

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 3, Isa 4 and 5

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number three, Isaiah chapters four and five. Well, I think the hour is here.

Welcome to each of you. Glad you're here. Let's begin with prayer.

Father, we thank you for everything that testifies to your glory and your goodness. Thank you for this lovely day we've enjoyed. Thank you for the sun, and cool air.

Thank you for the green grass, and the blue sky. We think of the psalmist when he says, there is no sound, but their voice has gone out through all the world. Thank you.

And we thank you also then for your word, which enables us to understand what it is that nature is saying to us. Thank you that you haven't left us alone to wonder. Thank you for Isaiah.

We look forward to the day when we will meet this man whom you were able to use so dramatically and so powerfully. Thank you for him. None of us will ever be in those kinds of shoes, but help us Lord in the place where you've placed each of us to be as faithful as he was in his place.

Help us as we study your word tonight. Let us hear your voice speaking to each of us. Grant that this may not be merely an intellectual stimulation, but let it be a movement in our hearts.

In your name, we pray, amen. All right, we are looking at chapters four and five this evening. The study next week will be on chapter six by itself.

I hope you've picked up the study guide. They're there on the table in the hall if you haven't. And then remember, we have a break before we pick up two weeks later on chapter seven and following.

So, chapter four, verses two through six, and chapter five, verses one to thirty. If you've done your homework, what's the relationship between those two segments? Four, two to six, and five, one to thirty. Blessing and judgment? About the chosen people? Yes.

So, we have one more example of the kind of contrast we had last time where we have on the one hand the positive hope and on the other hand the, excuse me, I've got my colors mixed up here, the negative judgment. And once again we have here in chapter four, verses two to six, the positive hope and it will be followed by the

negative judgment. We saw in chapter one this, yes, okay, same situation where the contrast goes back and forth between positive statements about what's going to happen in the nation and negative statements about what the situation really is.

So, we see a relationship that can be called interchange. That is where you go from A to B, to A to B, and A to B. So, you have the contrast and the contrast is repeated. As I've said both our previous sessions, all three of the previous sessions, we have talked about this Israel, the one that exists now which is deeply and thoroughly corrupted, and that Israel, the one that is going to be.

All right, let's, with that introduction, let's jump into verses two through six. On that day the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land will be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. Does anyone have a new international version? Yes.

Is the Branch capitalized there? Yes. Okay. I have the English standard version here and it's not capitalized.

Now what's the issue that's going on? If you look at the background, notice the very first statement in Jeremiah 33, 15 and in Zechariah chapter six verses 12 and 13, the branch clearly refers to the Messiah. Let's look at the Jeremiah passage in particular. Jeremiah 33, chapters 30, 31, 32, and 33 are the positive part of Jeremiah.

The rest is virtually all negative but these center chapters are positive. Verse 14, behold the days are coming declares the Lord when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah in those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch and in this is the ESV, it's capitalized, a righteous branch to spring up for David and he will execute justice and righteousness in the land. Well, that's clearly a reference to the Messiah and we won't take the time to look at the Zechariah passage but it's a similar situation there.

Clearly, you're talking about the promised one who is to come. Now the problem here has to do with the second point in the background. Hebrew poetry is characterized by a device called parallelism in which the second main clause of the sentence is in some way synonymous with the first as in, and I've given you a hypothetical sentence, the Lord stretched out the heavens, the earth was founded by God.

So, Lord and God are synonymous, heaven and earth synonymous as expressions of creation stretched out and founded are synonymous as actions of the creator. So in poetry and Isaiah is almost entirely poetry, you expect the second part of the sentence to be in some way repeating the first part. Now look at the second part of the sentence here.

The fruit of the land will be the pride and honor of the survivors of the land. Now the second part of the sentence here, the fruit of the land will be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. What's the parallel to the branch? The fruit of the land is the parallel isn't it? Now some will argue that the Messiah is the ultimate fruit of the land and that I think is where the NIV translators come off with capitalizing branch and saying well that must be a reference to the Messiah.

