

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 46**

**ISAIAH**

**CHAPTER 46**

**Theme:** "God's Counsel shall Stand!"

**THEME VERSES**

**Isaiah 46:9-10** (KJV) "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

**INTRODUCTION**

The contrast between the kings of the earth and the LORD God of Israel continues in this chapter of Isaiah 46. We see the power of Man and of nations and we tremble. What our five senses perceive must not be more potent and influential in our lives than what the Bible reveals to us about God. Sadly this is a struggle that persists in many believers' lives in our age of atomic power. Never before has the world seen superpower nations possessing so much power. In the past, it was battle ships, and then came the tanks followed by the aeroplanes which led to the invention of jet planes. Today, thousands of these jet operated atomic weapons are

at the disposal of sinful men who could literally wipe the world out of existence by fire. This used to be the power that belonged only to God in time past. But today, it is in the hands of a few select nations and some of these nations are ruled by men who are prone to war mongering. It is therefore not surprising that Man, including believers, tend to give more weight to the power of man than to God. This is a tragedy that must cease because it affects the faith of the child of God to have such a distorted view of the potency of man and the omni-potency of God.

The world will always look to powerful men and nations in fear and trepidation. History has revealed that smaller nations will always appeal to these powerful nations for security and wealth. This will never change. However, the nation of Israel is God's nation. She is not supposed to be like the rest of the nations in the Gentile world. Israel must look to God alone for help to provide, protect and deliver. Israel must not turn to other nations for to do so means that the God of Israel is not able to take care of His own people and secondly, it implies that the gods of these Gentile nations are more powerful than the God of Israel. This is a sin and it insults God! This was the tragedy that Isaiah dealt with in his days.

The local churches today must learn from this principle when they appeal to the Gentiles and the Gentile governments to assist them in their spiritual work. It is one thing to do business and pay for services

rendered but another when God's people ask for "free" things to build churches or buy vehicles or do mission work.

### OUTLINE

1. The LORD reigns and not kings! (vv.1-4);
2. The limitations of idols (vv. 5-7);
3. Remember what the LORD has done! (vv. 8-13).

### COMMENTARY

#### The LORD reigns and not kings! – 46:1-4

**Verse 1** – Bel (Babylonian name for Baal) and Nebo (note that Nebuchadnezzar was named after this deity) were deities of the Babylonians. Both of these gods were major deities in Babylonian history. By saying that they bow down and stoop before the LORD, it does not imply that God acknowledges their reality as if they were real gods in equal standing with the LORD. Here the LORD merely declares that they are nothing before God. They are beneath God and that is why they need to bow down in worship of the LORD. This means that when the chief gods bow to the LORD and the Babylonians bow to these deities, the Babylonians also bow to the LORD! The Babylonians may not admit this but this is precisely what it means when they bow to their deities!

These idols were carried by the beasts like the cattle. The carriages were heavy due to the weight of these

manmade deities. They became burdens to the weary beasts. How great can these deities be when they had to be carried around by weary beasts! They are helpless and they are nothing but burdens to the people who worship them! If their gods are nothing but burdens, then how can they help the Babylonians to defeat the people of God?

**Verse 2** – They stoop and they bow down together before the LORD! These refer to the deities rather than the cattle. These deities could not deliver the burden i.e. they cannot carry themselves. They were made of gold or brass or some form of precious metal, which made them very heavy. The cattle that carried them in carriages became weary because of their heavy burden. These idols cannot move or carry their own weight implying that they cannot move! If they cannot move how can they help! They themselves are gone into captivity! What it means here is that these deities are like dead men with their souls in captivity. The Bible is being ironical here to drive home the point that it is great foolishness to fear idols and to bow down to idols!

**Verse 3** – The LORD commands Israel to listen and obey the LORD. Israel is called "house of Jacob" here to let Israel know that she is behaving in sin like the old Jacob before his name was changed by the LORD to Israel. Jacob means "usurper." Israel has become a house that usurps the authority of the LORD. When Israel disobeys the Word of the LORD it is as good as challenging the

authority of God. He thinks he is better and smarter than God by his rejection of God's Word. He believes that his way is better. God also included here all the ones who are called the remnant of Israel (implying the obedient ones). Both groups continue to exist in Israel.

God said that Israel was borne by Him the word for "borne" is the same word as used in verse 1 and translated as "heavy loaden." Israel had been a heavy load to the LORD. Note the difference between the LORD and the deities of Babylonian. In the case of the Babylonian deities these deities were a heavy load to the Babylonians and their cattle. In the case of the LORD, He carried Israel and Israel was a heavy load to the LORD! This is what God is supposed to do by carrying the worshipper and not the other way round! The LORD had been carrying Israel since the birth of Israel, even before she came out of the womb! This is a true mark of a real God! He helps and is not helped! If the worshipper helps the gods then the worshipper is stronger and greater than the gods! The deities are the ones who need help and therefore they cannot help!

