

# Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 7

## Isaiah 13-14

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 7, Isaiah 13-14, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. John Oswalt's lecture** on Isaiah 13-14 interprets these chapters as "Lessons in Trust," contrasting the consequences of trusting in nations versus trusting in God. **He emphasizes the themes of judgment** on nations for pride and arrogance, using vivid imagery of destruction and desolation. **Oswalt highlights the universality of God's judgment**, extending beyond Judah to the entire world. He analyzes the poetic structure and symbolism within the text, **specifically addressing the lament against the king of Babylon** and its implications for understanding pride and humility.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Isaiah).**



**Oswalt\_Isaiah\_Sessi  
on07.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah 13-14:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 13-14

**Date:** October 26, 2023 **Source:** Excerpts from "Oswalt\_Isaiah\_EN\_Session07.pdf"

**Lecturer:** Dr. John Oswalt **Subject:** Isaiah Chapters 13-14: Lessons in Trust

#### I. Introduction and Context

- **Session Start:** Dr. Oswalt begins Session 7 of his teaching on the Book of Isaiah, focusing on chapters 13 and 14.
- **Logistics and Community:** Before diving into the text, Oswalt makes a brief appeal for donations to cover the expenses of the FAS program (where he teaches) and asks for volunteers to assist with tasks like mailing.
- **Prayer:** Oswalt begins with a prayer focusing on Jesus's voluntary humility and asks for help in emulating it, acknowledging the human tendency towards pride and self-centeredness.
- **"Lessons in Trust":** The overarching theme for chapters 13-35 is "Lessons in Trust." This section is presented as a re-examination of faith, similar to "programmed learning," where the same issues are revisited for deeper understanding.
- **Structure:** Chapters 13-35 are divided into four sections: 13-23, 24-27, 28-33, and 34-35. This session focuses on 13-14, the beginning of a series of "oracles against the nations".
- **Oracles Against the Nations:** The pronouncements against the nations are a recurring theme in major prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). They are not simply predictions, but serve a particular purpose within the structure of each book. They appear in different places in the prophets, according to the message and structure of the book. For example, in Ezekiel, they are placed in the middle, when the city was under siege, but before the word came of its fall. Isaiah, however, places them at the beginning of the "lessons in trust" (13-35) section.

## II. Isaiah 13: Universal Judgment and Pride

- **Oracle Against Babylon:** The section starts with a message against Babylon, a surprising choice since Babylon was not a threat to Judah at this time, being a part of the Assyrian empire. However, Babylon was wealthy, cosmopolitan, and always looking for allies to rebel against Assyria. Babylon also represents Judah's ultimate enemy, to whom Jerusalem will fall in 586, and whom they are prone to trust, like Hezekiah was tempted to do.
- **Language of Judgment:** Oswalt highlights the intense and universal language in Isaiah 13:1-16. There is no joy, no mention of Babylon, but much mention of destruction, as well as imagery of war, pain and cosmic upheaval. The language points to universal judgement and the might of the Lord, and how the whole world will be judged by Him.
- *"The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude, the sound of an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together. The Lord of hosts, the Lord of heaven's armies, is mustering a host for battle."*
- *"Therefore, all hands will be feeble. Every human heart will melt... The sun will be dark at its rising. The moon will not shed its light."*
- *"I'll punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity."*
- **Universal Scope:** The judgment is not limited to one nation, but encompasses the entire world. This emphasizes Yahweh's role as the God of all creation, which would have been a radical idea at the time.
- Oswalt remarks that this claim, that the God of Judah was the God of the whole world, would have been "crazy" at the time, similar to someone claiming the God of a small county was the God of the whole world.
- **God's Judgment:** Oswalt notes that while this would have been an easy concept to understand and apply in a country where Christianity is the dominant religion, it would be harder to say in a situation where Christianity is the minority, as it is in England today, and as it likely will become in the US.
- **Sins of Pride:** The specific sins that bring God's judgment are: Pride, arrogance, and ruthlessness. These are singled out because they represent the root sin of attempting to usurp God's place, saying, "I am God." Oswalt notes that this sin is why some seemingly "nice people" will be judged, those for whom they

themselves are "god". He also states that "the attempt to make myself God and to say, I do not have to bow down to anyone. Is the basic sin of all."

