

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 2, Isa 2

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This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number two, Isaiah chapters two and three. Well, you're here and I'm here and it's seven o'clock so I think that means it's time to begin.

Let's pray together. We pause, oh Lord, to recognize your presence. We know that we don't have to beg you to come.

We know that you are more eager to reveal yourself to us through your word than we can ever imagine. And so we pray that you'll give us ears to hear, hearts to receive, wills to do. Deliver us, Lord, from merely being those with itching ears who want to hear some new thing, but give us, Lord, a determination to know you by walking with you.

Help us, Lord, as we spend this time together in your word that each of us may be able to put our hand in yours more firmly and to match our steps to yours more closely. In your name, we pray, amen. Well, what a delight it is to see you this evening.

I told Karen that, oh, with this rain the crowd will be halved. Well, it didn't happen. You are much more faithful than I gave you credit for being.

So thank you for being here. Thank you for coming. Now, there were study guides for next week on the table right outside the door.

There were supposed to be more than 100. So, if you didn't get one, please, can you look out there? Is there more on the table? There are more on the table. So, they're there for next week for you.

And I won't be at all troubled if you work ahead. That's a word to the wise. We are looking at the book of Isaiah.

Again, there were extras of the handouts from last week, but I see those are gone. So, if you, let me ask this. If you didn't get handouts from last week and didn't get them tonight, would you hold up your hand? One, two, three, four.

The maps are there, but I'm not sure that the, oh, there are some. Okay, good, it got covered up, I guess. So please, if you did not get one, hold up your hand and our friend will deliver them to you.

We're over here? Okay. All right. Now the next question is, who was not here last week? Okay, quite a few.

All right. So let me spend just a few moments in the introduction. The first five chapters of the book are understood to be the introduction.

In the introduction, and now this would be more my understanding than necessarily all of the scholarly worlds, but my understanding of the introduction is that Isaiah is laying out a problem. He's laying out a problem of what will be versus what is. And we're especially going to be focusing on that this evening in the two chapters that we're looking at.

And the question is, how is it possible that what is can ever become what will be or what should be? And that's the issue that is laid out for us there. We saw this in microcosm in chapter one last week, where we have this oscillation between these announcements of what the city is. The righteous city has become a prostitute.

She was once full of justice. Righteousness used to dwell in her, now murderers. That's what is.

And yet he can say, I will restore your leaders as in the days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward, you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. And we say, huh, what? So these five chapters are setting up that issue for us that we have the situation as it is, and yet we have a couple of prophecies of what will be.

So on that basis, let's look now at chapters two and three. There are a few cases in the Old Testament in particular, where it's pretty clear the chapter division got put in the wrong place. One of those is here tonight.

The chapter division should not occur between chapter three, verse 26, and chapter four, verse one. It should occur between chapters four, one and four, two. Now exactly how this happened, we don't know for certain.

It is said that the chapter divisions were put in by a monk as he was riding on his donkey from place to place. Apparently, the donkey hit a pothole here. The other example of this in Isaiah that we will see is Isaiah chapter 53 actually begins with chapter 52, 13, a very classic example where three verses of the poem got put in the previous chapter and shouldn't have.

So, we're looking tonight at 2, 1 through 4, 1. Now anybody work ahead? What's the relationship between 2, 1 to 5 and 2, 6, 4 to 1? What will be and what is. Yes, a very, very strong contrast. Now in chapter 2, verse 1, we once again have the statement, this is what Isaiah, son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

This is the second place where the author is identified. The first one was in chapter 1, verse 1. Why do you think he would be identified a second time here and it will be nowhere else in the book? It's in these two chapters that it's specifically said. And don't worry about being wrong because nobody agrees.

Why do you think Isaiah names himself a second time here? All right, all right. He is identifying himself. He's validating the vision that he sees here.

I think that's a good choice. Yes. I think it's because of his name.

Because his name is God will save. Yahweh will save. And he's just reinforcing that by giving his name to it as he goes.

I think that's a good possibility as well. Yes. All right, in the first one he's establishing the historical setting under which kings he served.

Any other thoughts? Now it's very interesting. I didn't ask you to do it, but in fact, verses 2 through 4 are a word-for-word repetition of what you have in the book of Micah, chapter 4, verses 1 through 4. They are word for word the same. And some would say that Isaiah is establishing, I'm the one who originated this.

