



Consequences for Injustice

Study Scripture: Habakkuk 2: 6 - 14

Background Scripture: Habakkuk 2: 1 – 20; 2 Kings 23: 35 - 37

Lesson 3 March 14, 2020

Key Verse

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

Habakkuk 2:14

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Habakkuk is directly applicable to the tragic events happening in the world as a consequence of the conflicts between nations and peoples.

When we look at the context of the times of Habakkuk, the realization is inescapable that the Assyrians and the Babylonians brought immense terror to that part of the world. They were people who loved to terrorize their enemies, so that their violent behavior would not be resisted. Their cruelty was mind-bending and they ruthlessly killed, injured and destroyed those that stood up to them.

This is exactly how many nations in the world behave today. The terrorists among us have learned the lessons of the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the modern nations of the world well.

We must be very careful judging a prophet like Jonah for not wanting to preach to Nineveh, otherwise called Assyria, so that they possibly would repent. Assyria was a brutal regime and so was Babylon. In chapter two Habakkuk highlights the bad behavior and the sins of powerful nations such as Assyria and Babylon. Of course the sins of these powerful nations were very similar to those of the kingdom of Judah. They practiced the evils of Babylon on their own people. The rulers of Judah did violence to their people, shed their blood, stole from them, enrich themselves on the backs of their people and behaved proudly.

We are looking at the times when terrible wickedness ruled and cruelty, terrorization of populations, and violence was endemic.

Since we are focusing on the kingdom of Judah, we note that we are looking at a tragedy. But we must also remember that the Book of Habakkuk is very relevant to us today, for the tragedy of Judah is the same tragedy of people today.

This is so because when people forsake God they are lost. It was true then and it is true now. People who forsake God lose any sense of who they were created to be, do not understand who they

are and begin to behave like animals; acting brutishly, hating others, at the same time displaying all the signs of hating themselves and having no proper sense of self.

These were very troubled times in the Near East. The prophet Habakkuk apparently wrote in the years after the fall of the Assyrian Empire and before the onslaught of the rising Chaldean power, who became the instrumentality responsible for the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Habakkuk's revelation is described as a "burden", that is, a "load, or prophetic occurrence" that is heavy with woe and judgment. The prophet had something on his mind that was very unpleasant for his nation, for those who attacked his nation and as well as for himself. As a result, in the first part of this book we find a conversation between Habakkuk and his God and in this conversation the prophet alternatively lament and utters prophetic oracles. In the second part the prophet puts a mocking song in the mouths of the nations that have suffered under the oppression of Babylon. There are five woes, and then a Psalm.

It is most likely that Habakkuk ministered during the reign of Jehoiakim and Josiah and he would have witnessed many of the religious reforms that Josiah, the last righteous King of Judah put in place. He would also have seen for himself the wickedness in his own nation Judah and like Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah, realized that the reforms would come to nothing and would die with Josiah, for there was no trace of godliness in Judah. These were dark days for Judah in every respect and Habakkuk clearly did not like what the people of Judah were doing before his very eyes.

It must also be said that Habakkuk did not like what God was doing, or more precisely "not doing", for not only were the sins of the nations distressing him greatly, but God's seeming inactivity about what was happening was even more distressing.

Habakkuk was therefore a perplexed prophet. While other prophets proclaimed divine judgment, Habakkuk pleaded for divine judgment, both on his people and on their attackers.

Clearly Habakkuk had been praying for a long time about his problems, but God was not answering his prayers. He could not believe that God would behave like this, ignoring his prayers, given the great corruption, difficulty, distress, violence, disobedience, idolatry, immorality and all other kind of evils that filled Judah and his region.

So it seems to some that Habakkuk was angry with God and was actually rebuking God for not acting promptly in doing what Habakkuk thought that God should be doing. So some commentators accuse Habakkuk of being arrogant and less than perfect in his manner of speaking and in his attitude toward God. In fact though, this chapter does involve an inquiry into the goodness of God, his omnipotence and whether or not the existence of evil conflicts with the other attributes of God. In other words, if God is good, why is there evil in the world? Related to this is the question as to why even if God allows evil to occur, why does He allow evil people to prosper?

From a human point of view Habakkuk is in a bad situation and he is getting no attention to his urgent cries. He's waiting on God, is agonizing over the situation and in his waiting on God, his questions explode aggressively. So we can regard Habakkuk as a man with a strong lament or a man with a strong protest. Whatever we think though, he certainly is in great distress over both the sinful state of his country, as well as God's apparent silence and inaction.

Habakkuk like Jeremiah knows the iniquity of Judah. Jeremiah had gone so far as to describe Shallum the son of Josiah in the most unflattering words.

“But thine eyes and heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for operation, and for violence, to do it.” Jeremiah 22:17

Or as one translation puts it rather plainly: **“But you are always thinking and looking for ways to increase your holding by dishonest means. Your eyes and your heart are set only on killing some innocent person and on committing fraud and oppression.”**

The following verses are even more condemning of the sons of Josiah.

“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee Violence! And thou wilt not save? Why dost thou make me see wrongs and look upon trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is slacked and Justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted.”

