

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18, Isa. 36-37

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 18, Isaiah chapters 36 and 37.

Okay, let's pray together. Father, how we rejoice in your presence with us. In the end, that's everything. If you are not with us, we don't exist. You are life. You are hope. You are truth. You are everything. everything. And we testify that we exist because you think of us.

You are the author and we're the characters. You're telling the story and we're part of the story and we thank you for it. Thank you that through Christ we have life, abundant life, now and evermore.

Forgive us when we don't draw on our inheritance when we live thin, meager, empty lives as though you did not exist. Help us, Lord. Help us to remember who you are and what your resources are and to live to the fullest extent of what you make available to us.

Thank you. Once again we thank you for your word and once again we entreat you, Holy Spirit, to come and apply your word to our hearts. In your name, we pray. Amen.

We have worked more than halfway through the book. Congratulations.

We have seen in chapters one through six the call to servanthood. The child seems to be unusually shaky. In one to five we had the problem.

The nation is called to be the pure, pure vehicle through which God can reach the nations but in fact they're rebellious and broken, enamored with everything high and exalted on earth. And so, I suggested that Isaiah gives his own call as the solution to that problem. If the nation of unclean lips would have the same experience as the man of unclean lips then they would have a message to declare to the nations as he had a message to declare to them.

Then I suggested that seven through thirty-nine is trust. Trust in God. Trust the basis of servanthood.

Call to servanthood. Trust the basis of servanthood. In seven to twelve we saw no trust and the implications of that.

Then in thirteen to thirty-five, we saw lessons in trust. Don't trust the nations. Don't trust human power and exaltation but trust God.

Now then, tonight we're ready to begin to look at the other side of the picture again. Thirty-six to thirty-nine. And the title that I would give those four chapters is Trust, Yes But.

Okay. I ask you to look at the other side of the picture. Look at thirty-six two and seven three.

What did you discover there? It's the very same location. The place where Isaiah challenged King Ahaz to trust God in probably seven hundred thirty-five. Now thirty-five years later in seven hundred one B.C. the Assyrian officer stands in the very same spot.

Now that ought to tell us something. That ought to tell us that indeed these two sections are an envelope. Ahaz you can trust God.

Oh, I wouldn't want to put him to the test. Oh no, no, no. As I said back then, piety is often a wonderful excuse for unbelief.

No, I won't put God in a place where he's got to prove himself. I won't put God myself in a place where God's got to prove himself. There's the bottom line.

And so Isaiah had to tell Ahaz whatever you trust in place of God, and of course, he had put his trust in Assyria, whatever you trust in place of God will one day turn on you and this Assyria that you're trusting now one day is going to flood this land right up to the nose. And that's where we are with chapter thirty-six. Assyria has come.

They have come down the coast and they're all the way down in Philistia, southwest of Judah. I think I'm getting worse at map drawing. Judah, remember, located here on this central ridge that runs sort of that way and that way.

And the coast road came down along Galilee across the Jezreel Valley through this ridge at the pass of Megiddo and then down the coast. The Philistine cities are located here. Five of them.

And in many ways they're the last barrier to Assyria's ultimate goal, Egypt. But obviously, the Assyrians cannot leave Judah back here in their rear. Otherwise, the Judeans would be able to sally down and cut the supply lines.

Can't have that. So, while the Assyrians are mopping up the Philistines, they're also mopping up Judah. And the Bible tells us that they had taken forty-six fortresses in Judah.

There are only two left. One is down here on the road up to Jerusalem and that is the city of Lachish or Lakish. And the Assyrians right then are besieging Lachish.

If you have been to Israel you know this was a big city. It was actually probably a little bigger than Jerusalem. Well fortified and obviously if he's going to get Jerusalem he's got to take this one.

So there are forty-eight fortresses in Judah. He's taken forty-six. He's about to take forty-seven.

He'd like to save himself a little money. Sieges were horribly expensive. Keeping an army in place year-round.

Typically these armies would attack during the spring and the summer and early fall and then withdraw leaving just garrisons behind. But you couldn't do that with a siege. You had to leave that army there year-round.

