

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Isaiah Chapter 46 — The Living God Versus Lifeless Idols

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Isaiah Chapter 46 presents one of the clearest contrasts in Scripture between:

False gods.

And:

The living God.

The chapter begins with:

Bel.

Nebo.

Two prominent Babylonian deities.

But they are not pictured as:

Triumphant.

Powerful.

Victorious.

Instead:

They bow.

They stoop.

They must be:

Loaded onto animals.

Carried away.

Their images become:

Burdens.

That is the great irony of the chapter.

False gods must be:

Carried.

The true God:

Carries His people.

False gods become:

Burdens.

The Lord bears:

Burdens.

False gods cannot:

Move.

Speak.

Answer.

Save.

The Lord says:

“I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

Isaiah deliberately sets these truths:

Side by side.

The question is not merely:

Which god is stronger?

The deeper contrast is:

Which God is alive?

Babylon's idols are:

Made.

Transported.

Positioned.

Supported.

Carried.

The Lord:

Makes.

Carries.

Sustains.

Rescues.

The chapter therefore forces the worshiper to ask:

Am I carrying my god?

Or is my God carrying me?

Then Isaiah moves from:

Idolatry.

To:

God's eternal counsel.

The Lord says:

“Remember the former things.”

Why?

Because history proves:

His faithfulness.

Then comes one of Scripture's strongest declarations of divine sovereignty:

“I make known the end from the beginning.”

And:

“My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”

God is not:

Guessing.

Reacting.

Improvising.

Panicking.

Trying to rescue His plan from human events.

His purpose:

Stands.

What He says:

He brings about.

What He plans:

He does.

The “bird of prey” from the east continues the theme developed in Isaiah 41, 44, and 45.

The historical figure is:

Cyrus.

God summons him:

From afar.

For:

His purpose.

Again, the point is not:

The greatness of Cyrus.

The point is:

The sovereignty of God.

Cyrus moves because:

God summons.

History moves because:

God purposes.

Then the chapter ends by addressing:

The stubborn-hearted.

Those far from:

Righteousness.

Yet even here the emphasis remains on:

Grace.

God says:

“I am bringing My righteousness near.”

And:

“My salvation will not be delayed.”

The stubborn people are not told:

Climb up to righteousness.

They are told:

God is bringing righteousness near.

The central truth of Isaiah 46 is:

Babylon's idols must be carried and cannot save, but the living God carries, sustains, and rescues His people from birth to old age; He alone knows the end from the beginning, His purpose cannot fail, He raises rulers to accomplish His will, and He brings His righteousness and salvation near to His people.

I. BEL BOWS DOWN

Isaiah 46:1 — Babylon's Gods Become Burdens

“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are loaded onto beasts of burden. The images you carry are heavy loads, a burden for weary animals.”

Bel and Nebo were associated with:

Babylonian religion.

Yet Isaiah pictures them:

Bent.

Stooping.

Carried.

A god should:

Carry the worshiper.

These idols must be:

Carried by animals.

Cross References

Jeremiah 50:2

Jeremiah later announces Babylon's fall and specifically declares that Bel will be put to shame and Babylon's idols exposed.

Jeremiah 51:44

God promises judgment upon Bel and declares that what Babylon trusted will be humiliated.

Psalms 115:4

The idols of the nations are made from silver and gold by human hands and possess no living power.

Spiritual Principle

A god that must be transported cannot:

Transport you through life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Anything you must carry in order to keep it functioning cannot be your ultimate Savior.

II. THE IDOLS CANNOT RESCUE THEMSELVES

Isaiah 46:2 — Gods Going into Captivity

“They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go into captivity.”

The picture becomes even more devastating.

The idols cannot:

Rescue their worshipers.

They cannot even:

Rescue themselves.

They become:

Captives.

Cross References

Jeremiah 43:12

God declares that the idols of Egypt can be broken and carried away, showing their helplessness before divine judgment.

1 Samuel 5:4

The idol Dagon was found fallen and broken before the ark of the Lord, exposing the impotence of false gods.

Isaiah 46:7

Later in this chapter, the idol is pictured unable to move, answer, or save anyone from trouble.

Spiritual Principle

False gods fail:

At the moment salvation is needed most.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If your god can become a prisoner, he cannot free prisoners.

III. GOD CARRIES HIS PEOPLE

Isaiah 46:3 — Carried from the Womb

“Listen to Me, house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and carried from the womb.”

What a contrast.

Verse 1:

People carry idols.

Verse 3:

God carries people.

The Lord says:

From birth.

From the womb.

I carried:

You.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 1:31

Moses reminds Israel that God carried them through the wilderness as a father carries his child.

Isaiah 63:9

God is pictured sharing the distress of His people, redeeming them and carrying them through former days.

Exodus 19:4

God reminds Israel that He carried them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself.

Spiritual Principle

The true God does not:

Burden His people like an idol.

