

Isaiah OT651-Essay
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The one new thing I was exposed to is that prophesy cannot always be interpreted literally. Oswalt makes a good point about Isaiah 42:15-16. “Is God going to blast the mountains, dry up the Euphrates, make the sunshine in the daytime, and create a smooth highway for the blind Judeans to walk on? According to Ezra and Nehemiah, neither of the returns from Babylon was accompanied by miracles of that sort, just described.”¹ Poetic imagery does not mean the writer is making up something but it allows us to peer at the unexplainable. According to James McConville: “The biblical writers’ use of poetry was an attempt to meet the inherent challenges to human language in undertaking to speak about God. Linguistic choices and forms are inseparable from epistemology. Poetic imagery is not merely decorative, but functions actually to disclose meaning. It also wrestles with the limits of the power of language to speak of God. At these limits, it both discloses and does not disclose. There was no essential difference between metaphor and simile in this regard. Both these modes have the potential to enable certain kinds of mental conception.”² It’s not that God is not going to intervene, it’s just will he intervene in the precise way described by the writer in poetic terms. People are moved by their emotions especially when one is devastated by their circumstances. It is during these moments that our faith needs to be rekindled so that it will arouse our hope and capture our will to press on in spite

¹ (Oswalt. p. 481-482).

²(James McConville, “Poetic Imagery and the Nature of God in the OT”, Sept 2019 p.181

of our circumstances. John Walvoord makes a good example of a literal translation of prophecy. “The Bible says, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). In Revelation 19 Jesus is said to be riding a white horse when He returns. Did Jesus go up to heaven riding a horse wearing a robe dipped in blood and with a sword coming out of His mouth?”³ The author’s point is that Jesus ascended up in heaven and he will come back again. His coming back will be dramatically different from when he was taken up to heaven. Hill and Walton also add, “It cannot be assumed that every object in a vision has symbolic value, and when the meaning of a symbol is not given in the text, the interpreter must be cautious in supplying such a meaning. It is possible that the symbolism is used to conceal rather than to reveal.”⁴ II Corinthians 1;20 says, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. God will fulfill every promise of scripture but will they be fulfilled by all the images and symbols expressed? My answer is “let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans. 3:4).

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 274.

⁴ Andrew Hill and John Walton, “A Survey of the Old Testament”, (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) p. 508-509