

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 7, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, ready to dive deep. Today, we're looking at Isaiah chapters 13 and 14. Sometimes, I got to admit, reading the prophets, it's kind of like deciphering a secret code.

But we've got Dr. John Oswalt's lectures to help us out, right? And he's amazing at making, you know, ancient scripture feel like it was written for us today. What's really interesting about these chapters is that Isaiah just jumps right in. He doesn't mess around.

It's a declaration of judgment. Judgment, yeah. Not just on like one specific nation, but on the whole world.

Hold on a sec. That's a pretty huge statement, don't you think? Oh, yeah. We're talking about the God of Gad.

What did Dr. Oswalt compare it to? Like a tiny rural county. And this God is claiming authority over everything. Exactly.

It makes you wonder what it was like back then to believe in that God when your faith wasn't exactly popular. Yeah, yeah. Talk about commitment.

So Babylon, it wasn't an immediate threat to Judah when Isaiah was speaking, right? But it does become their ultimate enemy later on. And Dr. Oswalt, he points out that Babylon, it's not just a city. It represents something much bigger.

Imagine Times Square, but instead of billboards, it's massive ziggurats dedicated to Babylonian gods. Wow. And instead of Black Friday shoppers, it's merchants trading stuff from all over the ancient world.

Exotic goods. That's what Babylon was like. Wealth, power, human achievement.

But all that focus on worldly success, well, that's what leads to their downfall. When you build your identity on things that can crumble, your sense of security gets pretty shaky. Okay, so we've got this symbol of worldly power, Babylon, and it's first in line for judgment.

Why? What's the big deal about Babylon? Pride. It all comes back to pride. Dr. Oswalt says pride is the root of all sin.

Because it's basically saying, I am God. And that's something we can all relate to, even if we don't think of ourselves as, you know, arrogant. Well, I get that pride can be bad, but isn't there a good kind of pride too? Like, isn't it okay to be proud of your accomplishments, your work? That's a great question.

It is important to differentiate between pride and self-respect. Self-respect means knowing your worth comes from something bigger than yourself. Something that lasts longer than your achievements.

It's not about puffing yourself up, but recognizing the gifts you have and using them for good. So it's about where your validation comes from. If you're always comparing yourself to others, trying to get their approval, that's where pride can turn into a problem.

Exactly. True self-worth comes from knowing you're loved and valued just as you are, no matter what you achieve or don't achieve. Okay, so we have this heavy judgment on Babylon, the idea that pride leads to destruction.

But then in chapter 14, things take a turn. We see hope. God offers compassion to Israel, even after they've messed up, even after exile.

Yeah, it's like Isaiah is telling King Ahaz, look, you made some bad choices. You put your trust in the wrong things, but God will bring you back. He hasn't given up on you.

Don't put your faith in nations. Put it in the one who holds the nations in his hand. Wow, that's powerful.

It's like when you feel like you've totally blown it and there's no coming back, but then you remember there's forgiveness. There are second chances. Absolutely.

And then we get to this section some people call the taunt song. It's about the king of Babylon in chapter 14. Dr. Oswalt really stresses this.

It's not about Satan. Some people interpret it that way, but it's not. It's about what happens when any creature, human or not, tries to take God's place.

A cautionary tale about playing God. So what is this taunting song all about? What happens to this prideful king? Oh, the imagery is vivid. Earth, hell, even heaven.

They all rejoice at this king's downfall. He wanted to be like God to rule over everything. But in the end, he's totally humiliated.

He doesn't even get a proper burial. Oh, wow. That's harsh.

So what does Isaiah actually say? How does he describe it? Well, Dr. Oswalt points out this one really chilling detail. The king's body is compared to a loathed branch, a miscarriage, the ultimate rejection, like saying, you thought you were building a dynasty, a legacy. Look at you now, a discarded, forgotten branch.

Whoa, that's a powerful image. It really gets the point across that pride leads to destruction. No matter how high you climb, if you try to take God's place, you're going to fall hard.

And it's not just about that one person's fall. You know, think about the ripple effect. When leaders are obsessed with pride, it affects everyone around them, their choices, their actions.

It all flows from that ego. So intense judgment on Babylon, God's compassion. And then this chilling image of what happens to those consumed by pride.

What do we do with all this? What's the takeaway for us thousands of years later? Well, remember Dr. Oswalt talked about lessons in trust. I think Isaiah is urging us to look at where we're putting our trust. Are we putting our faith in things that can disappear? Our achievements, our possessions, social status? Or are we finding our security in something much bigger? Something that can't be shaken by the storms of life.

Something that transcends all the ups and downs. Exactly. That's the question Isaiah is asking.

It's a question we all need to wrestle with. Okay. So we've been focusing on Babylon, this future threat, this symbol of pride and ambition.

But Dr. Oswalt then shifts to a more immediate danger for Judah: Assyria. Right. Because Assyria was a very real threat in Isaiah's time.

Yeah. It's almost like he's saying, okay, now that we've got the big picture, the whole world under judgment, pride leading to destruction, let's talk about what this means for you right now. It's like zooming in from this wide-angle view of global judgment to a close-up on the immediate crisis.

And suddenly the stakes feel a lot higher, right? Definitely. So let's dive into this oracle against Assyria, see what it means for Judah and for us. Dr. Oswalt starts by pointing out how Assyria is portrayed.

They're ruthless, arrogant. They brag about cutting down forests for their palaces, even claiming they've destroyed all the other gods. It's that same theme, pride and self-exaltation, just like Babylon.

Yeah. They're basically saying we're the ultimate power. Nobody can stop us.

And we should point out this wasn't just empty boasting. The Assyrians, they were known for their brutality, their military might, how cruelly they treated the people they conquered. They weren't just conquering.

They were terrorizing. It wasn't about expanding their empire. It was about crushing anyone who opposed them.

Exactly. And this is the context for Isaiah's message to Judah. So what does Isaiah tell Judah in the face of this terrifying threat? Does he say, cower in fear, make a deal with the devil? No, not at all.

He actually uses this oracle against Assyria to remind Judah of God's power and faithfulness. OK, I'm intrigued. How does he do that? What kind of language does he use? Well, in chapter 14, verse 25, he says, I will break the Assyrian in my land and on my mountains; I will trample him underfoot.

His yoke shall depart from them and his burden from their shoulder. Whoa, that's some intense imagery. God's basically saying I'm going to take this mighty empire, this unstoppable force, and I'm going to break them.

I'm going to trample them. Exactly. And it's not just about military defeat.

It's utter humiliation. He's saying their pride will be their downfall. So what's the takeaway for Judah? What's Isaiah trying to tell them? Don't be afraid.

Don't put your trust in human alliances or armies. Put your trust in the God who holds the nations in his hand. The God who can break even the most powerful empires.

I love how Isaiah balances judgment with hope. Me too. He's not afraid to talk about the darkness, but he always points back to the light.

He acknowledges the fear, the threat of Assyria, but reminds them that God is bigger than any empire, any crisis, any fear. It's a powerful message. And honestly, I think we need to hear it just as much as Judah did.

Because let's face it, our world can feel pretty overwhelming sometimes. All the headlines, all the conflicts. It's easy to feel like things are spinning out of control.

Totally. Everywhere you look, there's another reason to be anxious. Another crisis.

Another empire trying to take over. Right. And Isaiah's message to us, just like to Judah, is don't panic.

Don't lose sight of who's really in control. Don't give in to the temptation to trust in fleeting things. Instead, ground yourself in the God who is bigger than it all.

That's the lesson in trust. It's a lesson that can really change our lives. Okay, we've seen how Isaiah uses these oracles against Babylon and Assyria to challenge pride and call people back to trust in God.

