

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 29, Isa. 60-62

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 29, Isaiah chapters 60 through 62.

For those of you who were here last week, we talked about the interesting structure of this final section of the book, which I have called Righteousness, the Character of Servanthood. Righteousness, the Character of Servanthood. And we see it arranged in this kind of stair-step structure. Where the two ends of the stairway are parallel and each step up is parallel until we come to the apex of the triangle, the top of the ladder, and there's not a parallel to that segment, that one stands by itself.

We talked last week about why this might be the case. Why would Isaiah have done this? Why would he say the same things over again, somewhat in reverse? And I suggested to you that the value of this kind of structure is it reminds us of the importance of what we're about here. What is the goal of servanthood? And the goal of servanthood is that all the world might come and worship God.

The goal of Israel's priesthood is that they might be the go-betweens for the rest of the world. And so, if we only had that much, we might forget the goal as we reach this wonderful climactic point. But we reach the climax and then we're reminded not only what the goal is, but what the issues are.

Chapters 40 to 55, we are saved by grace. Nothing we had to do; no repentance is called for. We simply are the chosen servants of God.

Why? Because of my promise to Abraham, that's why. So, it really doesn't matter how we live, then, does it? And chapters 56 to 66 are saying, oh yes, it does. And in a real way, as we saw last week, what's happening here is that just as salvation was by grace in chapters 40 to 55, so the character of righteousness is by grace.

Righteousness is called for, but somehow, we can't seem to do it. And so, the divine warrior comes to defeat our enemy, and we'll talk about that more in just a moment, which makes possible, then, the climactic section. And we're looking at that next week as sort of the close of our study, chapters 60 to 62 we'll be looking at next week.

Tonight, I want us to look at this 63 to 66, the parallel to chapters 56 to 59. So, with that in mind, and we've got a couple of errors here in the notes. First of all, it should be 63, 1 to 6, not 60, 1 to 6. And then, I wanted you to rapidly scan chapters 63 to 66.

So, those of you who did your homework, I'm sorry, you had to read another two chapters. Sorry about that. So, as we look at 63 to 66 for similarities and differences, the immediate similarity that we see is the divine warrior.

And as we'll note here in just a moment, there's even a verse that is the same in each of those segments. So, number one, the divine warrior. Now, interestingly, in this case, we concluded with the divine warrior.

Here, we begin with the divine warrior. And that will make a little difference in the way we look at the materials. So, that's in 63, 1 to 6. Then, when we go on, 63, 7. I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his head.

For he said, surely they are my people, children, remember chapter 1, verse 2, I have raised up children, but children who will not deal falsely, and he became their savior. In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his face saved them. In his love and in his pity, he redeemed them, lifted them up, carried them all the days of old.

Here it comes, verse 10. What? But they rebelled. Here we are.

In spite of all God's goodness, in spite of his compassion, in spite of his hesed, in spite of his pity, his mercy, they rebelled. Then we go on in verse 11, talking about God again. So it's interesting, in this section, following the divine warrior, we talk about God's grace as sort of the opening indicator.

But now go on, verse 15. Look down from heaven and see from your holy and beautiful habitation, where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. You're our father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us.

You, O Lord, are our father, our redeemer from of old is your name. O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Over to 64, verse 5. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry and we sinned.

In our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We've all become like one who's unclean. All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away, and so forth.

So, interestingly, we begin with this emphasis upon God's gracious care in the past, and then a word about the rebellion, God continuing to care for them, and now we're talking about, oh God, we don't do righteousness, and it's your fault because

you don't make us repent. Chapter 65. I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me.

I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, here am I, here am I, to a nation that wasn't called by my name. I spread out my hands all day to a rebellious people who walk in a way that's not good, following their own devices.

A people who provoke me to my face continually. So forth. So then, verse 11, 65-11, you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for fortune, and fill cups of mixed wine for destiny, I'll destine you for the sword.

And then, very interestingly, in verses 13 and 14, the difference between you and my servants. My servants shall eat, but you will be hungry. My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty.

My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. The interesting question is, who's the you here? We'll talk about that. So, God promises that he is going to bless his servants, those who are his servants, as opposed to those who think they're his servants.

And then in 65-17, we have something that is completely new. There's nothing like it here in this first part of the section. And that's the new heaven and the new earth.

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered or come to mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

So, the concluding section of this is emphasizing what God is going to do. Now, the way, I saw Candice come in, and Candice was auditing my Isaiah class that I taught at the seminary this spring. I won't call on her here, but she might remember.