**Verse 4** – The LORD had been carrying Israel from the time she began to exist in the womb to her old age. Israel was more than a thousand years old from the time of Abraham in Genesis 12. Israel is like an old man with hoary hairs! The LORD says that He is the One. He has never for a moment deserted Israel. Israel had been carried by the LORD like a heavy

load all these many years! When a man is old he cannot walk any more. The LORD carried Israel then and is still carrying Israel now! The LORD has made and has borne and has carried and has delivered Israel. He has never deserted nor failed Israel at all, these hundreds of years!

#### **The Limitations of idols – 46:5-7**

**Verse 5** – The LORD challenges Israel, the people of God, to dare to compare the LORD to anyone or anything. Dare Israel make anything or anyone equal with God? The phrase "that we may be like" means "that we may resemble" the LORD to any gods on earth or in heaven! There is nothing that is like God. He is the One living and true God for beside Him there is no one else! This truth will never change. Man and man's surroundings keep changing but this truth about God's unique omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient character no one can duplicate or even come close for comparison!

**Verse 6** – In the case of idols there are millions of them. They are common all over the world and throughout the ages! They are made by the hands of man! They are beautified by man to make them as glamorous as possible and as large as possible to give them that semblance of power and might! Gold and silver are used lavishly for these are the precious metals that mean a lot to man. If the gods are covered by cheap and common material, then the idols resemble weakness and poverty. To ensure that man is attracted to these

idols they have to be covered by gold and silver. Goldsmiths are hired to make them. With their craftsmanship, a god is created out of these precious metals. Then men bow down and worship before these golden and silver gods!

The point of this verse is clear. How can the idols be called gods when they are created by man! How can man who created these gods bow down and worship i.e. serve or pay homage to them as their creator when they should be greater than them. These idols ought to bow and worship man instead and not the other way round! Man has lost all sense of logic when he turns to idols. This is an example of blindness that has impacted the lives of all who bow down and worship idols, without exception!

**Verse 7** – These dead idols that cannot move are carried on the shoulders of the worshippers. They move these idols from one place to another and house them in temples and then set them up and make them stand. These idols are completely helpless! Where their worshippers place them will become their resting place forever unless the worshippers decide to move them again!

When the worshippers cry to them for help they cannot answer! When they ask these idols to save them, they cannot move or save them out of their trouble. These idols are utterly and completely useless! Why would Israel call them gods! They are weak and impotent. Conversely, the one living and true God is able to help. He does not need to be carried. In fact

He was the One who has been carrying Israel throughout all of Israel's existence. He has been helping and protecting Israel from her many enemies since the day Israel came out of Egypt! When the LORD is such a wonderful and powerful God, why would Israel depart and turn to idols! It makes no sense at all! The logic of the LORD's argument is indisputable.

**Remember what the LORD has done! – 46:8-13**

**Verse 8** – Using the imperative, the LORD challenged Israel to remember this! "This" refers to what the LORD had just written about Himself and the idols. If Gentile nations worship idols, it is understandable as they have not been given the Truth i.e. the Word of God. They were not given the Temple and the priesthood to teach them the right way of worship. They worship idols because they do not know better and were not expected to! However, Israel was the people of God. They had been given the Word from God from the time of Abraham! They had the presence of the LORD with them from the very beginning of their existence. They have been given the priests and levities who taught them the Word of God. When they erred and strayed from the truth, the LORD sent them prophets to rebuke and redirect them back to the right path!

Israel has no excuse to make and bow down to idols in worship! Remember this! Israel is God's people! Israel must worship only God.

**Verse 9** – The LORD used the imperative again in the next verse.

This time the remembrance was with regards to the former things! Before, Israel was charged by God to remember the present and her foolishness by making and bowing to idols. In this verse, Israel was charged by the LORD to remember what the LORD has done for Israel. The LORD is God! There is no difference between the two. The LORD made the covenant with Israel. God protected Israel but they are one and the same! There is no other like Him.

Israel had known this through the records of Holy Scripture! There is no one like the LORD God as well. The LORD is unique and there will never be anyone like Him. Therefore it is ludicrous for Israel to make God out of gold and silver and then call these dead objects "gods"! How could Israel be so blind!

**Verse 10** – The LORD declares the end from the beginning! The LORD knows all things from the beginning to the end! There is nothing that He does not already know. He will never be caught by surprise at all by anyone! The omniscience of God is emphasized here. Regarding the future, the LORD says, "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." Whatever the LORD declares will surely come to pass. There is nothing that the LORD has said that will be empty and vanity! God can never lie! He will do all things according to His sovereign pleasure!

