

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 94

Tonight, we return to the book of Isaiah. We begin with our overview of chapters 46-48.

Overview of 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.

These gods are powerless to prevent the conquest of Babylon. Their images (idolatrous statues) have been removed from their pedestals and carted off by beasts and cattle.

Verse 2: The gods couldn't even rescue their own images! Now, with their worshippers vanquished, they have been unmasked as frauds. They are nothing but wood and metal. So, the “gods” are now captives right alongside their worshippers -with their sorceries, spells, and astrologers .

We now pick things up where we left off to do our mini-series on Ezekiel 38-39.

Verses 3 and 4: This is the second stanza. The LORD is now speaking to His people Israel.

He implores them to listen to Him. He is about to tell them something that they desperately needed to know.

Until now, they had not been listening to Him. They had forgotten about Him and were convinced that they would not hear from Him again.

His words encompass the past, present, and future life of the nation of Israel: from her birth to her old age.

Unlike Babylon's false gods, the LORD has always carried and delivered His people, and He always will.

Saying that He will always deliver them implies that they will always need to be delivered, from the oppression of powerful Gentile nations. It was so in 700 BC; in 540 BC; in the first century. It remains so to this very day and will continue to be so until the last day.

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the times of the Gentiles, Gog and Magog, the beast with 10 horns and 7 heads, all the nations.

Ezekiel 38-39 describes a future fulfillment of this promise from the Lord in verses 3 and 4.

Verses 5-7: This is the third stanza. 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, and we have studied it in some detail. So this time we will take a different tact. 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 married Jezebel. I'm guessing you've heard of her. She built a temple to Baal in Samaria, maintained 850 prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth, put God's prophets to death, and abolished 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. But even that didn't move the heart of Ahab to repentance.

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**.

Pay attention to the people that Elijah sends for in verses 19-20. There is a connection between this passage and Isaiah 41:21-29. Elijah will force the people to decide: will it be the LORD, or will it be Baal?

Verses 8-11: This is the fourth stanza. 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 40:21-22.**
 - b. The election of Israel: **Isaiah 41:9.**
 - c. The Passover: **Exodus 12:23-27.**
 - d. The Promised Land: **Deuteronomy 32:6-14.**
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: **Genesis 15:13-16** (Exodus 12:32-40); **Deuteronomy 17:14-15** (David); **28:36-37** (Assyria), **49-50** (Babylon), **64-68** (70 AD); **30:1-10** (2nd Coming); **31:16-18, 29** (Judges 2:11-14, 19); **Isaiah 14:24-27** (Assyria); **34:1-5; 35:1-10** (Tribulation and Kingdom).
 - 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** (Cyrus).
3. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass, **Numbers 23:19.**

Verses 12-13: This is the fifth stanza. 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 51:5-7, 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.**