

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### **Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation**

#### **Part LIII: God's Rescue Of His People Due To His Vast Superiority Over Their Foes' Gods (Isaiah 46:1-13)**

##### **I. Introduction**

- A. God's people often need encouragement that He is able and willing to help them face their overwhelming foes.
- B. Israel would face this need when she went into captivity to the seemingly overwhelming power of Babylon.
- C. Yet, a nation was only as powerful as its god(s), so the Lord in Isaiah 46:1-13 encouraged Israel, claiming He would deliver her from Babylon, for He was greater than Babylon's gods, and we view this passage for insight:

##### **II. God's Rescue Of His People Due To His Vast Superiority Over Their Foes' Gods, Isaiah 46:1-13.**

- A. In the Ancient Near East, "the fortunes of a nation were bound up with its gods. Hence, if the gods were destroyed the nation itself perished; and likewise, if the nation had been defeated in war the gods themselves were done for," Edward J. Young, The Book Of Isaiah, 1974, v. III, p. 220.
- B. Accordingly, in demonstrating His vast superiority over Israel's foes, the Babylonians who would take Israel captive, the Lord demonstrated His vast superiority over such foes in revealing His vast superiority over their false gods upon whom they relied for power (as follows), Isaiah 46:1-4:
  - 1. The Babylonian sun god Bel and Nebo, Babylon's god of learning, writing and astronomy, the two most prominent Babylonian gods (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1100), are presented in Isaiah 46:1-2 as being loaded onto weary animals to be carried off in captivity, the idols themselves pictured as bowing down or stooping in similar dreary helplessness. Though the Babylonian gods were supposed to bear their people all through their trials, these gods instead would themselves be born along (Ibid., Young), meaning the Babylonians would be helplessly taken into captivity as their gods in whom they trusted were of no help.
  - 2. Yet, in vast contrast to Babylon's false gods, Israel's true God called all His people, even the remnant of the house of Israel who were left alive in captivity, to hearken unto Him, Isaiah 46:3a, for He claimed that (a) He had borne all His people, including the remnant left alive from Babylonian invasion, since before they were born, since they were in the womb (Isaiah 46:3b), and (b) He would faithfully, ably keep bearing them even into old age when the hairs of their heads turned gray, Isaiah 46:4a. God had made them, He would thus bear them, carrying and saving them from their Babylonian Captivity, Isaiah 46:4b.
- C. Following this description of His vast superiority over Israel's foes due to His superiority over their gods, the Lord rhetorically asked, "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?", what called for the response, "No other god can compare to You, O Lord!" (Isaiah 46:5 ESV)
- D. God then illustrated the futile hope of the Babylonian people who relied on their false gods, Isa. 46:6-7 ESV:
  - 1. The Babylonians lavish gold from their money purses and weigh out silver in the scales, then they hire a goldsmith who makes the metals into an image of a pagan god, and then the customers who hire the smith illogically bow down and worship what they hired the goldsmith to make for them, Isaiah 46:6.
  - 2. The pagan worshipers then lift the image of their god onto their shoulders and carry it to a certain place and put it down so that it stands there, unable to move from the place its worshipers put it and unable to answer any who cry unto it for help, exposing its inability to save anyone from his troubles, Isaiah 46:7.
- E. Accordingly, Israel's God challenged the Babylonian idolatrous rebels against Him, Isaiah 46:8-13:
  - 1. The Babylonian idolaters were to know that He alone is God, that there was no one like Him who declared the end from the beginning, saying He would make His counsel stand and accomplish all His purpose, Isa. 46:8-10. (Ibid., B. K. C., O. T., p. 1101) He would call a bird of prey from the east, the man Cyrus of His counsel from a far country, to defeat Babylon, and this prophecy would occur since God had sovereignly purposed and spoken it to occur regardless of the Babylonian gods, Isaiah 46:11.
  - 2. In spite of Babylon's initial greatness and stubbornness against Him, God would cause Cyrus to defeat her, saving His people from Babylon and giving them glory in her future Kingdom, Isaiah 46:12-13; Ibid.

***Lesson:*** *Where Israel's Babylonian foes relied on their hapless gods to bear them all through life's trials, Israel's God had born Israel since she was in the womb, and He would faithfully, powerfully, gloriously bear her even in old age, carrying and saving her from her sinful, stubborn, overwhelming Babylonian foes.*

***Application:*** *May we trust our Sovereign, Almighty God Who has carried us through life's trials since before we were born to continue to bear us throughout life in delivering us from all ungodly, overwhelming, stubborn foes.*