

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 87

Eight absolute contrasts in Isaiah between the LORD and idols

We have completed #1-6 of this list. Tonight, we will finish up with #7-#8. This will provide a good lead-in for our study of chapter 46.

1. The LORD God **carries His people**,
2. The LORD **speaks to His people**,
3. The LORD **predicts the future** and fulfills His word
4. The LORD **creates**, forms, & establishes the heavens, the earth, and His people.
5. The LORD is the **only Savior**,
6. The LORD gives His people **new strength**,

7. The LORD acts to **deliver His people**, Isaiah 41:17-21; 43:1-7; 46:4.
 - a. The idol cannot move by itself; it only totter on a shelf, Isaiah 40:20; 41:7; 44:13; 46:2, 5-7.

8. The LORD will have **every knee bowing** before Him, Isaiah 45:22.
 - a. The gods of idols will themselves bow down, Isaiah 46:1-2.

Introduction to chapters 46-48 of Isaiah

In chapters 46-48, the LORD once more implores His stubborn, rebellious chosen people, Israel, to LISTEN to HIM!

Don't let the first two verses of chapter 46 throw you off. In these chapters, Babylon and her false gods are simply pieces on the LORD's chessboard. They exist only to magnify the greatness of Yahweh. The LORD doesn't speak to Babylon until chapter 47.

In the day of crisis, when the LORD wipes out the prideful Babylonian empire and erases them from human history, their idols and magicians will be exposed as total frauds.

The LORD will be vindicated in every respect. He is the sovereign, all-powerful God, and there is none other like Him. He knows the end from the beginning.

He will accomplish all His good pleasure. He predicts the future and brings it to pass. He keeps every one of the promises that He has made to His people.

He will redeem His people, even though they don't deserve it. He will do it for His own sake, that He might be glorified. The remnant of His people will be saved. They will be righteous, and the LORD's name will be glorious.

These three chapters are marked according to the audience to whom the LORD speaks.

| Chapter | Audience | Message |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 46 | The remnant of the house of Israel | I will grant salvation in Zion (46:13). |
| 47 | The virgin daughter of Babylon | Destruction will come upon you suddenly (47:11). |
| 48 | The house of Jacob | The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob (48:20). |

Isaiah Chapter 46

Isaiah 46 is a poem with two parts and 5 stanzas.

In **verses 1-2**, Isaiah exposes the impotency of the Babylonian gods and their associated idols. He does so for the benefit of his audience: the people of Israel, not the Babylonians.

This is the first part, and the first stanza.

In **verses 3-13**, the LORD addresses His people Israel directly: the house of Jacob, the remnant of the house of Israel. He makes clear His unhappiness with Israel, calling them stubborn-minded transgressors. Despite this, He will grant salvation to Zion. He has spoken, and He will bring it to pass.

This is the second part. It consists of four stanzas. Each stanza starts with either a command or a question that the LORD gives to His people.

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

Verse 1: Who were Bel and Nebo? Marduk and Nebo were the principal deities of the Babylonian state.

BEL — the Aramaic form of the Canaanite Baal. It is a title; it means “lord”. Here, Bel refers to Marduk, the national god of the Babylonians (Isa 46:1; Jer 50:2; 51:44).

NEBO - the son of Marduk, Nebo was the patron saint of nearby Borsippa. He was the god of wisdom, a patron of learning, and the keeper of the tablets of the gods. The name Nebu-chadnezzar shows that Nebo was his guardian god.

"Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols are on beasts and cattle," was an ironic allusion to the New Year procession in which the image of Nebo was brought to Babylon from his temple in Borsippa. He joined his father in the procession, where he wrote on “tablets of destiny” what the coming year held for Babylon. He clearly got it wrong in the year when Cyrus attacked Babylon!