekiel.

Now one of the questions that is asked, and I raise this in the background, most scholars think that the Jews kind of got cured of their idolatry, most of it, in the exile, and that when they came back, they were more inclined to be opposed to idol worship. So the question is, why is Isaiah bringing this in here? All right, they're still

doing it in their hearts. Now we've talked about paganism before in various ways, and again, I'm reluctant to ask you too many pop quiz questions, because it'll make me look bad as a teacher, but what is a pagan idea toward God? How does paganism, pagan worship, think about God? Excellent, excellent.

Maybe I will stay in the teaching profession. I do religious things in order to manipulate God to supply my needs. That's paganism, and that's why I ask here, suppose Isaiah is saying that their orthodox religious practices are really pagan in nature, as though they were actually doing these things.

So, let me ask you, what does paganism look like in evangelical North American Protestantism? Give your tithes so God will give you more blessings back. That's one. God will answer every prayer because I pray for them.

No, that's biblical. How about fasting? If I go to church enough, condemn every sinner, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

All of these ways, I need to get a job, so God I'm going to have devotions every day for the next month. No, I didn't say that. He's got a month to produce.

Yeah, paganism. Yeah, that's right, that's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

It's mechanical. Do it right, and it'll work every time. If it didn't work, you didn't do it right.

Running a treadmill, producing nothing, yes, yes. So, what is an un-pagan attitude toward God? He is worthy of our prayers. Trust, trust.

Obedience. Why should I tithe? Because it says so, yeah, that's pretty good. How about for love? I was going to say, I think if you have the love of God, then you do things out of that love.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. The kid who's in love with the girl doesn't say, hmm, I wonder, I wonder if maybe we can get by with McDonald's. No, you're going to go splurge, go someplace high class like Checkers or, but no, it's again, if you love, you don't ask, how little can I give and get by? You ask, oh, how much can I show? How much I love you.

All the difference in the world. Two people doing the same thing are not necessarily doing the same thing. This one's praying, that one's praying.

That one's praying for love, that one's praying to get. They're not doing the same thing. It's where your heart is.

Yes, exactly. It's where your heart is. John, I was in the midst of prayer when Fred was in Southeast Asia, and in the midst of it, God said, change your prayer, you're begging to pray for Jesus.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes. Jesus said, when I pray, I want to bring glory to my father.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. All right. Yes.

Chapter 57, verses 14 through 21. It shall be said, build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way. Now, that sounds a little bit like chapter 40, but in chapter 40, who's coming? It's the Lord.

Prepare a super highway so the Lord can come to us. Yes, yes. There's no way we can go to him.

There's no way we, in our sinfulness, can somehow do whatever we need to do to get his grace. We can't. He's got to come to us.

But then, we've got to go to him. So, what does God say? Verse 15. How do we, how do we get to God? The contrite heart and humility.

Yes, yes, yes. One of the most beautiful verses in the book. Thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.

Oh my. I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly, to revive the heart of the contrite. Isn't that beautiful? Oh my.

He lives in unimaginable light. He is beyond anything that our imagination can conceive of and, in the lowliest heart. Yes.

So, if I'm proud of my righteousness, God's not going to live here. Oh well, of course, that means then that I'm unholier than you are. We'll, we'll compete on being unholier than each other.

That's not the point. The point is in ourselves dwells no good thing, but if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, in our contrition, he can produce wonderful fruit. Now I ask you, how does this relate to the theme that we've seen running right through the book? What happens when we exalt ourselves? We fall.

And when we admit that in and of ourselves, we are helpless and utterly dependent on God, what happens? He lifts us up. Exalt yourself, be humiliated. Not humiliate

yourself, but take a right conception of yourself and allow him to lift you up to sit on the throne beside him.

I won't contend forever. I won't always be angry. The spirit would grow faint within me.

The breath of life that I made. Again, God's compassion, God's involvement with us. His, as the verse as I memorized it years ago says, he pitied his children.

He has compassion on his children. He knows that our frame is feeble. He knows that we're dust.

He knows all that. All right. So what do those verses say, 16, 17, 18, about God's ultimate purpose for us? To have a relationship with him.

If he becomes angry, it's just for a moment, his ultimate purpose. And so I ask you my line, God's intended last word is never destruction. I hope you remember that.

God's intended last word is never destruction. It may be his last word, but that's up to us. His intended last word is healing and restoration.

