

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 10

Isaiah 19-21

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 10, Isaiah 19-21, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a recording of a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah chapters 19-21. **The lecture focuses on the theme of not trusting in nations**, specifically Egypt, due to their impending judgment and idolatry. **Oswalt uses the historical context of Egypt's strengths (religion, Nile River, wisdom)** to illustrate why misplaced trust is dangerous. He then **connects this to the broader theological point that true hope and security reside only in God's plan and purpose**, not in human systems or natural resources. Finally, **he discusses the nature of prophecy and the importance of trusting God's ultimate control of events**, even when immediate outcomes are uncertain.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 10 – 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).



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3. Briefing Document

Briefing Doc: Isaiah 19-21 - Don't Trust the Nations

Source: Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 10, Isa. 19-21 © 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

Main Theme: This session focuses on Isaiah 19-21, part of the larger section of Isaiah 13-35 titled "Lessons in Trust." The overarching theme is a warning to Judah: **Do not trust the nations.** This is illustrated through prophecies against Egypt and Babylon, demonstrating their ultimate futility and God's sovereign control.

Key Ideas and Facts:

Chapter 19: Judgment and Transformation of Egypt

- **Reasons not to trust Egypt:**
- **Ancient religion:** "The idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them." (19:1) Their dependence on a multitude of idols will prove worthless.
- **Material abundance:** The Nile, the source of Egypt's wealth, will dry up, demonstrating the fragility of dependence on nature. (19:5-10)
- **Worldly wisdom:** Egypt's famed wisdom and leadership will fail to grasp God's will and purpose. (19:11-15) "Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you now, let them know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt." (19:12)
- **God's Purpose:** The judgment on Egypt is not random but part of God's plan. (19:17)
- **Ultimate Hope:** The chapter surprisingly ends with a prophecy of Egypt's future worship of Yahweh: "The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day." (19:21)

Chapter 20: Isaiah's Symbolic Act

- **The Prophet's Obedience:** Isaiah walks naked and barefoot for three years, symbolizing the future exile of the Egyptians. (20:1-6)
- **Visual Aid:** This dramatic act emphasizes the message: trusting in Egypt for protection will lead to humiliation and captivity. "This is what has happened to

those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; how shall we escape?" (20:6)

- **Trust in God, Not Man:** Isaiah models radical obedience and trust in God's commands, even when they seem strange or uncomfortable.

Chapter 21: The Fall of Babylon

- **The Wilderness of the Sea:** This oxymoron, referring to Babylon, highlights the deceptive nature of its apparent wealth and power. The riches of the sea trade ultimately lead to spiritual barrenness.
- **God's Justice and Grief:** Babylon, described as a "traitor" and "destroyer," will face God's judgment. However, even in judgment, God expresses anguish and grief over the destruction. (21:2-4)
- **Hope for the Exiles:** The chapter concludes with a message of encouragement to the future Jewish exiles in Babylon: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon... What I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you." (21:9-10)

Lessons for Us:

- **Trust in God Alone:** Like Judah, we are tempted to place our trust in worldly things: religion, material wealth, political systems, or the wisdom of man. These ultimately fail to provide true security or meaning.
- **God's Sovereignty:** We must remember that God is in control of history, working out his purpose even amidst the chaos of human events. Nothing is a surprise to Him.
- **Confidence in the Future:** Though the future may seem uncertain, we can live with confidence knowing that God's plan will ultimately prevail.
- **Availability and Obedience:** Isaiah's example challenges us to be available to God's call, trusting and obeying His commands, even when they challenge our pride or comfort.

Quotes:

- "Don't trust the nations because they are under judgment from your God, don't trust the nations because ultimately many of them are going to turn to worship your God."

- “The idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.” (19:1)
- “Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you now, let them know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt.” (19:12)
- “Fallen, fallen is Babylon... What I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you.” (21:9-10)

Overall: This session provides a powerful reminder that true security and hope are found in God alone, not in the fleeting things of this world. Isaiah's prophecies against Egypt and Babylon challenge us to re-examine our own areas of misplaced trust and to live in radical obedience to God's will and purpose for our lives.