Maybe so. Maybe so. I think it's also possible that this was sort of a common statement in the nation and both Micah and Isaiah, under inspiration, pick it up and use it.

All right, let's move on then. In the background, I point out that in the ancient world, mountains were considered to be the place where the gods dwelled. So what's being said in chapter 2, verse 2, on the last day, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains.

What's the point? I'm hearing several things here. Yes. God's law is supreme.

Why say Jerusalem is the highest of the mountains? He is God. He is the true God. All the other gods live on the hills.

But Yahweh lives on the highest mountain of all. Now some people say, oh my, in the last days there's going to be a big earthquake and Jerusalem is going to go whoop up higher than Mount Everest. That's a literal interpretation of poetry.

The point that's being made is he is God and there is no other. And the place where he is worshipped is indeed the highest of any mountain that you could ever imagine. Now, here Yahweh is referred to in verse 3 as the God of Jacob.

Once again, there's no necessarily right answer to this, but notice it's not the God of Abraham. It's the God of Jacob. Why do you think that Isaiah has done that? All right, he's not just the God of Judah.

Jacob had 12 sons and that involved everybody in the land. The tribe of Judah is just one tribe. There are 11 more.

So, yes, I think that's a good possibility. Yes. Okay, okay.

What Jacob had been and what Jacob became. Yes, I think that's a good possibility as well. There are a couple of others, but those are the key, I think.

Now, look what the people say. Let's go up to the mountain of the Lord to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will do what? Teach us for what purpose? He's going to teach us his ways for what purpose? That we may walk.

Those of you who have been with me for the last 18 months, I hope are beginning to get a point here. Salvation is not a position. It is a walk.

Right through the Old Testament. God calls us into a relationship with him where we are moving from one point to another point and on and on to his ultimate goal, which is godliness. Likeness to him.

Ephesians chapter 1. He chose us in him before the foundation of the earth that we should be like him, holy. So, the people of the world say we know what we need. Now, again, let me see if I should quit and take up truck driving.

What does Torah mean? Anyone? Instruction. Instruction. It's very easy for us to see law.

Law as something negative, something that shuts us in, something that limits our freedom. But no, the Torah is God's instruction manual. And the people of the world are saying, yes, we understand that.

Come, let's learn God's instructions so that we'll be able to walk like he will walk and live like he will live. Genesis 17. We've looked at this before.

Let's look at it again. God's instruction to Abraham. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am God almighty.

Walk before me faithfully and be, King James has got it right, perfect. That is, be all that you were made to be. To be perfected is not to be infallible.

To be perfected is not to be faultless. Blameless is not a bad translation here, but it misses the full power of when a thing is perfected, it is completed, it is brought to the place it was designed to be. Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his path. The Torah will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Verse 4, he will judge between the nations.

We've talked before about this word judgment and we need to do that again to remind ourselves what's going on here. We think of judgment in almost entirely legal terms, but the Hebrew concept is much more than that. The Hebrew word is SH, that's one consonant, P, that's the second consonant, and emphatic T, the third consonant.

So, a judge, like Samson, is a show fate. But think about Samson. Can you imagine him in a powdered wig and a black robe? No, not a chance.

Who are these guys, these judges? They are the ones who restore God's order. The real meaning of those three consonants is order. So, the word, the noun that is made from these three consonants, Mishpat, is often translated as judgment, but you know what? It can also be translated blueprint.

And it can also be translated into custom. It is the order by which the building will be built. It is the order that people put in their lives through customs.

And God's judgment is his bringing of his divine order into the world. And that's why the psalmist says, oh, give thanks for the judge is coming. I don't normally think that way.

But they're saying, yes, he is coming and he's going to put this disordered world back into the order that was planned for it at the outset. Oh, the judge is coming. That's good news.

He will judge between the nations, settle disputes of many peoples, beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. God is going to bring his divine order, his Mishpat, back into the world.

And as I said, I think sometime recently, one of the reasons I believe that Jesus is going to return before the millennial kingdom is I just want to see Jesus ruling his world for a thousand years the way it was meant to be. So, what conclusion does Isaiah want his people to draw from this? Verse 5. Yes, and do what? Yes, if the Gentiles are one day going to come to us and say, teach us God's Torah so we can

walk in his ways, what should we be doing? We ought to be walking in his ways. We ought to be walking in the light of the Lord.