And soldiers tend to eat. So, let's save ourselves a little money. Let's send the field commanders.

Let's send the field commander. Third in charge. The Rab Shaka.

Let's send him up there and get him to persuade these poor clucks to surrender. Save us a lot of money and time. And we can get on to what we're really after.

Judah, they don't have anything we really want. We just have to take them to be sure there's nobody in our rear while we're going on down to our ultimate goal. So how many times do words for trust appear in the RabShakah's speech? Did you count them? Nine.

Yeah. Some are implied. There are six that are explicit occurrences of words for trust.

Some of your translations may rely on other kinds of things. And if you get all the implications you got nine of them there. So, any question about what the issue is here? The issue is about trust.

So, who's the first thing that he says you're trusting foolishly? Okay. Egypt. And your own power as a result of that defense.

And what does he say about Egypt? Yes. Yes. Again of course Egypt on the Nile Valley.

Lots of reeds there. Big reeds. Big thick reeds.

But a reed is not a very good walking stick. Because a reed will splinter. So, you're leaning on this thing and it splinters and stabs you in the armpit.

That's Egypt. So, if you're trusting Egypt. If you're trusting your own strategy.

Verse five. Do you think mere words are strategy and power for war? No. That's not going to do you any good.

Are you trusting Egypt? That broken reed that will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it? What's the next trust that he ridicules? Trust in God. Now why does he say that is going to fail them? He thinks he knows God.

What did Hezekiah do that he thinks is a problem? He tore down all Yahweh's local churches. Which is exactly what he was supposed to do.

Now you remember the problem is that the gods were worshipped on the high places. The hilltops. So, he says on every high hill and under every green tree.

That's where the gods were worshipped. And so it's pretty clear that what the people were tempted to do was to take God away and instead substitute God. Now you remember can anybody think what the problem with that is? If you worship God on every hilltop what's the problem? I mean it's God.

What's the potential problem there? Competition. Exactly. From okay.

Okay. The John's they worship the Yahweh of Wilmore. But I worship the Yahweh of Nicholasville.

What happens is you begin to divide God up by location. So even though you've gotten rid of the gods by just substituting God for the gods you've still got a problem. And so from Solomon on and probably it was before Solomon but nevertheless, there had been some attempt to do what Deuteronomy said.

And Deuteronomy says you worship God in one place. It looks like until the time of Eli and Ichabod and the destruction the one place where they worshipped was Shiloh. Shiloh is about 15 miles north of Jerusalem in the territory of Ephraim.

That's where Hannah went. That's where Samuel served. But it looks as though that mosaic tabernacle was burned down by the Philistines.

You remember the Philistines are coming and everybody's scared to death so they decide to get their favorite rabbit's foot the Ark of the Covenant and take it out and use it on the battlefield. That'll surely scare the Philistines. Well, it did.

Scared them about like Georgia scared, Kentucky scared Georgia. Scared them bad enough to really play. And that's what happened.

The Philistines defeated them and captured the Ark. God's way of showing I'm not a rabbit's foot. And Samuel doesn't mention it but Jeremiah does.

Jeremiah says I can burn down this temple in Jerusalem just like I burned down the Tabernacle in Shiloh. And it looks as though you've got about 75 years of chaos where people are building tabernacles all over the place. You know this is their opportunity.

The mosaic tabernacle is gone. Let's make a little cashier. Let's have our own local tabernacle.

So, from then on it looks as though this business with the high places sort of proliferated and eventually, eventually Hezekiah says hey you know what? The Bible says you're not supposed to do that. So Hezekiah has gotten rid of all these Yahwistic high places. These high places were where some form of Yahweh was worshipped.

So, what does the Rabshakeh say about that? Yahweh's unhappy with that. I mean man, Hezekiah destroyed all the local churches. You're going to trust Yahweh? Yahweh's mad at you.

Now again I'm very impressed with the background work that the Assyrian foreign office has done here. He's pretty well prepared, but he doesn't understand biblical religion. If somebody had done that in Assyria and had destroyed all these local places to worship the gods, obviously the gods would have been furious.