He bears them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The idol says:

“Carry me.”

God says:

“I will carry you.”

IV. GOD CARRIES THROUGH OLD AGE

Isaiah 46:4 — From Birth to Gray Hair

“Even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

One of Scripture’s tenderest promises.

God does not say:

I carried you only when:

Young.

Useful.

Strong.

Productive.

He says:

To old age.

To gray hair.

Cross References

Psalms 71:18

The psalmist asks God not to forsake him in old age so he can continue declaring God’s power to future generations.

Psalms 68:19

The Lord is praised as the God who daily bears the burdens of His people and saves them.

Isaiah 40:11

God is pictured as a Shepherd who carries lambs close to His heart and gently leads His flock.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness does not expire with:

Human strength.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You may become weaker with age.

The arms carrying you do not.

V. "I HAVE MADE YOU"

This is the foundation.

God does not merely say:

I will carry you.

He says:

I made you.

Spiritual Principle

The Creator takes responsibility for:

His covenant people.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The One who formed you is not confused about how to sustain you.

VI. "I WILL CARRY YOU"

This is:

Present.

Future.

Personal.

Spiritual Principle

God's care is not merely:

Historical.

It continues.

VII. “I WILL SUSTAIN YOU”

To sustain means:

To hold up.

Maintain.

Support.

Keep.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not merely start the journey.

He supplies strength for the road.

VIII. “I WILL RESCUE YOU”

Carrying does not eliminate:

Danger.

But it includes:

Deliverance.

Spiritual Principle

The God who sustains can also:

Save.

IX. TO WHOM WILL YOU COMPARE GOD?

Isaiah 46:5 — No Equal

“To whom will you compare Me or count Me equal? To whom will you liken Me, that we may be alike?”

The answer:

No one.

Isaiah has already asked this question in:

Chapter 40.

Now he repeats it.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:18

Isaiah asks what likeness could possibly be compared with God.

Isaiah 40:25

The Holy One challenges anyone to produce an equal.

Psalms 89:6

No being in heaven can be compared with the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Every comparison eventually:

Breaks down.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God may be illustrated by created things, but He can never be contained by the illustration.

X. PEOPLE PAY TO MAKE THEIR GOD

Isaiah 46:6 — Gold Becomes an Idol

“Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it.”

The sequence is tragic.

Money.

Craftsman.

Object.

Worship.

They pay someone:

To make their god.

Cross References

Exodus 32:4

Aaron fashioned Israel's gold into a calf, and the people treated the manufactured object as divine.

Jeremiah 10:9

Silver and gold are shaped by craftsmen into idols.

Hosea 8:4

Israel used silver and gold to manufacture idols, turning material blessing into false worship.

Spiritual Principle

Wealth can become:

The raw material of idolatry.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When money creates what you worship, money is already controlling more than your wallet.

XI. THE IDOL MUST BE CARRIED

Isaiah 46:7 — It Cannot Move, Answer, or Save

“They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and it stands there. From that spot it cannot move. Even if someone cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save them from their troubles.”

This verse gives four failures.

It cannot:

Move.

Answer.

Respond.

Save.

The worshiper cries.

The idol:

Stands there.

Silent.

Cross References

Psalm 115:7

Idols have feet but cannot walk and possess no living power.

Jeremiah 10:5

Idols cannot move and must be carried because they have no ability to act.

Habakkuk 2:19

Those who ask wood or stone to awaken receive no answer because there is no life within the idol.

Spiritual Principle

A silent god is useless in:

A crying world.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not entrust your deepest prayer to something incapable of hearing it.

XII. REMEMBER AND STAND FIRM

Isaiah 46:8 — Take It to Heart

“Remember this, and stand firm; take it to heart, you rebels.”

God calls rebellious people to:

Remember.

Stand firm.

Think deeply.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 8:2

Israel is commanded to remember how God led them through the wilderness and what He taught them there.

Isaiah 44:19

Isaiah condemned idolaters because they failed to stop and reflect honestly upon what they were worshiping.

Numbers 15:39

Israel was given reminders so they would remember God's commands rather than follow wandering hearts and eyes.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual stability requires:

Memory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Forgetfulness feeds rebellion.

Remembering God feeds faithfulness.

XIII. REMEMBER THE FORMER THINGS

Isaiah 46:9 — “I Am God”

“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.”

Earlier Isaiah 43 said:

Do not dwell on former things.

Here:

Remember them.

No contradiction.

Isaiah 43 warned against:

Living in yesterday.

Isaiah 46 commands remembering:

God’s demonstrated faithfulness.

Cross References

Isaiah 44:6

The Lord declares Himself the First and the Last with no other God beside Him.

Deuteronomy 4:39

Israel is commanded to know and take to heart that the Lord alone is God in heaven and on earth.

Isaiah 45:5

God declares again that there is no God apart from Him.

