



The State of the Church
Sunday January 4th, 2026

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 46:8-11

SERIES: Stand alone

TITLE: State of the Church 2026 / A Clean Slate

BIG IDEA: We look back to God's providence in the past as we trust Him to carry us into the future.

SUMMARY

We will do two things today. We will look at what God has done and cast vision for the future. This is exactly what Isaiah is doing in chapter 46. God is speaking through Isaiah reminding the people to see His past providence and urging them to leave the worthless idols and cling to Him.

God is showing the people that they haven't had the help they have needed because they search for it in the wrong places. Their idols are burdens, not burden bearers. The idols have no power. God has ultimate power. He urges them to remember Him and in remembering Him and His sovereign power, they will walk in His plan as He sovereignly works out His plan. Isaiah is showing the power of God to carry not just their burdens, but to carry them.

"Isaiah returns to basic issues again and again because he knows that it is around these issues that the fundamental, daily struggles of the believer's life are lost or won. This whole chapter is in effect an elaboration of the last two lines of 45:20, 'Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.' The key link word is *carry*."¹

God is showing them that their past is a picture of God's care, grace, and providence. He is also showing them that the future is written. God has cleaned the slate, and His mercies are new each morning as well as for this new year. God declares the end from the beginning, yet He simultaneously urges the people to live with Him as their focus and object of affection, not the idols they have been running after.

As we start this year, there is a clean slate for 2026. God's mercies are new. Our past has been forgiven. We get to walk into the future with God's sustaining providence knowing He will accomplish His will.

¹ Barry Webb, [*The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings*](#), ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 187.

TEXT

Isaiah 46

Bel bows down; Nebo stoops;
their idols are on beasts and livestock;
these things you carry are borne (carried)
as burdens on weary beasts.
²They stoop; they bow down together;
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.
³“Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from before your
birth,
carried from the womb;
⁴even to your old age I am he,
and to gray hairs I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.
⁵“To whom will you liken me and make me
equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?
⁶Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales,
hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!
⁷They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,

they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.
If one cries to it, it does not answer
or save him from his trouble.
⁸“Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
⁹ remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,’
¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it.
¹²“Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from righteousness:
¹³ I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off,
and my salvation will not delay;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.”

OUR 4 PILLARS

- **The Supremacy of Christ**
- **The Centrality of the Gospel**
- **The Unity of the Body**
- **The Urgency of the Mission**

1. God's Faithfulness in The Past Is Our Confidence for the Future.

- How have you seen the Lord's faithfulness to you and your family this last year?
- What is one thing you would tell yourself if you could go back to this day a year ago?
- Why does God continually encourage us to remember His faithfulness throughout Scripture?
- How do our past experiences with the Lord prepare us for the future?
- Isaiah spoke often about idolatry. How does idolatry keep us from walking with the Lord?
 - The Israelites worshiped physical idols made of gold. What are some idols we worship? In other words, what are some things we tend to look to for relief, hope, help, love, to carry our burdens?
- As we think, pray, and plan for this year, what are your spiritual goals?
 - What do you want the Lord to do in your life this year?
 - What practical steps are you taking to pursue this change?
 - What things do you hope are different this year spiritually speaking?
 - Are there sins I have tolerated?
 - Are there relationships that need to be mended?
 - Am I honestly pursuing holiness?
 - Do I find my true delight in the Lord or something else?
 - Do my priorities truly reflect God's agenda or merely my own?
 - Am I intentionally and in humility considering others before myself?
 - Are my time, talents, and resources open and available for the Lord to use?
 - Am I living in the transforming grace of God or am I living in religious legalism?