So, Yahweh must be furious too. He doesn't understand. All right, let's push on here.

So, what does he offer to do in verses 8 and 9? He offers to give him horses. Now remember, the horse at this point is still the secret weapon. Things are just changing at this point.

It had been the horse and chariot where you've got a driver and if you're an Assyrian, it's a three-man chariot, a Bowman for long-distance artillery, and a spearman for a short distance. But things were changing over to cavalry. They were learning how to ride the horses and fight them and that gave them a lot more mobility.

So, he says you know, hey if you've got a problem, you don't have enough horses, hey I'll give you horses. That's like the golfer who says, hey I'll give you 25 strokes and still beat you. That's what he's saying.

I'll give you 2,000 horses and we'll still whip you. If you're trusting in military power. So, you can't trust your own strategy, you can't trust Egypt, you can't trust Yahweh, you can't trust your own military power, and finally look what he says in verse 10.

Yahweh, Yahweh sent us. Again, I have the feeling that somebody has done his homework. You know, hey you know what their prophets say? Their prophets say God sends them.

That's crazy but hey if they believe it, Yahweh sent us. So, the ambassadors say hey, why don't you talk to us in Aramaic? Now at this time, Aramaic was the term that's used is lingua franca, the language of business. All over the Assyrian Empire, Aramaic which was the language of Syria, Damascus.

And probably the reason why it's so important is because it became sort of the standard is it was kind of in the middle of the empire. You've got Babylon down here, you've got Damascus here, you've got Egypt there and so look, just talk to us in the diplomatic language and what does he say? No way. I took Hebrew lessons and I'm going to talk to these people on the wall here who will listen to us.

And of course, the language is pretty gross, isn't it? These people who are doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine need to know what's coming at them. That's a siege. I don't think we have any way of understanding the horror of a siege.

The walled cities were capable of holding maybe 25 or 30,000 people comfortably and you've got another 50, 60, 70,000 people living in tents outside, and here comes the enemy. Where do those 50 or 60 or 70,000 people go? Inside those walls. So in very short order, life inside the walls became unbearable.

And if the siege went on for two or two and a half years, you just can't imagine what it was like. So, he's saying, these folks need to know. I'm going to talk to them in Hebrew.

Again, these Assyrians, they're very thorough. Kind of like the Germans. So notice what he never calls Hezekiah.

He never calls him King Hezekiah. Look at verse 13. Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria, thus says the king, do not let Hezekiah deceive you.

Not King Hezekiah. That punk Hezekiah, don't let him deceive you. We're talking about the king here, folks.

What this is is psychological warfare. So, in verse 15, what should they not trust? The Lord. They should not trust in Hezekiah's words, the Lord will save us.

Because he won't. Don't listen to it. Who should you trust according to verses 16 and 17? We Assyrians.

I mean, hey, we're going to take you to a nicer place than this one. You'll all have your own vine and your own fig tree. You'll drink the water out of your own cistern.

And I'm going to take you to a much nicer land than this rocky place. Trust me. Would you buy a used car from this man? Now we come to the bottom line here.

Verse 18. Why will the Lord be unable to deliver them? No other God has and Yahweh is just one more of the gods. Here's the bottom line.

No, Yahweh didn't send them. No, Yahweh is not upset because they destroyed all the local churches. Yahweh is helpless.

That's the bottom line. Now I want you to know who destroyed those other gods. What's it saying? Verse 19.

Have they delivered Samaria? What? Samaria. What? Samaria. What? Samaria.

Out of my hand. Who's my? The king of Assyria. This is not a duel between the Assyrian gods and the Israelite God.

This is a duel between the Assyrian emperor and your god. The gods of Assyria never enter this discussion. This is about the great king.

And the great king has destroyed every other god and he's going to destroy your god too. Now again, he had a little bit of reason to say that. I mean, Samaria, they had gods, didn't they? The golden bulls.

