

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #68

Isaiah 46:1-13

For the most part, few of us actually carry around physical idols from place to place because we believe they can save us from sin and judgment, but I do believe that there are many things that can begin to replace God in our lives if we are not careful. There are some things we can begin to trust in way too much and these things cannot save us or deliver us from anything.

For example, some put all of their faith and trust in a career. Some people put all of their faith and trust in their money. Some put all of their faith and trust in a house. Some put their trust in a vehicle. Some put all of their faith and trust in a love relationship. Many people think their real identity and purpose lies in these things, and then when the bottom drops out, they realize what they were trusting in couldn't save them from depression, breakdown or even death. **God wants people to know that the key to meaning and purpose and identity and security and fulfillment are in Him and nothing else.**

We have already seen an amazing prediction concerning Cyrus, the Persian, and what God would do with him. Now we see an amazing prediction concerning Babylon and what God would do to it. The specific prediction Isaiah makes here would not actually take place for more than 150 years. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar and His military broke through Jerusalem's walls and burned houses and the temple and took many captives back to Babylon. However, in 539 B.C. Cyrus conquered Babylon (Daniel 5:30).

What God is doing in this text is showing His sovereignty over everything and everyone connected to His people. God is the only Savior and trusting in anything other than Him is useless.

In the 45th chapter of Isaiah, God has clearly shown Israel what He would sovereignly permit to happen to Israel. In the 46th chapter, God shows Israel what He would sovereignly permit to happen to Babylon.

The point is this:

GOD IS A SOVEREIGN GOD AND HE WILL TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY DESTROY BABYLON (IRAQ) AND HE WILL SAVE AND DELIVER ISRAEL FOR HIS GLORY AND THERE WILL NOT BE ONE THING ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO DO TO STOP IT.

The wise thing people can do right now in view of this is turn to the Lord and be saved. Wise are people who believe in Jesus Christ and receive the righteousness of God found in Him. Those who invest their lives pursuing worldly, idolatrous things are wasting time and life. God has a futuristic plan and He will perform it.

I just heard this week that the Islamic religion is becoming so dominant in some countries that nationals are moving out of their own countries. Those who trust in the Babylonian harlot, which is Islam, for help and those who turn to Mohammed and the Koran for help, will discover they will find no help. Even the greatest of the so-called Arab gods will be completely destroyed. Get this in your mind and don't forget this - **there is only one true God and He is the God of Israel** .

In this text, there are five amazing main prophetic points that Isaiah makes:

PROPHETIC POINT #1 – The false Babylonian gods will not be able to save Babylon.
46:1-2

Bel and Nebo were two of the most prominent deities of the Babylonian world back in the days of Isaiah. Bel who also had the name Marduk (Jeremiah 50:2), and is often called “Bel-Marduk,” was the Babylonian god of the sun. Nebo was the son of Marduk and was the Babylonian god of learning, writing and astronomy.

Bel had a temple in Babylon and Nebo had a temple about three hours south of Babylon. The Babylonians had various images of these and other false gods all throughout their kingdom.

The description here is that Bel and Nebo are not standing tall, but are bowed down, stooped over and crushed because God has dealt their false religious system a death blow. The false Babylonian “gods” could not stop God’s judgment nor save the people from it.

Every year large images of these gods were paraded through the streets at their New Year’s Day festivals, which weighed down both the people and animals. But these false gods could not prevent the Babylonians from going into captivity. None of their false gods could stop God from bringing Cyrus to conquer the Babylonians.

Instead of having a relationship with the true God of the Bible, who carries and sustains His people, they believed in their false gods they had to carry and lug around. God will eventually destroy every false religion that is in existence. His people need to know this.

We have people today who think they can trust in what they have accomplished or made or trust in their education. There will come a day when God will step in and there will be nothing they can do to stop Him.

PROPHETIC POINT #2 – The true God of Israel takes care of His people all of their lives.
46:3-4

At the time God calls His people to listen to Him here in Isaiah, they were still several years away from this Babylonian captivity. God wanted His people to know that He watched over every one of His people in their mother’s womb, at their birth and He continues to watch over them into their old age. God continues to provide for and sustain His people. He continues to deliver His people. He watches out for them their entire life.

In Deuteronomy 33:27, God makes a powerful statement about those who trust Him and those who trust idols: “The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are everlasting arms; and He drove out the enemy from before you, and said, ‘Destroy!’”

Here is one of the major differences between God and all false religions. **In true Biblical Christianity, God carries His people, but in all false religions the people carry the religion.**

In true Biblical Christianity, God carries your sins and burdens and guilt away. He washes you whiter than snow. He carries you all the way to heaven. In all false religions, you have to do your part and carry your weight and do your own works.

God sovereignly takes care of His own. He sovereignly looks out for His people from the time of their conception to the time they are born until the time they die. In their days of infancy and right to their older days of life, when their hair is graying, God is watching out for them.

