**“Insights into Isaiah”—Chapters 46-47**

**Chapter 46—Dead Idols and the Living God**

This chapter displays one of the best satires against idolatry found anywhere in the Word of God. And, it begins with the pronouncement of defeat against the Babylonian idols specifically. Babylon (which means “confusion” in the Bible), is a metaphor for all human society organized and functioning apart from God. It is mankind's attempt to meet his needs with his own resources. Babylon is personified as the great whore in Revelation 18.  In Isaiah 14 the kingdom of Babylon is judged. In Isaiah 46 the idols of Babylon are judged, and in Isaiah 47 the nation, personified as a queen, is chastised.

1. **In verses 1-2, who are Bel and Nebo?** Bel bows down, Nebo stoops: Bel and Nebo were names of two false gods the idol-worshipping nations served. It is as if now God gets personal, naming names when it comes to idols; and now these false gods are brought low. The names of the pagan gods Bel and Nebo are familiar to us in the names *Belshazzar* and *Nebuchadnezzar*. “Bel” is another word for “Baal.” And, from “Nebo” comes the names of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar, and Nebuzanadan. **46:1-- "Bel"** *Bel* (Akkadian for "lord") is a similar title to the Canaanite title *Ba'al*. This is a reference to the chief god of the Akkadian pantheon (*Enlil*, who was called "lord"). As Babylon came to power the chief deity's name was changed to *Marduk* (Jer. 50:2).**"Nebo"** This was the son of *Marduk* (named only here in the OT) and was the god of learning and writing. Bel and Nebo can be seen in many of the Babylonian names of the period (Nebuchadnezzar [Dan. 1:1]; Nebushazban [Jer. 39:13]; Nebuzanadan [Jer. 39:9]; Nabopolassar [first king of Neo-Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar's father]; Nabonidus [Belshazzar's father, last king of Neo-Babylon]; Belteshazzar [Dan. 1:7]; Belshazzar [Dan. 5:1]). These were the two chief gods of the Babylonian pantheon.
   1. **Refer to Isaiah 45:23 and Philippians 2:10. –** Inchapter 45 Isaiah declared that every knee will bow to the Lord, and here he pictures the gods of the great Babylon stooping low in humiliation.
   2. **What is “captivity?**” There is an enslavement to idols that makes evil men captive….a slavery to sin, sex, adultery, gambling, etc.
      1. **Look at liberty in Christ; see Galatians 3:13, 5:1, Romans 7:6, 8:2, 21.**
      2. **Discuss “bowed down” and “stoop.” See Isaiah 45:23. "Bowed down . . . stoops over"** There is a play on the concept "bow down.” It relates to 45:23, the deities of Babylon are bowing before YHWH the Creator.
   3. **Refer to Acts 14:12, where Paul is thought to be Bel/Baal and Barnabas to be Nebo/Mercury.** Bel is the shortened form of Baal and is found in the first part of Satan’s name, “Beelzebub,” while Nebo means “prophet or speaker.” When Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra, the people thought that Barnabas was Bel/Jupiter and Paul was Nebo/Mercury, because he was the talker.
2. **List the series of phrases, verses 2-3, used to describe the one who used to be the ‘queen of the nations’ (Isaiah 47:5, 7) and is now a slave.**  Simply the lot of slaves who were poorly clad and sexually vulnerable.
   1. **She grinds meal, Isaiah 47:2.**
   2. **She removes her veil, Isaiah 47:2.**
   3. **She had to prepare her clothes for hard labor, Isaiah 47:2.**
   4. **She had to cross the rivers herself and not be carried (possibly into exile), Isaiah 47:2.**
   5. **Her nakedness was uncovered, Isaiah 47:3.**
   6. **As a punishment for sin, Isaiah 20:4.**
3. **Verses 3-4 describe God carrying His people. Discuss.**
   1. **Refer to Luke 12:6-7.** I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry: This is the same Fatherly care Jesus spoke of in [Luke 12:6-7](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Luke+12:6-7&t1=en_nas): *Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*”
   2. **Why are both Jacob and Israel mentioned here?**
   3. **What does “from the womb” refer to? Examine Deuteronomy 1:31 and Isaiah 63:9. "Have been carried from the womb"** This primarily is a reference to God as parent and Israel as child. However, it also refers to the formation of the nation of Israel beginning with the Exodus.
   4. **The declarative of verse 4’s “I am He” points to God’s sovereignty. Examine. Use Malachi 3:6. "I shall be the same"** This (lit. I *Am* He cf. NKJV) is the concept that God does not change (Mal. 3:6). Even though Israel has been unfaithful to the covenant, God remains faithful. He is the God of covenant loyalty. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!
   5. **God “carries our sins.” Tie this to verse 4.** 
      1. **See also Isaiah 53:4, I Peter 5:7, and Deuteronomy 33:27.**