What good did those gods do Samaria? None. Again, he hasn't figured it out. The god of Jerusalem is not a golden bull.

The god of Jerusalem is the creator of the universe. But a man can stand up against him and take him down. Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? This is the bottom line here.

All the way through here we've been talking about human self-exaltation. It goes all the way back to chapter 2 and even chapter 1 versus the exaltation of Yahweh. So I say again, this is not a reasoned argument.

He's just quacking them with stuff. Don't trust your own strategy. Don't trust Egypt.

Don't trust Yahweh. Why? Because Yahweh sent me. Why? Because Yahweh's upset with you.

If you think you're strong, we'll give you horses. And in the end, Yahweh cannot help you. And we're very nice people.

Just trust us. This is not a reasoned argument that's going right through. He's just quacking them.

Now I ask the question here, 36, 11, 22, number 2. And I said look back at verse 10. That's where he says Yahweh sent us. Now here he says Yahweh is helpless.

That tells us what they really thought. So why did he bring verse 10 into the thing? Why did he say, well Yahweh's upset with you? And what does that tell us about the enemy's tactics when he's tempting us? It seems to me like there's hope that you feed them so that he can physically attack them because they're all deacons. And that's what he's doing here.

It's like the more he can make them not believe in God by telling them God is good, but what's he really going to do? He's gotten them all confused and he's trying to defeat them psychologically. Well, to tie into this, he's showing his knowledge of Yahweh, what they believe, and he turns it against them. And to the extent that he even uses, and I'm going to ask you, is there any other enemy we know in the record that actually uses the name Yahweh against Judah? No.

He actually uses the name in their language and that's got to be devastating. Yeah. Yes.

Yes. Yes. And that's exactly it.

The enemy tries to keep us off balance. He confuses us. He uses stuff that sounds pretty good if you haven't really thought it through.

And it's exactly what he did with Jesus. It worked with Eve. It worked with Eve, yeah.

But, you know, he uses the scripture with Jesus. Oh, you want to do scripture? I can do scripture. So that's when we allowed him room to begin to fuss with us.

He's going to try to keep us off balance all the time and take us down. And what that says is, that's why it is so necessary for us to be in the arms of Jesus all the time. Get out from under his protection.

And it's Hezekiah against the great king. Yes. And he's also using Hezekiah.

Yeah. Yeah. So that's the time where... Trying to drive wedges.

Yep. Yep. Yes.

You look at this, or I do, can you imagine the preparation that went into this? Exactly. Exactly. They must have had all kinds of advisors in different areas.

Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And to write this guy a script.

Yeah. Yeah. And he had learned Hebrew.

I mean, this is Assyria. Who cares what language this dinky little bunch speaks? If it'll help us get our point, we'll do the work. Yeah.

This is often the case that the other side is much better at its homework than we are. We're sort of depending on the Lord so we don't do our homework. On the other side, they do.

They do. You see this in biblical studies a lot. That those people who don't believe anything, they've done their homework.

But yes, exactly. Exactly. The Assyrian foreign office must have been something else.

In terms of, if they did this for everybody, and I think they did. Yep. He knew the prophets and told them not to trust Jesus.

Exactly. So he was holding what the prophets said. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. And he knew enough to know that some prophets had said that the Lord would bring these enemy nations.

Doesn't understand it, but he knows it. He's learned his lesson. Even if he doesn't understand the lesson.

Okay. So the embassy goes. And I ask you to look back at chapter 22.

In chapter 22, Shevna was over the household. And Isaiah had said, because he's out there working on his tomb, instead of looking to the fallen condition of the nation, God was going to take him down and put Eliakim in his place. Well, that has happened here, hasn't it? Verse 22.

Then Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, was over the household. As I said to you, I think that means prime minister. This is not the butler.

Hezekiah didn't send his butler out to talk to this guy. This is the prime minister. Interestingly, Shevna is still in the picture, though, isn't he? He's the secretary now.

He's been demoted. Okay. So, chapter 37.

What does Hezekiah do? He humbles himself. Number one. He tore his clothes.

