

## Who's Carrying Who?

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### Isaiah 46

Isaiah 46-47 is aimed at Babylon (cf. Isa. 13:1, 17; 44:28-45:3).

God begins this chapter by sarcastically ridiculing the gods of Babylon. God sometimes mocks false religions.

#### I. The **SCORNING** of Babylonian gods (vs. 1-2).

- *Bel* and *Nebo* were the main gods of Babylon.
  - *Bel* is an abbreviated form of *Baal—Beelzebub*, one of Satan's names / “*Belial*” = of that wicked one (Dt. 13:13; Jud. 19:22; 1 Sam. 2:12; 2 Chron. 13:7; 2 Cor. 6:15).
  - *Nebo* (son of *Bel*)—the Babylonian “spokesman of the gods.”
  - On special celebrations priests would **carry** them on carts throughout the streets of Babylon as people worshipped them.
- A. Their **HUMILIATION** (v 1). These “gods” bow down before the Lord like Dagon (1 Sam. 5:2-4).
- B. Their **HELPLESSNESS** vs. 1-2). The Babylonians had to load their idols onto carts and pulled by oxen as they fled from the invasion of Persia. QUESTION: What good is a “god” that has to be carried out from danger? (cf. Jer. 50:1-2)
- The idols were so heavy the beasts grew weary of carrying them. These burdensome idols lead to their ultimate defeat.
  - As Hosea 8:4 (Isaiah’s peer) says, “*of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.*” Idolatry (material or spiritual) will ultimately bring you down.

➡ If your religion is a burden, you have the wrong kind!

#### II. The **SUSTAINMENT** of Israel’s God (vs. 3-5).

➡ “*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms...*” (Dt. 33:27). God is not burden to be borne upon your shoulders—His arms are underneath to bear us up.

A. God **CARRIES** us—In contrast to idols which must be carried.

1. God made Israel<sup>1</sup> (44:24). Israel is God's **firstborn** (Ex. 4:22). He ...carried Israel from birth to old age...and will deliver Israel—From the *womb* to the *tomb*! Likewise, He carries us all the way from our new birth to the New Jerusalem!

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Terminology of the birth of a baby (v. 4): (1) **Carrying** the child; (2) **Child-bearing**; (3) **delivery** of a child (Num 11:12).

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2. People still carry their “gods.”

- Idols are carried by their worshippers today in Italy, Spain, Mexico, Philippines, Japan, and New Orleans!
- QUESTION: “Is your religion carrying you, or are you carrying your religion?” If you have to carry your religion, you have the wrong religion!
- God carries our sins and sorrows—“*He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*” (Isa. 53:4).
- Cast your burdens on the Lord and He will bear them (Ps. 55:22).



- B. God **CHALLENGES** us (v. 5). Good question—Unanswerable. God is incomparable—Nothing to compare Him to.<sup>2</sup> He is unexplainable. He is infinite. His ways are past finding out.

➡ How God describes Himself in Isaiah, saying “***I am he***—”

- 41:4—“***I am he...***” (41:4)
- 43:10—“***I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.***”
- 43:13—“***I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand...***”
- 43:25—“***I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions...***”
- 46:4—“***I am he...I will carry you...***”
- 48:12—“***I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.***”
- 51:12—“***I am he that comforteth you...***”
- 52:6—“***I am he that doth speak: behold it is I.***”

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<sup>1</sup> Israel

/ Jacob

## ➡ He does it ALL!

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The only way God could make Himself known to man was to become a man Himself (incarnation). The only way you can know who God is is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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### C. God **COUNSELS** us (vs. 8-11). *“My counsel”* (vs. 10-11).

1. He counsels us **to remember** (vs. 8-9).
  - Remember idols are vain (v. 8). Don't be bashful about it.
  - Remember God alone is God (v. 9). Consider what God has done in the past. Seeing how God worked in the past will encourage you today (1 Chron. 16:11-12).
2. He counsels of **things to come** (v. 10 cf. Rom. 4:17). Prophecy is how anyone can know God is God and there is none else (v. 9).
3. His counsels will **stand** (v. 10). He will do what He says—He will do all He pleases (Ps. 115:3)!

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Numbers 23:19—“...*hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good.*”)

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- v. 11—Cyrus is likened to a bird of prey coming from the east (i.e. The symbol of Persia was an eagle.<sup>3</sup>)

### D. God **CALLS** to us (vs. 12-13). Far versus Near

- v. 13—God prophesies He will deliver Judah in righteousness. He reminds them that Israel will still be His glory.

## III. The **SENSELESSNESS** of **Babylonian gods** (vs. 6-7).

- A. The **WASTE** of idolatry (v. 6). Idolaters go to great expense to make their gods.<sup>4</sup> Many people worship gold and silver today!
- B. The **WEAKNESS** of idols (v. 7). 3-fold weakness:
  1. Idols are immobile (v. 7).
  2. Idols are ignorant (v. 7).

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<sup>3</sup> - , *Commentary Isaiah*, , , .1 .  
<sup>4</sup> *The Prophet Isaiah*, , .

3. Idols are impotent (v. 7). In spite of all the wealth and energy men put into their “god,” their “god” cannot communicate with them nor save them.

**SUMMATION:** The God of the Bible versus the false idols of Babylon.

- Idols bow before God—God bows to no one.
- Idols are a burden—God is a burden bearer.
- Idols must be carried by man—God carries man.
- Idols are man-made (temporal)—God is unmade (eternal).
- Idols are helpless—God is an ever present help.
- Idols are dumb—God answers, He hears and He speaks.