4. **Why does God call His people to remember the danger of idols? (5-7)** Isaiah again exposes the ironic folly of idolatry.
   1. **Describe the gold and silver idols made by Israel.**
   2. **Verse 5 compares God to the idols in the land. Talk about Isaiah 43:11, 44:6, 8, 9-20 45:6, and 40:18-20.**  This is the emphasis that no one can be compared with YHWH. This is a comparison between YHWH and the idols of the nations.
   3. **Discuss the fact that most idols are shaped like men. Is this a form of human worship or humanism? Defend your answer.**
5. **Note how verses 6-7 contrast between the one true God of Isaiah 46:5 and the idols of the nations.** 
   1. **Compare with Isaiah 40:18-20.**
6. **In verses 8-9, what is God calling His people to remember and recall?**
7. **“Declaring the end from the beginning,” is a phrase we have seen other places. Examine. See I Samuel 3:12, Job 8:7, Revelation 21:6, Isaiah 44:6, ECCLESIASTES 3:11.** 
   1. **What does “I will do My pleasure” infer?** (8-10)
   2. **Review “former things of old,” verse 9, and compare to 2 Corinthians 5:17, Isaiah 43:18, Philippians 3:13-14, and Hebrews 12:1-2.**
8. **Examine verse 9. Consider 46:9 "the former things long past."**
   1. **See also Isaiah 43:18, 65:17, Jeremiah 16:14 and 23:7 in the covenant with Abraham.** This could refer to YHWH's ancient covenant with Abraham (Isa. 43:18; 65:17; Jer. 16:14; 23:7)
   2. **Look at Deuteronomy 32:7 and Isaiah 46:10-11, 42:9.** YHWH's acts of birthing (i.e., the Exodus) them Israel's ancient promise to be loyal and abide by the covenant (Deut. 32:7 YHWH's proof of His existence by predicting the future (Isa. 46:10,11; 42:9)
   3. **“Declaring the end from the beginning,” verse 9, is a recurrent theme about the prophecy of God. Where else have we seen this in scripture? 46:9-11** Again, God is using the example of predictive prophecy to show that He is in control of history. The emphasis on His purposes, mentioned so often in Isaiah 46:10-11, shows that history is not random but has a divine purpose (i.e. Isaiah. 14:24,26; 25:1). This assurance of YHWH fulfilling His Divine Plan is also seen in Isaiah 14:24; 25:1; 40:8; 55:11.
   4. **Compare the phrase in verse 10 to Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.** YHWH is the "present one" from the "very" beginning to the "very" end (i.e., the first and last)**!**
   5. **See also Revelation 22:13, I Samuel 3:12, and Ecclesiastes 3:11.**
9. **Who is the “bird of prey from the east?”** This is another reference to Cyrus. God’s people need to remember that God always has a deliverer for His people, even if He has to find one among pagan kings!
   1. **See also the mention of Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1.**
10. **Discuss the phrase, “My salvation shall not linger.”**
    1. **Is this a warning to us today?** **My salvation shall not linger**: God’s people need to remember that God’s timing is always precise and wise.
11. **Why is the ending of this chapter, verses 12-13, a very important passage? What does it show? 12"Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, Who are far from righteousness.I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; And My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, *And* My glory for Israel."** This is a very important passage and shows that God will have mercy even on **unbelieving Israel.** This shows that the Jewish people did not deserve God's love and mercy. Many of them were still stubborn and stiff-necked (Isaiah 48:4), but God brought salvation to them **because of who He is** and not because of who they are ( Ezek. 36:22-38). **This is the New Covenant model** (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
    1. **Parallel also to Isaiah 48:4, Ezekiel 36:22-38, and Jeremiah 31: 31-34.**
12. **Discuss the Millennium in verse 13. See Isaiah 61:13, 62:11, Joel 3:17, Zechariah 12:10-13, and Romans 11:25-27.**
13. **What is the “central thought” of chapter 46? Apply it to your own life.**

**Chapter 47—Babylon Brought Low**

If chapter 46 emphasized the fall of the Babylonian idols, then chapter 47 describes the fall of the empire itself (i.e., the city of Babylon) along with its occult prophets and priests. The prophetic literary form of this chapter is a **"funeral dirge."** It is recognized by its unique beat/meter in Hebrew (3, 2 beat, like the poems of Lamentations). It is a funeral lament but in a sarcastic sense (Taunt Song).  This is one of three literary models used by the Hebrew prophets to communicate their divine messages.1. funeral dirge/lament, 2. Court scene, and 3. promise oracle. This is the fourth time Isaiah will refer to the “fall of Babylon;” we saw it in chapters, 13, 14, and 21. Now we are witnessing the same recurring theme!! The language goes far-beyond Isaiah’s time to that of “The Pride of the Chaldeans,” the tribulation.

