

Habakkuk chapter 2

The first chapter ended with that difficult and confusing question, why God allows the wicked for so long to prosper in their oppressions of the righteous? This chapter represents the prophet waiting and thinking deeply and above all, God's response.

Verse 1

*I will stand (**steadfastly, meditating, observing and waiting**) my watch (**as a watchman**) And set myself (**with determination**) on the rampart (**tower, fort, barricade, protective wall**), And watch (**observe attentively**) to see what He (**the Lord**) will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected. (**When I'm instructed or rebuked**)*

- Habakkuk compared himself to a soldier or watchman on a city wall, watching the horizon for the approach of a horseman.
- He purposed to "watch" and wait expectantly for the Lord to reply to this second question, as He had the first, so he could report it to his people.
- He prepared himself for a discussion with the Lord about the situation, as well as for the Lord's answer that he expected in a vision or dream.
- "God's response to those who inquire of him is never automatic. They must be willing to wait in order to hear What God the LORD will speak'.

Verse 2

Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets (clear and simple displayed for all to see), that he may run who reads it.

- God did respond, and told the prophet to "inscribe" a permanent, easy-to-read "record" of "the vision"—which He had given.
- Having received and recorded the vision, Habakkuk, and other messengers, should then "run" to tell their fellow citizens what God's answer was, so that they would run and publish it."
- Or so "It could involve passers-by, who will be able to read the message as they go by and then pass the message on informally to those they meet,
- Or it could mean a messenger, whose specific function will be to spread the message throughout the land.

Verse 3

*For the vision (**what you foretell to them**) is yet for an appointed time (**though unknown to man is determined and fixed by with and by God**); But at the end (**appointed time**) it will speak (**be accomplished**), and it will not lie (**disappoint your expectations**). Though it tarries (**seems to have delayed for 120 years from the time of King Manasseh to King Darius and Cyrus**), wait for it (**expect it with patience**); because it will surely come (**the ruin and destruction of Babylon**), It will not tarry (**delay**) (**not beyond the appointed time**).*

- The vision Habakkuk was about to receive concerned events to take place in the future.
- Though it was a prophecy that would not come to pass immediately, it would materialize eventually. Habakkuk was to "wait" for its fulfilment, because it would indeed "come" at the Lord's "appointed time."
- "Just as, in human life, the timing of certain actions and events is very important, because it is also in the divine scheme of things. . . . The apparent lack of divine action from God, which may cause faith to be unsteady, is in reality only our inability to perceive the timing of divine action."

Verse 4

*Behold (**look, see, pay attention to**) the proud (**Babylon, puffed up with pride and evil passion**), His soul (**A heart and mind which is lifted up by self-sufficiency and pride**) is not upright in him;*

- Is very corrupt and wicked.
- Is very presumptuous and arrogant and thinks God will not punish them.
- "Spiritually, morally, and ethically the ungodly presumptuously ignore the path of God's righteousness to follow the way of selfish desires in the everyday decisions of life.

*But the just (**the righteous, the humble, upright, the blameless Jew**) shall live (**shall not be destroyed physically and spiritually by the Babylonians**) by his faith (**trust in God and His physical and spiritual deliverance**)*

Verse 5

"Indeed (for sure), because he (Babylon or the king) transgresses by wine.

Proverbs 31:4

4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink;

5 Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.

6 Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart.

- Too much luxury and excessive drinking of wine destroyed kingdoms. Case in point, Belshazzar the Babylonian king destroyed by Darius and Cyrus. **(Go and read Daniel chapter 5)**

He is a proud man (vain, boastful, prideful), and he does not stay at home (always abroad fighting and conquering other countries to enlarge his territory). Because he enlarges his desire as hell (his greed like the grave cannot be satisfied), and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied (greedy and always hungry for more), He gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples. (Conquers very many nations and enslaves them.)

- When a person drinks too much "wine," it leads him (or her) to reveal his pride publicly. Here, the "proud man" is a representation of Babylon.
- The Babylonians were known for their consumption of wine as seen in Daniel 5).
- "Wine" makes a person dissatisfied with his present situation and possessions, and he often leaves his home to find more elsewhere (cf. Proverbs 23:30-31).
- Wine can be a good thing and in the bible is used to represent overflowing blessings.