Perhaps it is, but there's room for question clearly what is Isaiah promising or what is God promising through Isaiah in this verse? The land will be what? Fruitful, and abundant, rather than being the kind of fruit that is the fruit of the kind of desert that we're going to encounter in chapter 5. The promise is the land is going to be fruitful and abundant. The question is are we talking about a literal fruitfulness and abundance or a spiritual fruitfulness and abundance? And this is a situation where as the man says, you pay your money and take your choice. I think either one is possible and you can find reputable commentators on both sides of the issue there.

But in any case, God is promising rather than being a wasteland as it is now, the land is going to be abundant. Okay, verse 3. He who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy. Everyone who's been recorded for life in Jerusalem.

So, what was the situation we just had in the end of chapter 3? Mel is saying chaos. What else? Desolation. Yes, it was talking about the failure of the leadership.

Look particularly at verse 24 of chapter 3. Instead of perfume, what? Stench, decay, corruption. But now what? Everyone will be called holy. Go on to verse 4. When the Lord shall have done what? Washed away what? The filth of whom? The daughters of Zion.

So, there's a clear connection with what has just gone before. And the bloodstains. I think that's a reference to the failure of the leadership as they have both permitted violence and in some cases sponsored it in the land.

All right. Now, what are we talking about here as compared to what we were talking about in chapter 2 verses 1 to 5? What was chapter 2, 1 to 5 promising? The mountain of the Lord's house will be established on the top of the mountains. Why? For what purpose? The nations will come to learn what? Yes, what does the text say? His ways, his Torah, his instructions.

So, are we talking about the condition of Israel here or are we talking about something else? The mission, huh? Now what are we talking about here in chapter 4, 2 through 6? We're not talking about the mission, are we? What are we talking about? Their restoration, their condition. Now keep that in mind as we look further at the passage. First of all, the promise of a mission, and second of all, dealing with their condition.

Look at Exodus 19 verses 5 and 6. Those of you who are in the Exodus sessions, I hope you might remember that we said chapter 19 is the preparation for the covenant when God prepares them cognitively and volitionally and effectively. In the cognitive preparation in verses 5 and 6, what will happen if they accept the covenant and keep it? They will be a holy nation. What does Isaiah chapter 4 promise? The remnant will be what? Holy.

Now look at Deuteronomy 28, 9, and 10. The Lord will establish you as a people what? Holy to himself as he has sworn to you if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways and all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of Yahweh and they'll be afraid of you. So, Exodus 19, the beginning of the covenant, and Deuteronomy 28, the end of the covenant, the condition of the people that is expected is holy.

We've talked about this before. We'll talk about it again next week. Holy in its base meaning refers to otherness.

The otherness of the gods and everything attached to them. But in a pagan environment, it can have no moral connotation because the good gods are holy and the bad gods are holy. The kind of gods are holy, the cruel gods are holy.

The clean gods are holy, the unclean gods are holy. So, holiness has no moral connotation whatsoever. But if it's true that there is only one being who is truly other and that is Yahweh, then his character comes to define what other character really looks like.

And that's the whole point of the covenant. It's not simply that we are set apart. I have dear friends who are of the reformed persuasion and they think that we second blessing holy rollers are really bizarre.

And so, for them holy is simply to be other in your behavior than everybody else. Not for a moment. If anybody is peculiar, they are.

The Bible very, very clearly tells us that we are expected to share the character of Yahweh. That's what it means when over and over again he says you must be holy as I am holy. It's not just religious.

It's not just dedicated. It is transformed. And God is promising here in chapter 4 of Isaiah, you're going to be transformed.

This is the ultimate work of the Messiah. Not merely to restore us to God, but to transform us into the character of God. That's his goal.

I've quoted it before. I'll quote it again. The book of Ephesians, chapter 1, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the high places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy.

