

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

In addition to the reading this week, I was helped immensely by Dr. Mack's teaching video on "The Language of Judgment". I have always struggled in understanding the language of judgment in the prophets (and the imprecatory Psalms). To modern ears, the Old Testament's words of judgment seem "over the top", excessively harsh, exaggerated, and graphic. As a result, I believe many Christians find it hard to accept the judgment of God as something "Christian." Dr. Mack's video offered several excellent keys to understanding the language of judgment:

- We must remember that prophetic words are poetic in nature and designed to make an *emotional* impact. These messages are for the heart.
- We must remember that often the words are used figuratively rather than literally. Often the words are used to describe a spiritual rather than a physical point.
- We lack the words to adequately describe God, so we resort to anthropomorphism and metaphor. The words are representation designed to convey some aspect of God's character (and his wrath) that may be difficult to depict in words. The prophets used metaphor to give memorable images, create shock, and recall Israel's history.
- We must focus on function rather than form. Depending on the speaker's intent, the same words can function differently in different contexts. We use words to accomplish a specific function and often that function goes *well* beyond the function of the words. When prophets speak words of judgment, we must remember that their words may function beyond the dictionary definitions of the words.
- We must remember that the curses in the covenant have overlap with the curses in their contemporary vassal treaties. These words of curses were the words the prophets were familiar with, so these are the words the prophets used.
- We must remember that hyperbole of harsh language was common in the ancient world.
- We must remember that God's wrath was visualized in extreme language.
- Lastly, we must remember that fixed phrases of judgment were applied to varying situations.

Better understanding the language of judgment gives a better understanding of the text and its contemporary implications for Christians.