Now, this light thing, light and dark, is going to play especially in the next five or six chapters, a really important kind of emphasis. And then we're going to see it again in the final chapters of the book. Okay, so there it is.

Now look at verse 6. You, Yahweh, have abandoned your people, the descendants of who? Jacob. Wow. It's like crossing the railroad tracks downtown when they're working on them.

We're coming smoothly down Main Street there and WHAM! What happened here? Now, again, if anyone did their homework, what's the common theme running through 2.6 to 4.1? The sin of pride. You got it exactly right, Mel. Now, there it goes from end to end.

Human exaltation. So, these people who are going to be the ones to whom the Gentiles come to learn God's ways are totally absorbed in lifting themselves up. Right back to Genesis chapter 11.

This is a lonely, frightening world. You and I seem so insignificant, so unimportant, and so it's very, very easy to become absolutely fixated on lifting ourselves up. That's the amazing thing about the self-esteem movement.

It's really not necessary for other people to be building our self-esteem. We're pretty good at it ourselves. And I love John Roseman.

I love whatever John Roseman says I like, but anyway, I particularly love it when he says, you know, we ought to think twice about this self-esteem thing when we recognize that the single group that has the highest self-esteem are criminals. I'm too smart to work. I'm not like you people.

So then, immediately here in these next verses, verses 6, 7, and 8, there's a repeated word. Did you get it? Full. They are full of what? Everything bad.

Superstitions. They are full of what? Silver and gold. They are full of what? Horses and chariots.

What's that? Military hardware. The things were changing at this time in history, but up until this time, the horse and the light chariot were the ultimate weapon. They'd be the equivalent of a main battle tank today.

Now, it was changing right about this point. They were discovering how to ride horses, and cavalry was coming into play, but this was still a marker for military hardware. Full of what? Idols.

Yep. There it is. Magic, money, military hardware, idolatry.

They're full, and what's the result? Verse 9. The very opposite of what they intended. So people are brought low, and everyone is humbled, and Isaiah says to God, don't forgive them. Now, hang on to this thought.

I want to talk about it more as this chapter goes on, but our human attempts to exalt ourselves have the very opposite effect. Go into the rocks, hide in the ground, from what? The fearful presence of the Lord, the dread of the Lord, the splendor of His Majesty. The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled, and human pride will be brought low.

Why? The Lord alone will be exalted. Here's the issue that we have constantly got to deal with. This cannot exist with this.

It's one or the other, and God says, in the end, this doesn't have a chance. All right, let's push on. Verse 12.

The Lord has a day against what? Everything that is proud and lofty, and then you have, and this is poetry, folks, you have some examples of what's proud and lofty. What's the first one in verse 13? The cedars of Lebanon, mighty trees. We talked last week about the fact that in this book, trees are a recurring image that He uses.

Oftentimes, as in chapter 1 and here, a symbol of arrogance and pride, but it can also be a symbol of fruitfulness and stability and rootedness. So, you got to keep your eyes open to see which way He's using it. So, yes, trees.

What else? Verse 14. The mountains. Verse 15.

Fortifications. And finally, in 16, ships. If you've seen what they call the tall ships, the sailing ships from the 19th century, you understand there's something breath-taking about them, and the ones sailing the Mediterranean were not as lofty as that, but still, for somebody who'd been raised on land to see one of those great ships.

So, here are symbols of high, lifted-up, proud things. Now, here then comes the refrain again in verse 17. What's going to happen? Yes.

Over against divine glory, human glory doesn't have a chance. Now, I want you to look, especially at verses 19 through 21. The idols will totally disappear.

People will flee to caves in the rocks, to holes in the ground, from what? The dread of the Lord. The fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty. Verse 20.

In that day, people will do what? They'll throw away their idols of silver and gold to what? To the moles and the bats. Now, what's the significance of that? They are unclean. The moles and the bats are unclean.

So, you have gone through elaborate, elaborate rituals to make sure that your idol is clean, to make sure that there's nothing demonic attached to it that could break the links between the visible and the invisible. That's the main reason in paganism for these rituals of cleanliness. You want to get the demonic out of there because the demonic are constantly messing things up.

The worldview, again, repetition is the heart of education. You did get that, didn't you? Yeah, thank you. Repetition is the heart of education, yes.

This is the cosmos. Within the cosmos, you have three interpenetrating realms. Because this is two-dimensional, it can't really get the sense of interpenetration.

