

Isaiah Lesson 46

Isaiah Chapter 46

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Introduction: In chapter 45, we covered how God chose Cyrus, a Persian King, to be the one instrumental in getting the Temple rebuilt.

The folly of idolatry is continued in this chapter. Israel is exhorted to remember the power of God and the impotence of idols. The context however is the powerlessness of the idols of Babylon to prevent the defeat thereof by Cyrus and the Persians.

I. The Idols of Babylon and the One True God

Isa 46:1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

Isa 46:2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods. It is thought that Bel was a Babylonian derivation of Baal. The mention of them being stooped and bowed down refers to their destruction. Apparently these idols, after having been broken apart, were loaded onto beasts of burden and brought as loot back to Persia.

These 'gods' which once were thought all-powerful were knocked down and broken up. The irony of it is how they could not prevent the defeat of Babylon and "themselves are gone into captivity."

Isa 46:3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

Isa 46:4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

God directs Israel to listen. He reminds them how that it was He who had given birth to them as a nation. The same God who gave birth to Israel also promised to take care of them and deliver them. Using the analogy of birth to old age, God promised to be faithful to His chosen people throughout their history.

Isa 46:5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

Isa 46:6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

Isa 46:7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

God challenged Israel as to whom they would compare Him. To whom was He equal? Who was like unto Him? The answer is apparent. None!

In verse 6, once again the folly and stupidity of idolatry are set forth. Idolaters hire a goldsmith who makes an idol. The foolish idolaters promptly proceed to worship the piece of metal knowing where it came from. They begin to pray to it to help them. Yet, inanimate objects cannot deliver anyone.

II. God Pleads for them to Turn to God

Isa 46:8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.

Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

God challenged His own people to remember and act as men and not as immature fools. He challenged Israel to bring to mind God's commandments forbidding idolatry. Israel is challenged to remember the early days of their nation when God forbade idolatry, to remember the singularity of God, and to remember that there is none liken unto Him.

It is apparent that in the day of Isaiah, one of the besetting sins of Israel had been idolatry. God calls them on it.

Isa 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Isa 46:11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

God continues to describe Himself in calling Israel to remember Him. It was Jehovah God who knew the earliest days of Israel to that day. It was He who knew what was yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, it was Jehovah God whose counsel will stand and who will accomplish His own purposes.

God here likens Cyrus to a bird of prey coming from the east (i.e., Persia). In the greater context of the preceding chapter, here again, is another prophecy about how that God would raise up Cyrus to overturn Babylon. The accomplishment would be the fulfillment of God's plan.

Isa 46:12 Harken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:

Isa 46:13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

God directed Israel to pay attention. The term stouthearted has the idea of being obstinate or stubborn of heart. The reference clearly is to Judah who was, by then, far from righteousness. Though Hezekiah their king was a godly man, the nation as a whole was not. Notwithstanding the backslidden condition of Judah, God nevertheless foretold how that in righteousness He would deliver Judah.

The next chapter deals with God's judgment upon Babylon and that likely is the point of reference here. Though God would chasten Judah for their idolatry, nevertheless, He would deliver them and restore Zion (i.e., Jerusalem).

He reminds them that Israel would still be for His glory. Moreover, there very well may be a hint of God's greater salvation for it was at Jerusalem (i.e., Zion) where the ultimate salvation of God was made possible as Jesus died on the cross and rose again.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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