1. **Who is “the daughter of the Chaldeans?” (**1-3) Babylon, represented as a woman, is humbled. “Come down and sit in the dust!” Isaiah pictures proud Babylon as a humiliated woman, who shall no more be called tender and delicate. She is stripped of her fine clothing, and is forced to march in a forced relocation (pass through the rivers). This is the bold image of a rich, frivolous and sensual young woman who, as a prisoner, is doomed to the despicable state of a slave and in every respect is treated like a Near-Eastern slave woman.
   1. **See Revelation 17-18 where Babylon is referred to as a harlot**.
   2. **Explain the idioms in verse 1**.  **"O virgin daughter of Babylon"** This was a Semitic idiom of security and preciousness in family metaphors. She (the Neo-Babylonian Empire) who was so secure and protected has now become vulnerable. **"Sit in the dust . . . sit on the ground without a throne"** This is literally "sit" (Isa. 47:1[twice], 5, 8 [twice]). It was one of the physical signs of mourning.
      1. **Why is the term “virgin” used of a harlot? Because she has not yet been captured by the Medes/ Persians. Although an ancient kingdom, back in Genesis 10, she hasn’t arisen to world dominance yet.** 
         1. **Review the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.**
   3. **What does it mean, “tender and delicate?” See Deuteronomy 28:56. "Shall no longer be called tender and delicate…."** These two terms are used in Deuteronomy 28:56 for luxurious, extravagant living. This is contrasted with Isaiah 47:2-3, where she is now: 1. a slave and 2. A prostitute.
2. **List the imperatives in verses 1-5 which are directed at Babylon, a queen/harlot, and discuss their implications.**
   1. **“Come down,” Isaiah 47:1** - *Qal* imperative.
   2. **“Sit in the dust,” Isaiah 47:1** - *Qal* imperative (BDB 442, KB 444)
   3. **“Sit on the ground,” Isaiah 47:1** - same as #2 (notice the number of times this term is used in Isa. 47:1 [twice],5, 8 [twice])
   4. **“Take,” Isaiah 47:2** - *Qal* imperative grind, Isa. 47:2 - *Qal* imperative
   5. **“Remove your veil,”** **Isaiah 47:2** - *Piel* imperative
   6. **“Strip off the skirt,: Isaiah 47:2** - *Qal* imperative
   7. **“Uncover the leg,” Isaiah 47:2** - *Piel* imperative
   8. **“Cross the river,: Isaiah 47:2** - *Qal* imperative
   9. **“Let your nakedness be uncovered,” Isaiah 47:3** - *Niphal* jussive
   10. **“Sit silently,” Isaiah 47:5** - same as #3,4
   11. **“Go into darkness,” Isaiah. 47:5** - *Qal* imperative
3. **In verse 4, “Redeemer,” refers to Jesus. What is the definition of “Redeemer?”As for our Redeemer**: Seemingly, Isaiah cannot help himself - when he sees how God will take vengeance on this enemy of God’s people, he praises God and boasts in his **redeemer**. A ***gaal*** had to be a **close relative**. Christ is this too, for according to His humanity He came forth from the Jews. A *gaal* had to **be able to deliver**. The Holy One of Israel does not lack this ability. Sometimes a *gaal* had to **exercise bloody vengeance**. Christ will work bloody vengeance upon Babylon for its oppression of His people. Frequently a *gaal* had **to pay a ransom to free a prisoner**. The Lord Jesus paid with his blood on Golgotha to ransom His people.
4. **Who is the “Lady of Kingdoms**?” from “Mistress of the World” to “slave woman?” (Verses 5-7) and what does she parallel? **And you said, I shall be a lady forever.** Babylon was *blind*, Babylon was *cruel*, and now Babylon is shown to be *proud and presumptuous*. For all these reasons, God promises to humble Babylon. Bultema applies the sense of [Isaiah 47:5-11](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+47:5-11&t1=en_nas) to the corrupt Church: In her self-satisfaction and frivolous self-deception she says, *I shall be a lady*. She claims royal riches, power and honor for herself *for ever*. A queen feels she must reign, and that was also the Church’s goal quite early.
5. **Who is "The queen of kingdoms?"**  Refer also to 47: 2, 3, 7-8. This is an idiom of Neo-Babylon's view of itself and its power (Isaiah 47:7). The queen has become a sex slave (Isaiah 47:2-3,8a). What she did to exiles will now happen to her (i.e., divinely caused role reversal). **It is also possible that this idiom relates to Nabonidus leading Neo-Babylon away from *Marduk* to the worship of the moon goddess called "the Queen of heaven." She was called *Sin* (Akkadian) or *Nanna* (Summerian).**
   1. **Could this be the corrupt church?** Defend your answer.
6. **In verse 6, Babylon showed God’s people no mercy. Discuss, using Jeremiah 50:17-18, 51:33-40, and Zechariah 1:15.**
7. **Why does sudden humiliation come to Babylon?** (8-9)
   1. **What two things come to pass in one moment?** “Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children; but these two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day: **The loss of children,** and **widowhood.** They shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments.”

