

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 101

Isaiah Chapter 46

Here is the outline of the whole chapter:

Verses 1-2	Bel has bowed down	Isaiah is speaking
Verses 3-4	“Listen to Me”	The LORD is speaking
Verses 5-7	“To whom will you liken Me?”	The LORD is speaking
Verses 8-11	“Remember this and be assured”	The LORD is speaking
Verses 12-13	“Listen to Me”	The LORD is speaking

Verse-by-verse

Verses 5-7: Once again, the LORD draws an absolute contrast between Himself and the idols.

This has been a major theme in the past few chapters of Isaiah. We are going to observe a historical event that drives home the point in a memorable way.

The event in question occurred during the reign of perhaps the most evil king in the history of Israel: Ahab. Ahab was king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from 874 – 853 BC. **1 Kings 16:29-33.**

Ahab married Jezebel. I'm guessing you've heard of her. She built a temple to Baal in Samaria. Jezebel maintained 850 prophets of Baal (the god of rain and agriculture) and Ashtoreth (the goddess of fertility). Jezebel put God's prophets to death, and tried to abolish the worship of the Lord.

The LORD raised up the prophet Elijah to eradicate Baalism and restore the hearts of the people of Israel to the LORD. And the LORD performed miracles in answer to Elijah's prayers. For one thing, God gave Elijah power to prevent any rain for 3 ½ years. **1 Kings 17:1; 18:1-2. James 5:17-18.**

But none of these things moved the heart of Ahab to repentance.

Baal was the rain god. The fertility of the land was vital to the very survival of Israel. Israel and her pagan neighbors lived in a dry climate. They needed the right amount of rain at the right time to grow sufficient food for the people. Who controls the rain: Yahweh, or Baal?

Again and again, Israel's kings and people were unfaithful to the Lord. They worshipped Baal. They violated the command of the Lord. See **Deuteronomy 6:4-15.**

The people of Israel did not completely stop worshipping Yahweh. They worshipped Baal along with Yahweh. They shared altars. They conducted Baal worship in the Temple of the Lord. They paid lip service to the Lord, but their deeds showed what was in their hearts. **Isaiah 29:13, Titus 1:16.**

They were on the fence. They wanted to worship both Baal and Yahweh. They wanted Yahweh to be their god of power and deliverance, and they wanted Baal to be their fertility and rain god.

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

The people did not want to choose. But the Lord will tolerate no rival. As Jesus put it:

Matt 6:24

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Elijah forced the people to decide: will it be the LORD, or will it be Baal?

So the LORD moved to place before the eyes of the nation of Israel a miracle that would convince them that the LORD was the only true God, and Baal was impotent.

This event is described **1 Kings 18:17-40**.

Notes: Verse 26 is akin to Isaiah 46:7. In verses 38-39, this is miraculous fire from heaven, similar to what the Lord did in **Leviticus 9:24**.

For another take on the theme of Isaiah 46:5-7, read Jeremiah 10:1-16

Verses 8-11: The LORD continues to address the remnant of the house of Israel. He makes it crystal clear that they have transgressed His law. And He implores them to recall three things to mind:

1. *Remember the former things long past.*
2. *I am God and there is no other.*
3. *I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass.*

1. Remember the former things long past:

- a. Creation: **Isaiah 40:21-26.**
- b. The election of Israel: **Isaiah 41:8-14.**
- c. The Passover: **Exodus 12:23-27.**

2. I am God and there is no other, **Deuteronomy 32:36-41.**

- a. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done: **Deuteronomy 17:14-15** (Saul & David); **28:36-37** (Assyria), **49-50** (Babylon), **64-68** (70 AD); **30:1-10** (2nd Coming).
- b. “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure”: **Psalms 33:6-12.**
- c. Calling a man of My purpose from a far country: **Isaiah 41:1-4, 21-26; 45:1-7** (Cyrus).

3. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass, **Numbers 23:19.**

Verses 12-13: The Lord ends by repeating His command to listen to Him. He tells the house of Jacob that they are stubborn-minded, and far from righteousness. Yet He will bring His righteousness near, and grant salvation. **Isaiah 51:5-8, 56:1; 61:10-11; Jeremiah 23:5-6** (Messiah's reign).

This is the good news of redemption. Only the Lord God can accomplish this. Salvation is from the Lord alone (**Jonah 2:9**). Righteousness is from the Lord alone (**Isaiah 45:8,24**). **Psalms 98:1-2**.