- Oswalt distinguishes pride from self-respect, stating that true self-respect comes from knowing that one's worth comes from God, and not from within ourselves. He states that one is "worth the death of the son of God".
- **The Role of the Medes:** The focus narrows in verse 17 to the Medes (from modern-day Iran) who are "stirred up" against Babylon. This is a prophecy of events occurring approximately 200 years after Isaiah's time. The Medes, allied with the Babylonians, would destroy the Assyrian Empire, but then would join the Persians to destroy Babylon.
- **Babylon's "Glory":** The issue with Babylon is its self-proclaimed "glory", which is described as "pomp" and "splendor". Oswalt connects this with the Hebrew word for "glory," *kabod*, which means substance, weight, and significance. God's point is that the glory of the nations is not true glory, as it lacks eternal significance. Only God's glory fills the earth.
- *"What is the earth full of, according to chapter 6? The glory of the Lord. It's not the glory of Babylon. It's not the glory of Oswald. It's the Lord's glory that fills the earth."*
- **Babylon's Desolation:** Isaiah uses vivid imagery of desolation (hyenas, jackals, and abandoned buildings) to contrast with Babylon's supposed glory. Babylon would become so desolate that its location was lost for 1500 years.
- Oswalt notes, "The Latin is *sic semper gloria*, thus always glory."

### III. Isaiah 14: Restoration of Israel and the Fall of the King of Babylon

- **Compassion for Israel:** Isaiah 14:1-3 offers a message of hope and restoration for Israel. God will have compassion on Jacob, choose Israel again, and restore them to their land. Even sojourners will join them, and they will rule over their former oppressors.
- *"For the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel and will set them in their own land."*
- **Trust in God:** This section contrasts with Judah's tendency to trust other nations for safety. God assures them that they can trust Him, that they do not need to fear what the nations can do to them.

- **Lament for the King of Babylon:** Isaiah 14:4 introduces a lament against the king of Babylon. This lament, verses 4 through 21, is a carefully developed poem, using a "limping" meter (three beats, then two) typical of laments. It is a sarcastic mockery of the fallen king.
- *"Oh, how happy we are that you're dead. The whole earth sings for joy now that you're gone."*
- **Not About Satan:** Oswalt emphasizes that this poem is *not* about Satan, contrary to many interpretations that draw a parallel between Lucifer and the King of Babylon. He argues that it is about the fall of all creaturely pride.
- **Three Stanzas of the Lament: Earth Rejoices (14:5-8):** The earth is happy at the death of the oppressive King, represented by the trees of Lebanon.
- **Sheol (Hell) Welcomes the King (14:9-11):** Sheol is stirred up to meet him, and other dead leaders remind him that he is as weak as they are. The king's pomp is replaced with maggots and worms.
- **Heaven Condemns the King (14:12-14):** Here, Isaiah uses imagery from ancient myths to portray the King's arrogance and attempt to elevate himself to a divine status, saying "I will make myself like the most high".
- **Return to Earth (14:15-21):** The final section brings the King back to earth where he is humiliated. He is denied a proper burial, and his lineage is cut off.
- *"But you are cast out away from your grave like a loathed branch... You will not be joined with them in burial."*
- Oswalt suggests that this section could be related to the death of Sargon of Assyria.
- **Thematic Conclusion:** The section concludes with the idea that self-exaltation always leads to humiliation.

#### IV. Conclusion and Key Takeaways

- **Exaltation vs. Humility:** The core message revolves around the futility of human pride and the necessity of humility before God.
- **Trust in God:** The entire section from chapters 13 to 35 aims to teach the people of Judah to trust in God and not in the power and splendor of the nations.

- **Symbolic Use of Babylon:** Babylon serves as a symbol of the pride and arrogance of the world, rather than just a specific historical entity.
- **Relevance Today:** The message remains relevant for believers who are tempted to rely on their own strength or the world's systems instead of trusting in God. This is especially true for Christians in societies where they are increasingly marginalized.
- **Book of Revelation:** The book of Revelation makes use of these themes and the imagery of Babylon, to make the point that Babylon is representative of the world's arrogance.
- **Final Prayer:** Oswalt ends with a prayer asking that they not even be proud of their own humility, but trust in God's grace.

This briefing document captures the main points of Dr. Oswalt's lecture, emphasizing the themes of trust, pride, and God's ultimate authority. The lecture provides a framework for understanding the historical context of Isaiah 13-14 as well as its enduring message.

## 4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 7, Isaiah 13-14

### Isaiah Chapters 13-14 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was Ahaz's main failing, and how does it connect to the themes of Isaiah 13-35?
2. Why does Isaiah begin this section of pronouncements with an oracle against Babylon, even though Babylon is not an immediate threat at the time?
3. Describe the universal nature of judgment presented in Isaiah 13:1-16. What does this reveal about the God of Israel?
4. According to Isaiah 13:11, what are the specific sins for which judgment is coming? How do these relate to the idea of self-deification?
5. Explain the distinction between pride and self-respect as discussed in the lecture. How does this distinction relate to the Christian faith?
6. Who are the "Meads," and what role do they play in the prophecy against Babylon?
7. What does the Hebrew word for "glory" (kavod) mean, and how does this definition relate to the critique of Babylon's glory in Isaiah 13?
8. In Isaiah 13:20-22, what is the significance of the vivid imagery of desolation and the types of animals that will inhabit Babylon?
9. What is the main point of the passage in Isaiah 14:1-4? How does it contrast with the previous section's judgments against nations?
10. Explain how the lament against the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14:4-21 uses sarcasm and illustrates the ultimate fall of creaturely pride.