If He wants to remove the most powerful man on earth, He will just do it. No army or anything or anyone can stop Him, not even for a millisecond! If

He wants to destroy this earth even this universe, He will just do it! The world will always be at the absolute control of God Almighty! This past demonstration of God's power in Israel must not be forgotten by Israel. It will stand Israel in good state if she would remember who her LORD is.

**Verse 11** – The LORD continues with His treatise on the former so that Israel might not forget the LORD and turn to impotent idols. He calls a ravenous bird from the east and the man who comes from the east will do His counsel. He comes from a far country. God is not limited by time or space. The identity of this man from the east which is described as a ravenous bird is none other than Cyrus, the Persian king. He will come into Israel and accomplish the will of the LORD God of Israel. The LORD is not only in control of Israel and her existence but that of the whole world.

Obviously, Cyrus was not even born yet at this juncture. But the LORD wanted Israel to realize and understand that He is God Almighty who transcends time. With great affirmation, the LORD states that He has spoken it and He will bring in to pass. He has purposed it and He will surely do it! Just as all the former things came to pass that the LORD has declared concerning the future, likewise, this prophecy regarding Cyrus coming from a far country to do God's Will, will also come to pass.

**Verse 12** – Listen and obey the LORD is the appeal. This is a command of the same magnitude as verses 8 and 9. The hearts of many

Israelites were stout. The word for "stout" means "proud." The Israelites thought that they were very clever. They believed that the word of man was greater and better than the Word of God. This foolishness abounds today as well in many churches. This pride in man is a deadly sin that has destroyed many in life and in death. They end up in Hell after they die with this pride in their hearts! They do not fear God. They fear nothing not even death! This is what stoutness of heart can do to a person.

These proud ones are far from righteousness. They live in sin and great immorality as they worship these idols. The worship of idols is not a minor or innocent sin. Romans 1 reveals to us the many fruits of idolatry. It is sad when God's people who have the truth so near to them are so far from doing what is right! The path of righteousness was before them but they turn away from it and chose the path of sin and idolatry. The evidence of one who is in the path of righteousness is one who has a heart of flesh filled with humility.

**Verse 13** – The rebuke of the LORD is always accompanied graciously by an appeal toward reconciliation. But the reconciliation must be on God's terms. The LORD brings near His righteousness. All Israel needs to do is to reach out and take it. Israel must turn from her idolatry and many sins and come back to the LORD who loved them and sent Jesus to die for them. The righteousness shall not be far off. The LORD will discipline Israel by bringing

the ravenous bird. Chastisement from a loving Father is to bring about righteousness and holiness and not destruction. The LORD's righteousness is nearby means that the LORD is nearby too. The LORD's salvation will not tarry. The moment Israel turns from her sin and back to the LORD, salvation is given. There is no way Israel can stop or stem the tide of the enemies that God will send. All the alliances that Israel makes to prevent the enemies from coming to destroy Israel are futile. It is as good as fighting against God. This means that Israel has more hope in telling the sun not to rise and shine than to stop God from sending His discipline to bring Israel back to Himself!

The LORD will place i.e. give salvation in Zion for Israel, which was God's glory! Zion means "guiding pillar". Zion will be restored and salvation will come through Israel. Israel will be the glory of the LORD when salvation comes through her. This is of course a reference to Christ as well as the manifestation of her testimony of God's grace and mercy. God's plan of salvation for mankind cannot fail. Amen.

## DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Daily Readings

**MONDAY:** Isaiah 46:1-4

**TUESDAY:** Isaiah 46:5-13

**WEDNESDAY:** Isaiah 46:1-13

**THURSDAY:** Isaiah 46:1-13

**FRIDAY:** Isaiah 46:1-13

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the attraction in worshipping idols? How does the worship of idols ensnare a person? Please elaborate.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What makes man bow down and worship idols? Please explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. If a professing believer who grew up in church, serves in the YF and sang in the choir and then marries a Roman Catholic, would you question her salvation? If she leaves her protestant church and joins her husband to worship in his Roman Catholic church, would you then say that she is not born again in the first place? Please explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Which kind of idols is the most deadly or all in snaring its victims? How would you define what an idol is? Can your child/children become your idols? Please elaborate.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. How do you explain the word "omniscience" in relation to God? How does the knowledge of the omniscience of God impact your life today? Please explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6. Is prophecy and omniscient the same? What is the difference and how are they related to one another?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7. How do the past deeds of God as recorded in Holy Scripture impact you? Cite an example please. How does the future prophecies of the LORD affect your present?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---