When we were looking at this in detail in the class, we noticed that over here, the primary emphasis is upon human inability, and there is a minor emphasis on divine ability. The change is over here, the major emphasis is on divine ability, and the minor emphasis is on human inability. The overall point is the same in both cases.

The Judeans are unrighteous, but sort of following this lead here, there is a greater emphasis upon God's ability to do something about that, if they will. Okay, so then, if we look at these four chapters, 63, 64, 65, 66, the first segment is the Divine Warrior, 63, 1 through 6. The second is 63, 7 through 64, 12, then 64, 13 through, yes, thank you, yes, okay, and then 65, 2 through 25, and then chapter 66. So, we'll think in those terms.

64, 13, ends at 12. Ends at 12. Oh, oh, oh, I see what you were saying.

I see what you are saying. Thank you. There we are.

Okay, so, four segments there in the larger section. Okay, look at 63, 5. I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold.

So, my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. That's 63, 5. Now, here is 59, 16. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede.

Then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. It's interesting, over here, it's his righteousness that upheld him, and here it's his wrath that upheld him. A righteous wrath, I think, and a wrathful righteousness.

So, I think if nothing else, those two verses seal it that these two are to be understood in parallel with each other. Now, the language here is very, very grim. Here comes the warrior, his robes are stained red to the knee, and it isn't grape juice.

Who has been in the wine vat? 63, 1. What is Basra? Anybody remember? Basra is the capital of Edom. Edom is in the wine vat, and he is stomping on Edom, and their blood is squirting out all over his garments. Now, you know, you want to help the folks on the left with their being appalled at the bucket of blood theology, here it is.

The warrior is spattered all over with the blood of his enemies. He's been stomping on them like grapes in a wine vat. But, who are these Judeans' enemies? They themselves, their own sins.

Their sins have defeated them. Edom is not a problem anymore. Edom was captured by the Babylonians and destroyed, and the Edomites never returned.

Arabs from the desert filtered into that area and became the Nabataeans of the New Testament. So, Edom doesn't exist at this point in the return from exile. But, as I say in the background notes, Edom, here as back in chapter 34, yes, is the symbol of the enemies of God.

So, if this divine warrior is indeed the one sent from God, whose blood is it that spatters his garments? His own. His own. He who knew no sin became sin for our sakes.

This warrior has become the sins of his enemies. He's become the sins of his people. And in so doing, it is his own blood that covers his garments.

So, again, I want to try to emphasize this. When we think about salvation, conversion, and regeneration, Jesus comes as the suffering servant. He takes the sins

of the world into himself, submissively, meekly, as the lamb before its shearers is dumb.

But, when it comes to defeating sin in his people, he doesn't come as the suffering servant. He comes as the warrior. He comes to destroy the power of sin in our lives.

And it's very important that we understand both those pictures. The suffering servant who meekly takes the sins of the world into himself and gives back love. And the divine warrior who comes to attack sin in his people and destroy it.

With his own blood. The cross. The cross is the answer.

Yes, it's the answer to sins that were committed. And it's the answer to sin as a power in our lives. Tragically, in North American evangelicalism, we have made it simply the answer for sins that have been committed in the past.

It has nothing at all to say about sins that Christians commit now. Tragically. But that's wrong.

The cross, the blood, is for sins that have been committed. And it is to defeat the power of sin in our lives now. And that's good news.

John, is there a significance then related to that, that in chapter 59, he speaks as the second person, and in chapter 63, in the first person? I think so. I think it is. I don't know whether all of you heard the question.

In 59, it's second person. Or even third. In 63, the warrior himself is speaking.

And the question is, is that significant? And I think it is. I think it's a focusing, it's making it more pertinent, more explicit, more concrete.

Yes. Good observation. All right.

Now then, let's push on. 63.7 begins a poem that runs all the way to 64.12. When we look at that poem, 63.7 to 64.12, and again, if you haven't done this, it's too late. But, let me simply point out some things here.

What we have is this beginning of remembering how gracious God has been to us in the past. How he has led us. Then, beginning in 63.15, you begin to have these appeals.

Look down from heaven and see. Where are your zeal and your might? I mean, God, you did all this stuff for us in the past. Why aren't you doing this now? Verse 1 of chapter 64.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence. God, we're not getting it done. If you'd just show up, everything would be fine.

64.8. Now, oh Lord, you are our Father. We're the clay, you're our potter. We're the work of your hand.

Be not so terribly angry, oh Lord. Remember not iniquity forever. Please, look, we're all your people.

