

### Scripture Text

Isaiah 46 - 47

### Context

Judah is in exile in Babylon and throughout the world, because they turned to idols and did not trust in God. Isaiah tells them God's word still stands, he will still bring to pass his promises to them, even though they are far from the promised land. He has told them in 45:1 he will raise up Cyrus who will be his instrument to deliver his people. Isaiah prophesies the judgement of Babylon 200 years before these events happen so God's people can hold onto his promises when they are exiled.

### Observation and Meaning

- What is the difference between the gods of Babylon and the God of Israel?
- What does God tell his people to remember about his character? (46:8)
- God has always kept his promises to his people in the past. How does remembering this give his people in exile hope in the promises he now gives them? (bird of prey = Cyrus)
- God promises to save his people from Babylon. What will this mean for the nation of Babylon? (47:1-7)
- Why was Babylon going to be destroyed? (47:8-11)
- What is the hope for Babylon if they continue in their current way of living? (47:12-15)

### Big Idea

The world's idols of self-worship are burdens that cannot save, but God is the only God who carries his people, and he will save them through the judgement of man-centred pride.

### Connecting to Bible Storyline

200 years later, Babylon will be overthrown and God's people will return to Judah. But Babylon represents man-centred world culture that rejects God. The quick and merciful judgement of Babylon in 600BC was a fulfilment on Isaiah 47, but this judgement will be finally fulfilled when Jesus returns, as in Revelation 18. Meanwhile, God's salvation is greater than Cyrus. His promise to bring near his righteousness and put his salvation in Zion is fulfilled in Christ for anyone who trusts in him.

### Applications

- While the nation of Babylon is long destroyed, the ideas of Babylon live on. Babylon represents self-glorifying ideologies that reject God. What are the man-centred idols of our culture today? How are we tempted to let them affect our belief system? Which of these idols impact you the most?
- What is the end result of man-centred ideals?
- How are these idols burdensome compared to the God who carries his people?
- In this passage, we are told twice to listen to God and once to remember who he is. When we consider our average week, who or what do we listen to the most (including reading and watching)? And how does this tell you what you really believe is able to save you?
- How has God been faithful to us in the past?
- God always brings to pass what he promises. How has God promised us an even better salvation today?

## Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

### Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

### Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?  
What is the situation of the author and of the readers?  
Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?  
Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

### Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.