

# A BETTER KING, SERVANT, CONQUEROR

*The Book of Isaiah*

**Isaiah 13—18**

## Verse to Remember

*The Lord Almighty has sworn,  
“Surely as I have planned, so it will be,  
and as I have purposed, so it will stand.”*  
Isaiah 14:24

## Recap and Introduction

In chapters 1—11, Isaiah alternated between the two themes of judgment and restoration. We saw in those chapters that God’s holiness demanded that he judge and punish the sin of his people and the surrounding nations, and we read about the devastation that punishment would entail. But we also saw God’s grace, mercy, and love in his promises of restoration and hope. He promised to bring salvation, reconciliation, and peace through the King he would send to rule his people. Furthermore, we saw how in all things and at all times the LORD Almighty is in control, using even nations and kings who refuse to acknowledge him to accomplish his will.

Daniel 4:25 says, “...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.” Isaiah’s prophecies show this to be true. God’s plan for history is all encompassing; it includes not only his chosen people, but the surrounding gentile nations as well. Ultimately, God’s way will be acknowledged as best, and he will finally receive the praise and worship he alone deserves.

While there are scattered passages of hope in Isaiah 13—23, most of the content is dark. The events these chapters describe are distressing and heart-wrenching. In them, Isaiah further develops the theme of judgment, going into great detail about the judgments that are going to come upon Judah and the ten nations that surround her. He presents an “oracle” (divine declaration) for each nation, in which he describes the devastation God will bring. He also exposes each nation’s total inability to change the course of events God has ordained. Each of these nations was self-confident and proud, believing that through their own strength and efforts or by some strategic alliance with another power, they could be safe, secure, and successful.

Isaiah fervently wants his readers to see that hope in anything—any ruler, god, or government—other than God will never bring about the safety and security people long for. God is the only King that can rule with righteousness and justice; he is the only King that can use evil for good and eventually triumph over it. God is the only King who can produce lasting peace, and he is the only one who can actually change the very nature of creation. He alone is to be trusted and worshipped.

This lesson will focus on the oracle concerning Babylon in Isaiah 13:1—14:27. You may want to read through chapter 18 to get a feel for the judgments God has planned for the other nations. Through these oracles you will see that God rules over all nations.

**Day 1 — Today we will travel back to an earlier time in Israel’s history.  
Read 1 Samuel 8:1–21.**

1. Why did the nation of Israel ask Samuel to appoint a king for them? (1 Sam. 8:5b, 20)
2. What did this say about their relationship with God? (1 Sam. 8:7–8)
3. What did God say would eventually happen to Israel if she had a king? (1 Sam. 8:18)

## Day 2 — The Prophecy against Babylon

### Read Isaiah 13 and 14:23–27.

It may be hard for us to reconcile the desolation and destruction that results from God's judgment with what we mean when we say "God is good." But the cruelty, corruption, and darkness we see in these passages flow out of the sin in people's hearts. God uses the nations to accomplish his purposes, and in these passages we see him using their sinful greed and violence. As commentator J. Alec Motyer explains, however, God doesn't make people his puppets; he simply gives their sinful nature free rein: "In a very real sense, therefore, what the Bible speaks of as 'the stretching out of [God's] hand' (Is. 14:26) would be more easily understood if we thought of it as the *withdrawing* of his hand—to leave sinners to implement all the inhumane savagery of fallen human nature, bereft of the restraining, humanizing efficacy of common grace."<sup>2</sup>

### Babylon


"This first oracle... address[es] Babylon on several levels: 1) as the most valued city of the Assyrian Empire...; 2) as the powerful center of the Babylonian Empire to come; 3) as a symbol of all those who rebel against God."<sup>1</sup>

The fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies in the near future gives credibility to the prophecies he made about the end times or the "last days." In the past, in Isaiah's time, and in the future, "Babylon" represents any human agency, government, or system that sets itself up in defiance of God.

1. Briefly summarize what God says will be the fate of proud and self-confident rulers and nations? (Is. 13:7–22)
2. What do verses 1–5 tell us about the One doing the judging?
3. How will God's power and control be displayed in the broader "Babylonian" systems and governments of this world? (Is. 13:11; Is. 14:22–27)
4. Peter recalls Isaiah's prophecy about the end times. How does he exhort believers to live in light of these events? (2 Pet. 3:10–18)

**Day 3 — Read Isaiah 14:1–8.**

After Isaiah describes the devastating destruction to come, he switches back to the theme of *hope*.


1. What will the Lord do for his people in the future? (Is. 14:1a, 3–7; \* Ezek. 37:21–28)
2. How would God’s restoration plan extend beyond the Jewish nation? (Is. 14:1b)
3. How will the restoration plan be fulfilled in a far greater way in the future? (Eph. 2:11–22; Rev. 7:9–10)

**Day 4 — Read Isaiah 14:9–27.**

This passage describes the fate of kings and rulers who trust in themselves and not in God.

1. Who was waiting to greet the king of Babylon in “the realm of the dead”? (Is. 14:9)
2. What evil desire was behind the king’s boast in 14:13–14?
3. Contrary to the king’s view of reality, what was really true about him and his fate? (Is. 14:10–12, 15–17)
4. Normally, after kings die, they are honored with a regal ceremony and buried in a prestigious place. Describe this king’s “ceremony” and “burial.” (Is. 14:18–21)


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5. Isaiah prophesied the fall of Babylon, but he saw beyond his own time to the fall of Satan – the energizer and motivator of all worldly systems that “act contrary to the will of God.”<sup>3</sup> How does the writer of Revelation describe this event? (Rev. 12:7–9; Rev. 20:10)
  
6. The king of Babylon grasped for status and power, for dominion and wealth – things our culture also values and pursues. How does a heavenly perspective change how we see these things? (Mt. 6:19–21; 1 Tim. 6:6–7, 17–19;  Lk. 16:19–31)

## Day 5

As we have seen, Israel put their hope in earthly kings to provide safety and security for them. Isaiah 11:2–9 contains the promise of the perfect king God will send to establish peace and prosperity in the future. But in the meantime, his people will have to live by faith. Skim through Hebrews 11 to see how all of God’s people are called to live by faith and not by sight.

1. What people, places and things do you tend to trust for safety and security?
  
2. Why are they unworthy of your trust? (Ps. 135:15–18; Jonah 2:8)
  
3. What practical things can you do to transfer your trust to God and live by faith in your current circumstances? (Consider Jonah 2:7–10; Ps. 62:5–8; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 12:1–3)

\*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen B. Nielson, *Isaiah: The Lord Saves*, Living Word Bible Studies (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011), 94.

<sup>2</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 139.

<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Comforted: Feeling Secure in the Arms of God* (Colorado Springs, CO.: David C. Cook, 1992), 58.