4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 10, Isaiah 19-21

A Deeper Dive into Isaiah 19-21: Trust, Judgment, and Hope

Key Terms and Definitions

- **Oxymoron:** A figure of speech that combines contradictory terms for effect. (Ex. "Wilderness of the Sea")
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods. In Isaiah's time, Egypt was known for its extensive pantheon of gods.
- **Proverbial Wisdom:** Practical wisdom expressed through short, memorable sayings. Ancient Egypt was a source of early proverbial literature.
- **Linear Time:** The concept of time as a straight line with a beginning and an end, in contrast to the cyclical view of time common in pagan thought.
- **In That Day:** A phrase used repeatedly in Isaiah 19, signifying a future period of time, a day of the Lord, distinct from the present.
- **Threshing and Winnowing:** Agricultural metaphors used to describe the suffering and purification of the Israelites in exile.
- **Visual Aid:** A tool used to make a concept or message more understandable. Isaiah's actions, like walking naked and barefoot, served as dramatic visual aids.
- **Duma:** Likely a reference to Edom, an ancient kingdom south of Judah, known for its hostility towards Israel.
- **Anagram:** A word or phrase formed by rearranging the letters of another word or phrase.

Short-Answer Quiz

1. According to Isaiah 19, what are three reasons why Judah might be tempted to trust Egypt?
2. How does Isaiah describe the impact of God's judgment on Egypt's natural resources?
3. What is the significance of the repeated phrase "in that day" in Isaiah 19?
4. What unexpected outcome does Isaiah predict for Egypt in the future?

5. Describe the symbolic action Isaiah performs in chapter 20 and explain its meaning.
6. Why does Isaiah refer to Babylon as "the wilderness of the sea" in chapter 21?
7. How does God respond to the impending destruction of Babylon, according to Isaiah 21:3-4?
8. What imagery does Isaiah use to describe the experience of the Judean exiles in Babylon?
9. What message of hope does Isaiah offer to the exiles in Babylon?
10. How does the Advent hymn connect with the themes of Isaiah 19-21?

Short-Answer Quiz Answer Key

1. Judah might be tempted to trust in Egypt because of: (1) Egypt's ancient and powerful religion, (2) Egypt's abundance of resources, especially the Nile River, and (3) Egypt's reputation for wisdom and intelligent leadership.
2. Isaiah describes God's judgment drying up the Nile, impacting all the industries that depend on it. This emphasizes the frailty of trusting in natural resources alone.
3. The repetition of "in that day" highlights the future aspect of God's plan and points to a time when things will be radically different, challenging the pagan notion of cyclical time.
4. Isaiah predicts that Egypt will eventually come to worship the Lord, demonstrating the far-reaching extent of God's grace and plan for redemption.
5. Isaiah walks naked and barefoot for three years, symbolizing the humiliation and captivity that Assyria will inflict upon Egypt. This serves as a powerful visual aid to warn Judah against trusting in Egypt's military might.
6. Isaiah uses the oxymoron "wilderness of the sea" to sarcastically describe Babylon. While Babylon boasts wealth from sea trade, this wealth is ultimately superficial and cannot provide true security or satisfaction.
7. God expresses a profound sense of grief and anguish over Babylon's destruction, even while acknowledging the necessity of judgment for their wickedness. This reveals God's complex nature of justice and mercy.

