

Exegetical Paper Guide

Writing Papers for Biblical Studies

An exegetical paper is a type of essay that seeks to interpret or explain a certain Biblical text.

There are two types of exegetical papers that students may be asked to write at Columbia but both follow the same basic procedure.

- **Inductive Exegetical Papers** follow the steps outlined below but the research section only involves asking and responding to questions by means of information that the Bible itself provides (e.g., word studies, references in other biblical books, etc.).
- **Exegetical Research Papers** follow the same steps but combine students' careful reading of the primary source (the Bible) and critical reading and referencing of secondary sources (commentaries and journal articles *about* the Bible). It is expected that these papers will use proper in text citation to identify where the insights of scholars originated and will include a properly formatted Works Cited page. See Columbia's Term Paper Guide for citation guidelines and suggestions for integrating research material into your writing.
 - A sample exegetical research paper is available in the library handouts.

Introduction

This short section of your paper should get the reader's attention and focus the topic of your paper (e.g., "Few texts in the New Testament are as difficult to interpret as Ephesians 5:22-33."). After several sentences of introduction, one should include a purpose statement (e.g., "This paper will follow the exegetical process to determine the central message of this text for its original audience, identify several key theological themes in the text, and suggest possible applications for Christians today."). The introduction may also include a thesis statement based on the outcome of your research (e.g., "The main theme of Psalm 23 is God's presence in the midst of trying circumstances rather than..."). A thesis makes a statement that is potentially controversial (e.g., "The writer of Judges is portraying Gideon's request for a fleece sign

in negative ways and not as an example to follow”). Others could disagree with this statement so your paper will need to argue that this point is defensible.

Determine the Text Unit

If you have been given a specific group of verses this step might be unnecessary, but if not, you need to determine where a given text begins and ends. Normally text units will be at least 10 or more verses but not more than 30 or 40. Try to limit your text and prove that your text is new (e.g., new theme, location, characters, etc.). You may just be studying a scene from within a larger story which is fine as long as you mention this in your paper.

Compare English Versions

Read through the text in a number of good English versions. Note any significant differences between the versions and any comments in the footnotes of these versions about other possible ways of translating the text into English. Include the most important variations in your paper and explain what difference these variations could make.

Create a Structural Outline

While there are several possibilities here, you should be able to outline the text based upon either content (e.g., theme 1,2, and 3) or literary structure (e.g., vision, rhetorical question, argument, result, location notice, description of speaker, reason, time notice, etc.). This outline should be at about one half to one page in length.

Identify the Genre of the Text

Determine whether the text is poetry, law, historical narrative, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, or epistle. Then look carefully at your specific text to see what form (or sub-genre) is represented here (e.g., lament psalm, parable, prophetic woe oracle, etc.)

Research the Text

In this section, state briefly what your assumptions are about authorship and date (“This paper will assume that Paul wrote this text during his time in a Roman jail”). Are there any background questions that need to be answered? (“To understand Samson’s birth and early life, it is important to explore the Nazirite vow described in Number 6”). Are there key questions that the original audience would have been particularly concerned about? This background material should be brief—one page or less. Then work your way carefully through each section of the text explaining and clarifying any difficult words, phrases, or concepts that are not clear. If the text is making an argument, explain the

argument. If the text is a narrative, explain why the author tells the story this way. If the text is poetry, explain the structure and any poetic devices. Keep relating your findings to the big question: What is the message of the text to its readers many years ago?

Relate the Parts

In a paragraph, summarize the way the text fits together. For example: “After a description of how useless wooden idols are (vv.1-4), Isaiah goes on to describe the power and awesomeness of God (vv.5-10). He concludes the text with a statement about how God will crush all these useless Assyrian gods (vv.11-13).”