So, the theme that's running through here is this cry of the people that God will do something to make them righteous. But the underlying note is, it's his fault that we're not righteous. So, the people are asking God to show up.

You're far away, show up here. And, the basis of the appeal is, we're Abraham's children, God. You owe us.

How interesting. Rather than his people owing him something, he owes them something, because he chose Abraham. So, again, this issue of election.

Election means we've got some sort of a lock on God. Election means God owes us something. As opposed to these folks, these foreigners, and these eunuchs, to whom supposedly God owes nothing.

So, again, this emphasis is upon the inability of God's people to do righteousness. Now, over here, there's more of a sense of, and we don't have to. We're God's people.

It doesn't matter. Here, there is more of a sense of, we ought not to be acting the way we're acting, God. And, it's your fault that we're not.

Okay, let's back up now and look at this in a little more detail. 63, seven through 14. What's the main theme of this stanza? God's hesed.

I think that's exactly right, Mel. I think it's there in the very first verse. I will recount the hesed of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that he's granted us.

Yes, here's the hesed, the undeserved devotion and favor of a superior to an inferior that God has demonstrated to his people. Now, notice how many references there are to the Spirit or the Holy Spirit here in this stanza. Okay, Mel says three.

Verse 11, where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit? Verse 14, like livestock that go down in the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest, but there is

one before that, I believe. Let's see. In 10, yes, they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

Now, there's no right answer here, but why do you think this emphasis on the Holy Spirit here in this passage? God has been with them in his spirit and they recognize that his spirit is his presence with them. I think that's one good possibility. I think they recognize the need for the Holy Spirit, different than when they were on the march, to be in them individually, to have a relationship individually.

Yes, I think that's a real possibility, that they are recognizing this growing theme running through the Old Testament. God, we love our Torah, but we don't keep it. Therefore, it condemns us at every spot.

But God, we've seen some people in whom a different spirit is at work. Is there any chance that you might be willing to put that spirit in all of us and enable us to keep Torah? And God says I thought you were never going to ask. That's been my plan.

So I think, and again, I can't prove it from the passage, but I think it's very, very possible that that's what's going on, that they are now conscious of the Holy Spirit's work in the world. And are aware that they need his leadership, they need his guidance, they need his presence. We rebel against his spirit.

Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit? The Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So, I think it's a very real possibility that that's what's going on, is that Isaiah is, as he speaks for the people, saying, we need that Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit who brought us out of Egypt, that Holy Spirit who brought us into the Promised Land, we need him in new and special ways within us.

Okay, 63, 15 to 19. What are the people blaming God for? No zeal, no passion for them. He has hardened their hearts.

These folks are good Calvinists. That's unkind, but... Uh-huh, yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah.

Our hearts used to be tender when you were here, and then you went away, and our hearts are hard. So, whose fault is it? In particular, since you chose us. Yeah, yeah, since you chose us in the beginning, it's your fault if you're not here.

Pretty amazing. Yeah. So, verses 18 and 19, what are they saying? Mm-hmm.

That he was in his holy place, and now he's gone. Yes. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah.

For a while, you were in your holy place, now you're gone, and we're like those over whom you've never ruled. Ruth says that's the way we're going. And you've lost your credibility.

Mm-hmm. Everyone's gone. Yep.

All right, push on then, 64, 1 to 12. In verses 1 to 5, what is the appeal? What are they asking? That God would come down, that God would reveal his presence. And for what purpose in verse 2? Yes, to make your name known to your adversaries that the nations might tremble at your presence.

Okay, at least they're getting the focus a little off themselves. But it's primarily, do good things for us so our enemies will shake in their boots. Not much of a missionary movement here, is there? But at least we can say, yes, it is so that the world will know you.

At least we can go that far, and that's good. Questions somewhere? Someone wants to say something. Why did you give the Supreme Man? Yep.

Why? Why did you give us choices? It's your fault. Yep. Uh... Yes.

David Raban, a couple of weeks ago, gave me a cartoon. And it's obviously God and an angel are standing on a cloud looking at the earth. And the angel is saying, well, if you want it to be interactive, you're going to have to give them free will.

Yep. Yep. That was the problem.

Verse 5. Notice what they're saying? Yes. Yes. So, they've got the right perspective.

You joyfully, meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Yeah. So, we understand, God, that you work in the lives of those who do righteousness.