But his pronouncements don't stop there. He's got some things to say to Philistia. Oh yeah.

A nation that had been a thorn in Judah's side for ages. They had. And what's interesting here is that Philistia, they were actually pretty weak at this point.

Assyria had conquered them. You'd think they'd be off the hook. Yeah.

But Isaiah, he doesn't let them slide. Why not? What did they do wrong? Well, Dr. Oswalt says that even though they're weak, they're still rejoicing in Assyria's downfall. They're celebrating the fact that their oppressor is gone.

Which on the surface seems kind of understandable, right? If someone had been bullying you for years, you might feel relieved when they finally get what's coming to them. Right. But Isaiah is getting at something deeper.

The Philistines are still trapped in this cycle of revenge and hostility. They're so focused on their enemies, they've lost sight of their own need for repentance, for reconciliation. So it's not just about who's stronger or weaker in the moment.

No. It's about your heart. Are you filled with anger and resentment? Or are you trying to find peace and forgiveness? Exactly.

And Isaiah warns the Philistines that their celebration will be short-lived. He says they're going to face judgment and destruction too. So even though they're happy about Assyria's downfall, they're basically digging their own grave.

That's a great way to put it. They're so caught up in the moment that they're missing the bigger picture. They haven't learned the lesson that pride and vengeance lead to destruction.

It's a good reminder that true peace doesn't come from your enemies getting what they deserve. No. It comes from turning away from that hostility and finding reconciliation with God and with each other.

And that's a message that's just as powerful today as it was back then. Okay, so we've looked at Isaiah's pronouncements against Babylon, Assyria, and Philistia, but this deep dive keeps going. It does.

And now we're moving on to Moab. Another one of Judah's neighbors and often an adversary. Yeah, and Moab's story gets really interesting.

They're known for their pride and arrogance, which we know is a big no-no for Isaiah. But there's also this feeling of grief and lament in their oracle. Oh, really? Tell me more.

What are they grieving? Moab is mourning the destruction of its cities and its treasures. Dr. Oswalt points out that Isaiah uses some really vivid language to describe their despair. They're weeping, shaving their heads in mourning, wearing sackcloth.

It's like they've been stripped bare. Yeah. Literally and figuratively.

All their wealth, all their displays of power, it's gone. They're left facing the consequences of their pride. Exactly.

And what's striking is that even in all this grief, Isaiah offers Moab a glimmer of hope. He says a remnant will be saved. That there's a future for them beyond the judgment.

So even though they messed up, even though they embrace pride and arrogance, God still offers them a way back. Yes. And I think that says a lot about God's character.

He's not quick to anger. He doesn't enjoy destruction. He's always looking for ways to draw people back to himself, even those who have wandered far from him.

It's a reminder that no one is beyond God's grace. That's right. That even when we make mistakes, even when we choose the wrong path, there's always a way back.

Precisely. And it's a message that can give us all hope, especially when we're facing our own struggles and failures. Okay.

That was a lot to unpack. We've traveled through some intense pronouncements from Isaiah, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, and Moab, each one a reminder of the dangers of pride and the importance of trusting in God. And we're just getting started.

There's so much more to explore in these chapters. We've only just scratched the surface. That's right.

Stay tuned for part two of this deep dive. We'll continue to uncover the depths of Isaiah's prophetic vision. Welcome back to our Isaiah deep dive.

It's really amazing how he weaves together all these pronouncements against different nations. It is. Each one seems to highlight a different piece of God's character.

Yeah. And his plan for the world. Exactly.

And now we're shifting gears a bit to a prophecy that's kind of different. The one against Damascus. Right.

So what makes this one stand out? Well, we've been talking about these huge empires, right? Babylon, Assyria. Yeah. Damascus wasn't like that.

Not a global superpower. Okay. It was the capital of Aram, a much smaller kingdom.