Construct a Focus Statement

A focus statement is a one to two sentence summary of the message of the text for those we think were the original audience. This is a high point for your paper so spend significant time thinking about this. Why is your text in the book where it is? What is the author’s main point in your text? For example in relation to Isaiah 7:1-25: “Isaiah tells King Ahaz and the people of Judah to trust only Yahweh in the midst of the threat from both Israel and Aram. All other forms of security are worthless.”

Explain the Theology

What does the text seem to be teaching about the nature of God, about following God, about the way God sees humanity, or about God’s larger mission in the world? Include a number of paragraphs here with one theological insight in each paragraph. Demonstrate how this theological insight shows up in your text and how this theological insight relates to the rest of that biblical book as well as to the theology of the rest of the Bible. Is it a key theme in the rest of the book? Does the rest of the Bible affirm it strongly?

Apply the Text to the Present

Often the best approach here is to look back to the theological insights noted above, and process how they could be applied at either the individual or church level today. If a key theological insight is that “Amos argues in this chapter that God is deeply concerned for social justice,” a number of paragraphs could be devoted to evaluating how committed the contemporary church is—or individual Christians are—about pursuing social justice, and suggesting ways to demonstrate more commitment.

Works Cited

If your exegetical paper involved research beyond simply using your Bible, list all the sources that you have cited in your paper on a separate page according to the proper format noted below.

It is worth mentioning that many research sources in biblical studies have specific guidelines for Works Cited page citation (e.g. bible commentaries, bible dictionaries, and biblical studies software). Use Columbia's Term Paper Guide to see how these unique kinds of sources should be cited.

For more detail related to the exegetical process, see:

Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Hendrickson, 2009.

Do you still need help? Make an appointment with the Librarian (for research and citation help) or the Academic Support Office (for writing and citation help). Both offices are located in the library.

Works Cited

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The Idols of Babylon and the One True God
Isaiah 46:1-3

An Exegetical Paper
Presented to Sam Smits
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October 21, 2001
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Introduction

The book of Isaiah is full of wonderful things that God is trying to teach his people. The specific passage from Isaiah that this essay will be examining is Isaiah 46:1-13. The purpose of this essay is to explore the author's intent in writing this passage of scripture and also to determine the application of the text for the original audience and for Christians today.

Meaning

Determine the Text Unit

To begin the exegetical method, it is necessary to determine the text unit because sometimes ^{modern English Bible translations} the Bible does not always make the proper distinctions of where text units begin or end. The first reason why Isaiah 46:1-13 is a complete text unit is because it begins with a new subject. In Isaiah 45 the subject matter is how Yahweh is going to use Cyrus to take over the nations so that Israel will be able to return to Jerusalem. Isaiah 46 changes subjects and Yahweh begins to speak about the gods of Babylon and how they are in no way comparable to himself. A different subject begins in Isaiah 47:1, where Yahweh is now speaking about the fall of Babylon.

A second reason that Isaiah 46:1-13 is a text unit is because there is a new audience being addressed by Yahweh in this chapter. In Isaiah 45, Yahweh is having a conversation with Cyrus, the Persian. Yahweh's audience changes in Isaiah 46:1 when he addresses ^{Israel!} Israel. The audience changes again in Isaiah 47:1 when Yahweh speaks to Babylon. Therefore, the changes in subject matter and audience before and after Isaiah 46:1-13 make it clear that this is a complete text unit.

good

Compare English Versions

Now that the text unit has been established, it is necessary to examine different ^{translations} versions of the text. After looking at a number of good English Versions, there are some significant differences in the text that need to be mentioned. The first significant difference is found in verse thirteen. Here, the NIV uses the word "righteousness" where some of the other versions

The Hebrew word is + 2 = 2/2/2/2

use "deliverance" or "victory." Another difference is found in verse eight where the NIV uses the word "rebels" and other versions use "sinners," "transgressors," and "guilty ones." In verse three, the NRSV, the NJKV, and the Jerusalem Bible all differ from the NIV in the way the verse is ordered. The NIV says, "...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth" (46:3). The other translations mention "birth" first and then "conceived" or "womb." Verse twelve also contains some differences for the term "stubborn-hearted" which the NIV uses. Other versions use "faint hearts" and "stubborn, evil people." The final difference that needs to be mentioned is found in verse one. Here the NKJV talks about "weary beasts" where other versions use "weary animals" or just "weary." ✓