Spiritual Principle

Remember:

God’s character.

Without becoming trapped in:

Past methods.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith remembers yesterday’s God while expecting Him to remain faithful tomorrow.

XIV. GOD DECLARES THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Isaiah 46:10 — “My Purpose Will Stand”

“I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’”

This is one of Scripture’s great sovereignty verses.

God knows:

The end.

From:

The beginning.

Why?

Because history is not:

Outside Him.

His purpose:

Stands.

Cross References

Job 42:2

Job confesses that God can accomplish all He purposes and that no plan of His can ultimately be thwarted.

Ephesians 1:11

God works all things according to the counsel and purpose of His will.

Proverbs 19:21

Human beings have many plans, but the Lord’s purpose ultimately stands.

Spiritual Principle

God does not merely:

Predict history.

He governs history according to:

His purpose.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God never reaches the end of history and discovers it became something He did not expect.

XV. “MY PURPOSE WILL STAND”

Human plans:

Change.

Governments:

Change.

Cultures:

Change.

God’s purpose:

Stands.

Spiritual Principle

Stability rests in:

Divine purpose.

Not human predictability.

XVI. “I WILL DO ALL THAT I PLEASE”

This does not mean:

Arbitrary cruelty.

God’s pleasure is always consistent with:

His holy character.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God’s sovereignty is never separated from God’s holiness.

XVII. THE BIRD OF PREY FROM THE EAST

Isaiah 46:11 — Cyrus Fulfills God’s Purpose

“From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill My purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”

The “bird of prey” refers in context to:

Cyrus.

A rapid conqueror.

Summoned:

By God.

Cross References

Ezekiel 17:3

A great eagle becomes imagery for a powerful imperial ruler acting upon nations.

Jeremiah 49:22

A conquering ruler is compared to an eagle rising and spreading wings over its target.

Isaiah 41:2

Isaiah previously spoke of the ruler from the east whom God summons to conquer nations.

Spiritual Principle

Cyrus moves because:

God’s purpose moves history.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The ruler may think he is chasing conquest while God is directing the larger story.

XVIII. “WHAT I HAVE SAID, I WILL BRING ABOUT”

God’s speech is not:

Wishful thinking.

Spiritual Principle

Divine promise carries:

Divine ability.

XIX. “WHAT I HAVE PLANNED, I WILL DO”

Human plans can fail because of:

Lack of knowledge.

Lack of power.

Changed circumstances.

God lacks:

None.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Nothing can surprise God into abandoning His eternal purpose.

XX. GOD ADDRESSES THE STUBBORN-HEARTED

Isaiah 46:12 — Far from Righteousness

“Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness.”

God calls them:

Stubborn.

Far.

Yet still:

Calls them to listen.

Cross References

Ezekiel 2:4

God describes rebellious people as stubborn and hard-hearted while still sending His message to them.

Romans 10:3

Paul speaks of those who ignore God’s righteousness and attempt to establish their own.

Isaiah 1:4

Israel is described as sinful and rebellious, turning away from the Holy One.

Spiritual Principle

Being far from righteousness does not place someone beyond:
God's call.

XXI. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BROUGHT NEAR

Isaiah 46:13 — Salvation Will Not Delay

“I am bringing My righteousness near, it is not far away; and My salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, My glory to Israel.”

This is:

Grace.

The people are:

Far from righteousness.

God says:

I will bring righteousness:

Near.

Cross References

Romans 1:17

The gospel reveals the righteousness of God in connection with faith.

Isaiah 51:5

God says His righteousness draws near and His salvation goes out.

Isaiah 62:11

God announces to Zion that her salvation is coming and His reward is with Him.

Spiritual Principle

The sinner's hope is not:

Closing the distance alone.

It is:

God bringing salvation near.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When we are far from righteousness, grace does not merely shout from a distance—it brings salvation near.

XXII. SALVATION WILL NOT BE DELAYED

God operates according to:

His appointed time.

Spiritual Principle

Delay from our perspective does not equal:

Failure in God's purpose.

XXIII. GLORY TO ISRAEL

The final destination is:

God's glory displayed.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Redemption ends where it began:

With God receiving the glory.

XXIV. THE GREAT CONTRAST OF ISAIAH 46

The Idol

Must be carried.

Cannot move.

Cannot speak.

Cannot answer.

Cannot save.

Can be captured.

Becomes a burden.

The Lord

Carries His people.

Sustains them.

Speaks.

Answers through His revealed Word.

Rescues.

Rules history.

Declares the future.

Brings salvation.

Key Truth

The question of Isaiah 46 is not merely, “Which God should you worship?” but, “Why would you carry a god when the living God offers to carry you?”

XXV. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT IDOLATRY

Idolatry reverses:

The proper order.

Creator should carry:

Creature.

Instead:

Creature carries idol.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every idol eventually becomes heavier than the worshiper expected.