But here's the human, here's nature, and here's the divine. Whatever happens in one realm automatically happens in the other two. So, it's not raining.

I need rain. I'm going to die. There's no Kroger's.

If I don't get rain on the crops this year, I won't make it until next year. I've got to have rain. So, why isn't it raining? Well, obviously, the sky god and the earth mother are on the outs.

Now, why would they say that? Because they're imagining deity on the basis of their own experience of this world. That's what's so shocking about the Bible. It goes in the other direction completely.

So, all right, if it's not raining, sky god and earth mother are not doing what they're supposed to be doing. What are they supposed to be doing? They're supposed to be in bed together. So, how do I get them in bed? I go down the road to my local priestess.

Prostitution was a temple business. Still is in India. So, she and I get into bed together.

And if the links are in place, and that's a big if, demons love to break the links. So, we've got to be sure that everything we do is clean. And if we do it, then we go to

bed, they go to bed, and if you think about this for a while, you will never walk in the rain again.

So, all the energy that they have put into making sure that their idols are clean in the crisis, they will throw them to the bats and the moles. They will flee to the caverns in the rocks, to the overhanging crags from what? Here it is again, the dread, the fearful presence of the Lord, and the splendor of his majesty. Now, let me say, what's going on here? If we make humanity the measure of all things, and that's what we're doing when we make the gods in our image, what have we done? We have made this world meaningless.

Look at the last verse. Stop trusting in mere humans who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in any esteem? This is what has happened in European philosophy.

In the last two centuries, we have concluded, what the Sumerians concluded 5000 years ago, that humanity is the measure of all things. And the result is, then nothing means anything. Stop trusting in mere humans who have but a breath in their nostrils.

One breath from nothingness and we're going to build the universe on the image of that? No. So, here is this, these people who are going to be the ones who will lead the world to understand the revealed instructions of God so that they can walk in his way, these people are enamored with human bigness. And God says you're going to get the very opposite of what you wanted.

You're going to get human meaninglessness. The philosophy is called existentialism, but it's what post-modernism is all about. There is nothing that means anything.

It's not just that truth is relative. Truth is a meaningless concept. You don't even need the word.

And therefore, whatever you want to do is fine. We each, faced with the nausea of meaninglessness, have to create our own meaning. All the time knowing there is no meaning.

So, what's the meaning of my life? I can tell you the earned run average of every pitcher in the National League for the last 38 years. Which is worth what? But that's the meaning of my life. All right.

Let's push on now into Chapter 3. There are three stanzas in this section. Three bits of poetry. First of all, verses 1 to 5, then verses 6 to 8 and then verses 9 to 15.

What is the common theme running through all of those? Leadership. Boy, Mel's getting the gold stars tonight. Leadership.

And what kind of leadership? Well, I think what's interesting, John, is that it's categorically going to become weaker and weaker and weaker. Not that it doesn't exist, but it's going to become weaker. Exactly.

Exactly. Now, let me ask about this. This is in an election year, remember? I'm not going to go with the donkeys or the elephants here.

But if human exaltation is our goal, and we are faced in our darkest hours with the reality that in fact our lives are pretty much meaningless, how do we as human beings, as political animals, how do we try to solve that problem? Human reason? And by exalting human leaders. How do you say this? They've got all the answers. Exactly.

Exactly. Somebody. Somebody that we can follow mindlessly.

But he's going to solve our problems. What does Chapter 2 say to us when we exalt humanity? What's the result? Meaninglessness, disaster, failure. When we expect human leaders to solve our fundamental human problems, we condemn them to failure.

They cannot. No human, best person in the world, no human can solve our fundamental human problem. And so, Chapter 3 is about, once again, this.

You exalt human leaders, what happens? You get failed human leaders. The higher you exalt them, the farther they fall. So, verses 1-5.

See now, the Lord, the Lord of Heaven's armies, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support, supplies of food, supplies of water, the hero, the warrior, the judge, the prophet, the diviner, and elder, the captain of fifty, the man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman, clever and handy. Think he's trying to make a point? Rather similar to the point that we're going to get at the end of Chapter 3. Isaiah is a master of overkill. I'm going to take away all the human leaders that you have looked to, to exalt you, and to save you from the meaninglessness of your lives.