Create a Structural Outline

- I. **Babylon's gods** vv.1-2
 - A. Description of gods 1a Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low...
 - B. Description of burdensome idols 1b-2a ...idols are borne by beasts of burden.
 - C. Description of idol's/god's power 2bc ...unable to rescue the burden...
- II. **Yahweh's Address #1** vv.3-4
 - A. Call to attention 3a Listen to me...
 - B. Identification of audience 3ab ...house of Jacob...house of Israel...
 - C. Description of unfailing support 3c-4
 - 1. Example #1 4b ...I am he who will sustain you.
 - 2. Example #2 4c I have made you... ✓
 - 3. Example #3 4c ...I will carry you...
 - 4. Example #4 d ...I will sustain you...I will rescue you.
- III. **Yahweh's Address #2** vv.5-7
 - A. Rhetorical Questions 5
 - 1. Question #1 5a To whom will you compare me...
 - 2. Question #2 5b To whom will you liken me...
 - B. Description of making idols 6abc ...pour out gold...hire a goldsmith...
 - C. Description of idol worship 6d-7 ...they bow down and worship it.
- IV. **Yahweh's Address #3** vv.8-11
 - A. Call to remember 8-9a Remember this, fix it in mind...
 - B. Description of sovereignty 9b-11
 - 1. Rationale #1 9bc I am God, and there is no other...
 - 2. Rationale #2 10ab ...make known...what is still to come.
 - 3. Rationale #3 10cd I say: My purpose will stand...
 - 4. Rationale #4 11 ...I summon...to fulfill my purpose.

V.	Yahweh's Address #4	vv.12-13
A.	Call to attention	12a Listen to me...
B.	Identification of audience	12ab ...you stubborn-hearted...
C.	Description of action	13
	1. Action #1	13ab I am bringing my righteousness near...
	2. Action #2	13cde ...my salvation will not be delayed.

Very good

Identify the Genre of the Text

It is important to identify the genre of the text so that the text can be better understood.

The genre of Isaiah 46:1-13 is poetry. The reason the text is poetry is because of the way it is written and laid out. Another reason this text is poetry is because it is not prose. In addition to being poetry, this text is also a salvation oracle. It is a salvation oracle because there is a call to attention (46:3), a description of the situation (46:1-2, 5-7), a description of God's saving action (46:8-11), and an explanation of why God is doing this (46:12-13).

Research the Text

The next step in the exegetical process is to research the text to find out what it meant to the original audience. In order to understand Isaiah 46:1-13, it is important to first examine the historical setting of this passage in the context of the book of Isaiah. Some scholars suggest that it is very difficult to assign a specific date to the material of Isaiah 40-66 because these chapters do not highlight their historical and social setting (Seitz 315). Seitz suggests that the reason Isaiah 40-66 does not specify a historical setting is because the prophet's audience would have already known everything that was going on at the time (315). But, it is possible to distinguish the time frame that this text is dealing with based on historical events even though Isaiah 46 does not have a specific date assigned to it. Some of the other chapters such as Isaiah 40 and 41, help to shed some light on the historical setting. Isaiah 40:1-2 addresses the people of God by telling them that their punishment is over and their sin has been paid for. Isaiah 41 records God telling

his people that he is going to destroy their enemies and deliver them. Isaiah also makes it clear that Cyrus, the Persian, is going to be the one who takes over Babylon (45:1). Cyrus did in fact capture Babylon in 539 BC and soon after that he released the Israelites to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-8). This context is important to Isaiah 46:1-13 because it brings more understanding to why Yahweh is speaking about how the gods of Babylon are not going to be able to save them when they go off into captivity. God is going to use Cyrus to defeat Babylon and the gods of Babylon are not going to be able to save or protect their worshipers. *so the audience for this text is ?*

