

August 19th, 2018
"I Will Carry and Will Save"
Isaiah 46

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Aug 12 Jeremiah 1-3	Aug 16 Jeremiah 14-17
Aug 13 Jeremiah 4-6	Aug 17 Jeremiah 18-22
Aug 14 Jeremiah 7-9	Aug 18 Jeremiah 23-25
Aug 15 Jeremiah 10-13	Aug 19 Jeremiah 26-29

Lesson Introduction: Over the last couple of weeks Cyrus the Great has been introduced as God's chosen instrument to free Israel from the Babylonians. Our lesson this week will focus primarily on chapter 46, but it is important to understand that chapter 47 is a prophecy concerning the certain destruction of Babylon. Chapter 46 begins by mentioning the Idols that Babylon would place their trust in for deliverance, and how these Idols would ultimately fail them, leading to the destruction that we see in chapter 47. Our passage today beautifully contrasts the burden of those who place their trust in idols, with the freedom we have in being carried by the Lord. As we go, we will consider **The Burden and Futility of Idolatry, The One Who Carries Us, and The One Whose Plans are Certain.**

Key Memory Verses: Isaiah 46:3-4

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- Idolatry is burdensome (V. 1-2, 6-7).
- The Lord is our creator and sustainer (V. 3-4).
- The Lord's plans are certain and can be trusted (V. 9-11).

Isaiah 46

1 Bel bows down; Nebo stoops;
their idols are on beasts and livestock;
these things you carry are borne
as burdens on weary beasts.

2 They stoop; they bow down together;
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.

3 "Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from before your birth,
carried from the womb;

4 *even to your old age I am he,*
and to gray hairs I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

5 "To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?

6 *Those who lavish gold from the purse,*
and weigh out silver in the scales,
hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!

7 *They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,*
they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.

If one cries to it, it does not answer
or save him from his trouble.

8 "Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
9 remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
10 declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'
11 calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it.

12 "Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from righteousness:
13 I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off,
and my salvation will not delay;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory."

Discussion Section 1: The Burden and Futility of Idolatry (V. 1-2, 6-7)

-Who are Bel and Nebo?

-What do these verses tell us about their ability to bring stability to Babylon upon the invasion of Cyrus?

-What do these verses tell us about the burden that idols are in the lives of those who worship them?

-How might some idols that you have worshiped been burdensome to you?

Note: *Bel was another spelling of the famous Babylonian god, Baal. Nebo was Bel's son, and highly exalted in Babylonian culture as shown by the prominent Babylonian names compounded from his: Nebachadnezzar, Nabopolassar, and Nebuzaradan. We see in our passage today that these gods would be of no use to the Babylonians when Cyrus (The Lord's chosen instrument) would come to invade. In fact, what we find out is that these idols would turn out to only be burdens to the people of Babylon, as they would have to be hauled off into captivity by the work of "weary beasts." They were also a burden because their followers had to pay to have them made, then carry them on their shoulders into their homes, only to set them in their place where they would not move and would not respond when they were cried out to (V. 6-7). What an incredibly pitiful picture the Babylonians provide for us of what it looks to place our trust in anything but the One True God.*

Often in our own lives, we give ourselves over to idols that cannot bring satisfaction, comfort, or salvation, but rather, are only a burden. Consider the idols of wealth and success. So often we spend much of our time and effort trying to make ourselves wealthy, believing that we will be able to buy our security, comfort, and joy. However, everything money can buy will ultimately perish (Matthew 6:19), and even with those things in front of us, we always find ourselves wanting more. The desire for more things becomes burdensome. As we strive to keep up with the Joneses, we grow tired, weary, and frustrated, and begin to feel like no matter how hard we try, our efforts will never satisfy. The truth is, they will not. May we today consider the idols in our lives that are wearing us down, and realize that our worship of them is simply leaving us in a place of weakness and frustration

Discussion Section 2: The One Who Carries Us (V. 3-4)

-How is the One True God contrasted with the idols of Babylon in these verses?

-In what ways has God carried us from the womb, and in what ways does He carry us in our old age?

-What does God mean when He says, "**I have made, and I will bear**"?

Note: *In verses 1-2, and 6-7, we see that the idols of Babylon were of no use to their followers, and indeed were only dead weight to be carried by the very ones*

who created them and placed their trust in them. Verses 3-4 contrast this description of the idols of Babylon by reminding Israel that they have indeed been created and carried by the God of their salvation. Israel was not a nation at all until the Lord created them by His own will (Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 43:1, 7). The Lord not only created them, but continually promised to uphold them, and work on their behalf (Exodus 6:6-8, Isaiah 41:10, Ezekiel 36:27).

As we consider these verses about God's creating and carrying grace towards Israel, it is important to realize that the same is true of us, both physically and spiritually. None of us would be alive at all had the Lord not knitted us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13), and none of us would have spiritual life and salvation apart from God causing us to be born again by the power of His Spirit, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ His Son (1 Peter 1:3, John 3:3-8, Ephesians 2:5, Titus 3:5-7). So also, it is true that we would not continue to physically wake up, breath, and walk, except by the empowerment of God through Christ each day (Acts 17:28, Colossians 1:15-17), and neither would we continue to walk in obedience to His commands and grow in the fruit of the Spirit without His working and willing in us (Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:10, Jude 24-25). How incredibly blessed we are to be loved and held by the God of the universe, Whose commands are not burdensome, but life giving (1 John 5:3-4), and Who calls the weary to rest in Him through Christ (Matthew 11:28-30). Praise God that He has formed us, and that He carries us, not just when we are infants, but all throughout our lives, by His grace and kindness.

Discussion Section 3: The One Whose Plans are Certain (V. 9-11)

-How does the Lord differ from idols in these verses?

-Have you ever made your future an idol?

-How might knowing that God's plans will stand bring freedom and comfort to your life?

Application:

-What does this passage teach us about God?

-What idols are weighing you down this week?