I will make mere youths their officials. Children will rule over them, people will oppress each other, man against man, neighbor against neighbor, the young will rise against the old, the nobody against the honored. And then, here's, this is just so typical of Isaiah, here's this graphic illustration right here in two verses.

A man will seize one of his brothers in his father's house and he'll say, you have a cloak, you be our leader. Take charge of this heap of ruins. In that day he will cry out,

I have no remedy, I have no food or clothing in my house, don't make me a leader of the people.

If you exalt human leaders, you condemn them to failure. So then in verse 6, well I added 8 there as a summary statement. Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling, their words and deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence.

Let's look at Luke chapter 14, verse 11. Famous verse, for all those who exalt themselves, will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. That's called a paradox.

That's not two people with doctor's degrees. Oh well. The Bible is full of those.

You want to win, or lose. You want to live, or die. You want to rise, or fall.

If you exalt yourself, you will be humbled. If you humble yourself, you will be exalted. Now, we're going to deal with that theme over and over again through our study, but let's at least begin to unpack it here.

How is it that humbling ourselves results in exaltation? Did anyone get an answer there? We really get down to the truth of the matter, who we really are, that in ourselves we don't have a lot to brag about. You empty yourself so God can come in. It's when we realize by his grace that we have been made princes and princesses of heaven that we say, wow, I'm worth the cross.

I must be worth something. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

But the principle is there that when we recognize that only Yahweh is exalted, not us, then we're in a position for him to say, come on up here. Come up here and sit on the throne beside me. All right, let's move on.

Verse nine. The look on their faces. Remember that from chapter two.

Their haughty eyes are going to be lowered. The look on their faces testifies against them. They parade their sin like Sodom.

We saw a mystery on television last night in which a church in England had been turned into a gay bar. And I don't know, I guess the authors were just being faithful, but the people in the bar were parading their condition and their rights. And I thought at the time, that's what Isaiah was talking about.

Woe to them. Now, I touched on this in the background for next week, but I'll go ahead now. The Hebrew word is oy.

As in oy vey. That's a Hebrew word. Woe is me.

Oy vey is woe is me. We don't have a contemporary English equivalent. Woe, unfortunately, has come to have coloration that it probably shouldn't have.

The best English equivalent is the archaic alas. It's a word of sorrow and regret. It's a word you use in a funeral.

And so this is not Isaiah saying, woe to them. They're going to get what they got coming to them. He's saying, oh, alas for them.

They have brought disaster on themselves. The Old Testament prophets regularly, when they pronounce disaster, pronounce it through tears. And if I, as a preacher, enjoy preaching judgment, I need to go to my knees.

Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Those two verses just fit together so very, very well. And they tell us a very bizarre fact, that you reap what you sow.

Isn't that amazing? Who would have thought it? I mean, when I plant wheat, I expect to get apricots. Doesn't usually happen that way, though. Now, what I'm saying here is, that I was talking about this with my good friend Steve Harper at our faculty retreat.

The modern West really believes that we can rewrite the terms of life. That everything is up for grabs. The Bible says, no, no.

Reap unfaithfulness, excuse me, sow unfaithfulness, and you'll reap it. Reap faithfulness, why? Because you sowed it. Back we come in verse 11, then, alas for the wicked, disaster is upon them.

They'll be paid back for what their hands have done. So those three verses, 9, 10, and 11, are very, very poignant verses. Telling us that, no, we don't determine the terms of life.

The Creator has determined the terms. And our only choice is whether we're going to live in them or be broken on them. Now we come back.

Youths oppress my people. Women rule over them. My people, your guides lead you astray.

They turn you from the path. Here's this broken leadership again. Verse 14, the Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people.

It is you who have ruined my vineyard. The plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor, declares the Lord, the Lord of Heaven's armies?

Now let me ask you, if we should not exalt human leaders, well then what should we do? Isaiah doesn't really get into it here, but we need to think about that. What is the appropriate attitude toward human leaders? All right, we should respect them. Paul speaks of that in the book of 1 Thessalonians.

We should pray for them. What else? We need leaders, yes. And we need to be aware of that.

What should we not expect of them? Perfect conviction. I think I hear a cynical note arising here. It seems to me, we sit here and we're thinking of our political leaders, but it's also true of our Christian leaders.

Absolutely, absolutely. And maybe more of them than of our political leaders. Yes, yes, yes.