Oh, you mean set apart? No, blameless. It's as though Paul is saying I don't want you to misunderstand what I'm talking about here. I'm not talking about a state.

I'm not talking about a position. I'm talking about a condition. So, he says, everyone will be called holy when the Lord will have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the blood stains of Jerusalem.

Now how is God going to do that according to verse 4? Verse 4. A spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Burning. Oh, he's going to come with a rose petal and sprinkle holy water on us.

No. No. Now remember, the Hebrew word that is translated as spirit, the word ruach, has about four meanings.

Hebrew, biblical Hebrew, is a very small vocabulary. So, most words have multiple meanings as far as English is concerned. So, the word is ruach.

And the word ruach, that's very intelligible to you, isn't it? Ruach. And that's that rough H there on the end you have to sort of clear your throat with. It means wind, breath, spirit, and spirit.

And you have to decide on the basis of the context what the meaning of the word, the Hebrew word is in this setting. So, you're going to find some translations that will say with a wind of judgment and a wind of fire. So the whole others are going to say with a breath of judgment and the breath of fire.

So, you are simply dependent on the context to know what's being talked about here. But the picture is of a firestorm that sweeps through the land. I've said it before.

I'll say it again many, many times before we're done here. For these people, the only hope is through judgment. The hope is not that they can avoid judgment.

There is no avoiding judgment. It's coming. The hope is that by means of the judgment, they'll not be destroyed, but they'll be cleansed.

Well, what I would say is this is primarily talking about the Exile. It's talking about the fire that's going to come and cleanse the land of the filth of the city. However, by God's utilizing the fire sign in Pentecost, I think he's tying back to this.

That's one of the issues that we wrestle with in terms of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. Some people would say, well, the only purpose of the Old Testament is to predict the New. Others will say, there's no relationship between them.

The New Testament people just inappropriately utilize stuff from the Old Testament. As I've said before, the middle of most roads is as wide as a razor blade's edge, and there are big ditches on either side. But here's where I think the middle of the road is, and that is the Old Testament has its own meaning with its own integrity, but the New Testament is an intrinsic part of that, and God utilizes the Old Testament for his ultimate purposes.

Okay, verse 5, the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. What's that about? It's about the Exodus, isn't it? Yes. Now, why do you think Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would utilize the Exodus language for this situation after the return from exile? What's he doing? All right, all right.

In a real sense, the Old Testament prophets see the exile, the return from exile, as a new Exodus. There's a sense in which Ezekiel really, really does this. There's a sense in which they see all of Israel's history between the conquest and the return as one big judges cycle.

Remember the book of Judges? They get blessed, and what happens? They forget God. And forgetting God, what did they start to do? Worship idols. And what does God do in response to that? He takes down the walls, we're going to talk about this next week and lets the enemy come in and oppress them.

In response to that, what do the Hebrew people do? Cry. And in response to their crying, what does God do? He sends a deliverer, and the deliverer restores God's divine order, his mishpat, his justice, but much, much bigger than our idea of legal justice. He restores God's order, and the people are blessed.

And what do they do? Forget God. And what do they do? Worship idols. And what happens? God opens the doors for oppressors.

What happens? They cry. What happens? God sends a deliverer, and the deliverer restores God's mishpat, and the people are blessed. And what happens next? They forget God.

Seven times in the book of Judges we go around this circle, but it's not really a circle. It's a helix. A helix is a downward curve.

A spiral is downward and tightening. A helix is the same diameter of a circle, but just going down. And that's what we have here.

Now I'm saying that the prophets in many ways see the whole history of Israel. The Judges, the United Monarchy, the divided monarchy, the exile, and the return from exile as one big Judges cycle. So that when we return from exile, we have a chance to go on to become that holy nation, that royal priesthood.

So, the use of the Exodus language here is very intentional. The Bible is the book of fresh starts. God does not say, well, you had a chance.

You blew it. I'm done with you. Fresh start.

