

Gods of Babylon—Isaiah 46:1–13

Open It

1. Why do you think we tend to compare ourselves with other people?
2. Do you remember when you were carried as a child by your parents?

Isaiah 46:1–13 (ESV)

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

²They 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;

⁴even 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?

⁶Those 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!

⁷They 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,

⁹remember 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 not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’

¹¹calling 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:

¹³I 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.”

Explore It

3. What observations does Isaiah make about Bel and Nebo, the gods of the conquering Babylonians? (46:1–2)
4. In what ways does the text use the word “burden”? (46:1–2)
5. In contrast to gods that must be carried, what relationship did Jehovah have with Israel? (46:3–4)
6. What do we know about the process of setting up an idol which is totally unlike God? (46:5–7)
7. Who did Isaiah intend to take these words about the uniqueness of God to heart? (46:8)

8. In what respects does God show Himself to be totally different from idols? (46:9–10)
9. How was the threat from the east part of God's purpose? (46:11)
10. What assurance is given concerning God's words and plans? (46:11)
11. What heart attitude was God addressing through this prophecy of Isaiah? (46:12)
12. What does God say about His righteousness? (46:13)

Get It

13. How does God compare to the things that our contemporary world worships?
14. What difference can it make to our faith that God's righteousness is near?

Apply It

15. In what current difficulty could you be strengthened by reminding yourself that God will carry you?