

OT751 Isaiah
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Essay 4: What is one new thing you learned or idea to which you were exposed?

One new thing that I learned this week is that Chapters 13-22 are more than a series of judgment oracles, but a presentation of a Godly worldview which is drastically different from that of the world. Apart from Judah, the nations in the list include Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Egypt, Dumah, Arabia, and Tyre. These nations are located in the North, South, East and West of Judah (Constable, 112). In fact, the list includes the whole ancient Near Eastern world except Ammon (Oswalt, 199). It is basically the entire world known to Judah. The extensiveness of the list demonstrates the distinctiveness of the God of Judah. He is not a local deity, but the one and only true God that rules over the entire Earth. The destiny of these nations are in the hands of the Holy One of Israel. God knew the Philistians' plan to revolt (Oswalt, 219) and foretold the helplessness of Egypt (Isa 19:15) and the fall of Babylon (Isa 21:9). It would be utterly foolish for Judah to rely on these nations rather than on God Himself.

In addition to knowing and judging these nations, God also extended mercy and salvation to them. Moab's destruction was a just punishment of her pride (Isa 16:6), nevertheless Isaiah grieved over the sufferings of her refugees (Isa 15:5). Isaiah 19:16-25 further reveals that God's ultimate purpose is not to destroy but to bless the nations. He plans for a day when Egypt, Assyria and Israel will worship Him together, and He will call Egypt His people and Assyria His handiwork. (Isa 19:23-5) The God of Israel has a "universal character" (Oswalt, 242). As pointed out by Oswalt, the judgment oracles demonstrate God's transcendence. He is not a part of the world, He is beyond and in control, therefore He can save the world. (Oswalt, 249) God is not merely a "god" of Judah that beats up Judah's enemies to show he is stronger than other "gods". He is the only God that rules from above, and He has chosen His people to extend blessing to all His creation. Thus, the "worldwide judgment" (Constable, 111) in this portion of Isaiah is in fact a reflection of a worldview that correctly understands the relationship between God and the whole world.