

Title: Isaiah Session 10: Isaiah Chapters 19 through 21

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. John Oswalt covers Isaiah chapters 19 through 21, continuing the theological focus on "Lessons in Trust" by illustrating why Judah must not rely on foreign powers like Egypt or Babylon. Dr. Oswalt details the vulnerabilities of Egypt's ancient religion, its natural dependency on the Nile, and its highly regarded but limited wisdom. The session also addresses Isaiah's dramatic three-year visual aid of walking naked and barefoot to warn of Egypt's captivity, alongside the bizarre apocalyptic oracles against Babylon, Duma, and Arabia. Ultimately, the lecture highlights God's sovereign control over international history and His compassionate heart even amidst executing necessary judgment.

Outline

I. Introduction and Theological Framework (Chapters 13–35)

- A. Prayer for global believers, freedom, and the correct application of Scripture
- B. "Lessons in Trust" Overview:
 - 1. Chapters 13–23: "Don't trust the nations"
 - 2. Two primary reasons for this warning: the nations are under divine judgment, and many will eventually turn to worship Yahweh

II. The Oracle Against Egypt: The Vanity of Worldly Security (Isaiah 19:1–15)

- A. Groundless reasons to trust in Egypt:
 - 1. Ancient Religion: The Egyptians were exceptionally idolatrous, but Yahweh causes their idols to tremble and confounds their counsel
 - 2. The Nile River and Nature: Egypt's predictable agricultural abundance relies entirely on the Nile, yet God warns it can be dried up
 - 3. Human Wisdom and Leadership: Egypt is famous for ancient proverbial wisdom, but its advisors cannot understand God's ultimate purpose
- B. Correct Christian Attitude Toward Leadership: Respect and honor the office, but do not worship, trust, or expect them to offer ultimate salvation

III. The Conversion of Egypt: Hope "In That Day" (Isaiah 19:16–25)

- A. Circular vs. Linear Time: Pagans see time as a repetitive circle, whereas biblical revelation views it linearly with progress and purpose
- B. The Promise of Egypt's Conversion:
 - 1. The repetitive phrase "in that day" (appearing 5 or 6 times) points to a different future era
 - 2. Egypt will build an altar, cry out to Yahweh, and experience His healing and rescue
 - 3. The ultimate picture of a highway of peace connecting Israel, Egypt, and Assyria in unified worship
- C. The True Purpose of Predictive Prophecy:
 - 1. Not to establish a precise future timetable
 - 2. To foster confidence that God holds the future, and to deepen faith when those events are eventually fulfilled

IV. Isaiah's Stark Visual Aid (Isaiah 20:1–6)

- A. The Shocking Command: Isaiah is directed to walk naked and barefoot (likely in a loincloth) for three years
- B. The Purpose of the Visual Aid:
 - 1. Demonstrates how the Assyrians will lead away Egyptian captives in total humiliation
 - 2. Proves the futility of trusting in Egypt's protection
- C. Historical Context of Ashdod's Revolt (~711 BC):
 - 1. The king of Ashdod rebelled against Assyria and fled to Egypt for asylum
 - 2. Egypt betrayed the king of Ashdod, handing him back to Assyria to save themselves, proving that worldly allies will sell out their partners

V. Bizarre Oracles of Wilderness, Doom, and Watchmen (Isaiah 21:1–17)

- A. The Oracle Concerning the "Wilderness of the Sea" (Babylon) (21:1–10):
 - 1. Sarcastic title referencing Babylon's sea trade and wealth, which is spiritually dry and hollow
 - 2. Prophecy of Elam (Persia) and Media overthrowing Babylon
 - 3. The emotional tension: God and His prophet express intense grief and anguish over the destruction, showcasing God's broken heart even during judgment
 - 4. Anticipation of Belshazzar's final feast and sudden death
 - 5. The watchman on the tower announcing "Fallen, fallen is Babylon"
- B. The Advent Hymn Connection: John Bowering's hymn ("Watchman, Tell Us of the Night") based on Chapter 21, pointing to Christ as the ultimate Morning Star

- C. The Oracles Against Duma (Edom) and Arabia (21:11–17):
 - 1. Duma as an anagram for Edom
 - 2. Depicts refugees fleeing destroyed caravan routes across the desert, bringing panic and devastation to those depending on trade