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9. *Things Old and New In Religion*, Hoyt Bailey, C.E.I. Pub. Co.
10. *Survey Course In Christian Doctrine, Vol. II and IV*, C. C. Crawford, College Press, Pg. 256f
11. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, art. "Types" Eerdmans
12. *The Theology of the Older Testament*, Payne, Zondervan
13. Class notes from Hebrew Epistle, Butler, unpublished.
14. *Bible Types and Shadows*, John W. Wade, Standard Pub. Co.

3. SOVEREIGN OVER NATIONS, CHAPTERS 46 - 47

a. CONDEMNING THEIR GODS

TEXT: 46:1-13

- 1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols are upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: the things that ye carried about are made a load, a burden to the weary beast.
- 2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.
- 3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne by me from their birth, that have been carried from the womb;
- 4 and even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver.
- 5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

- 6 Such as lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, they hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worship.
- 7 They bear it upon the shoulder, they carry it, and set it in its place, and it standeth; from its place shall it not remove: yea, one may cry unto it, yet can it not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.
- 8 Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.
- 9 Remember the former things of old: for 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 ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it.
- 12 Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:
- 13 I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

QUERIES

- a. Whose gods were named Bel and Nebo?
- b. Who is the "ravenous bird from the east"?
- c. When is salvation placed in "Zion"?

PARAPHRASE

Bel and Nebo, the images of Babylonian gods, are as good as gone! They are about to be loaded on camels and horses and taken captive along with their worshipers. Those pagan gods you carried about with such fondness and care are to be

unceremoniously loaded on animals like so much burdensome baggage. Where are the gods these images represent? Why do they not save the images from such humiliation? Because the gods consist of nothing more than the wood and metal of which their images are composed! Therefore the Babylonian gods disappear into captivity. Listen to Me, descendants of Jacob and all you who remain of My covenant people, Israel; take heed to the One who gave you birth as a people and who has given you paternal care ever since. I am your Father through all your lifetime; even when your hair is white with age I will continue to take care of you. I created you and I will sustain you. I am not like the pagan gods—I will deliver you. Is there any pagan god with whom I may be compared? None! All other gods are made of metal and stone by human hands. That is what the Gentiles worship—a creation of their own hands. They take metal or wood, make themselves a god, carry it around wherever they wish and when they set it down any place it stays there, for it is unable to move! And when those who made it cry out to it in prayer and supplication it does not answer, nor does it deliver those who are in trouble. It is not really a god at all—just a piece of wood or metal!

Do not forget what I have just told you, My people, and fix it firmly as a part of you; take it to heart you sinners! Do not forget all the former demonstrations of My sovereignty, both to you and your forefathers. Remember that I, Jehovah, am God and there is not another like me. I predict the events of history and the affairs of men's lives many centuries before they happen. Now, what I have predicted shall just as surely come to pass! My sovereign decree that a "bird of prey" (Cyrus) shall come from the east, a man from a far away country to carry out My counsel, will be brought to fulfillment. I, Jehovah, have planned it and I will surely do it! Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted who are resisting the idea that I will certainly fulfill My predictions of righteous judgments; I am very near to showing My righteousness—it is not far away. And all I have predicted concerning My salvation will soon come to pass. "Zion" will be the location of My salvation and the true Israel will be the recipient of My glory.

COMMENTS

v. 1-7 DEMISE OF IDOLS: Bel (otherwise known as Merodach or Marduk) was the principal god of the Babylonians. Nebo (or Nabu) was the son of Bel and in later times was identified with the Greek god Mercury because Nabu means "speaker." The Babylonian gods were (as the name Bel indicates) "descendants" of Baal, the Canaanite god (see *Minor Prophets*, by Clinton Gill, pub. College Press, for a special study on Baalism). Bel's major temple was in Borsippa, twelve miles to the south of Babylon. According to the historian Herodotus, the image of Bel was gold and 18 feet tall. These great, impressive, expensive images with the authority of centuries of pagan heritage added, which seem invincible, will be dismantled and carried away from their place to a foreign pantheon. When will this happen? When Cyrus conquers Babylon, October 29, 539 B.C.! (for details of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon see, *Daniel*, by Butler, ch. 5, 7, 8, pub. College Press). The thrust of Isaiah's message here is: these pagan images, impressive as they may be, powerful as their people claim they are, will suffer humiliation and defeat. They will be carried away on the backs of *khayyah* (wild animals, probably asses) and *behemah* (large animals, probably oxen). Those objects of metal (precious gold they may be) of which the Hebrew people were so enamored will ignominiously disappear, loaded unceremoniously onto the backs of dumb brutes and transported at the whim of a conquering emperor. Where are the gods these images represent? If they are images of a real god surely this god would not allow his image to be thus humiliated and obliterated! The answer is: there are no gods. Otherwise they would deliver their images. The gods are figments of human imagination—mere fantasies—less than the wood and metal of which their images are composed. This was fulfilled in a way which would not be admitted by Cyrus. He had claimed that it was under the auspices of the gods that he had marched into Babylon. But the idols were powerless (v. 7); it was the Lord, Jehovah, who was bringing his conquest of Babylon and

its gods to fulfillment.