He covered himself with sackcloth. What does he do next? He goes into the house of the Lord. And what does he do next? He sent a message to the prophet.

Yeah. Yeah. Humbled himself.

Went into the presence of God. Consulted with God's man. It's hard to beat that prescription for when you're in trouble.

He knew repentance. He knew where to go. He knew who to talk to.

Thus says Hezekiah, verse 3. This is a day of distress, of rebuke, of disgrace. Children have come to the point of birth and there's no strength to bring them forth. I've said to you many times, that Isaiah is a symphony.

These motifs appear and disappear. And then they appear again in a slightly different form. And this idea of coming to the point of birth is one of those themes.

We're going to see it two or three times showing up here. I think I hear myself in the background somewhere. We've come to the point of giving birth.

And we've no strength to do it. This, of course, was tragically frequent in that day. A woman, perhaps, who has labored for 30 or 40 hours.

And she simply expires, unable to give birth to the child. We're helpless. We've come to the point where something's got to be done.

There's got to be a deliverance here. The child has got to be delivered and we can't do it. That's a pretty good place to come to.

As long as you think you can save yourself, you can't. It may be that the Lord your God... Now, I think that's kind of interesting. It doesn't say the Lord my God, the Lord your God.

He's going to do better here before the chapter's over. I find that kind of interesting. Isaiah, will you talk to your God, please? And see if you can do something for us? He better be your God and not just somebody else's God.

Whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to mock the living God. Now, that phrase does not occur that many times in the Bible. But when it does, it's a very, very important statement.

You see, the gods are lifeless. Because they are made with human hands. Whatever we have made to save ourselves with will fail us.

Because we can't give it life. Only the I Am has life to give away. Every other life in the universe is derivative.

Derived from his life. The only life we can give is the life we have received from him. So, the living God is the God who hears.

They have ears, but they can't hear anything. The God who sees. They have eyes, but they can't see anything.

The God who acts. They have hands, but they can't do anything. One of the great oxymorons of the Bible.

He has no ears. Oh, but he has no eyes. Oh, but he sees.

He has no hands. Oh, but he acts. And so, Hezekiah has got it.

What's the issue here? This human being thinks that he can take on the living God. No way. So, Isaiah says, don't be afraid.

And I think there's a little bit of return mockery here. Don't be afraid because of the words that you have heard. With which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me.

The boys. I don't think that Rabshakeh would like being called a boy. I'll put a spirit in him so he'll hear a rumor and return to his own land.

And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land. Look over at the very end of chapter 37. Verse 38.

Verse 37, actually. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. And as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch, his god, Adrammelech and Sharizer, his sons, struck him down with the sword.

After they escaped to the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon, his son, reigned in his place. That's 19 years later. But I love the line, God's mills grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine.

It took 19 years, but it happened. He's going to go back to his own land. He did that right away after the defeat after the army died.

But then 19 years later, in his own land, he was killed by the sword. And in his temple. While worshipping his god.

Yep. Yep. Yep.

Yep. Okay, so that's what Isaiah says. So, the Rabshakeh returned.

He gave his message. Didn't get a response. So, he goes back down southwest toward Lachish, where the Assyrian army is located.

And finds that, hey, finally, the Egyptian king has decided he's going to sally out. Well, as a matter of fact, he came out and went back. But that probably gave people hope.

Ah, okay, finally, finally, all that money that we sent to Egypt to go into an alliance with them, finally it's going to pay off. The Egyptians are going to come out and it'll be alright. That might be the partying that was talked about in chapter 22.

But the king of Assyria sends Hezekiah a letter. Verse 10. Do not let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

And he goes through this same argument again. You know what I've done to all the other gods. How do you think your God's any different? So then, Hezekiah, this time, does even better.

He went up to the house of the Lord and spread the letter before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord. Yahweh, three times in that verse.

Three times in about 20 words. Oh, Lord of heaven's armies. Remember, sort of get that in your head when you see hosts.

We're talking about heavenly hosts. We're talking about God who has absolute universal power. All the powers of the universe.