Now that the historical setting and context of Isaiah 46:1-13 has been determined, it is time to examine the text, which is broken down into five main sections. But first, it is necessary to examine the meaning of the word “carry” since it appears four times in the first three sections of the text. The word “carry” can be translated in Hebrew as *nasa* or *sabal*. *nasa* is used six hundred ^{and} fifty-four times in the Old Testament. It is used fifty-eight times in Isaiah and three times in Isaiah 46. *nasa* is most commonly translated as carry, bear, or lift up (Kohlenberger 1111). This word has two definitions which are both used in Isaiah 46. The first definition is to bear, carry, lift up or also to forgive (Kohlenberger 2139). The meaning of this word as it occurs in Isaiah 46:4,7 is best understood as God carrying his people the way the idol worshipers carry their idols. The second definition is not as common, but it means to be forgiven, honored, or carried (Kohlenberger 2139). The meaning of this word as it is used in Isaiah 46:3 should be understood as carried. *Sum*

Sabal is the other Hebrew word that is also used to translate the word “carry.” *Sabal* is only used nine times in the Old Testament. It is used five times in the book of Isaiah and three of those times it is used in Isaiah 46. *Sabal* is most commonly translated as bear or sustain, but it can also be translated as carry, carried, draws himself along, or draw heavy loads (Kohlenberger

1137). The meaning of this Hebrew word is concerned with the bearing of burdens or loads.

This bearing of burdens can be both literal and figurative. This word is used in Isaiah 46:4 where it is translated as *sustain* and it is also used in Isaiah 46:7 where it is translated as *carry*. Now that the meaning of the word “carry” has been defined, a better understand will be gained as this word is examined in the text.

In the first section of the text, verses one and two, Yahweh is contrasting himself with idols by giving a description of the two most prominent gods of Babylon. Bel was a title that meant “Lord” and was given to the chief god (Oswalt 228). In Isaiah 46:1, Bel refers to Marduk, the city god of Babylon, who was the leader of the gods (Goldingay 267). Nebo, the patron god of the royal dynasty, was Marduk’s son (Goldingay 267). It was a practice of the Babylonians to carry the images of their gods in an annual New Year’s Festival procession through their city (Oswalt 228). Isaiah uses this procession to make his point about how Yahweh is different than other gods. There are a couple of different interpretations that scholars suggest for these two verses in regard to the procession of the gods. One interpretation is that the gods are being mocked because they have to be carried on the backs of animals (Brueggemann 87). These gods are a burden to the animal because of their size and weight. Each time the animal carrying the god takes a step forward, the god that is mounted on its back shifts or sways giving the impression of instability (Brueggemann 87). Another interpretation is that when the gods of a nation fell, that nation fell. McKenna suggests that when the Babylonians heard that Cyrus was coming after them, they turned to Bel and Nebo for help (481). Therefore, if the Babylonians wanted to avoid total defeat they would flee carrying their gods. Carrying their gods would have been a burden to the animals and would have slowed them down. The gods do not have the power to rescue the burden of the animals or the people. The gods could not save or protect their

Good options.

own image, let alone save or protect the people. (✓)

Yahweh compares himself to Bel and Nebo in verses three and four, which is the second section of the text. Bel and Nebo are dead gods who have to be carried and are burdens.

Yahweh, on the other hand, carries the burdens of his people. Yahweh addresses the people as house of Jacob and house of Israel to help them remember their history with him and how they have never had to carry him (Oswalt 230). Yahweh wants his people who are in exile to remember how he has carried them since conception and birth and how he will carry them to their old age. Key!