8. Isaiah uses the imagery of "threshed and winnowed" to depict the suffering and purification experienced by the Judean exiles in Babylon. This metaphor evokes the agricultural process of separating grain from chaff, suggesting a process of refinement.
9. Isaiah offers a powerful message of hope to the exiles by proclaiming the imminent fall of Babylon. This prophecy encourages the exiles to maintain their faith and anticipate their eventual return to their homeland.
10. The Advent hymn builds upon the themes of hope and anticipation found in Isaiah, connecting the watchman's anticipation of Babylon's downfall with the longing for the arrival of the Messiah, who brings true light and peace.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Isaiah's use of visual aids in communicating his prophetic messages. How do these actions enhance the impact and memorability of his prophecies?
2. Explore the tension between judgment and hope in Isaiah 19-21. How does Isaiah portray God's response to the wickedness of the nations, while simultaneously offering a glimpse of future redemption?
3. Compare and contrast the portrayal of Egypt and Babylon in Isaiah's prophecies. What are the key characteristics of each nation, and how do their fates reflect God's overarching plan for the world?
4. Discuss the significance of Isaiah's prophecy regarding Egypt's eventual worship of the Lord. What implications does this prediction have for our understanding of God's relationship with the nations and his plan for salvation?
5. Reflect on the relevance of Isaiah's messages for contemporary society. How do his warnings against trusting in human power and material wealth resonate with our own experiences and challenges?

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 10, Isaiah 19-21, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Isaiah Chapters 19-21 FAQ

1. Why does Isaiah advise against trusting in Egypt?

Isaiah presents several reasons why Judah should not trust in Egypt for protection against Assyria:

- **Egypt's Idolatry:** Their reliance on a multitude of gods is ultimately futile. These gods will tremble at Yahweh's presence and offer no real security.
- **Dependence on the Nile:** The Nile River's predictable floods bring abundant resources. However, Isaiah predicts its drying up, highlighting the danger of relying solely on material wealth and nature's stability.
- **Egypt's Flawed Wisdom:** Though known for their ancient wisdom and counsel, Egypt's leaders cannot discern God's will or provide true deliverance. Political systems and human intellect alone offer no ultimate solutions.

2. What does the repeated phrase "in that day" signify in Isaiah 19?

The phrase "in that day" emphasizes a future period distinct from the present. It highlights the linear nature of time according to the biblical perspective, where tomorrow is not merely a repetition of today but holds the potential for either advancement or decline. This future period will be marked by God's purposeful actions, bringing about significant change.

3. How does Isaiah depict God's emotions in response to the impending judgment on Egypt?

Isaiah portrays God's complex emotions, highlighting both His justice and His compassion. While God decrees judgment on Egypt for its betrayal and the suffering it inflicted, He also expresses anguish and grief. This imagery reveals that God's acts of judgment, though necessary, are not carried out with vengeful delight but with a heavy heart.

4. What is the significance of Isaiah walking naked and barefoot for three years?

This dramatic act served as a powerful visual aid to communicate God's message. It symbolized the humiliation and captivity awaiting the Egyptians. Isaiah's obedience, even in this humbling task, exemplifies unwavering trust in God's instructions, regardless of personal discomfort or societal norms.

5. What message does Isaiah convey to the Judean exiles in Babylon?

Isaiah offers hope and encouragement to the exiles who felt like "threshed and winnowed" grain, stripped and scattered. He proclaims the imminent fall of Babylon, assuring them that God hears their cries and remembers His covenant. This prophecy reinforces their faith and encourages them to resist assimilation and maintain their distinct identity.

6. What is the meaning of "the wilderness of the sea" in Isaiah 21?

This phrase, an oxymoron, likely conveys sarcasm. It refers to Babylon's access to sea trade and its perceived wealth. However, Isaiah implies that this outward abundance is ultimately deceptive and unsustainable, like a barren wilderness. True security lies not in material possessions but in faithfulness to God.

7. What is the mysterious scene described in Isaiah 21:6-9a?

This passage presents a challenging enigma. While the precise meaning remains unclear, the most plausible interpretation suggests a watchman observing refugees fleeing along caravan routes from a fallen Babylon. The imagery highlights the suddenness and totality of Babylon's destruction, fulfilling God's prophetic pronouncements.

8. What is the ultimate hope offered by Isaiah in these chapters?

Amidst judgment and political upheaval, Isaiah points to a future where Egypt and Assyria, former enemies of God's people, will come to worship Yahweh alongside Israel. This vision emphasizes God's transformative power, His plan for universal blessing, and the hope of a future where former enemies are reconciled through their shared faith.