The stars of the heavens are His. And He can focus that power on any situation. Oh, Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who's enthroned above the cherubim.

Some people have said, well, the Ark of the Covenant was really sort of God's throne. And that's really all it was. It was just a throne.

It doesn't say He was enthroned on the cherubim. It says He was enthroned above the cherubim. His throne is invisible unless you're Isaiah.

And then you see it once. Enthroned above the cherubim. You are the God.

You alone of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made heaven and earth. Creation is so significant.

We didn't make God. God made us. Incline your ear and hear.

Open your eyes and see. And hear all the words of Sennacherib, which He has sent to mock the living God. Truly, oh Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations in their lands.

They have cast their gods into the fire. Why? There are no gods. Yeah, He's right.

But it wasn't gods He was fighting. It was idols. Lifeless idols.

But the work of men's hands. I've been speaking so many different places recently. I can't remember when I've said what to whom.

And I have this horror of simply saying over again what I've already said. But repetition is the soul of education. Yes, okay.

God made us in His image. Idolatry is when we make God in our image. Reducing divine power to our control.

Getting God manageable for our purposes. Now, I love verse 20. Suppose you were Hezekiah.

You've made your prayer. You've said, yeah, that's right, God. They did destroy all the gods, but they're not gods.

You're God. So, you're not coming to your conclusion. What's your conclusion going to be? Why should God deliver you? Well, because you're such good people.

Because you've been so faithful. Because you deserve it. What's he say? This is not about us, Lord.

It's about you. And I think at that point God said, woohoo! Somebody has gotten it. About us, Lord.

Whatever Hezekiah, however, Hezekiah failed, and he did, this time, this time he got it right. Oh, Lord, do your work in me. Not because I deserve it.

Not because I've somehow earned it. But so that the world can know. And you see, that goes back to chapter two.

All the nations are going to come to Jerusalem to learn his Torah, his instructions. To walk in the way of the Lord. If, if, Jerusalem is transformed into the face of God.

Okay, push on. Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. Because you've prayed to me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the word the Lord has spoken concerning him.

She despises you. She scorns you, the virgin daughter of Zion. She wags her head behind your back, the daughter of Jerusalem.

There's the picture. Here comes this monster man who's going to rape this helpless little girl. And she says, This helpless little girl, this virgin daughter, she mocks you.

You mocked her, God, she mocks you. Wow. Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice? And lift your eyes to the heights? Remember what chapter two says? The lofty eyes will be cast down.

And here it is. Against the holy one of Israel. The one Isaiah saw.

The hem of whose robe filled up the temple. The only truly holy being in the universe. The one who is really other.

Who has given himself to a people who don't deserve it. But just for pure love, he's done it. That one is the one you've mocked.

Not smart. Not smart. Now it's fascinating.

Verses 24 and 25. It looks like Isaiah has done his homework. Because this language is very much like the Assyrian animals.

All of these emperors. They put reports of their accomplishments on the temple walls. And they say these very things.

With my many chariots, I've gone up to the heights of the mountains. To the far recesses of Lebanon. To cut down its tallest cedars.

Its the choicest cypress. To come to its remotest heights. Its the most fruitful forest.

I dug wells and drank waters. I dried up the streams of Egypt with the sole of my foot. Now I don't know whether Isaiah had done a little research here.

Or whether this is just the Holy Spirit. But it's interesting. If the Rabbi Sheka knows about Judah.

Isaiah knows about Assyria. Now here it comes. Verse 26.

Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what I now bring to pass. That you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins. Verse 28.

I know you're sitting down. And you're going out and coming in. And you're raging against me.

Because you've raged against me. And your complacency has come to my ears. I'll put a hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth.

And I'll turn you back on the way by which you came. That's the picture of exile. The Assyrians bragged about dragging people off to exile with fish hooks.

And with bits and bridles. You're going to get your own. So, what is Sennacherib's sin according to this statement? Haughtiness, pride, arrogance.

Yeah, yeah. Here's another one of these motifs of the book of Isaiah. Who is it who is exalted in the universe? Yahweh alone.