Again, I am in so many different places, I don't remember for sure where I said it last, but I seriously believe the ministry is the most difficult profession. It's a broken society, and brokenness is heaped on these men and women. They're expected to put everything back together again, and it's a difficult, difficult task.

We ought not to expect them to do for us what only God can do for us. We ought not to put them on the kind of pedestal from which they must fall. And when that happens, we should be compassionate.

We did it to them. All right, let's look... Oh no, as responsible citizens, we must seek to understand what they're doing, and whether that is right, and if not, to act against it. Certainly, certainly.

We have a responsibility there not merely to act like sheep. All right, let's look now at the last section of this third chapter. And if you ladies would like to leave, you may.

The Lord says the women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, strutting along with swaying hips, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. And Isaiah didn't have television either. And what will be the result? Verse 17, he will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion.

The Lord will make their scalps bald. It's this theme that has been running right through both chapters. Exalt yourself, and the result is you are humiliated.

The term that's used here is daughters of Zion. And again, I am somewhat alone here among commentators. But that term, when it's singular, daughter of Zion, is simply an image of the nation.

The daughter of Zion is. So, I have a suspicion that this is being used symbolically, that we're not just talking about the women. We're talking about Zion, men and women, who are exalting themselves, and we're using the figure of a woman here to deal with that.

Now, as I say, most commentators disagree with me on that. They say, no, no, we're talking about the women here. And maybe that's correct.

But I think the other needs to be considered. Now, the next five verses are a wonderful example of overkill. On that day, the Lord will snatch away their finery, the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings, the bracelets, the veils, the headdresses, the anklets, the sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine rings, the capes, the cloaks, the purses, the mirrors, the linen garments, tiaras, and shawls.

Whoa. He's been to the gap. Why do you think he did that? And don't say because he's a misogynist.

Why all of those? Yes. Not to sound crude, but it's almost imagery of stripping them naked. Taking away everything that would be of adornment to them, that would make them be haughty and strip them down to absolutely nothing.

So they're no longer, in a sense, quote, attractive. I think also women. Careful, careful.

Adornment. Be careful. It's much more picturesque, I guess you could put it, to see women in their adornment, and then because men don't adorn themselves the same way, and then that contrast between beauty and ugliness and fragrance, sweet fragrance and stench are very clear when we bring in the woman because of their lifestyle.

Yeah, yeah. It's also the multitude of items. If we're not looking at these people personally, we see this long list of things they were not supposed to do.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then also going back to the eyes of the arrogant man would be humbled at the pride of a man brought low. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Yes. And all of the adornment is something to hide behind. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

And I think it also is another way of talking about this fullness, all of the stuff we do to fill our lives full of something or other to give meaning. And I think if Isaiah were writing today, he would have even more to say about the stuff in our lives. I've said many times that when I do retire, I'm going to buy one of these storage unit places.

That's a growth business. Our basements are full. Our attics are full.

Our garages are full. And you've got to buy, you've got to rent a storage unit to put the rest of the stuff in it, stuff that's supposed to give meaning to our lives. Instead of fragrance, a stench.

Instead of a sash, a rope. Instead of well-dressed hair, and baldness. Instead of fine clothing, sackcloth.

Instead of beauty, branding. Your men will fall by the sword. Your warriors in battle.

The gates of Zion will lament and mourn. The destitute shall sit on the ground. That's Zion sitting on the ground now, you see.

In that day, seven women will take hold of one man. Now, in that society, a woman's social place was determined by her relationship to a man, either her father or her husband. If she didn't have a husband, then she was a daughter all her life.

There'll be so few men that seven women will take hold of one man and say, we'll eat our own food, provide our own clothes. Only let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace.

The ultimate pictures of humiliation are here. So full. Full of everything imaginable.

And so horribly, horribly, horribly empty. Oh, America, America. Let's pray.

Oh, Lord, thank you that you do not cast us off. Thank you that you are patient and long-suffering. Slow to get angry.

Oh, God, if you were short-tempered, how long ago this planet would have been empty. Help us, Lord. Help us to learn these lessons.

How much junk do we need to give ourselves significance? Let us find the meaning of our lives in our relationship to you. Knowing that if we had nothing and you, that would be enough. We say that Lord, but it's really hard for us to believe it.

Help us. In your name, we pray, amen. This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah.

This is session number two, Isaiah chapters two and three.