XXVI. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT GOD’S CARE

From:

Womb.

To:

Old age.

God says:

I carry.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness spans:

An entire lifetime.

XXVII. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT AGING

Aging brings:

Weakness.

Gray hair.

Changing strength.

But not:

A weaker God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your body may age.

God's promises do not.

XXVIII. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S UNIQUENESS

No equal.

No comparison.

No rival.

Spiritual Principle

The Lord belongs in:

A category by Himself.

XXIX. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT MEMORY

Twice:

Remember.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A forgetful faith becomes a fragile faith.

XXX. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT PROPHECY

End.

Beginning.

Ancient times.

Future.

All known to:

God.

Spiritual Principle

Prophecy is possible because God is sovereign over:

Time.

XXXI. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT PROVIDENCE

Cyrus is:

Summoned.

Directed.

Used.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Providence is often God's invisible hand directing visible history.

XXXII. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS

People are:

Far.

God brings righteousness:

Near.

Spiritual Principle

True righteousness is received from God's gracious action rather than produced by stubborn human self-reliance.

XXXIII. WHAT ISAIAH 46 TEACHES ABOUT SALVATION

God says:

My salvation.

I will grant it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Salvation belongs to God before it becomes ours.

XXXIV. BEL BOWS DOWN

A god that once looked:

Impressive.

Ends:

Stooping.

Spiritual Principle

False gods eventually reveal:

Their weakness.

XXXV. NEBO STOOPS

Religious prestige cannot:

Protect an idol.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Age, tradition, popularity, and cultural power cannot turn falsehood into truth.

XXXVI. THE ANIMALS ARE WEARY

Even the animals carrying the idols become:

Burdened.

Spiritual Principle

False worship burdens:

More than the worshiper.

XXXVII. THE IDOLS GO INTO CAPTIVITY

What a reversal.

Supposed saviors become:

Captives.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not expect freedom from what cannot keep itself free.

XXXVIII. GOD CARRIED ISRAEL FROM BIRTH

Israel existed because:

God sustained.

Spiritual Principle

God's care precedes:

Israel's awareness.

XXXIX. OLD AGE DOES NOT CANCEL COVENANT CARE

God does not say:

I carried you while you were useful.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The worth of God's people does not decline when their physical strength declines.

XL. GRAY HAIRS

Isaiah mentions something:

Ordinary.

Human.

Visible.

Spiritual Principle

God's promises enter:

Real aging.

Real weakness.

Real life.

XLI. "I AM HE"

God remains:

The same.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Aging changes us.

It does not change God.

XLII. MADE, CARRIED, SUSTAINED, RESCUED

Four verbs.

One God.

Spiritual Principle

The Creator does not abandon His covenant work halfway through.

XLIII. NO COMPARISON

People often compare:

Power.

Money.

Influence.

God says:

Do not compare Me.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is not simply stronger than idols.

He is fundamentally unlike them.

XLIV. GOLD FROM A BAG

Worship begins with:

Material.

Spiritual Principle

Created wealth can become:

False deity.

XLV. SILVER ON THE SCALE

Measured metal becomes:

A supposedly immeasurable god.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You cannot weigh the material for your god and still claim that god is the transcendent Creator.

XLVI. THE GOLDSMITH

The idol needs:

Skill.

Spiritual Principle

Anything requiring a craftsman cannot become:

The Craftsman of heaven.

XLVII. SHOULDERS CARRY THE IDOL

Human muscles:

Move it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If your faith collapses when your own strength fails, you may have been carrying an idol rather than trusting the Lord.

XLVIII. THE IDOL STANDS IN ONE PLACE

Motionless.

Spiritual Principle

A stationary idol cannot lead:

A moving life.

XLIX. CRYING WITHOUT AN ANSWER

The worshiper cries:

Nothing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Silence from a lifeless idol is not mystery.

It is inability.

L. THE IDOL CANNOT SAVE FROM TROUBLE

This is the final test.

Can it:

Save?

No.

Spiritual Principle

The value of an object of trust becomes clearest:

In crisis.

LI. REMEMBER

God commands:

Memory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When fear erases perspective, memory restores proportion.

LII. TAKE IT TO HEART

Not merely:

Think.

But:

Internalize.

Spiritual Principle

Truth must move from:

Memory.

To:

Conviction.

LIII. “YOU REBELS”

God speaks:

Strongly.

Yet continues:

Speaking.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God’s rebuke is itself mercy when rebellion is still being called back to truth.

LIV. FORMER THINGS

What has God already:

Done?

Spiritual Principle

Past faithfulness provides evidence for present trust.

LV. “THERE IS NONE LIKE ME”

Not merely:

No better God.

No:

Comparable being.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God’s uniqueness is qualitative, not merely competitive.

LVI. END FROM BEGINNING

Humans know:

Beginning.

Then discover:

Ending.

God knows:

Both.

Spiritual Principle

Time unfolds to us.

It does not unfold unexpectedly to:

God.

LVII. GOD'S PURPOSE STANDS

People may:

Resist.

Delay.

Complicate.

God's purpose:

Stands.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Human rebellion can oppose God without overthrowing Him.

LVIII. GOD DOES ALL THAT HE PLEASES

His pleasure is:

Holy.

Wise.

Righteous.

Spiritual Principle

Sovereignty does not make God arbitrary because His character is:

Perfect.

LIX. THE BIRD OF PREY

Cyrus arrives:

Swiftly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God can summon the instrument of change from far beyond the horizon of His people.

LX. A MAN FROM FAR AWAY

Distance does not:

Limit providence.

Spiritual Principle

God's answer can come from:

Unexpected places.

LXI. "WHAT I HAVE SAID"

God links:

Word.

Action.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Divine speech is backed by divine power.

LXII. "WHAT I HAVE PLANNED"

Planning implies:

Purpose.

Spiritual Principle

History is not meaningless because the Lord of history has:

Purpose.

LXIII. STUBBORN HEARTS

The problem is not only:

Ignorance.

It is:

Resistance.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Some people are not far from righteousness because truth is unavailable, but because the heart resists it.

LXIV. RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES NEAR

God initiates:

Grace.

Spiritual Principle

The direction of salvation is ultimately:

From God toward sinners.

LXV. SALVATION WILL NOT DELAY

God's appointed fulfillment is:

Certain.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is never late according to His own purpose.

LXVI. ZION RECEIVES SALVATION

The city that faced:

Judgment.

Will know:

Restoration.

Spiritual Principle

Discipline is not necessarily:

The final chapter.

LXVII. ISRAEL RECEIVES GLORY

God's saving work displays:

His glory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The restoration of God's people ultimately points back to the greatness of God.

LXVIII. ISAIAH 44, 45, AND 46

Isaiah 44

Idols are made from:

Wood.

Isaiah 45

Idols cannot:

Save.

Isaiah 46

Idols must be:

Carried.

Key Truth

Isaiah progressively dismantles idolatry until nothing remains but a lifeless burden in contrast with the living God who creates, carries, predicts, purposes, rescues, and saves.

LXIX. ISAIAH 40 AND ISAIAH 46

Isaiah 40

God gives strength to:

The weary.

Isaiah 46

God carries His people to:

Old age.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God who renews strength in youth remains faithful when youthful strength is gone.

LXX. ISAIAH 43 AND ISAIAH 46

Isaiah 43

God says:

“You are Mine.”

Isaiah 46

God says:

“I will carry you.”

Spiritual Principle

Belonging to God means being:

Held by God.

LXXI. CYRUS IN ISAIAH 41–46

Isaiah 41

The conqueror from the east is:

Introduced.

Isaiah 44

Cyrus is:

Named.

Isaiah 45

Cyrus is:

Commissioned.

Isaiah 46

Cyrus is:

Summoned as the man who fulfills God’s purpose.

Key Truth

The repeated Cyrus theme demonstrates not the independence of a great ruler but the sovereignty of the greater God who predicted, named, summoned, and directed him.

LXXII. ELEVEN GREAT CONTRASTS IN ISAIAH 46

- 1. Idols Carried → God Carries**
- 2. Idols Bow → God Reigns**
- 3. Idols Captured → God Rescues**
- 4. Lifeless Images → Living Lord**
- 5. Human Weakness → Divine Sustaining Power**
- 6. Aging People → Unchanging God**
- 7. Manufactured Gods → Incomparable Creator**
- 8. Silent Idols → Speaking God**
- 9. Human Plans → Standing Divine Purpose**
- 10. Stubborn Hearts → Near Righteousness**
- 11. Captivity → Salvation**

Key Truth

Isaiah 46 repeatedly contrasts the gods people must carry with the God who carries people from birth through old age and into deliverance.

LXXIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Who are Bel and Nebo?

Prominent Babylonian deities represented by idols.

Question 2

How are their idols pictured?

Stooping, being loaded onto animals, and becoming heavy burdens.

Question 3

Can the idols rescue themselves?

No.

They themselves go into captivity.

Question 4

What contrast does God make with Israel?

Idols must be carried, but God carries His people.

Question 5

How long has God carried Israel?

From birth and from the womb.

Question 6

How long does He promise to sustain them?

Even into old age and gray hairs.

Question 7

What four assurances appear in verse 4?

God made them, will carry them, sustain them, and rescue them.

Question 8

Can anyone be compared adequately with God?

No.

Question 9

How are idols manufactured?

People provide gold and silver and hire craftsmen to make them.

Question 10

What happens after the idol is made?

People bow down and worship it.

Question 11

Can the idol move by itself?

No.

It must be carried and set in place.

Question 12

Can it answer prayer?

No.

Question 13

Can it save from trouble?

No.

Question 14

What does God command His rebellious people to do?

Remember and take truth to heart.

Question 15

What former truth are they to remember?

That the Lord alone is God and none is like Him.

Question 16

What does God know?

The end from the beginning.

Question 17

What does God say about His purpose?

It will stand.

Question 18

Who is the man from the east summoned to fulfill God's purpose?

Cyrus.

Question 19

What does God promise concerning what He has spoken?

He will bring it about.

Question 20

How does God describe the people in verse 12?

Stubborn-hearted and far from righteousness.

Question 21

Does God abandon them because they are far away?

No.

He brings His righteousness near.

Question 22

What does God say about salvation?

It will not be delayed.

Question 23

Where will He grant salvation?

Zion.

Question 24

What does the chapter ultimately contrast?

Lifeless idols that must be carried with the living God who carries, sustains, rescues, speaks, plans, and saves.

LXXIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Isaiah 46 asks several searching questions.

What Am I Carrying That I Expect to Carry Me?

Money?

Reputation?

Career?

Possessions?

Political power?

Tradition?

Relationships?

Success?

Has something become:

A burden.

Because I made it:

An idol?

Am I trusting anything that cannot:

Hear?

Answer?

Move?

Save?

Do I believe God has carried me farther than I realize?

Can I trust Him with:

Old age?

Weakness?

Changing health?

Declining strength?

Do I believe:

“I will sustain you”?

Am I trying to hold myself together when God says:

“I will carry you”?

Have I forgotten:

What God has already done?

Am I remembering former things as evidence of His:

Faithfulness?

Do I believe God knows:

The end from the beginning?

Am I frightened because I cannot see:

The end?

Can I trust that God does?

Do I believe His purpose:

Stands?

Am I stubbornly trying to establish:

My own righteousness?

Do I believe God can bring:

Righteousness near?

Am I living as though salvation is:

Far away?

When God says:

It is near?

LXXV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Carry a God When the Living God Offers to Carry You”

Babylon loads its gods onto:

Animals.

God tells Israel:

“I have made you and I will carry you.”

Principle:

Every idol ultimately becomes a burden, but the living God bears His people through every season of life.

LXXVI. FALSE GODS BECOME LUGGAGE

Bel and Nebo become:

Cargo.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A god reduced to luggage is no god at all.

LXXVII. WEARY ANIMALS CARRY FALSE RELIGION

The burden is:

Heavy.

Spiritual Principle

Idolatry eventually exhausts.

LXXVIII. FALSE GODS CANNOT RESCUE THEIR OWN IMAGES

Captivity exposes:

Powerlessness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When judgment comes, false gods need rescue as much as their worshipers.

LXXIX. GOD CARRIES FROM THE WOMB

Before Israel could:

Walk.

God carried.

Spiritual Principle

Grace begins before:

Human strength.

LXXX. GOD CARRIES TO GRAY HAIRS

After strength:

Declines.

Grace remains.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God who carried you when you had no strength will not abandon you when strength fades again.

LXXXI. OLD AGE AND MINISTRY

Psalm 71 asks for strength to:

Tell the next generation.

Spiritual Principle

Old age is not spiritual:

Irrelevance.

LXXXII. THE MAKER CARRIES WHAT HE MADE

Unlike idols:

Humans make them.

Then carry them.

God makes:

Humans.

Then carries:

Them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The biblical order is Creator sustaining creation, not creation sustaining deity.

LXXXIII. INCOMPARABLE GOD

Comparisons fail.

Spiritual Principle

God is not the highest member of a class.

He is:

Unique.

LXXXIV. GOLD BECOMES GOD

People turn:

Wealth.

Into:

Worship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Anything valuable can become spiritually dangerous when value becomes ultimacy.

LXXXV. THE IDOL STAYS WHERE YOU PUT IT

It cannot:

Lead.

Spiritual Principle

A god that cannot take one step cannot guide yours.

LXXXVI. THE IDOL DOES NOT ANSWER

No voice.

No response.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not mistake lifeless silence for sacred mystery.

LXXXVII. THE IDOL CANNOT SAVE

The final verdict.

Spiritual Principle

Salvation reveals the true difference between:

God.

And:

Idol.

LXXXVIII. REMEMBER THIS

God says:

Remember.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The battle against idolatry is partly a battle against spiritual amnesia.

LXXXIX. STAND FIRM

Memory produces:

Stability.

Spiritual Principle

Conviction grows stronger when truth is:

Remembered.

XC. TAKE IT TO HEART

Information alone:

Not enough.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Truth that never reaches the heart rarely governs the life.

XCI. NONE LIKE GOD

No:

Equivalent.

Spiritual Principle

God's uniqueness makes idolatry irrational.

XCII. END FROM BEGINNING

No uncertainty.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You live forward one day at a time.

God sees the completed story.

XCIII. PURPOSE WILL STAND

Some plans collapse.

His:

Does not.

Spiritual Principle

The permanence of God's purpose is stronger than the instability of circumstances.

XCIV. "I WILL DO"

God's will includes:

Action.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's sovereignty is not merely theoretical control.

It produces actual fulfillment.

XCV. CYRUS AS BIRD OF PREY

Swift.

Powerful.

Historically significant.

Still:

Summoned.

Spiritual Principle

Even powerful conquerors remain:

Servants of providence.

XCVI. A FAR-OFF LAND

Distance does not hinder:

God's summons.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God can prepare deliverance in a place His people are not even watching.

XCVII. STUBBORN HEART

God identifies:

Resistance.

Spiritual Principle

The heart can remain far from righteousness even while surrounded by:

Religious truth.

XCVIII. GOD BRINGS RIGHTEOUSNESS NEAR

Nearness is:

Grace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not merely diagnose spiritual distance.

He acts to overcome it.

XCIX. SALVATION IS NOT DELAYED

God's timing may feel:

Slow.

Still:

Certain.

Spiritual Principle

Waiting is not evidence that the promise has failed.

C. ZION SAVED

The judged city becomes:

The saved city.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God can write restoration over a place that once carried the marks of judgment.

CI. GLORY TO ISRAEL

The final word is not:

Babylon.

Idols.

Captivity.

It is:

Glory.

Spiritual Principle

God's redemptive purpose moves toward:

Restoration.

CII. THE BURDEN TEST

Ask of anything you trust:

Does it:

Carry me?

Or do I constantly have to:

Carry it?

Crawford Bible Study Principle

An idol always demands maintenance.

The living God gives sustaining grace.

CIII. THE CRISIS TEST

Ask:

Can it save me in:

Trouble?

If not:

Do not make it your god.

CIV. THE AGING TEST

Human strength decreases.

What happens to:

Faith?

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith does not depend on the permanence of youth because its object is the everlasting God.

CV. THE FUTURE TEST

Can your god:

Know tomorrow?

God says:

I declare the end from:

The beginning.

Spiritual Principle

Confidence in the future must rest in the One who is already Lord over it.

CVI. THE PURPOSE TEST

Can human opposition:

Overthrow God?

No.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's purpose is not fragile.

CVII. THE SALVATION TEST

Can an idol:

Save?

No.

Can God?

Yes.

Spiritual Principle

What cannot save should never receive worship.

CVIII. ISAIAH 46 IN THE FLOW OF THE BOOK

Isaiah 44:

God exposes the making of idols.

Isaiah 45:

God declares Himself the only Savior.

Isaiah 46:

God shows the idols being carried into captivity.

Then Isaiah 47 will turn directly toward:

The humiliation of Babylon itself.

Key Truth

The collapse of Babylon's gods prepares for the announcement of Babylon's own fall.

CIX. TEN GREAT MOVEMENTS IN ISAIAH 46

1. Babylon's Gods Bow

Bel and Nebo stoop and become burdens.

2. The Idols Go into Captivity

They cannot save themselves.

3. God Reminds Israel That He Carries Them

From the womb onward.

4. God Promises Care Through Old Age

He will sustain, carry, and rescue.

5. God Declares Himself Incomparable

No idol or being is His equal.

6. Isaiah Exposes Manufactured Gods

They must be carried and cannot answer prayer.

7. God Commands His People to Remember

Past faithfulness grounds present trust.

8. God Declares the End from the Beginning

His purpose stands.

9. Cyrus Is Summoned to Fulfill Divine Purpose

History serves God's plan.

10. God Brings Salvation Near

Righteousness comes to stubborn people, and Zion receives salvation.

Key Truth

Isaiah 46 moves from gods that must be carried to the God who carries, from idols that cannot speak to the Lord who declares the future, and from stubborn hearts far from righteousness to salvation brought near by divine grace.

CX. FINAL APPLICATION

Isaiah Chapter 46 opens with a strange picture.

Two famous Babylonian gods:

Bel.

Nebo.

Are:

Bent over.

Stooping.

Loaded onto:

Animals.

Imagine worshiping a god and then needing to:

Pick him up.

Carry him.

Transport him.

Protect him.

That is Isaiah's point.

False gods eventually become:

Burdens.

Then God speaks to Israel.

And says:

Not Me.

You do not carry:

Me.

I carry:

You.

“I have upheld you since your birth.”

Then the promise becomes even more tender:

“Even to your old age I am He.”

Your hair may:

Gray.

Your body may:

Slow.

Your strength may:

Decrease.

Your memory may:

Change.

Your circumstances may:

Shift.

God says:

“I am He.”

You change.

He remains:

God.

Then:

“I will sustain you.”

“I will carry you.”

“I will rescue you.”

Maybe there are seasons when you feel:

I am not carrying life very well.

Isaiah 46 asks a different question:

Who said you were supposed to carry everything?

The living God says:

I will carry:

You.

Then Isaiah returns to idols.

People pour out:

Gold.

Silver.

Hire:

Craftsmen.

Make:

A god.

Then lift that god:

Onto their shoulders.

Set him down.

And:

He stays there.

Cry:

Nothing.

Ask:

Nothing.

Trouble comes:

No salvation.

So ask yourself:

What am I trusting?

Does it:

Hear me?

Can it:

Save me?

Can it:

Sustain me through old age?

Can it:

Know the future?

Can it:

Carry me?

Then God says:

Remember.

Remember what?

“I am God, and there is no other.”

Then one of the greatest lines:

“I make known the end from the beginning.”

You do not know:

The end.

God does.

You do not know:

How this circumstance finishes.

God does.

You do not know:

What next year holds.

God does.

You do not know:

How all the pieces fit.

God does.

And then:

“My purpose will stand.”

That is stronger than:

Your anxiety.

Stronger than:

An empire.

Stronger than:

Babylon.

Stronger than:

Cyrus.

Stronger than:

Human opposition.

Then God says:

“What I have said, that I will bring about.”

The God who carries also:

Plans.

The God who plans also:

Acts.

The God who acts also:

Saves.

Finally He speaks to:

Stubborn people.

Far from:

Righteousness.

And He does not say:

Find your own way back.

He says:

“I am bringing My righteousness near.”

That is grace.

They are:

Far.

God brings:

Near.

They are:

Stubborn.

God still speaks.

They are:

Guilty.

God still announces:

Salvation.

So Isaiah 46 leaves us with:

A choice.

You can carry:

Your god.

Or:

Let the living God carry you.

You can trust:

Something silent.

Or:

The God who speaks.

You can rely on:

Something motionless.

Or:

The God directing history.

You can fear:

Tomorrow.

Or:

Trust the God who already knows the end.

You can cling to:

Your plans.

Or:

Rest in the purpose that stands.

You can remain:

Far from righteousness.

Or:

Receive the salvation God brings near.

So when the burden becomes:

Heavy—

Remember:

God carries.

When age brings:

Weakness—

Remember:

God sustains.

When trouble comes—

Remember:

God rescues.

When the future feels:

Unknown—

Remember:

God knows the end from the beginning.

When circumstances look:

Out of control—

Remember:

His purpose will stand.

And when you feel:

Far—

Remember:

His salvation is:

Near.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that You are:

The living God.

You do not need us to:

Carry You.

Support You.

Protect You.

Maintain You.

You carry:

Us.

Father, forgive us for every:

Idol.

Everything we have trusted to give us:

Security.

Meaning.

Identity.

Protection.

Salvation.

When it could not:

Hear.

Answer.

Move.

Save.

Expose every false god in:

Our hearts.

Thank You for carrying us:

From birth.

Thank You for Your promise to remain faithful through:

Old age.

Gray hairs.

Weakness.

Changing circumstances.

Father, when our strength fails:

Sustain us.

When our burdens feel heavy:

Carry us.

When danger comes:

Rescue us.

Thank You that You are:

Incomparable.

There is:

No other God.

Father, help us:

Remember.

Remember Your:

Faithfulness.

Your works.

Your promises.

Your deliverance.

Keep us from spiritual:

Forgetfulness.

Thank You that You know:

The end from the beginning.

When we cannot see:

Tomorrow.

Help us trust the One who already knows:

The end.

When our plans collapse:

Remind us:

Your purpose stands.

When the world appears chaotic:

Remind us:

History remains under Your hand.

Father, thank You that what You speak:

You accomplish.

What You plan:

You do.

Thank You for bringing:

Righteousness near.

Thank You for bringing:

Salvation.

Draw stubborn hearts:

To Yourself.

Bring back those far from:

Righteousness.

Let Your salvation be known in:

Zion.

Your church.

Our homes.

Our families.

Our communities.

Father, help us stop carrying what cannot:

Carry us.

Teach us to rest in:

Your everlasting arms.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“Even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.” — Isaiah 46:4

Central Truth

Babylon's lifeless idols must be made, carried, positioned, and protected, yet cannot answer or save; the living Lord, by contrast, made His people, carries them from birth through old age, sustains and rescues them, declares the end from the beginning, accomplishes His unchanging

purpose through rulers such as Cyrus, and graciously brings righteousness and salvation near to those who are far from Him.

Isaiah 46 in One Sentence

Isaiah contrasts Babylon's helpless gods Bel and Nebo, which must be carried and themselves go into captivity, with the incomparable living God who carries Israel from the womb to old age, sustains and rescues His people, declares the end from the beginning, summons Cyrus to accomplish His purpose, and promises to bring His righteousness and salvation near to stubborn hearts and to display His glory in Israel.