**It seems from Daniel 5 and from Herodotus that the people of Babylon laughed at the approaching Persian army. However, the Persian army rechanneled the waters of the Euphrates River, went under the walls of this magnificent city, and in one day the city fell (Daniel 5). The people of Babylon saw the Persians as liberators because Belshazzar and his father, Nabonidus, had begun to worship a strange moon goddess called *Sin* and Cyrus allowed them to return to their traditional deities-*Bel*, *Marduk*, and *Nebo*.**

* 1. **Compare the phrase, “one day,” to Daniel 5:28-30.**
  2. **Review “Mystery Babylon” in Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, Revelation 17-18, and Isaiah 47.** MYSTERY BABYLON IS FEATURED IN REVELATION. Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, Revelation 17-18, and Isaiah 47.
  3. **How does Isaiah 47:8 echo the “letter to Thyatira” in Revelation 18**:4?”echoing letter to Thyatira”—for she saith in her heart, “I sit a queen, and am a widow……..Isaiah 47:8…..same..what is “Mystery Babylon?” Genesis 11—pagan religion starts at Babel…..Constantine pulls much from this in his taking on Christianity….New Age, Catholicism, Apostate Christian Church—ecumenicalism. Could this brag be that many false religions is a post-rapture brag about not losing many of her children in the rapture?
     1. **Where else do we see, “not sit as a widow and loss of children?” See also Revelation 18:4-7, compared to Isaiah 47:8.**
  4. **Verse 9’s "loss of children" seems to tie to Isaiah 13:16, 18. Comment.**

1. **What will happen because of Babylon’s wickedness?** (10-11) Therefore evil shall come upon you: And it did for Babylon, which was suddenly conquered in one night, when they believed all was safe and secure (as recorded in Daniel 5).
   1. **See also Daniel 5, Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, and 1 Peter 5:5.**
   2. **Sinners foolishly think they are safe, according to verse 10. Compare with Ezekiel 8:12, 9:9, and Luke 17:27.**
2. **Isaiah 47:9 specifies the degradation of “sorcery.” Refer also to Deuteronomy 18:9 and Isaiah 47:11-13. "many sorceries. . .the great power of your spells"** The emphasis on Babylon's occultic practices, made so specific here in Isaiah 47:9, is continued in Isaiah 47:11-13. These practices are condemned in Deuteronomy 18:9. For all her magical arts Babylon could not protect herself, which shows the corruptness and ineffectiveness of occult practices (the weakness of her gods).
   1. **List the types of occult practices found in Isaiah 47:9-13.**
   2. **See also Revelation 18:23.**
3. **Why are verses 12-13 wonderful examples of ‘justification by faith?’ Comment.**
4. **And, here are some points to consider.** 
   1. **What is the parallel between Isaiah 45:23 and 46:1-2?**
   2. **What is the “word play” between Isaiah 46:1-2 and 46:3-4?**
   3. **How is monotheism emphasized in Isaiah 46 and 47?**
   4. **Can Isaiah 46:8 be linked with Isaiah 46:12?**
   5. **Does one reconcile God's control over history with human freedom?**
5. **How can chapter 47 be summed-up to make it applicable to us today?**
6. **What was the central theme of chapters 46-47? Biblical truths?** 
   1. **Parallel this chapter with Revelation 18.**

**And, here are “The Promises”……**

**Isaiah 46:3-4, “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, Who have been upheld *by Me* from birth, Who have been carried from the womb: 4Even to *your* old age, I *am* He, And *even* to gray hairs I will carry *you!* I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you.”***

**Isaiah 46: 9-10a, “Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; *I am* God, and *there is* none like Me, 10Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done…”**