None of his creatures. Exalt the creature and lower Yahweh. And you end up with a meaningless universe.

We in ourselves have no meaning whatsoever. Exactly where late 20th century and early 21st century philosophy is. Life is meaningless.

You make your own meaning. And one meaning is as good as another. Because there is no God.

So, I talk about the sign that he gives there. And the promise then in 33. He's not going to come into this city or shoot an arrow there.

Or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mount against it. By the way he came, by the same, he'll return. He will not come into this city declares the Lord.

For I will defend this city to save it. For my own sake and for the sake of my servant David. 37.26 Go back and look at chapter 14.

Verses 24 to 27. And compare the two. What does God say about Assyria in chapter 14? I have planned it.

I have proposed it. Verse 26. This is the purpose that's purposed concerning the whole world.

Every time Assyria shows up. Bragging about what they have accomplished and what they have done. God says don't you understand? This is part of my old old plan.

You guys are simply conforming to my plan. Now I've talked about this before and I'll talk about it again. I hope you have this wonderful mix.

Between human free will. No, the Assyrians are not puppets. And God's just pulling the strings.

And they're doing what they're supposed to do. No. They're doing what they're doing of their own free will.

But their free will is conforming to what God has planned. Now you say how do you hold those two together? You don't in a human brain. But the Bible does.

And we cannot compromise either side of that. No God is not sitting in heaven saying. Oh dear I wonder what they're going to do next.

But neither is he the puppet master. Who's just making us hop as he pulls the strings? Somewhere in the mix between those.

God's purposes are going to be realized. But you and I have amazing choices. In how we're going to be part of that plan.

And how we're going to conform to it. Okay. So.

It's so interesting that you get this long build-up. And then thump. And the angel of the Lord went out.

And struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when the people arose early in the morning. Behold they were all dead bodies.

Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home. I would too. Now two interesting things and I'll let you go.

We have Sennacherib's annals. Where in the classic tradition of the Assyrian emperors. He's reporting all his accomplishments.

He reports how Hezekiah this king of Judah. Had engineered a coalition. With the remaining nations there.

Moab, Edom, the Philistines, and Judah. And so, he says I went to punish them. I attacked the Philistines.

Destroyed them. I stripped Judah of all of its fortresses. I captured the greatest fortress of all, Lachish.

And as for Hezekiah. I shut him up like a bird in a cage. Now on my next glorious campaign.

I decided to go east. What happened? Normally the one who organized the coalition is the one you're after.

And he dies a slow horrible death. Just as a lesson to anybody else. Who might have such a dumb idea?

As for Hezekiah. I shut him up like a bird in a cage. You didn't destroy Jerusalem, huh? I wonder why? We know why.

But of course, he's not going to tell his God that. The other interesting thing is. As I said.

Sennacherib was on the throne for another 19 years. He never campaigned in the West again. Remember what their ultimate goal is.

Their ultimate goal is Egypt. That's what he's been after all along. Well, I wouldn't either.

If I'd lost a whole army one night. Messing with this Yahweh creature. I wouldn't go over there either.

Can you trust God? Oh my yes. Oh my. And so in these chapters.

In a real way. The whole flow of the book is to this point. Is coming to its climax.

In a real way. 36. 37.

38. Of chapter 37. Is the climax of everything we've been pushing toward.

Can you trust Yahweh? Yes. You. Can.

But we've got two more chapters here. And that's what we want to talk about next week. What's going on in these next two chapters? Let's pray.

Lord Jesus. Thank you. You have proven that we can trust you. Not by killing 185,000 enemy soldiers. But by laying down your own life. For us. Thank you. Thank you. And we would want to say to you. We do trust you. Forgive us for all those times. When we don't act like it. When we're consumed with our anxieties and our fears. When we feel like we've got to work hard enough to save ourselves. Have mercy upon us oh Lord. Remind us again. You are--trustworthy. And help us to live in that confidence. In your name, we pray. Amen.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 18. Isaiah chapters 36 and 37.