

## Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 5

### Isaiah 7-8

### Resources from NotebookLM

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

#### 1. Abstract of Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 5, Isaiah 7-8, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. John Oswalt's lecture** focuses on Isaiah chapters 7 and 8, exploring King Ahaz's refusal to trust God and the resulting consequences. **The lecture analyzes** the themes of trust versus fear, divine foreknowledge and human free will, and the significance of the sign of Immanuel. **Oswalt discusses** the historical context of Assyria's threat to Judah and interprets the prophecies within their historical setting. **He connects** Ahaz's lack of faith to the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, contrasting it with Hezekiah's later faith and deliverance. **The lecture also** examines the ambiguous nature of the prophecy concerning the birth of Immanuel, suggesting a double meaning applicable to both a near-term fulfillment and the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 5 – 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  
on05.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Isaiah chapters 7 and 8:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Isaiah 7-8

**Date:** October 28, 2024 **Source:** Excerpts from "Oswalt\_Isaiah\_EN\_Session05.pdf"

**Lecturer:** Dr. John Oswalt

#### 1. Overview and Context

- **Section Focus:** The lecture focuses on Isaiah 7-8, which is part of a larger section (Isaiah 7:1-35:10, possibly 39:39) that explores the theme of trusting God. This section is framed as a response to the revelation of God and self found in Isaiah 6, where the nation is called to servanthood for the sake of the world.
- **Key Idea:** The section highlights the necessity of trusting God for those who are to become His servants. "No one will become the servant of someone whom we do not trust."
- **Structure of 7-12:** Oswalt outlines a three-part structure for Isaiah 7:1-12:6:
- **7:1-9:7:** "Children, signs of the promise," broken down into: The sign of Immanuel (ch. 7), the threat of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, and the promise of a child.
- **9:8-10:4:** An interlude, a carefully structured poem.
- **10:5-12:6:** The kingdom of the child.
- **Historical Background:** The events occur around 735 BC. Assyria is expanding, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria form a coalition to resist them. They try to force Judah into this coalition.

#### 2. The Crisis of Trust (Isaiah 7)

- **Ahaz's Dilemma:** King Ahaz of Judah is faced with the decision of whether to join the anti-Assyrian coalition or not. There are indications Ahaz had pro-Assyrian leanings. Rather than trusting God, Ahaz sends tribute to Assyria asking for their military intervention against Israel and Syria.
- **The Meeting:** Isaiah is sent to meet Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool, where he challenges him to trust God. The same location is the scene of the Assyrian

envoy's demands 34 years later (Isaiah 36), highlighting the consequences of Ahaz's failure to trust.

- **The Significance of Isaiah's Son:** Isaiah is commanded to bring his son, Shear-Jashub, whose name means "a remnant shall return," as a prophetic object lesson. This illustrates the tension between God's foreknowledge and human choice. "If you obey the Lord, a remnant will remain. If you do not, a remnant is going to remain, but the rest are going to be..."
- **The Fear of Ahaz:** Ahaz was more concerned for his own safety and position, than for the well-being of his nation. "From what we know of Ahaz, he wasn't very much concerned about his country. He was very concerned about himself."
- **The House of David:** The lecture discusses how the promises made to the House of David are conditional on faithfulness to God. "You will not lack for a son to sit upon your throne if your son is faithful." While God is faithful to his promises, this does not absolve individuals of responsibility. The Davidic monarchy fell in 586 BC, yet God's promise is kept through Jesus.
- **God's Instructions and the Basis of Sin:** Isaiah's instructions to Ahaz are: "Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, do not let your heart faint". Oswalt argues that fear, worry, and anxiety are often the basis of sin, as they demonstrate a lack of trust in God.
- **God's Trustworthiness:** The core question for the entire section is whether or not God can be trusted. This is linked to the concept that God was slandered by the snake, implying he doesn't care for humankind.
- **Dependence vs Self-Sufficiency:** Oswalt notes that in contemporary Western society, people don't typically have to rely on God for daily needs. This can hinder their ability to trust him, unlike some in other parts of the world who face more immediate daily dependence on God.
- **The Sign Refused:** God offers Ahaz a sign "as deep as Sheol or high as heaven," but Ahaz refuses, citing false piety. He is covering his disobedience, as he doesn't want to discover he made a deal with Assyria he didn't have to make. "It gives this outward impression that oh yes, I don't need these crude signs. I'm much farther along than that."
- **False Piety:** False piety serves to cover a lack of trust and unwillingness to risk depending on God.