Verse four contains four first-person pronouns which emphasize^{ol} the fact that Yahweh does not depend on his people for anything. Yahweh says he *will* sustain, carry, and rescue his people. The verbs are also important to note because they contrast sharply with the ones used to describe Bel and Nebo. Bel and Nebo need to be carried, they are made, and are unable to rescue, but Yahweh is able to do all those things. God is trying to tell his people that they can count on him and rely on him for their future. (son)

The next section of this text is Isaiah 46:5-7. Yahweh resumes his criticism of the idols. Yahweh is trying to show his people that there is no comparison between him and the gods of the Babylonians. Other gods are created by humans and are subject to the limitations of time and space. There are three rhetorical questions that Yahweh asks his people (46:5). First Yahweh begins by asking them who they are going to compare him with. In the Babylonian culture, the kings took on the names of Bel and Nebo in a way to compare themselves with the gods (Goldingay 267). For example, Nebuchadnezzar uses Nebo's name and Belshazzar uses Bel's name. But no one can do that with Yahweh's name. The second question is, who will you make me equal with? Once again, the tradition in the Babylonian culture was that the gods would

compete with each other to see who was their equal or who was the better god (McKenna 483).

By asking this question, Yahweh is saying that there is no one who could ever be considered equal with God. The third question that Yahweh asks is, who will you liken me with? When an

individual had an idol made, the idol maker was to create an idol that portrayed the visual qualities of the god (McKenna 483). Yahweh is so unique and so different from any other god

that it is not possible for him to be created into any kind of idol to worship. In fact, God commands his people not to make idols (Ex. 20:4). Yahweh is a unique God and he cannot be compared, counted equal, or likened to any other god. ✓

The fourth section of the text involves verses eight to eleven. In this section, Yahweh is calling his people to remember their past. The people are to remember the history they have with Yahweh and how he has provided and cared for them from birth to old age. Yahweh wants the people to remember that they only have one God and he is the God who has shown them his reliability through past events like creation, the flood, the exodus, the conquests, the judges, etc. (Oswalt 235). It is also in this section that Yahweh refers to the people as "rebels" (46:8 NIV). Oswalt suggests that this term expresses the idea that these people are leaning toward unbelief instead of just having little faith (235). The people had been surrounded by the Babylonians and their gods for so long that they needed to be reminded and encouraged to put their belief and trust in the one true God. ✓

Verses ten and eleven continue to give an even clearer picture of the uniqueness of Yahweh and how different he is from other gods. Yahweh's uniqueness is made evident by the way he declares everything that is still to come (46:10). God knows what he is doing in the lives of his people and he has something planned for them in the future. Yahweh also says, "... My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (46:10 NIV). Yahweh can do whatever he

wants because he alone is God. There is no one else like him in all the universe. Yahweh's uniqueness is displayed once again in the way that he calls a bird of prey, a man to fulfill his purpose (46:11). This is a reference to Cyrus, the Persian, although he is not mentioned by name (Brueggemann 90). Yahweh is going to use Cyrus to fulfill his plan and purpose.

The final section of this text serves as a conclusion to the previous verses. Verses twelve and thirteen state that Yahweh can and will deliver his people no matter what kind of situation they are in. Once again, God calls his people to listen to him. This time Yahweh calls the people "stubborn-hearted," which seems to infer that if the people continue to question Yahweh as their God, it is no longer a matter of unbelief but a willful refusal to believe (Oswalt 237). Yahweh also says that these people are far from righteousness (46:12). Oswalt suggests that there are two interpretations for understanding this statement of the people being far from righteousness. First of all, a literal interpretation would mean that because of the people's lack of faith they are far from experiencing the deliverance that God wants to bring them (Oswalt 238). The second way of interpreting this statement is in an ironic sense. God's deliverance is actually not far away at all; it is quite near. The people do not realize how near God's deliverance is because of their spiritual blindness (Oswalt 238). Even though the people are far away from righteousness, Yahweh is bringing *his* righteousness near through Cyrus.