After exposing the nothingness of Babylon's gods, Jehovah calls the remnant of the Jews to attention. Why should they put their trust in the gods of foreign nations when it was Jehovah who gave birth to them as a people and a nation (cf. Isa. 44:2; 44:24; 49:5). He "bore" them (sustained) them through centuries of deliverance from enemies all around them many times more powerful than they (cf. Deut. 1:31) 33:27; Isa. 40:11). Jehovah nurtured them, chastened them, enriched them and kept them free (cf. Ezek. 16:1f), but they turned to other gods. He wants to care for them when they become aged and silver-haired, even for all their lives. But He cannot care for them if they refuse His covenant of care. They should know by now the difference between pagan gods and Jehovah. There are no pagan gods in all the history of mankind which can compare at all to Jehovah. He delivers! He keeps His word! He is invincible! He cannot be moved by men. The gods of the Gentiles are made by craftsmen (cf. Isa. 44)—works of human hands—and then human beings fall down and worship the works of their own hands. Utterly absurd! Furthermore, these man-made gods are carried about from place to place. They can be manipulated, misplaced, displaced, burned up, melted down, and carried off to foreign temples. They cannot move once they are set in one place by human hands. It takes human hands for them to move again. Men cry to them, offer sacrifices to them, disfigure themselves in fear of them and all to no avail—the images of wood and metal say not a word. They cannot answer; they cannot deliver anyone from trouble nor can they bless anyone. They are dead! They were never alive!

v. 8-13 DIRECTION FOR ISRAEL: The stance Israel is to take in light of the soon demise of Babylon's gods is to *remember*. They are reminded of two things: (a) it is sinful to worship gods other than Jehovah; (b) there is no One but Jehovah whose word is sovereign. The Hebrew word *hitheaoshashu* ("show yourselves men" v. 8) means literally, "firmly founded." God's direction for Israel is that she remember *who* He is

and *fix it firmly* in her heart. This is the only solution for Israel's idolatrous rebellion. She is a nation of *phosheiyim* (from *pasha*) "rebels." The word means "refuse subjection to rightful authority." The only solution to rebellion and sin is to remember *who* God is! Remember how He has dealt with man and sin in the past; punishment for the incorrigible rebel and forgiveness for the penitent believer. God is omnipotent and omniscient. He not only knows and predicts the future, He controls it and uses it for His redemptive purposes. What He has said about Cyrus will surely come to pass. God will certainly call an '*Ayit* ("ravenous bird") from the east. The Hebrew word means, "to be angry with; to rush or fall upon with fury." Cyrus will come from a "far country" to carry out the counsels of God. This is the "servant" of Jehovah—this bird of prey. He hasn't even been born yet, but his birth, crowning and service to God is as certain as if it had already been done because it is the will of the sovereign Jehovah! Cyrus is not merely another conqueror—he is the divinely commissioned executioner of Babylon and her gods. More sovereign control of the events of history and the destinies of men could not be visualized than is described in these chapters by the prophet Isaiah! When God speaks His word never fails of completion! When God purposes, it is as good as done!

The word *abbiyrey* ("stout-hearted") literally means, "strong" but is probably synonymous with "strong-minded" or "stubborn-hearted." The context would indicate this usage. They are stubborn-hearted and "far from righteousness." "Righteousness" in this instance must mean the righteous purposes of Jehovah in what He has been announcing concerning Israel's captivity, release by Cyrus and Cyrus' destruction of the Babylonian gods Israel had grown so enamored of. Israel was stubbornly staying away from those conclusions. She refused to accept these decrees of the sovereign Jehovah. But Jehovah is about to bring "near" His righteous goal. Its beginning is not far off. In a little over a century it will all begin just as the prophet is predicting it. Jehovah's salvation for all mankind (including the *goiyim*) will come without fail. "Zion" will be

the location of God's salvation (see comments in *Minor Prophets*, Butler, pub. College Press, Obadiah 17; Joel 2:28—3:21). "Zion" is the N.T. church (cf. Heb. 12:22). Of course, the climax of this salvation will not come for some 600 years after Cyrus—but what is 600 years viewed from Jehovah's perspective? Less than a day! For the believer who by faith sees all things from God's perspective "redemption draweth nigh." Not only salvation, but glory!

QUIZ

1. Where did the gods Bel and Nebo have their origin?
2. Who carried these gods off on the backs of animals?
3. Give four reasons men should be able to know that idols are not gods.
4. To what extent are the people of Israel rebelling against God's purposes?
5. How emphatic is this text on the sovereignty of God?
6. Where is "Zion"?

b. CONQUERING THEIR GOVERNMENTS

TEXT: 47:1-15

- 1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.
- 2 Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers.
- 3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man.
- 4 Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.
- 5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of