### 3. The Immanuel Sign and its Double Significance (Isaiah 7:14)

- **The Sign:** Isaiah states, "The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The word used for "young woman," *alma*, is not the usual term for virgin or young woman, but rather means "young woman of marriageable age".
- **Double Fulfillment:** Oswalt argues that the sign has a double significance. In the short term (within 13 years), the child is a sign that the threat of Israel and Syria will be gone by the time the child reaches the age of accountability. In the long term, this prophecy points to the ultimate fulfillment in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, as the Greek Septuagint translates *alma* to the Greek word for "virgin".
- **Immanuel:** The name Immanuel ("God with us") has significance on two levels: the current historical crisis and the ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus.
- **The Consequences of Rejection:** Because Ahaz refuses to trust God, Isaiah prophesies the coming of Assyria, described as a razor that will shave the land. This demonstrates that anything one trusts in place of God will ultimately turn and destroy.
- **The Hired Razor:** Oswalt points out a textual issue with Isaiah 7:20. A Hebrew word which is *sahar* means drunk while *shahar* means to hire. Thus, the text could be read "a drunken razor" or "a hired razor" leading to a different view of the intended meaning of the phrase.

### 4. The Prophecy of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and the Call to Trust (Isaiah 8)

- **Short-Term Fulfillment:** Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, is the short-term fulfillment of the prophecy (the spoil speeds, the prey hastens) and may have been the child born to Isaiah's fiancée.
- **Call to not fear:** God warned Isaiah "not to walk in the way of this people" which is to not call conspiracy all that they call conspiracy. Oswalt believes that these prophecies are fulfilled in his son Maher-shalal-hash-baz.
- **God's Control:** God is in control of history. This contrasts with the people's inclination to seek explanations in conspiracy theories.
- **The Lord of Hosts:** Oswalt notes the frequent use of the title "Lord of Hosts," (Lord of heaven's armies) signifying God's control of history. It means that God is the ultimate authority who has power over history and the world.

- **Making God Holy:** The call to regard God as holy is a call to recognize his true transcendence and authority, not making him little, but as the ruler.
- **Fear of Displeasing God:** People are called to fear displeasing God rather than being ruled by fears of human threats and conspiracies. "I don't want to displease him. I don't want to do what would offend him. I don't want to do what would break his heart. I'm afraid of doing those things. That's what he's saying."
- **God as Sanctuary or Snare:** God will be either a sanctuary or a snare, depending on one's relationship with him. "Go his way and he'll be a sanctuary. Fly in his face and he'll be a snare."
- **The Testimony and the Disciples:** Isaiah is instructed to bind up the testimony and seal the teaching for a future generation who will understand. This is in light of the current generation's lack of understanding and acceptance.
- **Faithfulness:** The message for believers is to be faithful in their calling, while outcomes are in the Lord's hands. This is illustrated by the story of Jeremiah.

## 5. The Darkness of Unbelief (Isaiah 8:19-22)

- **Darkness:** The closing verses of chapter 8 describe the grim reality of those who reject God. They will seek mediums and necromancers instead of God, ultimately leading to distress, hunger, rage, and darkness.
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Oswalt connects the spiritual darkness described to modern post-modernism and spiritism. He calls for believers to be faithful and be a light.

## 6. Conclusion

- **Key Takeaway:** The overarching message is the need to trust God deeply and fully, acknowledging his control and making him the center of our lives.
- **Call to Action:** The lecture concludes with a prayer for deeper trust in God and a call to be a light in a world of growing darkness, as well as to have the perspective of faithfulness over guaranteed success.

This briefing document should provide you with a solid overview of the main points discussed by Dr. Oswalt in his lecture on Isaiah 7-8.

## 4. Isaiah Study Guide: Session 5, Isaiah 7-8

### Isaiah 7-8 Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. What is the main conflict facing King Ahaz in Isaiah 7? Briefly explain the political situation and the choices he faces.
2. Explain the significance of Isaiah taking his son, Shear-Jashub, with him when he meets Ahaz. What does his name mean, and how does it relate to the situation?
3. What sign does God offer Ahaz, and what is Ahaz's response? Why does he refuse to ask for a sign?
4. What is the sign of Immanuel, and how does it have a dual significance? Explain how it applies to both the immediate situation and the future.
5. Briefly describe the immediate consequences for Judah described in Isaiah 7:17-25 for refusing to trust God.
6. What does the name "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" mean, and how does this child serve as a sign?
7. According to Isaiah 8, what should the people not fear, and what should they fear? What does it mean to make the Lord of Hosts holy?
8. In Isaiah 8, what is meant by God being both a "sanctuary and a snare"? How does this reflect the choices people have?
9. What is Isaiah instructed to do with the teaching and testimony, and why? What does this reveal about the immediate reception of his message?
10. What does the passage say about trusting in God versus worldly solutions, and how does this apply to the present day?