Fresh start. And we go on then with over all the glory there will be a canopy. Verse six, is a booth for shade by day from the heat and for refuge and shelter from the storm and the rain.

Notice the order here now in the whole thing. What has to happen for us to expect God to shelter us? We've got to be cleansed, don't we? We've got to come to that place where the fire has played upon us and burned away the dross and the corruption. And when we're in that condition, we can expect God to guide us and protect us and be a shelter.

There are a lot of people in the world who expect God to guide them and protect them and shelter them when they're living for the devil and get upset with God when he doesn't. There are conditions on this thing. Number five there.

Does anybody care to share some ways in which God has been a shelter, a shade, a hiding place, a refuge in your life? Yes. Yes. In the midst of problems you didn't think you could ever survive, he gives you peace.

I get scared every time I remember my teenage years. And I think there must be a guardian angel somewhere in the back corner of heaven who's having a nervous breakdown. I remember a night, Karen wanted me never, never to tell our boys about this.

I remember a night when I took a carload of guys and 57 holes and floored it. Went over the top of a hill and went airborne. Came down straight and went on a little bit slower.

In a moment five boys could have been incinerated because of the idiocy of the driver. And I think God, God was a shelter in that moment. It reminds me of an event in my life in which I was rolling down a long, there's a highway in the desert area there in California, and had a pretty brand new Buick.

I went around to start to pass a semi and as I came around his left side I saw a cow or a deer jump out in front of him. And he didn't see me so he swerved and I went off the road, tumbled over several times, had a passenger with me, a friend, and not a scratch on us afterward. And in fact, the humorous part of this is the car was so badly damaged that when we got to talking to the state patrolman he said, well it certainly was a miracle because he said, well it was just the grace of God, he saved us.

And the highway patrolman said, well he certainly wasn't sitting in the back seat. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think again and again of all of the innumerable times when God has sheltered us and we haven't known it.

We haven't been aware that two seconds difference, is the difference between life and death. I confess that it's very easy for me when difficulties arise to say, why God? And sometimes I think I hear God saying, why not? I've protected you many, many more times than you know anything about. All right, let's move on then.

Anything else you want to talk about in four verses two through six? Yes? I've read something that caught my interest here about the cloud and the smoke and we're talking about going back to Exodus. And I think this is called the Shekinah, a physical or visible, visible presence of God. Yes, and this is built, this is actually a Hebrew word. This is built on the three consonants, SH is a single consonant, K and N, which means to shelter or to the tabernacle.

The tabernacle is the Mishkan. This word does not actually occur in the Bible. It occurs in the Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament and it occurs all over there, the glory of God, the tabernacling glory of God.

And probably John is thinking of this when he says he tabernacled among us. He pitched his tent among us. So that idea of the presence of God, the glory of God is one that does show up, as I say, in the Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament and then is pretty clearly in the thought processes of the writers of the New Testament.

Okay, let's move on now. And once again, with just no transition at all, we move from hope back to judgment. This is very, very typical of Isaiah.

He's going to close this introductory section with these words of judgment. He's never going to stop with the future hope so that we can say, oh, everything's going to be fine. He drags us back to the present where everything is not fine and some things are going to have to change if that glorious hope is ever to be realized.

Let me say one more word before we leave it. I think the order here is very significant. Why is it that God gives us this transformed condition? Why does he give us this transformed condition? Why does he make our Jerusalem a place of refuge

and shelter instead of a place of bloodshed and violence? It is for the sake of, and I think it's significant, that he expresses the mission first.

In order for that mission to be realized, there's got to be a transformed condition. But the transformed condition is not simply so that you and I can sit down and say, oh, doesn't it feel so good? The transformed condition is so that the world may know. So, as I say, I think that order is on purpose.

