

“Listen to Me” (Isaiah 46:1–23)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/23/2018)

Introduction

1. Chapter 45 closed with a strong plea for salvation and a declaration that “*only in the Lord*” is righteousness and strength, and only in the Lord shall the offspring of Israel be justified (Isaiah 45:22–25).
2. In the chapters before us (40–49), the Lord continued His contention with stubborn Judah, building His case against them for their failure to trust Him but persistently adhering to idols.
 - a. The Lord threatened the judgment of the Babylonian captivity unless Judah repented.
 - b. However, Judah’s religious leaders gave false assurances (Jeremiah 6:14).
3. Israel’s confidence rested on her genetic link to Abraham: “*Abraham is our father*” (John 8:39).
 - a. Jesus corrected them: “*If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did*” (v. 39).
 - b. They protested: “*We have one Father—even God*” (v. 41). Jesus corrected them again: “*If God were your Father, you would love me*” (v. 41).
 - c. So, who was their father? “*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires*” (v. 44).
4. The main issue: Abraham’s descendants are not redeemed because they are related to Abraham. God’s work is to bring in *Christ*, a descendant of Abraham, Judah, and David (Isaiah 42:1).

Of course, there will be a *remnant* of Israel saved, just as the Lord promised (Isaiah 46:3, 4).

Salvation is the sovereign work of God, and He is able to save whomever He will. Tragically, Israel preferred to associate with idol-worshipping neighbors. They submitted to Lord Ba’al and worshiped his image made by their own hands. Thus, the Lord challenges the nation.

I. Which Lord Is Truly Lord?

1. Who carries whom? Chapter 46 opens with a comparison of Bel and Yahweh (vv. 1–7).
 - a. *Bel* is Akkadian for “lord,” which is *ba’al* in the Hebrew.
 - 1) Bel represented the god Marduk who defeated the sea monster Tiamut. This defeat enabled Marduk to create the world, which enthroned him as the king of the gods.
 - 2) Marduk also has a son, Nebo, whose influence on the Neo-Babylonian period (of the Jewish exile) is seen in the names Nebuchadnezzar and his son Nabonidus.
 - 3) The significance of the previous points is to recognize the spiritual entity behind Bel or Ba’al. Who represents himself as the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)? More importantly, what did Jesus expose about the Jews and who their true father was (John 8:38–47).

b. This section (vv. 5–7) is a comparison between a god represented by images that must be carried (vv. 1, 7) and the true God, Yahweh, who does the carrying (v. 4).

2. The command to listen (vv. 3, 12)

a. To whom is the command addressed?

- 1) The house of Jacob as it was—a reduced remnant of Israel—Judah, the southern kingdom.
- 2) What we need to see actually lies behind the obvious. There is both a general and specific call, and the difference lies in who actually hears the call.

b. What are the listeners to consider?

- 1) The Lord has borne His own from long before they ever existed.
- 2) The Lord will continue faithful to His own in every stage of life.
- 3) He created us, He bears us, He will carry us, and He will save us.

II. Remember and Stand Firm

1. The irony of idolatry (vv. 5–7)

- a. They use what is valuable to make something to worship while ignoring the One whose value is beyond all comprehension. He alone is worthy of our worship.
- b. They make an effort to establish the idol for the purpose of worship. The idol cannot form its own image or create itself, let alone those who are devoted to it. Neither can the idol hear prayers or save the seekers from their troubles.

2. The corrective for transgressors (vv. 8–11).

- a. We must always first remember that all God does is due to our being prone to offend by leaving the way He has prepared for us. We are the trespassers, the transgressors.
- b. The Lord alone is sovereign.
 - 1) He is all-knowing (v. 10a).
 - 2) He is all-powerful (v. 10b).
 - 3) He is behind every event of life, past, present, and future (v. 11).

3. A final charge (vv. 12, 13)

The Lord has put His salvation in Zion for His glory. Jesus has come. He saves. He transforms. He will take His own with Him to glory.

What Can We Take from This

Are you one who has been deceived, believing that you belong to Christ when your whole existence testifies otherwise?

Are you doing His works? Good works are the fruit of grace, not the means of salvation (Ephesians 2:8–10).

Do you love Jesus? Are you hearing His Word? Are you understanding His will and purpose for you and all things?