Proverbs 3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

- But it can also represent something bad as seen in **Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. Also in Proverbs 20:1 and Proverbs 21:17.** It just depends on the context you choose to focus.

- The proud person is "never satisfied" — "like death" that consumes people every day and never stops. Here, "hell" is a representation of death. Babylon was similar, opening wide its jaws to consume all peoples.

Proverbs 30:16

The grave, The barren womb, The earth that is not satisfied with water-And the fire never says, "Enough!"

- The proud person also seeks to dominate others, and Babylon was the perfect example.

Verse 6

*"Will not all these (**who have been oppressed, used and deceived**) take up a proverb against him (**turn him into a song of scorn**), And a taunting riddle (**insulting mystery, puzzle or problem**) against him (**the king of Babylon**), and say, 'Woe (**grief, sorrow, misery, calamity**) to him who increases what is not his-how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'?"*

- Because of the Babylonians' sins, it was inevitable that the righteous would taunt and mock them.
- They would pronounce "woe" on them for increasing what was not theirs just to have more, and for making themselves rich by charging exorbitant interest on "loans."
- "How long" would this go on?—they asked themselves. When would God judge Babylon?

Verse 7

*Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty (**prize or plunder from looting or piracy**).*

- Those from whom Babylon had stolen would surely "rise up" and rebel when they woke up to what was going on.
- Then they would turn the tables and Babylon would "become plunder for them."
- This actually happened when the Medes and Persians rose up (attacked) and overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C.

Verse 8

*Because you have plundered many nations (**raided, slain their people, robbed their treasures, enslaved them**), All the remnant of the people shall plunder you (**The remnant of the nations untouched by you Babylon, shall combine against you, and execute the Lord's justice upon you**), Because of men's blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.*

- Babylon would suffer the same punishment it had inflicted on other nations.
- Its survivors would "loot" it because it had "looted many" other peoples. Babylon's plundering had involved "killing" and "violence" which had been done to the land of Canaan and to the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

Verse 9

*Woe (**calamity and great suffering**) to him who covets (**desires enviously**) evil gain for his house (**enrich his household through oppressing the innocent**), that he may set his nest on high (**like a bird of prey**), that he may be delivered from the power of disaster!*

- Babylon used the riches from plundering to build a secure government for itself that it thought would be safe from all calamity.
- It built a strong and rich dynasty ("house") so it would be self-sufficient.

Verse 10

*You (**Nebuchadnezzar**) give shameful counsel to your house, Cutting off many peoples (**destroying and making many peoples and cities poor**), and sin against your soul (**brought ruin on yourself**).*

- It was shameful for the Babylonians to destroy "many" other "peoples. By doing so they were "sinning against" themselves. That is, they were doing something that would eventually bring destruction on themselves.

Verse 11

For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timbers will answer it.

- The stones and woodwork ("framework"), taken from other nations to build the Babylonians' fortresses and palaces, would serve as visual witnesses to the sinful invasions that brought them to Babylon.
- They would testify to the guilt of the Babylonians in the day that God would bring Babylon to judgment.

Verse 12

*"Woe (**calamity and great suffering**) to him who builds a town with bloodshed (**through murder and cruelty**), who establishes a city (**Babylon**) by iniquity! (**By force, with corruption, extortion and ill-gotten riches from the innocent**).*

- The Babylonians were to face trouble because they had built their cities at the expense of the lives of their enemies.
- Basically "blood money" or money obtained by making others suffer, even shedding their blood.
- Babylon was built with "blood money" and the blood, sweat, and tears of enslaved people.
- It was a town founded on injustice; without injustice it could not have become what it had become.

Verse 13

*Behold (**pay attention, see**), is it not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labour to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain?*

- This verse focuses on the Almighty God, the Judge.
- His assessment was that the Babylonians' hard work was in vain; all their labour would amount to "nothing."
- Their works would turn out to be fuel "for fire" that would burn them up, the fire of His judgment

Verse 14

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

- Rather than "the earth" being filled with the glory of Babylon, it will one day "be filled with the knowledge of" God's "glory," like the waters cover the sea"
- This prediction refers to the ultimate destruction of Babylon.

Verse 15

Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbour, pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness!

- God would judge Babylon because the Babylonians had deceived their neighbour nations, with the result that they were able to take advantage of them.
- The Babylonians had behaved like a man who gets a woman "drunk" so she will lose her self-control, and he can then undress her.