Okay. Chapter 5. Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

Why do you think Isaiah refers to God twice as his beloved? Why he refers to this as a love song? What do you think is going on there? And again, there's no right answer here. So, what do you think? Yes, what might have happened in Isaiah's love song to bring him into a closer relationship to God? Yes, yes. As I said at the outset, it's not at all clear that these are in chronological order, that they were preached in this order.

It's very likely, I think, that they have been taken from various points in Isaiah's ministry and brought together for this purpose of introduction. So, yes, it suggests that Isaiah has had some intimate experience with God that has drawn him into God's heart. This is one of the things that the scholars have commented upon, that the Hebrew prophets seem to be touched by the pathos of God.

God is passionate for his people. God is passionate for his people. He's jealous for them.

He wants their best. He longs to give them his blessing. And yet, it seems as though they are determined to have their own way at all costs.

And it seems that the prophets, you've got prophets in other parts of the ancient world, but you don't have any place where the prophet is entering into the heart of God. So, in this situation, it's as though Isaiah is feeling the heart of God as God looks at his vineyard. As I say in the background, Judah was only good for growing grapes, just almost nothing else.

It's a rock pile. Israel, the northern half of Solomon's old kingdom, had some land that was reasonably good for growing wheat and barley, for pasture. Not Judah.

It's vineyards. And the soil is pretty good for vineyards. So, it's not merely that that's all they can grow.

It's really, that's what the land is really good for. So, in terms of rhetoric, in terms of persuasion, Isaiah knows whom he's talking to. Those Judean farmers, their ears picked up when he said, my beloved had a vineyard.

Oh, vineyard. Oh, yeah, yeah. As I say in the background, it was three years before you got your first crop.

Your first year was spent basically clearing the land. I've told this story before. My dad went with me to Israel when he was 82.

He was an Ohio farmer. We were driving down the road one day in the bus and he was sitting next to the window just shaking his head. I said, Daddy, what's the matter? He said, why would anybody fight for a rock pile like this? And that's what it is.

It's a rock pile. So, you spend that first year clearing the field of rocks, and using the rocks to build walls. The next year, you get the best vines you can.

You plant them. You put them in. Remaining time, you clear more rocks, and build watchtowers because people will steal your grapes if you let them.

You dig out a wine press, a hollow in the rock, and you have a big long pole and you weigh that thing with rocks so that it will squash the grapes in baskets in the wine press. Finally, in the third year, you're ready to go out and get the grapes. Wow.

Look at them. Big, big clusters hanging there. Each grape just bursting.

I'm going to make a lot of money off this. You take a grape and pop it in your mouth. It's bitter.

Oh, maybe that was an accident. They're all bitter. After all my beloved's work.

Verse three, now, oh, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of the earth, Judah, judge between, now notice it's me and my vineyard. Yes, this is so typical of the prophets. You begin talking about God as he, but before very long, your identification with him is so complete, he's I. I'm not talking about the beloved anymore.

The prophet is the beloved. Judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I haven't done in it? When I look for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And I can see those Judean farmers.

If there were pews in that church, they're standing on the pews saying, tear it up, burn it down, call in the wild animals. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge.

I wonder how close we are in this country to having our hedge removed and it will be devoured. I'll break down its wall and it'll be trampled down. Call in the cows, call in the sheep.

Worst of all, call in the goats. When goats are done with a field, there's nothing more to be done for it because they pull the stuff up right by the roots. I'll make it a waste.

It won't be pruned or hoed. Briars and thorns will come up on it. Here's another theme of the book of Isaiah.

Briars and thorns. We're going to encounter this about six more times. I'll command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

And this next verse, now verse seven, is sort of like Nathan and David. David, do you know what? There's a man in your kingdom. Oh, there is? Oh, it feels so good to get excited over other people's sins.

He took his neighbor's one lamb and cooked it for a guest. David says, that man deserves to die. The long, bony, prophetic finger points right in David's face and says, you are that man.

David says, verse seven, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. You want him to tear up the vineyard? You want him to knock down the wall? You are the vineyard. I say in the background, there's a Hebrew word play going on in the end of verse seven.

