

Isaiah 46:1–11

¹ Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; Their idols were on the beasts and on the cattle. Your carriages were heavily loaded, A burden to the weary beast.

² They stoop, they bow down together; They could not deliver the burden, But have themselves gone into captivity.

³ “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:

⁴ Even 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.

⁵ “To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal And compare Me, that we should be alike?

⁶ They lavish gold out of the bag, And weigh silver on the scales; They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship.

⁷ They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it And set it in its place, and it stands; From its place it shall not move. Though one cries out to it, yet it cannot answer Nor save him out of his trouble.

⁸ “Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O 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 that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’

¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

“He Who Holds Tomorrow” Isaiah 46:8-11

INTRO:

Ira Stanphill wrote: *“Many things about tomorrow/ I don’t seem to understand/ but I know who holds tomorrow/and I know who holds my hand.”* While we sing about it, the question is: *“do we really believe it?”* In **Isaiah 46**, Isaiah was the mouthpiece for a conversation the LORD carried on with His covenant people. The subject of the conversation is who holds tomorrow.

In the context, the LORD talked about the Jewish proclivity toward idolatry. In the **first two verses** of **Isaiah 46**, the LORD described how they had to carry their idols. ***“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols were on the beasts and on the cattle. Your carriages were heavily loaded, a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together. They could not deliver the burden, but have themselves gone into captivity.”*** These foolish people, who were addicted to idolatry had to carry their gods.

Now listen to the contrast our Lord drew in **verses 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: even 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.”*** In effect God asked, *“Do you want a god you have to carry or a God who can carry you?”*

The crux of the chapter is a question the LORD asked in **verse 5**. ***“To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we should be alike?”***

In our text, our LORD told us why no idol could ever represent Him.

- I. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of Yesterday (vs. 8-9a)*
- II. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of Tomorrow (vs. 10-11)*
- III. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of the Present (v. 9b)*

I. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of Yesterday (vs. 8-9a)

A. The first reason He is the only true God is because He is the God of yesterday.

“Remember this, and show yourselves men. Recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old.”

These gods they lugged around were not the gods which gave them their history. Their history was the work of the one true and living God.

B. What a history this was.

1. Yahweh made all things. Then out of all the peoples He created, God chose one man, Abraham. He called Abraham out of the paganism of Ur of the Chaldees to the land of promise. With Abraham God made a covenant promising a nation would come from Him. Yahweh promised to uniquely be with Abraham's people, they who were to be His covenant people.

2. He brought them into Egypt to wait for the sins of the Amorite to become full. Then He brought them out through Moses opening the Red Sea for them to cross. He provided manna for them and carried them through the wilderness wanderings. Finally, He brought them into the promised land. He gave them leaders and victories.

3. In short, the LORD led them all the way. How did Israel pay Him back? They rejected the living God and gave their worship and service to dead idols!

C. Truly, God was the God of Israel's past. Their history was His story. It was the story of His provision, His watch care, His carrying them every step of the way.

1. What about us? Do we recognize that God has been the God of our past also? Have we ever thought about all the events and people God coordinated so we would be saved?

(1) Perhaps, He gave you a Christian home and you have heard the gospel from the time of your earliest memories.

(2) He may have brought a friend, relative, or acquaintance into your life at exactly the right moment for you to respond. Whatever the circumstances, you can be sure God was at work in the background. He was at work in both you and your life before you were converted!

2. Think of where you are now. Who did God bring into your life to help you grow in Him?

(1) How did you find your spouse or your job? What did God do to bring you to this place here and now?

(2) God is always at work in our lives. This is why **Romans 8:28** is such a blessing.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Although we cannot see the whole picture, we can see enough to know that God was the God of our past. Our history is also His story.

II. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of Tomorrow (vs. 10-11)

A. Not only was our Yahweh the God of our yesterdays, He will be the God of our tomorrows also.

1. While we often have little trouble seeing the hand of God at work in our past, we somehow think God is passive in our future.

2. We think things like, He knows the future because He can look down the corridors of time and see what will happen. The fact is, God knows what will happen because He makes it happen! **Isaiah 46:10-11**

“Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.”

B. What about Israel’s future? God declared it.

1. **Isaiah** is a book full of prophecies describing how God would send Judah into captivity if she did not get rid of her idols. The book of **Jeremiah** is much like it. Still, even in all of the judgment and doom we read incredible statements of promise. My favorite statement of God’s mercy on Israel is found in **Jeremiah 29:10-14**

“For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.”

2. This all brings us face to face with a mystery. Some people would say to us that if God is in control of the future, and He carries out His purposes in the way God Himself said here in Isaiah, man is just a puppet and God is somehow culpable for our sins.

3. He does control the future just as He controlled the past. Still, we must do our part to obey and serve Him. He is not responsible for our sin, nor is He responsible for the consequences we suffer because of the foolish things we do.

4. How is this possible? I do not know. However, consider how God worked in the past. We read how that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the entire world be enrolled in a census. This census just happened to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in time for Jesus to be born there as prophesied by Micah the prophet. Now, why did Caesar decide to do this? It was because he wanted to do it. He did it of his own free will. But God also decreed that Caesar should do this and it happened.

4. It is only because God holds the future that **Romans 8:28** is true.

“We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

God can work all things together for good for those who are His because He is actively working out our future.

III. There Is No One Like Me Because I Am the God of the Present (v.9b)

A. We need to remember there is no one like our God because He is the God of the past. He is also the God of the future. Finally, our God is also the God of the present. This is the thrust of God’s statement in **verse 9**.

“For I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like Me.”

B. Israel needed to recognize that the God who created the past and controls the future is the same God who is Lord right now. He is the God who is carrying them. He is the God who is correcting them. He is the God who pleads with them to return to Him. He is the God they must fear, love, obey, worship, and serve.

C. We must not forget our God created the past. Our history is His Story. We also must remember that our God controls the future. Our future is in His hands. Most of all we must recognize that He is our God in the present. We must fear, love, obey, worship, and serve Him.

1. To do this we must first come to know Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, who came into this world to die for us that we might live in Him.

2. We then need to grow in Him, learning to fear Him by recognizing who our God is and what He is like. We need to learn to love Him because He first loved us. We express this love by obeying Him. And we must worship Him in the beauty of His holiness. Then we will serve Him recognizing we owe everything to Him.

3. We learn from this passage that if we know who holds tomorrow it will change our lives.

Hymn# 178 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded