

- What is one new thing you learned or idea to which you were exposed?

Let me begin this week by saying that I love Oswalt's *NIV Application Commentary* on the book of Isaiah. It is easy to read, clear, scholarly, and filled with real life applications. Who would have known that Isaiah could be so contemporary?

This week in reading Oswalt I learned a great deal about the oracles against the nations. In previously reading these oracles (including those in the book of Amos) I have been curious about the purpose of including these oracles in the Bible. Were these oracles meant for the other nations and how would these other nations receive the messages included in them? This week's reading answered my question!

These oracles were not written for the surrounding nations but were meant to give a message to the people of Israel. Oswalt states that "the oracles against the nations have been placed at this point in the book of Isaiah to emphasize the foolishness of trusting in the nations" (Oswalt, p. 198). The nations are tools in God's hand and "once their work is finished, they too will come in for judgment." (Oswalt, p. 208). Oswalt continues (p. 198) to suggest that they also may be there to emphasize the certainty of God's restoration as they show that the surrounding nations will not be able to triumph, God will judge his enemies, and repentant Israel will be restored.

In addition to learning about the purpose of these oracles against the nations, I learned much about the history during this time. The reading gave me a clearer timeline of the Babylonian empire, the Assyrian empire, the Medes, the Persians, Ethiopia, and Egypt.

I also learned about the contemporary application of these oracles. Not only do these oracles against the nations have historical connection to literal nations, but they also represent lessons for the ages. The oracle against Babylon is a general pronouncement against pride and the selfishness of man. Oswalt suggests that the king of Babylon is a composite of all the proud, despotic kings who have ruled (Oswalt, p. 211). The oracle teaches that this is the end of the pride that says it will sit on the throne of God (Oswalt, p. 211). Those who sit on the throne in pride will find certain and absolute destruction. The oracle against the Philistines represents the folly of turning away from that which is secure to depend upon what is failing (Oswalt, p. 219). The oracle against Syria is a judgment against idolatry and human effort. The oracle against Egypt reminds us that we cannot trust other gods, nature, or the fabled wisdom of any culture or nation. Though given to a particular people at a particular time, the messages of these historical oracles speak to all mankind through the ages.

In reading Oswalt's commentary on the oracles against the nations, I was also surprised to learn of the connection between Isaiah and Revelation. Oswalt connects the two-part hymn in Isaiah 12:1-6 to the song in Revelation 5:9-10 that will be sung around the glassy sea (Oswalt, p.193-194). Additionally, Oswalt connects the Babylon of Isaiah to the Babylon depicted by John in Revelation 18:2-3. (Oswalt, p. 201-202). This Isaiah/Revelation connection confirms the great storyline of the Bible!

Lastly, I was helped by the parameters Oswalt laid out in discussing the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, especially concerning the purpose of prophecy. It was helpful to be reminded that "prophecy is not given so that those hearing it can map out a timetable of future events" (Oswalt, p. 247). Biblical prophecy is a call to obey God. He is the God of the universe, and He has the entire future in his hands.