He looked for mishpat, but behold, mishpach. Bloodshed sounds like mishpat. There's a word play.

He looked for justice, and found bloodshed. For righteousness, tzedakah. And behold, zaakah, a scream.

So again, this is poetry, and it's beautiful, powerful poetry, even more so in the Hebrew than necessarily in the English. Okay, now, what are the bitter grapes? They are spelled out here in a series of woe poems. I say again, in the background, you constantly have to remember, in English today, woe is a kind of a judgment term.

Woe to you. You're going to get it, and I'm glad. But really, it's a word of regret and grief.

There is no contemporary English word that gets it. You have to use the archaic alas. If Isaiah cries woe to you, he doesn't do it with glee.

He does it with a tear. Oh, no. Oh, no.

We wrestled with this in the New Living Translation. Oh, how sad. Oh, what grief for those who, so forth.

The first one is in verses eight, nine, and ten. What's the bitter grape here? Grief and greed, yes. Now, I don't know whether these are in descending order or not.

There are a couple that maybe don't quite fit, but it's very interesting to think about the order here. Notice greed is the result of what? Think about the Ten Commandments. The last one, I hear it, covetousness, covetousness.

If I just had what somebody else has, I'd be happy. Paul calls this idolatry, the worship of this world. Is it true that the destruction of a nation begins with greed? Interesting to think about.

Verses 11 and 12, what's the bitter grape here? Self-indulgence. And throughout the poem, he breaks in at a couple of points to talk about what the results are going to be. And I want to jump past those for the moment and go on.

So, the second woe is self-indulgence in verses 11 and 12. The third woe is in verses 18 and 19. What's this one? Caught in the web of sin, Mel says, yes? Those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, who say, let him be quick.

Let us beat his work so that we may see it. Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel that you chatter on and on about, draw near. Let it come that we may know it.

What attitude is that? Mockery, scorn. Yes, yes, I think so. These are people who sin for the heck of it and dare God to do anything about it.

Yes, the great atheist, right? The great atheist, Robert Ingersoll, used to stand on stages and say, you say there's a God, I tell you there is none. If there's a God, certainly he has a scrap of honor. And then he would proceed to curse God with every vile curse he could think of.

And finally, he said, now if you've got any honor, you'll strike me dead. Nothing happened. See? See? And his sister died.

He threw himself into the grave on top of the casket, crying, oh the darkness, the darkness. The fourth woe, verses, verse 20. And I think 20 and 21 go together.

It's two woes, but I think it goes together. What's this one? Deliberate rejection and in fact, reversing the moral order. Who call good evil and evil good.

Darkness is light and light is darkness. Bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter. And again, I don't think you have to look very far on your tube to find this.

They are reversing the moral order. Now there's, as I say, I think there is a progression here. When I live for what I can get when I live for how good I feel, ultimately I'm going to come face to face with the moral order, and to justify what I'm doing, I'm going to have to ultimately turn it on its head.

There's a sense in which then the last one, 22 and 23, is particularly aimed at the moral order. Aimed at the leaders. They are heroes in drinking wine.

Valiant men in mixing strong drink. Boy, you haven't tasted a martini until I've put it together. I've studied this carefully.

Who cares? And acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right. There's a sense in which I think what we have here is another of these graphic illustrations where he sort of says, where does this all lead? It leads exactly where we are. To leaders who are drunks and whose greatest accomplishment is in becoming drunker and as a result are perverting justice on every side.

Well, therefore, verses 13, 14, 24, and 25. Now remember, we have talked about the relationship of contrast. Contrast between judgment and hope and interchange where the contrast keeps being made.

Contrast, interchange, here's another relationship, cause and effect. And this relates to the old preacherly line, when you see a therefore ask what it's there for. Because it is telling you that something has happened and this is the result.

Now look at the results. Verse 13, my people go into exile for lack of knowledge. We're not talking about intellectual knowledge here.