I want us to observe that **six times in verse 4 God uses the pronoun “I.”** God is stressing that He is the One who is Personally doing these things.

When you are in a relationship with Jesus Christ you never walk alone. No matter what hits you, no matter what knocks you down or what setbacks you have, your God is with you and He is watching out for you.

PROPHETIC POINT #3 – Nothing can be compared to a relationship with the true God of Israel. **46:5-7**

Now people given to idolatry want something to be their god that is not the real God. The problem is that there is nothing that can ever compare to the true God. What could a sinful person design that would be comparable to the true God?

Nothing can compare to God. Nothing is equal to God. Idolatrous people spend fortunes on constructing some idol to worship, and then they set the lifeless idol in a place and it never moves. It cannot answer prayer and it cannot deliver anyone from anything.

People get themselves in trouble and run to their false gods that cannot deliver them from anything. There is an amazing scene in Revelation when all the people in the world are hiding from the real and true God because He is pouring out His wrath and they cannot stop it (Rev. 6:15-17). They can run to their false temples and mosques and their false rituals and they will not be able to help them. There is only one true God and He is a God of wrath.

The true God of the Bible, on the other hand, is a living God. The true God of the Bible is a moving God. You can pray to this God and he will answer. You can turn to this God and He will deliver.

I cannot help but think of something Dr. McGee observed. He said there are a lot of people who go to churches and they are not getting anything out of it and it is nothing more than idolatry. They are worshipping the church and not the God of the church. There are millions who go to churches and could care less if they ever went through one book of the Bible. Why would you go to a church when you aren't learning anything about God? Because the church has become an idol.

PROPHETIC POINT #4 – God calls transgressors and idolaters to remember truths about Him. **46:8-11**

Now **verse 8** is intriguing because God calls all transgressors and idolaters to use their minds to believe truth about Him. This is pure grace. God invites sinners to turn to Him and turn to truth.

God calls His people to remember the stupidity and the impotence of idols. God wants people knowing and believing truth with their minds. There are six great theological truths that God wants His people to have:

Theological Truth #1 - God is God. **46:9a**

The God of the Bible is it. He is God and nothing else is. God is comprised of three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Theological Truth #2 - God is the only God. **46:9b**

In Hebrew, the phrases “there is no other” and “there is no one” sit first grammatically for emphasis purposes. God wants to stress this point emphatically. There is no other God but Him and there is no other God like Him.

Theological Truth #3 - God is incomparable God. **46:9b**

This is why it is impossible to fully explain and define God. There is no one like God. There is nothing anywhere that begins to compare with the true God. We cannot even reduce God to our vocabulary.

Theological Truth #4 - God is the only God who declares the end from the beginning. **46:10a**

This is one of the many things that sets God apart from any other concept of God. He declares the end from the beginning. He can announce a future event and declare exactly the outcome of the event. He has done this time and time again, even from ancient times.

Theological Truth #5 - God is the only God who does what He purposes and what He pleasures. **46:10b**

God does what He is pleased to do. God will perform His will for His people. Notice God’s purposes and God’s pleasures are always good and always perfect.

The word “purpose” used here and again in **verse 11**, is one that refers to carrying out a very counseled plan or purpose. The point of this word is that God’s purposes are carefully planned and thought out and then executed (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 647). The word “pleasure” is one that means God does what delights Him according to His desires and will (*Ibid.*, p. 296).

What God is saying here is I do exactly what I desire to do at all times. I purpose, plan and carry out My will perfectly. I am the only God who can do this.

Theological Truth #6 - God will call a man from a far country to conquer Babylon. **46:11**

God literally looked into future history and directed events so that He literally called a man from the East, Cyrus, to come and take over Babylon. Persia (Iran) sits directly to the east of Babylon (Iraq). He named Cyrus before he was born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). God would call him and direct him like a bird and he would sweep into Babylon and conquer it. He planned it and there was nothing anyone could do to stop it.

God calls people to see the truth about what He has done time and time again. He predicts something and then does it. All He asks us to do is believe it and believe in His Son.

PROPHETIC POINT #5 – God invites stubborn-minded people to partake of His righteousness. **46:12-13**

God's people should remember this. God would deliver Israel by calling a heathen idolater from the East to destroy an idolatrous nation of Babylon so that His people could go free.

God warns those far away from Him to get right with Him. God will save Israel and God will deliver Israel. Israel will be seen as the glorious nation of God.

Now God-mocking nations can quibble about this all they want, but they will not be able to stop it.

The idea of God's righteousness is a prominent thought in this section. That theme was brought out in 45:24-25 and here in **46:12-13**. In chapter 45, we are told that God's righteousness is found in Him (45:24), and in **chapter 46** God says that people are "far from righteousness" (**46:12**) and He brings it near to them.

God offers you His salvation and His righteousness. It is a righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. If you will believe in Him, you will be saved. He will take away your sin and guilt. He will lift your burdens and carry you all the way to glory.