Yahweh also promises his salvation to Zion (46:13). It is necessary to take a closer look at the word "salvation" that is used here to gain a better understanding of the text. The Hebrew word for "salvation" that is used in this verse is *tesuah*. This word is used thirty-four times in the Old Testament. It is only used two times in the book of Isaiah and is found in Isaiah 45:17 and Isaiah 46:13. *Tesuah* is most commonly translated as salvation or victory (Kohlenberger 1675). The general meaning of the Hebrew word for "salvation" implies bringing help to people in the

interesting

middle of their troubles rather than rescuing them from the troubles (Hubbard 556). The other prophets also use the word *tesuah* to affirm that it is only Yahweh who saves (Jer. 3:23). The meaning of this word is also tied up in the fact that Yahweh has a track record as Savior, which is a claim that no other god can make. Yahweh never lacks the power to save. Israel's confidence for salvation can only lie in Yahweh and not in idols (Is. 45:17). Therefore, the meaning of the word "salvation" in verse thirteen is that Yahweh is about to bring help to his people in their time of trouble and their time of exile in Babylon is about to end.

Relate the Parts

Now that the research of the text is complete, it is necessary to examine how the different sections of the text fit together. The text begins with Yahweh describing how useless the Babylonian gods are (46:1-2). Yahweh describes how the Babylonian gods are actually a burden to those who worship them, instead of the gods carrying the burden of the people like Yahweh does for his people. This leads into the next section of the text where Yahweh calls his people to remember their history with him (46:3-4). Yahweh has been faithful to his people and he has carried them from birth to old age. Yahweh questions his people by asking them why they would even consider comparing or likening him to idols (46:5-7). Yahweh goes on to describe the process in which an idol is made. He also describes how useless the idol actually is because it is made by human hands and it has no power to save. Once again Yahweh calls his people to remember their past history and how he has demonstrated to them that he is the one and only true God (46:8-11). Yahweh concludes his address to his people by telling them that he can and will deliver them, unlike the Babylonian gods who can do nothing (46:12-13). Yahweh is bringing his righteousness and his salvation near. In fact Yahweh is going to bring his salvation to Zion.

swallow sentence

Construct a Thrust Statement

It is important to understand the message of this text that was intended for the original audience. The message of this text that was given to the original audience could be summarized as follows: The gods of the Babylonians are nothing and cannot even begin to be compared with Yahweh and the way in which he has proven faithful in carrying, protecting, providing for, and sustaining his people. It is Yahweh's plans and purposes that will be carried out to bring righteousness and salvation to his people ^{and return them to Zion.} ~~in Zion.~~

Explain the Theology

Now that the meaning of the text is clear and understandable, it is important to highlight what this text teaches about the nature of God. First of all, the text teaches that Yahweh is the one and only true God and there is no one like him. This fact is clearly demonstrated when Yahweh makes evident the fact that the gods of Babylon are nothing compared to him (46:1-2, 5-7). Bel and Nebo are only idols that are burdens to the people who worship them, but God carries his people (46:3-4). God makes it very clear to his people who he is and that there is no one else like him (46:9). This same theological insight about God runs throughout the book of Isaiah. There are numerous references where God refers to himself as being the one and only God (Is. 37:16-20; 41:4; 43:10; 44:6,8; 45:5,21). God is constantly reminding Israel that he is the one and only God that they are to worship, trust, and rely on. The rest of the Bible also stresses this very important theological insight. The ten commandments say that we are not to worship any other gods but Yahweh (Ex 20:3). Deuteronomy 6:4 addresses the importance of Yahweh being the one and only true God that the Israelites were to worship and serve. The prophets also stress this theological insight. Jesus teaches his disciples that God is the only God they are to serve (Mt. 5:24). The book of Revelation also contains many references that talk

about God as the one and only true God (1:8,17). Therefore, it is clear that this theological insight is important both to the book of Isaiah and the whole Bible. *gwn*