And they had a history of conflict with Israel, but more like a regional rivalry, not a world-dominating kind of thing. So it's not just about military power this time. No, not really.

Isaiah's prophecy against Damascus. It's less about their political power and more about their culture, what they were known for. Okay.

I'm curious now. What was Damascus known for? Well, think about it. Damascus was known for beauty, wealth, sophistication, and being a center of trade and culture.

Almost like a cosmopolitan hub in the ancient world. I like that. You can imagine these bustling marketplaces, exotic goods, beautiful gardens, impressive architecture.

It was a place that really embodied the allure of worldly pleasures. So it's like Isaiah saying, don't be fooled by all the glitz and glamour. Don't get distracted by the things of this world.

Yeah, that's a good way to put it. He warns that all that stuff- the beauty, the wealth, the sophistication- it'll all fade away. He says Damascus will be destroyed.

Its people scattered. It's glory turned to shame. So even though Damascus wasn't this massive empire, it still symbolizes something that can tempt us, that desire for comfort, security, pleasure, the kind of stuff that can pull us away from what truly matters.

And I think that's why this prophecy is so relevant to us thousands of years later. Yeah. Because we all face those temptations, those distractions, things that try to pull us away from what really matters, from our purpose.

Totally. It's like we're constantly being told that happiness comes from buying more things, achieving more success, fitting in with the right crowd. But Isaiah is reminding us to keep our priorities straight.

Yes. To seek things that truly have lasting value. Okay.

So we've got Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, and now Damascus. It feels like Isaiah is addressing this whole spectrum of human pride and ambition, from global empires to regional powers to cultural centers. Is there a common thread running through all of these, a bigger message he's trying to get across? I think so.

I think Isaiah is painting this picture of a world that's totally out of sync, a world where nations are fighting for power, consumed by pride, focused only on themselves. Which, sadly, sounds a lot like our world today. Yeah, it does.

Where conflicts erupt, empires rise and fall, and people are always chasing after more, more power, more wealth. Exactly. And Isaiah's pronouncements, they're like a wake-up call.

He's saying, look around, this isn't how it's supposed to be. You're putting your trust in things that will eventually fall apart. So what's the alternative? What's Isaiah's vision for a better world? Ah, it's not all doom and gloom.

Good. Throughout these judgments, you see these glimpses of hope. He talks about a coming king who will rule with justice.

Righteousness. A king who will establish peace, restore harmony. Sounds a lot like the Messiah, doesn't it? It does, yeah.

And I think that's on purpose. OK. Isaiah is pointing us to a future where God's reign will be fully realized.

OK. Where pride and arrogance are replaced by humility and love. Powerful.

He's not just pointing out the problems. He's giving us a glimpse of what could be. So even in the midst of all this judgment, there's a message of hope.

God is still working. His plans will ultimately win. Absolutely.

And that's something we can hold on to. Yeah. Even when things seem like they're falling apart around us, there's a bigger story unfolding.

A story that goes beyond the headlines of the crises we're facing. OK. We're moving right along.

And now we've got a nation that's a bit more mysterious. Kush. This isn't a place we hear a lot about in the Bible.

No, it's not. So what does Dr. Oswalt say about it? Kush is really fascinating. Because it represents this far-off land full of mystery.

It was located south of Egypt in what we now call Sudan. Kush was known for its wealth, its military, its unique culture. Really different from the nations we've been talking about.

So it sparks the imagination. Right. A land of exotic beauty and riches.

Exactly. And Isaiah's prophecy against Kush is especially interesting because it talks about their downfall coming at the hands of a messenger from God. A messenger.

Like an angel. Or a prophet. It's not totally clear.

Dr. Oswalt thinks it could represent a foreign power or even a natural disaster. But the message is clear. Even the most distant and powerful nations, they're not beyond God's judgment.

It's like a reminder that God's sovereignty has no limits. Yeah. His power extends everywhere.