#### Answer Key

1. King Ahaz is facing a coalition of Israel and Syria, who are demanding that Judah join them in an alliance against Assyria. He is also being threatened by them with being removed from the throne and replaced by Tabe'el if he refuses. He must choose whether to trust God or seek a worldly solution.
2. Shear-Jashub means "a remnant shall return." Isaiah taking his son with him is an object lesson demonstrating God's promise of a remnant. This is a sign that there

will be a remnant whether Ahaz trusts God or not, but only those who trust in God will be part of the positive remnant.

3. God offers Ahaz a sign that can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign because he has already made his arrangements with Assyria and does not want his existing plans challenged.
4. The sign of Immanuel is that a maiden will conceive and bear a son. This sign has a double significance: an immediate sign that the threats of Israel and Syria will be removed before a child is old enough to know right from wrong and a future, ultimate fulfillment through a virgin birth of God coming to earth to be with his people, the ultimate Immanuel.
5. The immediate consequences for Judah include the land being ravaged by Assyria; it is depopulated to the point that the food for the king will be the main food for the remaining population, suggesting a breakdown in normal societal structure.
6. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means "the spoil speeds, the prey hastens," a reference to the swift coming of judgment. This child serves as a sign of God's imminent judgment and his control over the situation.
7. The people should not fear the conspiracies of the nations or what they fear but should fear the Lord of Hosts. Making the Lord holy means recognizing Him as the transcendent ruler over all and giving Him the place of utmost importance in their lives.
8. God being a "sanctuary and a snare" means that if you follow him, he is a refuge and a place of safety. If you reject him, he will be your downfall. It shows that God is holy and powerful and can be both a refuge and a source of judgment, and the choice belongs to individuals.
9. Isaiah is instructed to bind up the testimony and seal the teaching among his disciples because the current generation will not listen. This reveals that the immediate reception of his message will be rejection, but God's message will persist through a faithful few.
10. The passage emphasizes that worldly solutions will ultimately betray you. Trusting in God is the only sure path to deliverance and should be the primary focus over temporal and worldly solutions.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of trust as it is presented in Isaiah 7-8. How does the refusal of Ahaz to trust God influence the events and prophecies described in these chapters, and what are the consequences?
2. Explore the dual significance of the Immanuel prophecy. How does it function as both a sign for Ahaz and a Messianic prophecy? What does the ambiguity of the word "alma" contribute to our understanding of this prophecy?
3. Analyze the significance of the children mentioned in Isaiah 7-8. How do Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz function as signs, and what do their names and roles suggest about God's plan?
4. How does Isaiah 8 challenge the worldview of the people of Judah? What specific warnings and commands are given to them, and what does it mean to "make the Lord holy"?
5. Examine the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility as presented in Isaiah 7-8. How do the characters' choices impact the unfolding events, and how does this reflect larger biblical themes?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ahaz:** The King of Judah during the time of Isaiah's prophecies in chapters 7-8, known for his lack of trust in God.
- **Immanuel:** A Hebrew name meaning "God with us," a title and prophecy with both an immediate fulfillment and ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.
- **Shear-Jashub:** Isaiah's son, whose name means "a remnant shall return," serving as a sign of God's promise to his people.
- **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz:** Isaiah's son, whose name means "the spoil speeds, the prey hastens," signifying God's judgment.
- **Ephraim:** A major tribe in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, often used to refer to the entire Northern Kingdom.
- **Lord of Hosts:** A divine title indicating God's power and sovereignty over all, particularly over heaven's armies and history.



- **Alma:** A Hebrew word used in Isaiah 7:14 that means "young woman of marriageable age," often translated as "maiden," a term that implies but does not explicitly denote virginity.
- **Tiglath-Pileser:** The King of Assyria at the time of Isaiah and Ahaz, who is paid off by Ahaz to attack Israel and Syria.
- **Sanctuary:** In this context, a place of safety and refuge, referring to God's presence for those who trust him.
- **Snare:** In this context, a trap or source of judgment, referring to the consequences of rejecting God.
- **Remnant:** A small group of people who are saved or remain after a disaster or judgment. In the Old Testament context, it often refers to a group of faithful people who will survive and carry on the heritage of God's people.
- **Conspiracy:** In Isaiah 8, this term refers to the common perception of the political events of the time, suggesting that worldly, human machinations were the cause of events, not God's sovereignty.

