

“Wasting Idol Time” Isaiah 46:1- 47:15

Context: God contrasts His power to deliver with the powerless gods of Babylon. The prophecy comes in the context of a prediction that Cyrus the Persian will serve as a messianic type by conquering Babylon and delivering Israel from their physical bondage in the Babylonian captivity. The completion of this God-given prophecy proved the omniscience and omnipotence of YHWH and also proved the gods of Babylon unreal. The entire prophecy and context serve to remind the Remnant to resist the temptation to idolatry by which their ancestors fell. At least twelve proclamations attesting to monotheism in the face of idolatry are found in Isaiah 43 - 46. All affirm the command to worship the only true God revealed in the *Shema* given at Mount Sinai. This command was confirmed by Jesus as the greatest commandment. **Life Principle:** That to which your heart endears is your G/god. (cp. 46:6; 9).

1. Wasted idols – Isaiah 46:1-13

The idols of Babylon neither deliver their devotees nor do they escape their devotees' devastation. Instead, they prove themselves burdensome to all, even to the beasts that carry them. In contrast, using a crescendo of “I” statements, God reveals Himself as the One who carries, sustains, and rescues His people from conception through old age. The trustworthiness of His promise of Messiah's salvation and the permeation of His glory in the Remnant can be confirmed by His unhindered fulfillment of past prophecies. It is a promise of hope applicable to His Church as it struggles under the oppression of the world order of the day.

2. Wasted time – Isaiah 47:1-13

Fittingly, the demise of the Babylonian gods is to be followed by the collapse of the Babylonian world order attached to those gods. Thoughtlessness was a cause of Babylon's sin, cruelty, arrogance, and subsequent judgment. It is a deep-down fact, an *ürphenomenon*, marking out a necessary pattern of arrogant mental neglect leading to judgment (cf. vv 6-7). In their self-aggrandizement, they did not consider their victory over Israel as God's punishment of the Jewish people for their idolatry. Certainly, God gave the Babylonian leadership ample revelation (i.e. Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, and Daniel). Instead, they wallowed in sensual pleasure and relied upon their self-made gods for truth, morals, and deliverance.

Study questions:

- Scripture clearly prohibits the worship, possession, or tolerance of idols. As a **Bible study method**, look up the use of idols in the Old and New Testaments (i.e. Matthew 6:24; Acts 17:16; Romans 2:22; 1 Corinthians 5:10ff; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 2:14, 20; 9:20; 21:8). How are the usages similar? How are the usages different? What penchant might you have toward idolatry?
- Isaiah 46:9 is one of at least twelve proclamations declaring the existence of only one God, as described in our doctrinal statement (see footnote 1-4 ‘**On God**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org) Also look at Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Exodus 20:3-5; Matthew 22:37; Isaiah 43:10; 43:11; 43:12; 44:6; ; 44:8; 45:5; 45:6; 45:14; 45:21; 45:22; and 46:9. What does God's command to worship Him as the only God have to do with man's desire to be like God in the fall and humanity's creation of idols throughout this age (cf. Genesis 3:5)? Would God's eternal experience of incarnation as Jesus Christ make Him any less than God before humanity's experience of His incarnation? Is Jesus a lesser god?
- Read the account of the Babylonian King Belshazzar in Daniel 5. How had God worked through Daniel in the past in order that the Babylonians could trust God's revelation through him then? Do the descriptions of Isaiah 47 aptly describe the behavior of King Belshazzar in Daniel 5? How about the description of the end of Babylonia prophesied in Isaiah 47:11 and the outcome of that end described in Daniel 5:30? Other examples of this type of *ürphenomenon*, can be found in Exodus 1:8; Judges 2:10ff and John 9:29.

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 47:7b. Will you take time this week to reflect on the G/god to which your heart endears, the actions that come from heart desires, and the consequences which God may bring for your actions and attitudes?