No one gets a free pass no matter where they're from or what their culture is. Right. And that can challenge us too.

To look at our own hearts, our actions. Are we living in line with God's will? Or are we following the same path of pride and self-importance that led to the downfall of these ancient nations? That's a really good question to think about. Okay.

So we've seen Isaiah challenge the pride of nations like Babylon, Assyria, and Moab. We've talked about the allure of worldly distractions with Damascus. Right.

And we've seen the reach of God's judgment with Kush. But Isaiah isn't done. No.

He's got some things to say to Egypt. A nation that had this complicated, often messy relationship with Israel. Yeah.

What's fascinating about the oracle against Egypt is that it shows both their strengths and their weaknesses. Okay. Egypt.

This ancient civilization. Yeah. Known for wisdom, power, cultural influence.

A real force to be reckoned with. But Isaiah doesn't sugarcoat it. He says their wisdom will fail, their plans will be foolish, their strength will vanish.

It's like he's saying, don't be impressed by what you see on the surface. Human ingenuity is not the same as divine power. Exactly.

And what's even more interesting is Isaiah's prediction that Assyria will conquer Egypt. Yeah. And remember, Assyria was this brutal, ruthless empire.

It's like a double whammy, right? Not only are they humbled, but they're conquered by a power that stands for everything they hate. Right. Dr. Oswalt suggests that this is supposed to show us how pointless it is to put your trust in human strength or political alliances.

Because even the strongest empires can collapse. And those who rely on their own power are always going to be disappointed in the end. So what do we learn from Egypt's downfall? I think it's a reminder to build our lives on something stronger than human institutions or political ideas.

Okay. To find our security and hope in the God who is above all earthly powers. Okay.

So far we've seen how Isaiah challenges the pride of nations, the allure of distractions, and the futility of trusting in human strength. But his message isn't all judgment. No, it's not.

He also offers hope, redemption, and a future where God's peace will rule. Exactly. And that's what we see in this prophecy about Egypt eventually returning to God.

Isaiah says that time will come when they'll turn away from their idols and embrace the true God. So there's redemption even for those who have wandered really far. Yes.

I think it's a message of incredible hope. Yeah. It reminds us that God's love and mercy have no limits.

He's always willing to forgive, to restore those who turn back to him. And it's not just about individuals, right? Isaiah also talks about a future where Egypt and Assyria, enemies, will be united in worshipping the one true God. That's an amazing image of reconciliation.

A world where old hatreds are overcome, where rivals come together in harmony. It's a glimpse of what God's kingdom could look like. It is.

A kingdom of justice, righteousness, and peace that includes every nation. Yes. A kingdom that goes beyond our human divisions and conflicts.

And it's a vision that can inspire us to work for peace in our own lives. Yeah. In our own communities, to break down the walls that separate us and find common ground.

Okay. We've covered a lot of ground in this deep dive into Isaiah's pronouncement. We have.

We've seen how he challenges pride, exposes the emptiness of distractions, and points out the uselessness of trusting in human strength. Yeah. But he also offers hope, redemption, a future where God's reign of peace will be completely realized.

It's an amazing tapestry. You know, judgment and grace all woven together. And it's a message that still speaks to us today.

Oh, absolutely. It challenges us to look at our own hearts, to think about our priorities, to put our trust in the God who holds everything in his hands. But the journey isn't over yet.

There's still more to discover. Stay tuned for part three of this deep dive. We'll go even deeper into Isaiah's message.

Welcome back to our Isaiah Dump Dive. We've been exploring his pronouncements against all these nations. We have.

From powerful Babylon to mysterious Cush. Yeah. And now we're going to look at a prophecy that's a bit more personal for Isaiah and his audience, the oracle against Edom.

Edom's interesting because, unlike some of the others, they were basically family. Descended from Esau, Jacob's brother. Right, right.