But God, you were angry and we sinned, in our sins we've been a long time, and shall we be saved? We've all become like one who's unclean. So, according to those verses, why must God act? All right. And there is no other God like him.

We cannot save ourselves. Now again, I remind you, we're not talking about 40 to 55. That's about salvation.

That's about deliverance from the consequences of your sins. These people are back in the land now. They are, quote, saved.

But they're not living righteous lives. So then, in verses 8 to 12, you are our father. Verse 9. We are your people.

Your holy cities are a wilderness. Our beautiful holy house has been burned by fire. Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord? Will you keep silent and afflict us so terribly? Okay.

You're our father. We're your people. This is your land that you gave us.

This is your house. Land, people, and house. They're all in a mess.

So why aren't you acting? So, how does God respond? In verses 1 and 2 of 65. I reveal myself to those who seek me. Now what does that say about everything they've been talking about here in the previous section? They must not have been trying very hard.

No, they got the right perspective. They've got to make the step. Maybe they're blaming God instead of themselves.

Okay. Okay. Okay.

Okay. I think that's right at the heart of it. How do we seek God? And the first thing is to stop blaming him for your problems.

Exactly. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. Be willing to do God's will. Yeah, precisely.

Evidently, from 65:1 it wasn't in earnest. It was, it was, they said they were willing to do God's will, but they weren't. In that, I think, they were not willing to take the step of faith.

They're standing here saying, okay God, you move me and I'll move. And God says no. It's hard to say.

It's hard to say, except on the basis of God's charges against them. That you weren't really seeking me. You said you were, but you weren't.

Well, they say he's not. They're accusing him that he has left them and that's why they are unfaithful and acting in unfaith. And God is basically saying, I never left you.

Because they wanted to keep doing what they wanted. They still wanted their will. Sure, I think that's exactly right.

They wanted their own way and they were basically saying, yes God, I'll do your will if you make me. Well, that's exactly what we're doing now. You got it.

Yeah. They would miss the idols, yeah. Okay.

Okay, okay, I think that's possible. I don't see it explicitly in the text, but I certainly agree that it's possible. A genuine humility.

I also think, and this relates to what I was talking about earlier, Mary Jo was just raising. How deep was their desire for change? And that, I think, relates to this first one. Do they just want to blame God? Okay, God, we're a mess and it's your fault.

Or do they really, really long for God to deliver them from these patterns of unrighteousness and come to him in genuine humility, willing to do God's will? Yep, yep, yep, yep. If you just step forward, in faith and step out, it's there. Yep, yep, yep.

Oh yes, I think you can see that in the patterns of revival across the centuries. That it is typically one person or a small group of people who really, really get passionate about this. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

All right, now then, look at verse three and following. God's accusation. A people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, making offerings on bricks, sitting in tombs, spending the night in secret places who eat pig's flesh.

Broth of tainted meat is in their vessels who say, keep to yourself, don't come near me, I'm too holy for you. Do you think they were really doing that? All right, that's the next question. If they weren't, what's the point? Why use this kind of loaded language if they weren't actually doing these things? It could be a reflection of their internal attitude.

I'm one of the most holy men you'll ever meet. I have devotions every day. I go to church every Sunday, twice.

Try that. I don't lie, I don't steal. I don't beat my wife, very often.

I'm a holy man, and if you people would try as hard as you, as I do, you could be as holy as I am. People who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, making offerings on bricks, who sit in tombs, who spend the night in secret places, who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels, who say, keep to yourself, don't come near me, I'm too holy for you. These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day.

I think it's very possible they were doing all the right things. And God says, for all the good it's going to do you, you might as well be eating mouse broth. Your holiness is a stench in my nostrils.

Do you understand what I'm saying? That it may well be that God is saying, all those good things you're doing, good things that are commanded, are rotten because you're doing them for yourself. You don't want to be like God, you want to be holy. Now you say, wait a minute, holy is holy, isn't it? No, no.

There's holiness, and there's holiness. And this is a stench. Because it's all about me.

It's all about my. And I suspect, again, there's a good deal of that sort of stuff going on here. Look over at chapter 66.

The second part of verse 2. This is the one to whom I'll look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit. We saw that back in chapter 57. I dwell in the high and holy place and with him who is lowly and contrite in heart.

He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man. He who sacrifices a lamb like one who breaks a dog's neck. He who presents a grain offering like one who offers pig's blood.

He who makes a memorial offering of frankincense is like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways and their soul delights in their abominations. Now do you see where I'm coming from? They're not actually killing a man, they're offering an ox.