And if he speaks destruction to me, it is not because he wants to destroy me. It's because he wants me to come to my senses and be healed. If I don't come to my senses, if I won't come to my senses, then I can't be healed.

But his purpose. So, he says in verse 18, I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips.

Isn't that interesting? What does that mean? I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. What is that? Praise, praise. Yes.

Yes. And that's the thing again that we've seen throughout the book is, oh my goodness, I deserve the back of his hand. And he gave me the front of his hand.

He took me by the hand. He's lifted me out of the miry clay as the, again, the King James language, creating the fruit of the lips. Very interesting.

You don't just feel praise, you have to speak it. That's why testimony meetings are good times. Exactly.

You're exactly right. Exactly right. And as long as we remain in our pride, I don't need a savior.

I'm one of the best people I know. God can't reach us, but it is when we tear down the obstruction of our pride and our self-sufficiency and admit our neediness that we then can come to him. He's got to come to us, but there's a stopping point.

And at that point, then we have to say, yes, yes, I need you. I can't make it without you. I'm dependent upon you.

And in that moment, the high and the holy one takes up his residence in this lowly house. Christianity is the only religion where God comes to us first. Yes.

And then we do have to come, but it has to be the other religions that say you go to their god. That's right. That's exactly right.

If there is a distinctive theology to Christianity, it is grace. Why do the Mormons live such upright lives? Because there's no grace in Mormonism. Why do the best of the Moslems live such upright lives? And they do.

Again, because there's no grace. You got to do this if you're going to get to heaven. And that is what has been the curse of Christianity for its whole history.

Oh, since I'm saved by grace, I can live like hell. And the world looks on at us and says, yeah, if that's religion, I don't think I'll have any of that today. And so our greatest blessing can also be our greatest curse.

Okay. Now he says, verses 19, 20, and 21, there is a doctrine known as universalism, which says that all people will eventually be saved. What do these verses say about that? Yes.

If you persist in wickedness, you will not be saved. Now, the interesting thing is, and I'll stop with this. It's often said, well, I mean, if a person stands before God and sees the alternatives of heaven and hell, if they finally see that God is real, well, of course, they're going to accept Christ.

I don't know whether you've ever been in an argument with somebody who is absolutely convinced of their point. I don't care how many overwhelming arguments you present. It won't be good enough because ultimately it's not about argument.

It's not about truth. It's about my way. And so, I've said this to you before many times, but the statistics on deathbed conversions are absolutely abysmal.

It's something like one percent. If you live for yourself all your life and now are invited to give up yourself in order to be saved, that price is way too high. Way, way too high.

So, the book of Revelation does not say that the kings of the earth will repent and cry out for forgiveness. The book of Revelation says the kings of the earth will cry out to the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the eyes of the living God. So these 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 years are very important.

Eternity hangs in the balance. Peace, shalom, shalom to the far and to the near says the Lord, and I will heal him. Uh-huh, yeah, it's not peace, peace to those who are going to heal themselves.

Peace, peace to those who don't need healing. Peace, peace to those who need healing and know it and receive it and I will heal them. But the wicked are like the tossing sea.

It cannot be quiet. Its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no shalom says my God for the wicked.

One last word, the wicked. That word essentially means godless. To live as if there is no God.

Well, yeah, if that's the way you live, then God cannot give you his shalom, can he? You've got to admit there is a God and I'm not him. And until you come to that point, there's not much God can do for you. So, we've looked so far at A, God's intention that all people will come into his house of prayer.

We've begun to look at part B, the inability of God's people to be righteous. God says I value these righteous eunuchs and foreigners, but my people are not living righteous lives. We're going to see that in spades next week.

It gets really, really intense in chapters 58 and 59. But at the end of 59, we see the revelation of the divine warrior.

Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you that you've come. And thank you that having come, you now hold out your nail-pierced hands to us and say, now children, come to me. All you that labor under heavy laden and I will give you rest. Shalom. Help us, Lord.

Help me. It's so easy to turn you into an idol. So easy to use you as a device to accomplish our purposes rather than being your child so that you can accomplish your good purposes through us.

Help us, Lord. Help us. Thank you that you have found a way to come from the high and the holy place to live in our hearts. Praise you. Praise you. Praise you. Amen.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 27, Isaiah chapters 56 and 57.