I think that shared history would mean a better relationship, but it was full of rivalry and conflict. It's like one of those family feuds that just never ends. You know, you think blood would be thicker than water, but sometimes it seems like the closer you are, the worse the fighting gets.

That's a great way to put it. And Isaiah really lays into Edom's pride and their constant hostility toward Judah. He talks about them gloating over Judah's problems, their violence, their betrayals.

It's like they're kicking them while they're down. Ouch. So this isn't just politics or land disputes.

It's deeper, right? This resentment is fueled by grudges and revenge. Exactly. And Isaiah calls them out on it, reminds them that their actions have consequences.

He predicts Edom will be destroyed. Cities ruined, land desolate. It's a serious warning about what happens when you let hatred and vengeance rule you.

It reminds me of that saying: holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Yeah. It hurts you more than anyone.

Right. It traps you in bitterness and resentment. You're the one who ends up getting burned.

Exactly. So even though this prophecy is about Edom, there's a lesson for everyone, right? About forgiving, reconciling, and breaking free from that hostility that keeps us stuck in the past. Yeah.

And that's especially relevant today. When conflicts get out of control so easily, and forgiveness can seem like a weakness. Right.

But Isaiah shows us it's the opposite. Choosing to forgive, to let go of anger, that takes real strength. It's a challenge, for sure, to choose peace when you've been hurt.

Oh, yeah. But Isaiah reminds us that it's the only way to truly heal, to find lasting joy. Okay.

So we've explored Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Egypt, and now Edom. What a journey through the ancient world. It has been.

Each prophecy gives us a different look at God's judgment, His grace, and His plan for us. Right. But there's one more stop, and it's a bit of a curveball.

The oracle against the coastland. This term refers to a region along the Mediterranean Sea. So who are these coastlanders? Is it a specific nation? That's what's so interesting about this one.

It's not aimed at one particular nation or empire. Okay. It seems more like it's addressing a general attitude.

This feeling of complacency and self-reliance that was common in coastal communities. Think about it. These people lived by the sea.

They depended on trade for their livelihood. Makes sense. They had tons of resources.

They were exposed to all these different cultures and ideas. So they were probably pretty sophisticated for their time. Exactly.

And I think that's part of what Isaiah is getting at. Okay. They'd gotten so comfortable, so self-sufficient that they'd forgotten about God.

So it's less about political power and more about a spiritual emptiness. That drift that happens when people get too comfortable and forget they need God. That's a perfect way to put it.

Yeah. Isaiah describes these coastlanders as proud, boastful, and self-reliant. They're relying on their own strength, their own smarts, their own stuff.

They've completely forgotten about the God who holds everything together. Forgotten that every good thing, every breath we take comes from him. And Isaiah warns them, doesn't he? He does.

Their pride is going to lead to their downfall. Their ships are wrecked, cities are destroyed, treasures are stolen. It's like he's saying everything you're putting your trust in, it can all disappear in a flash.

Exactly. It reminds us that real security can't be found in possessions or smarts. We all depend on God's grace.

So even though this prophecy is aimed at the coastland, it's really a universal message. It is. For anyone, any culture that puts its faith in the wrong things.

It's a call to humility, to rely on God, and to remember that real fulfillment only comes from seeking his will. You know, it's amazing how timeless Isaiah's message is. It really is.

All these themes of pride and humility, judgment and grace, destruction and restoration. It's all still relevant. It is.

It's incredible how these prophecies spoken thousands of years ago still speak to us today. They do. They make us look at our own hearts, think about what really matters, and place our trust in the God who is bigger than anything in this world.

So as you go about your week, I want you to think about what we've discussed. What have you learned from these ancient prophecies? Right. Where do you see these themes playing out in your own life and the world around you? Because these prophecies aren't just about ancient history.

They're about us, the choices we make. And the consequences that follow. They offer this timeless wisdom that can help us live a life of purpose, meaning, and true fulfillment.

Until next time, keep seeking, keep exploring, and keep diving deep.