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Ahaz failed to trust God, choosing instead to rely on Assyria for protection. This lack of faith serves as a contrast to the lessons in trust that Isaiah 13-35 will teach by presenting the futility of relying on nations rather than God.
2. Babylon is not a direct threat at the time of the prophecy, but it is presented as the ultimate enemy of Jerusalem and a symbol of the world's pride and

arrogance. Its inclusion at the beginning highlights the idea that all the nations are subject to God's judgment.

3. The judgment in Isaiah 13:1-16 is universal, encompassing the whole earth, heavens, and humanity, and reveals that the God of Israel is the God of all creation, whose justice will be exercised throughout the world.
4. The sins for which judgment comes in Isaiah 13:11 are pride, arrogance, and ruthlessness. These are related to the idea of self-deification, as they stem from the attempt to make oneself like God and refuse to acknowledge a higher power.
5. Pride is rooted in self-sufficiency and self-exaltation, while self-respect comes from the knowledge of one's worth as being created in God's image and being worth the death of Christ. This is derived from a relationship with God, not self-manufactured value.
6. The "Meads" are people from modern-day Iran who will be used by God to conquer Babylon. They are mentioned as an example of the future destruction that will come to Babylon despite its current glory.
7. The Hebrew word "kavod" means substance, weight, and significance, which relates to the critique of Babylon's glory as it possesses no true, eternal worth compared to the glory of God.
8. The imagery of desolation and the habitation by scavengers in Isaiah 13:20-22 highlights the stark contrast between the present glory of Babylon and its future state of complete abandonment and worthlessness, as it is no more than a place of brokenness and filth.
9. The passage in Isaiah 14:1-4 emphasizes God's compassion for Jacob and his promise to restore Israel to their land, contrasting the judgments against the nations with God's unwavering faithfulness to his people, promising that ultimately they will be the victors.
10. The lament against the King of Babylon uses sarcasm to show the joy of the earth and Sheol over his downfall, using the imagery of worms and maggots to display his end after his vainglorious attempts at self-deification, illustrating that ultimately all creaturely pride is futile before God.



## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the interplay between the specific judgments against Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 and the broader themes of God's sovereignty over all nations. How do these chapters challenge the idea of national pride and security?
2. Discuss the significance of the shift in focus from a universal judgment in Isaiah 13:1-16 to the specific judgment on Babylon in 13:17-22 and the lament against the King of Babylon in 14:4-21. What does this shift reveal about the nature of God's justice and judgment?
3. Explore the contrast between pride and self-respect in the context of the Isaiah passage. How does Isaiah's message challenge common understandings of self-worth, and what does this message imply for the believer?
4. Examine the role of historical and mythological imagery in Isaiah 13-14. How do these images reinforce Isaiah's message about the futility of human power and pride?
5. How does Isaiah's prophecy of restoration in Isaiah 14:1-4 fit within the larger message of judgment and hope found in these chapters? What does it reveal about God's intentions for Israel and the nations?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Oracle:** A divine message or pronouncement, often delivered through a prophet, conveying God's will or judgment.
- **Babylon:** A powerful Mesopotamian city and empire, often used as a symbol of worldly pride, arrogance, and opposition to God's will.
- **Meads:** An ancient people from the area of present-day Iran. They were part of the coalition that conquered Babylon.
- **Kavod (כבוד):** The Hebrew word for "glory," which refers to substance, weight, significance, honor, power, and wealth.
- **Lament:** A type of poetic expression, often used in grief or mourning, typically marked by a three-beat then two-beat cadence.
- **Sheol:** The Hebrew term for the place of the dead, a realm of darkness and weakness; often translated as "hell."
- **Day-star/Son of the Dawn (Helel ben Shachar):** A reference used in the ancient world to the planet Venus, it is used here to symbolize the pride of the King of Babylon.
- **Pride:** An excessive sense of one's own worth or importance, often leading to arrogance and a rejection of God's authority.
- **Self-Respect:** A sense of one's own worth derived from being made in God's image and worth the death of Christ, rather than from self-generated achievements or qualities.
- **Arrogance:** A type of pride that is haughty and dismissive of others, often accompanied by a lack of humility.
- **Ruthlessness:** Lacking compassion or pity, often exhibited through harsh or cruel treatment of others.

