

**Reformation Fellowship Notes (11-18-2012)**

**Handout #1**

**Teacher: David Crabtree**

**My Comments on Isaiah 13-23, Taken as a Whole**

**1) It is difficult to make good sense of this book.**

**2) Why is it so difficult to understand?**

- a) Much grammatical and historical information has been lost.
- b) The genre is hard to interpret.
- c) There are many textual variants.

**3) Some observations about the difficulty of determining when a predictive prophecy has been fulfilled:**

a) It is hard determine when the language is meant to be figurative.

Isaiah chapter 19 could be figurative, but it may not be.

“Alexander is surely right when he says that the picture is metaphorical, as one would speak in a metaphorical way of Britain’s demise by saying that her navy is sunk, her universities are empty, her throne abandoned, without any of those being literally true.”  
(Oswalt, p. 366)

b) Figurative language is designed to convey an impression rather than empirical data.

Example: “I ran into her at the store, but she was cold as ice.”

Listener does not know *one single empirical fact* about the encounter.

Listener knows what the encounter felt like.

c) Chronology

From the perspective of eternity, the passage of time is not very significant.

From a distance, widely-spaced events can be seen to be connected.

Example: Revolutionary War and Civil War:

In anticipation of these conflicts Isaiah could have written:

“Mothers’ sons fought to death in defense of freedom,  
even equality led armies to meet in bloody battles.

The battlefields were strewn with bodies cloaked in scarlet and in blue,  
blood saturated coats of blue and of gray covered corpses scattered on the ground.”

From eternity, events separated by a few millennia are not necessarily unrelated events.

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- d) Sometimes events in the Old Testament are intended to foreshadow events in the distant future. (Typology)

The history of mankind is God's magnum opus, like a carefully crafted novel.

Looking at the birth of Immanuel as an example:

What was predicted with respect to Isaiah's son, Immanuel?

- 1) A child will be born.
- 2) To a young unmarried woman (translated in the LXX with a word that suggests a "virgin").
- 3) Given the name Immanuel ("God with us").
- 4) Before he knows right and wrong Aram and Israel will be conquered.

Immanuel was a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Messiah.

- 1) The Messiah was born as a child.
- 2) Not just to a young unmarried woman but to a virgin.
- 3) He was not given the name Immanuel.
  - a) But he was "God with us."
- 4) Aram and Israel were not conquered again.

It was not a replication of the original event.

It was an event that bore some similarities (more profound) to the original event.

My suspicion is that inflated language may signal some future typological filling out.

- e) These four features make envisioning predicted events virtually impossible.

### 4) Why predictive prophecy?

Is it to impress the reader with God's knowledge of the future?

Were the predictions with respect to Jesus impressive?

Predictive prophecy is not intended to convince the skeptical of God's existence.

"Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah. . . Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates" (Isaiah 8:6-7).

Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39).

Predictive prophecy is intended to reassure the faithful.

### 5) What is the nature of predictive prophecy in Isaiah 13-23?

It is not a "history of the future."

It is impressionistic.

Chronology is of little concern.

I suspect it is highly typological.

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The invasions of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and the Persians all constituted a dress rehearsal for an eschatological filling out:

- 1) It affected the entire known world of Israel.
- 2) It was cataclysmic and destructive.
- 3) It brought about a complete transformation of the known world.
- 4) It was divinely ordained.

The end of time will witness a similar, more dramatic tumult.

### 6) What is the impressionistic picture that emerges?

First: There is a great judgment coming.

- 1) It will be punishment for evil.
- 2) It will be directed toward Israel and the rest of the world.
- 3) The agent of this judgment will be manifold.
  - a) nature
  - b) many nations
- 4) It will be so horrible that people will be struck numb.
- 5) There will be great destruction and loss of life.
- 6) It will sneak up on people.

Second: Nothing will provide security from this judgment and God's wrath.

- 1) No fortress or military will be safe.
- 2) No amount of money will save people.
- 3) No country will be spared.
- 4) No god or religion will provide protection.
- 5) The proud will be brought low.
- 6) God alone is willing and able to save.

Third: Restoration of Israel.

- 1) Israel will be freed from its oppression at the hands of its enemies.
- 2) The authority of world rulers will be broken.
- 3) Israel will be the center of the world.
- 4) Israel will be at peace with God.
- 5) God's disciplining of Israel will finally turn the hearts of a remnant.

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Fourth: Hope for other peoples.

- 1) A striking but healing.
- 2) A remnant will be given mercy.
- 3) They will worship in Jerusalem.
- 4) They will be God's people also.
- 5) World peace.

Fifth: God planned it all.

- 1) Planned from the very beginning.
- 2) God has orchestrated everything.
- 3) He is accomplishing all of his purposes.
- 4) Nothing is out of his control.

### 7) Conclusion

- 1) I can't tell you how the end will look or when it will be.  
I can only tell you how it will turn out.
- 2) I suspect that it will not look like the popular schemes depict it.  
Why do I think this?
  - a) The coming of Jesus was not as expected.
  - b) We are warned that not many will keep the faith.
- 3) We are asked to do a very difficult thing—to keep the faith.
  - a) God will not, for the most part, be providing signs.  
He did that long ago; that was enough.
  - b) We need to recognize in the mundane God's regular care and concern for us.  
We need to fully appreciate the gently flowing stream of Siloam.