- It could also be that Babylonians also took advantage of their victims sexually as is their love for wine.

Verse 16

*You (**king of Babylon**) are filled with shame instead of glory. You also-drink! (**From the cup of God's wrath**) And be exposed as uncircumcised! (**Ashamed and exposed**) The cup of the LORD'S right hand (**just judgement in His right hand**) will be turned against you,*

(KJV) And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.

*And utter shame (**like vomit from a drunkard**) will be on your glory.*

- As they had made their neighbours drunk, so the Lord would give them a cup of judgment that would make them drunk.
- God's "right hand" is a representation for His strong personal punishment, giving back in kind what the person being judged had given.
- Their future "disgrace" contrasts with God's future glory.
- They would "expose" their "own nakedness," just as they had exposed the nakedness of others.
- When you are naked you are vulnerable and ashamed. The Lord pictured Babylon as a deserving of hate, naked drunk who had lost his self-control and the respect of everyone including himself.

Verse 17

*For the violence done to Lebanon (**Mount Lebanon in Canaan**) will cover you (**Babylon**), and the plunder of beasts which made them afraid, Because of men's blood and the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.*

- Babylon's "violence" ethically and morally would come back to overwhelm him, because he had forcefully stripped "Canaan" of its vegetation and animals.

Verse 18

*What profit is the image (idol), that its maker (**sinful mortal man**) should carve it (**make it with his own hands and limited wisdom**), The moulded image (**of gold or silver**), a teacher of lies (**bewitch men to trust in idols**), That the maker (**not God but man**) of its mould (**who knows that it does not have life**) should trust in it, To make mute idols? (**Idols that cannot give guidance or direction or counsel**).*

- An "idol," "carved" by human hands, cannot help "its maker," because anyone Who creates is always greater than his creation.
- Images in fact become teachers "of falsehood," since their existence implies a lie, that they can help humans.
- An idol-carver "trusts in his" own "handiwork" by making it.
- Idols cannot even speak, much less provide help.
- Whenever a person sets his priorities on the things made rather than on the Maker of things, he is guilty of idolatry.
- "Famous people are the 'idols' of millions, especially politicians, athletes, wealthy tycoons, and actors and actresses.
- Even dead entertainers like Michael Jackson, Tupac, Bob Marley and Elvis Presley still have their followers.
- People may also worship and serve man-made things like cars, houses, boats, jewellery, and art. While all of us appreciate beautiful and useful things, it's one thing to own them and quite something else to be owned by them. A man called Albert Schweitzer said, 'anything you have that you cannot give away, you do not really own; it owns you.'
- Some people worship their children or parents.
- Social position can be an idol and so can achievements at your work place.
- For some people, their god is their appetite (**Philippians 3:19; Romans 16:18**); and they live only to experience carnal pleasures [including following their favorite sports?].
- Intellectual ability can be a terrible idol (2 Corinthians 10:5) as people worship their IQ and refuse to submit to God's word.
- Someone said that Idolatry begins with deception, encourages deception, and calls for a commitment to deception.

Verse 19

Woe to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone, 'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all.

- The Lord pronounced "woe" on those who ignorantly tried to coax their dumb ("mute") idols—"wood" or "stone," perhaps "overlaid with gold" or "silver"—to speak. No matter what they looked like, or what material they were made out of, they were still only lifeless objects of art. How foolish it was to look to one of these as one's "teacher" or guide!

Verse 20

But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

- In contrast to lifeless idols stands the living and true God. Yahweh lived in His heavenly, "holy temple," not in the works of human hands. Therefore "all the earth," everything in it should be quiet "before Him" out of respect and awe (fear). There is no need to try and persuade Him to come to life or to speak.
- "Idolatry is essentially the worship of that which we make, rather than of our Maker. And that which we make may be found in possessions, a home, a career, an ambition, a family, or a multitude of other people or things. We 'worship' them when they become the focal point of our lives, that for which we live. And as the goal and centre of human existence, they are as foolish as any wooden idol or metal image."
- Because God was not a man-made idol, through His majesty and sovereignty, He would take care of Babylon; the Israelites did not have to worry or concern themselves with that.

Conclusion

We also have to remember that "God sometimes uses evil people to accomplish His larger purpose in life. But He never condones evil, and those who do evil He holds accountable for their actions.