## 5. FAQs on Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 5, Isaiah 7-8, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Isaiah 7-8 based on Dr. John Oswalt's Lecture:

1. **What is the central issue explored in Isaiah 7-8, and how does it relate to the broader context of Isaiah?** The central issue is the question of trust in God, specifically in the face of political threats and uncertainty. King Ahaz of Judah is faced with the choice of trusting God for deliverance or forming a coalition with Israel and Syria, which ultimately leads him to seek help from Assyria. This section, as part of Isaiah 7-35, is a study in trust, highlighting that if Israel is to serve God and be a light to the world, they must know God is trustworthy. It follows the pattern of Isaiah 6, which featured God's revelation and the people's response.
2. **What historical circumstances frame the events in Isaiah 7?** The historical context involves the threat of a coalition formed by Israel and Syria against Judah around 735 BC. Both nations wanted Judah to join them in resisting the Assyrian Empire, which was rapidly expanding and subjugating the region. Ahaz was tempted to join this alliance. When Ahaz refused to join, Israel and Syria threatened to remove him from the throne and install their own puppet king named Tabe'el. This put Judah and the House of David in a very vulnerable position.
3. **Why does Isaiah take his son, Shear-Jashub, with him to meet Ahaz, and what does his name signify?** Isaiah's son, Shear-Jashub, whose name means "a remnant shall return," serves as a living object lesson. His name suggests that whether Ahaz trusts God or not, there will be a remnant that will survive whatever is coming. If Ahaz obeys the Lord, a remnant will be saved as an act of God's grace. If Ahaz disobeys the Lord, a remnant will still survive, but the rest will be destroyed. It does not mean that Ahaz does not have a choice, rather, that God will fulfill his plan even through judgment. It emphasizes the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

4. **What is the significance of the "sign" God offers Ahaz, and why is the word 'alma' used?** God offers Ahaz a sign as high as heaven or as deep as Sheol to prove his faithfulness, but Ahaz refuses to ask for it. God gives the sign anyway: a young woman (*alma*) will conceive and bear a son, who will be called Immanuel ("God with us"). The term *alma* is significant because it can mean a young woman of marriageable age, possibly a maiden. The term does not strictly mean "virgin" which has a distinct term in Hebrew (*betula*), nor a simple "young woman" (*na'arah*). The term *alma* was likely chosen for its ambiguity to point to a near fulfillment in Isaiah's time (maybe referring to a child of Isaiah's or another young woman) and to a more ultimate fulfillment in the distant future by a virgin birth. The near fulfillment was a sign that before that child knows good from evil (around the age of 12-13) the lands Ahaz fears would be abandoned, which historically was fulfilled by the Assyrian conquest of Damascus (732) and Samaria (722).
5. **How does Ahaz's decision to seek help from Assyria instead of trusting God illustrate a key theme in these chapters?** Ahaz's decision to bribe Assyria to attack Israel and Syria demonstrates a lack of trust in God and in his promises to the Davidic line. Ahaz puts his faith in human power instead of in God and this highlights the theme of human fear versus divine trustworthiness. This decision is depicted as foolish, like "one of the mice hiring the cat," showing that whatever is trusted in place of God will ultimately turn against and destroy.
6. **What is the importance of the location where Isaiah meets Ahaz, and what does its repetition in chapter 36 signify?** The location where Isaiah meets Ahaz, at the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the washer's field, is significant because 34 years later the Assyrian envoy demands Jerusalem's surrender in the same location. This repetition highlights Ahaz's failure to trust God and his failure to heed the prophetic message given to him in that location. It is a clear example of a missed opportunity and a choice that had long term negative consequences.
7. **How does the concept of "fear" and "trust" relate to the messages in Isaiah 7-8?** The lecture argues that fear is the root of many sins. Ahaz's actions are driven by fear of Israel and Syria and the might of Assyria, rather than trust in God, which causes him to act in disbelief and disobedience. God's message to Ahaz, through Isaiah, is a call to quiet his fears, not to panic and trust in God's promises and plan. The call is to make God holy by fearing Him, which means to live in awe and respect of his power and authority, and to not be afraid of human enemies and conspiracies.

8. **What does Dr. Oswalt mean when he says that the Lord will be both a "sanctuary and a snare?"** The Lord is portrayed as having a dual nature, as both a sanctuary for those who trust him and a snare for those who do not. The lecture describes it as "you pay your money and you take your choice." This means that God's presence and power can either be a source of protection and blessing or a cause of downfall, depending on how one responds to him. If one follows God, he becomes a sanctuary and protector. But if one rejects God, he becomes a snare, and a source of judgment.