But Isaiah says, for all the good it's going to do you, you might as well kill a man. They're surely not breaking a dog's neck and putting it on the altar, but God says you might as well. It's all about you and your attempts to manipulate God to do what you want for you.

And it's worthless. Now hear me. Do I believe that daily devotions are vitally important? I certainly do.

Do I believe that attending church even twice on Sunday is a good thing? I do it with all my heart. Do I believe that we ought to be people of untouchable morality? Yes, yes, yes. But I say, if that is all for me, for my achievements, for my own self-image, it's not good stuff.

So, as Ruth said at the outset, everything is attitude. Okay. Well, our time is getting away from us here.

We've covered most of what I wanted to hear. Look now. So, he talks about you and the servants.

And I think it's pretty clear that the you refers to these people who are proud of their own righteousness, and it is really unrighteousness, as opposed to those who are humble and contrite, who know their need and are seeking God in the right ways. Now, so go down through chapter 65 where he talks about how God is going to bless my servants as opposed to you. Verse 16.

So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth. He who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes. For behold, I create new heavens.

Now, remember, what relationship does for indicate? Substantiation, and what's that? All right, you have an effect, and for introduces the cause. So, in other words, this new heavens and new earth is a cause for the effect. Why will people bless themselves by the God of truth? Why will they swear? Because I'm going to create new heavens and new earth.

Now, my question here is an important one. Why is heaven necessary in view of God's promises? In the Old Testament, you have very, very little that is unquestionably about eternal life or new heaven and new earth. It's almost all focused on this life.

If you live this life God's way, then there are certain blessings that will necessarily follow, and if you don't live God's way, there are certain curses that will necessarily follow, and that's that. Now, if that's true, why is heaven necessitated? Why is heaven necessary? Because they have to see something beyond these basic elements. What else? The necessity to say what is the thing going to look like in view of redemption.

Well, the stars. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Dan? Is it possible that their actions have brought consequences that in this life may need to happen, but in order for God to ultimately fulfill His promise, He can't change the fact that the consequences have to come in this life, but He can create for them a life in which the promise is fulfilled beyond.

Yes. Yeah. The plain fact is there are a whole lot of people who live righteous lives who don't receive many physical blessings here, and there are a whole lot of people who live lousy lives who get blessed all over the place.

There's a real sense in which heaven is necessary if God is to keep His promises that righteousness empowered by Him, enabled by Him will result in blessing. No ifs, no ands, no buts. Wickedness will result in a curse.

No ifs, no ands, no buts. If this life is all there is, well, doesn't always work out that way, does it? We have severely damaged the creation. Oh, absolutely.

Absolutely. So that heaven, eternal life, and the next world, become a necessity in the light of God's promises. And so that means that you and I can live faithfully now, and if we don't get a big payback in this life, that's fine, because God is going to keep His promises.

If there is no heaven, then you and I, boy, we better get what we can while we can. Because as the man said, when you die like Rover, you die at once and you die all over. But heaven says, no, we can live in faithfulness to God now in the confidence that He will keep His promises.

Okay. Let me just say a word about chapter 66 and I'll let you go. In many ways, as I said in the lesson, chapter 66 is kind of similar to chapter 1. Chapter 1, if you remember, and I don't expect you do, but you should, anyway, chapter 1 goes back and forth between judgment and hope.

It's the same way here in chapter 66. It goes back and forth. And it ends, and I want us to look at this ending and then we'll go.

Verse 17. Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh, and the abomination and mice shall come to an end together, declares the Lord. Now it's interesting that that garden thing comes right back out of chapter 1. For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory, and I will set a sign among them, and from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lod, 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 shall declare my glory.

Notice how often glory is repeated here. Kavod, God's reality, God's significance, God's weightiness. They shall declare my glory among the nations.

They shall bring all your brothers, that's the Jews, from all the nations, as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain, Jerusalem. Remember chapter 2, all the nations say, let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them, and virtually all commentators are agreed that this refers to Gentiles, I will take for priests and Levites, says the Lord.

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. Now Isaiah being Isaiah, he can't end there. Oh goody, everything's going to be fine.

Everybody's going to get saved in the end. And they'll go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who've rebelled against me, for their worm will not die, their fire shall not be quenched, they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. Okay.

Okay. Choice. Choice.

Make the right choice. Okay. Next week, we'll look at that middle section, Arise, shine, thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 29, Isaiah chapters 60 through 62.