We're talking about personal knowledge of God and his ways. Lack of understanding, yes, yes. Verse 14, so the underworld has opened its mouth and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude go down, her revelers and he who exalts in her.

And here comes language that reminds us of chapters two and three. Man is humbled. Try to exalt ourselves and the result is we become meaningless.

Each one is brought low, the eyes of the haughty are brought low, but the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice. The holy God, this is a very important verse, shows himself holy. How? In righteousness.

Yeah. He's the holy one and therefore his character defines holy character. What is holy character? Righteousness, doing the right thing no matter what the cause.

Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture. Nomads will eat among the ruins of the rich. Yeah.

The nation is going to be, the land is going to be desolate. All these big houses that you built on the backs of the poor are going to be ruins and sheep are going to graze in the ruins. Verse 24, therefore as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, as the dry grass sinks down in the flame, their root will be rottenness, their blossom go up like dust.

He's going to talk about the flower of the field. Twenty-five chapters ahead of us. Why? They have rejected the instruction, the Torah, of the Lord of heaven's armies.

They have despised, considered worthless, the word of the holy one of Israel. Therefore, the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people. Reprobate.

Yes. Yes. It's not a word you'll see on the television, but reprobate.

Yes. Yes. So, what's going to happen in verses 26 through 30? What are these verses saying about Yahweh's lordship of history? Verse 26.

Now remember, remember the historical circumstances. This is somewhere after 745 B.C. when the Assyrians have picked up steam again and are headed for Egypt. You've got this powerful emperor, Tiglath-Pileser III.

For about 50 or 60 years, Assyria had been remarkably quiet. I think because of Jonah. Can't prove that, but it fits.

But this guy, he never heard about Jonah. And Assyria, like some monster machine, you know, these trucks with the huge tires. There they come.

But what does Isaiah say? Verse 27. He says I am not afraid. But I am not afraid.

There's a big tree in the background. I'm just afraid. Well, if that's the case, the only way to get out of this is through the air.

And it's not Calling Assyria? That's called chutzpah. It's also called faith. He'll whistle for them.

Come on. This is the fulfillment of the imagery of verses five and six. He has taken down the wall.

He's calling in the wild animals to come and trample the vineyard. And again, the language here is so powerful, the sense of urgency. None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleep.

Not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken. Their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent. The horse's hooves seem like flint.

Their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring's like a lion, like young lions. They roar, they growl, and seize their prey.

They carry it off and none can rescue. They will growl over it on that day like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress.

And the light is darkened by its clouds. OK. Before I let you go, look back at verse 20.

Do you want darkness? I'll give you darkness everywhere you look. God, as the psalmist says, is light. And in him, there is no darkness at all.

To him, even the darkness is as light. But cut yourself off from him. There is no light.

We're going to come to this again at the end of chapter 8. You get the same kind of thing. You insist on being the source of your own light. And you have nothing but darkness.

Questions, comments before I let you go? In one chapter, it says, please, where does that come from? Can you find it? Chapter 3, and now we'll have to please between me and my neighbor. Oh, chapter 5. Chapter 5, verse 3. Please, judge. Is that what it is? Yeah, yeah.

It is very much the idea of I've told the story. Now, my friends, please tell me what I should do. They say, well, dummy, it's obvious what you should do.

Yeah, that's right. Exactly right. It's a part of the rhetoric that he's using to put his case across.

Yes? That would be my position because of the parallelism, which talks about the fruit of the land. Those who would say, no, it is the Messiah, they will say the fruit of the land is intended to be metaphorical, and the Messiah is the fruit of Judah. That's certainly a possibility.

Anything else? Either way with that, it means life, they're looking at life or they're not. Yes, either way, Branch is talking about fruitfulness. This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah.

This is session number three, Isaiah chapters 4 and 5. I'm John Oswalt. We'll see you next time. Bye.