## 5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 7, Isaiah 13-14, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Isaiah Chapters 13-14: Lessons in Trust and the Fall of Pride

#### ***1. What is the main theme of Isaiah chapters 13-35, and how do chapters 13 and 14 fit into this theme?***

Chapters 13-35 of Isaiah focus on "Lessons in Trust." These chapters revisit the theme of trusting in God, contrasting it with the human tendency to trust in nations and worldly power, a lesson Ahaz failed to learn previously. Chapters 13 and 14 initiate this section by presenting oracles against the nations, highlighting the judgment that awaits all who place their trust in worldly power rather than God. It begins by focusing on Babylon which is not yet a threat to Judah, but is a symbol of worldly arrogance and the ultimate enemy that will destroy Jerusalem.

#### ***2. Why does Isaiah begin this section with a pronouncement against Babylon when Babylon wasn't a threat at the time?***

While Babylon was not a direct threat to Judah at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, it held symbolic significance. Babylon was a wealthy and sophisticated city within the Assyrian empire and was always looking for partners to revolt. More importantly, it would eventually become the ultimate enemy that would conquer and exile Judah. By addressing Babylon first, Isaiah highlights the ultimate futility of worldly power, establishing a broader context of judgment that extends beyond specific nations. It represents the epitome of earthly pride and arrogance and serves as a warning about where trusting in the nations will lead.

#### ***3. What is the significance of the language used in Isaiah 13:1-16, and what is the main point Isaiah is making?***

The language in Isaiah 13:1-16 is intense and dramatic, portraying a universal judgment by God against the whole world. It is not limited to a specific geographical area or a particular nation. The verses emphasize destruction, divine wrath, and the shaking of the heavens and the earth. It depicts the world as being under God's judgment, stressing that Yahweh, the God of Jerusalem, is in fact the God of the whole world, and all of humanity must ultimately answer to Him. The main point is to underscore the supremacy of God's justice and the universality of his judgment which all must eventually face, a stark contrast to the limited power of human kingdoms.

***4. What are the sins that are specifically condemned in Isaiah 13, and why are these sins so important?***

The sins specifically condemned are pride, arrogance, and ruthlessness. These are seen as the root sins, the attempt to make oneself God. Pride and arrogance lead to a disregard for God and others, resulting in ruthlessness and exploitation. These sins are particularly significant because they represent the core human desire to be self-sufficient and independent of God, the ultimate source of value and meaning. This focus is repeated often throughout the book, to underscore the point that no human flesh can stand in God's presence on its own merit.

***5. How does the focus shift in Isaiah 13:17-22, and what is the significance of this shift?***

The focus shifts from a universal statement of judgment to a specific oracle against Babylon, which is symbolic of all pride, pomp, and glory of the world. The verses highlight the role of the Medes as instruments of God's judgment against Babylon. The shift is not a contradiction of the universal message. It's a specific illustration, that even the most glorious worldly powers will eventually crumble. This section paints a vivid picture of Babylon's desolate future, where its grandeur is replaced by emptiness and inhabited by scavengers. This juxtaposition emphasizes the fleeting nature of earthly glory and the ultimate power and enduring nature of God's judgment.

***6. What is the purpose of the insertion of the promise of restoration for Israel in Isaiah 14:1-3, in the context of the oracles against the nations?***

The promise of restoration for Israel in Isaiah 14:1-3 is strategically inserted amidst the pronouncements of judgment against the nations. It serves to remind Judah that their hope lies in God and not in alliances with other nations. This reminds them that God's power and mercy are greater than any worldly threat and that even amidst judgment, God will have compassion on His people. It serves to assure them that despite the temporary dominance of worldly powers, God is the ultimate authority who will ultimately restore and protect his people who remain faithful.

**7. What is the purpose of the "lament" in Isaiah 14:4-21, and who is it directed at?**

The "lament" in Isaiah 14:4-21 is a mocking poem directed at the fallen King of Babylon, who represents all earthly power and pride. It is designed to expose the vanity and ultimate insignificance of earthly rulers who exalt themselves above God. It uses the traditional poetic form of a lament to mock the fallen king, and paints him as weak and humiliated. It moves through the perspective of earth, hell, heaven, then back to earth, each of which are rejoicing at his demise and humiliation. It emphasizes the ultimate failure of human arrogance and the inevitable downfall of those who oppose God's will.

**8. Is Isaiah 14:12-15 referring to Satan, and if not, what is it about?**

Isaiah 14:12-15 is not primarily about Satan, though it may allude to the fall of Satan indirectly. The language used here reflects ancient myths and stories about a creature who sought to usurp God's power. It's not specifically a description of Satan, but an image used to represent the ultimate act of creaturely pride, the desire to be like God. The primary focus is on the human temptation of self-deification which leads to humiliation. The fall of the king of Babylon is an example of all creatures who try to make themselves God and the humiliation that follows.