Another theological insight that can be taken from this text is that God is dependable. God clearly states his dependability in Isaiah 46:3-4, 10-11. God makes it evident to his people that all through their history with him, they have never carried him like the Babylonians have carried their gods. God has always carried his people, from birth to old age. God wants his people to recall their history with him so that they can remember how dependable he actually is. This theological insight is addressed throughout the book of Isaiah. One example occurs in Isaiah 7 and 8 where Isaiah is telling King Ahaz that he should trust in God to protect him instead of trusting and relying on Assyria. King Hezekiah was also confronted with the same dilemma of whether or not he should rely on God to protect him from the Assyrians (Is. 36-39). The rest of the Bible is also full of different stories where individuals decided to depend and trust in God for help instead of turning to someone else or some other god. Some examples of this are the exodus event (Ex. 12:31-14:31) and the conquests of the promised land that are recorded in the book of Joshua. The New Testament is full of stories of people who depended on Jesus to heal them. Jesus even teaches his disciples about trusting in God (Mt. 6:25-34). *gwn*

Apply the Text to the Present

Now that the theological insights from this text have been addressed, it is necessary to apply these insights to individual Christians and to the church in today's society. The world today seems to promote the worship of all kinds of human made gods and idols. Some of the different idols that the world worships are materialism, music, television, professionalism, education, and many other things. Because Christians live in the world and are surrounded by people who worship all these different kinds of gods, it is very easy to forget that God is the one

and only true God that is to be worshiped and to served. The gods that the world serves can in no way begin to compare to the true and living God. Individual Christians and the church as a whole need to remind each other that we are called and instructed by God to worship only him and no other god. Christians need to take some time and reflect on their lives so that God can speak to them and show them the things in their lives that have become gods. The church needs to be encouraging believers to not allow themselves to get sucked into following the many gods that the world promotes. The church also needs to help Christians by teaching them about the one and only true God and how he is so different from the other gods of the world.

Another application that can be made from this text is the fact that Christians today can totally depend and trust in God because he has proven himself faithful and because his plans will be carried out. In this text, God wanted his people to think back over their history with him so that they are able to remember the different ways that he has shown himself to be dependable and trustworthy. Christians need to be in the practice of remembering how God has proven himself to be dependable and trustworthy in our own lives. God has promised to carry us, provide for us, and protect us. So when Christians remember how God has worked in their lives in the past and the ways in which he has taken care of them, their faith is strengthened so that they can depend and trust in God even more than before. The church also needs to be encouraging its members to remember the church's history with God so that they can especially trust in God when the church goes through difficult times. God also proves his dependability and trustworthiness by the ways in which he compares himself to some of the gods that we have in our lives. God did the same thing for the Israelites when he compared himself to the Babylonian gods to show Israel that he was more dependable and trustworthy than any god. God is trying to show Christians and the church today that he is much more dependable and trustworthy than some of the gods we

worship. For example, God teaches us in his Word that Christians are not to worry about their food and clothes (Mt. 6:25-34), but some Christians are so caught up in worrying about whether or not they have the latest and best fashions in their wardrobe that they forget that God can meet their needs and provide them with so much more than they could ever imagine, if they would only depend and trust in him. God is dependable and trustworthy and this is made very clear to Christians all throughout the Bible and even in our own personal history with God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, after examining Isaiah 46:1-13 in great detail, it is clear that God was trying to tell the Israelites that the Babylonian gods are nothing and cannot even begin to be compared to him and the way in which he has proven faithful in carrying, protecting, providing for, and sustaining his people. It is Yahweh's plans and purposes that will be carried out to bring righteousness and salvation to his people in Zion. God is also trying to speak to Christians today through this text by telling us that he is the one and only true God we are to worship and that we can totally depend and trust in him to take care of us.

For the scholars who followed the method exceptionally well, and thoroughly researched the only improvement could be the clarification of why this text is so important for the scholars. Why one they in such danger of questioning Yahweh's sovereignty & dependability?

*Shalomi
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