So we can understand this righteous prophet Habakkuk when he explodes in chapter one.

The first chapter is filled with the protests of the prophet. God does answer and Habakkuk is stunned, for God is going to deal with the problem of sin in Judah, but He intends to use even “greater sinners” to rebuke the so-called “lesser sinners”.

How could God use a mighty, strange, cold-blooded, ruthless nation who were not afraid of, nor cared about anybody, to punish Judah? That must be wrong. How could God do that? How could that action be consistent with God's character? How could a pure and holy God use unrighteous instruments to achieve his purposes? Would doing that not leave His promises to Abraham and the patriarchs to preserve His chosen people unfulfilled?

Note that Habakkuk reminded God of who He is and then used his human logic to judge God's behavior.

Of course one should note immediately that Habakkuk was basing his argument on his belief that when the people of God sinned, even if their sins were gross, because they were in a “different category of people”, their sins were not really as bad as they seemed, or worthy of the particular kind of God's wrath that God had indicated was in store for them. At this stage Habakkuk was demanding, protesting, or pleading for what he thought was mercy, as he challenged God's way of dealing with the wicked.

It did not cross his mind that God often regard the sins of his people, who knew better, as being worse in quality than the same kind of sins pagans were committing. (See 2 Kings 21: 7-12).

Habakkuk's questions are important and the answers that God gives teach us much about God and how he looks at history. God certainly teaches that strictly nationalistic covenant theologies, whether found in Judah or anywhere else are silly and absolutely wrong. Nations are warned that God does not respect their nationalism or their national pride and does not in any way teach that nations who belong to him or claim to belong to him will get away with their sins and will not be judged according to His righteous standards.

God gives a basic response which is the ultimate theology of life and is that while events are proceeding on earth with nations, tribes and tongues fighting each other and doing all kinds of wickedness and while history is still awaiting its conclusion, the righteous are to live by faith or by “faithfulness”.

Habakkuk awaits divine revelation and when it comes, it leads to him to announce doom.

THE TEXT

Verses 1-5. Habakkuk declares that he is so perplexed that he intends to act as a sentinel on a city wall and watch and wait expectantly for God to answer his second set of questions. He urgently and attentively wants to hear what God has to say about his complaints.

Of course this is wise of him and it should be good for us to follow his example. When we are perplexed and have doubts concerning how God is acting in our lives and question his methods of operation and we feel that he is not behaving wisely or that he has abandoned us, we should take pains to stand on a “watch”, a place of determined seeking, while we diligently search for answers and wait for God to speak to us.

When we pray earnestly to God we must carefully observe what kind of answers he gives us. Habakkuk was really reflecting what David said in Psalm 5: *“Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.”*

This is the attitude we should have when we go through the trials of life and are tempted to quarrel with God and his providence or government. When we are perplexed we must go to our “**watch**”, and set ourselves upon the “**tower**”.

We then watch to see what God will say; this means that we must be prepared to listen, and then consider carefully what we will answer in response to our argument and the kind of defense we will put forward when we are reproved by the word of God.

Habakkuk personally gets his answer and it does not come through any third-party. He is ordered to write the revelation, so there could be no mistake about the word of God. This is to be a permanent record, for God intends it to have a permanent impact on those that hear and see it. Then he is told to make it plain, so that people will see it and understand it, for it is not to be written in a difficult manner or language. God wants those that read it to be able to “run”, that is to take action and make progress, because of the impact of the word of God on them.

Habakkuk must understand that he is speaking to people beyond his time. He must realize that he is talking about the future and people will not be able to fully understand what is happening and what would happen unless they understand what God is saying. The future is somewhat shrouded and until future events actually occur, there will be little understanding. But what God has said certainly will help them when this sure word of prophecy comes to pass.

Since Habakkuk was wondering why sinful Babylon, a nation even more sinful than Judah, would bring judgment to Judah, God assures the prophet that He is not ‘asleep at the wheel’ but does know and care about His people. He is doing something that Habakkuk might not understand. He knows that the nation that will come to judge Judah is filled with pride and all kinds of unrighteous practices and passions. He also knows that those who are just shall live because of his faith, or as some translate it because of his ‘faithfulness’.

The implication is that unrighteous Babylon will not live, because she did not live by faith or by trusting in God but depended on its might. Babylon fulfilled its ambitions, not by submitting to the sovereignty of God, but by depending on its might which enabled it to run over other people.

There is a big difference between the proud people of Babylon and their destructive tendencies and those who have humble faith in God and depend on God for deliverance. God understood the difference between those who trust in him and those who do not.

It is important to note what this means for understanding the topic of our lesson today. Pride is dangerous for everybody and is especially dangerous when found among the people of God. Pride is always hateful to God. God cannot accept the proud, for their principle of life is “the self”. They are always to be contrasted with the “just” whose principle of life is faith. One writer comments:

Pride is everywhere and takes all manner of shapes.

Here is a rich man, proud of what he has.

There is the poor man, proud of his “honor” in having less.

Here is the talented man, proud of what he can do.

There is the man of few talents, proud of his hard work.

Here is the religious man, proud of his religion.

There is the unbeliever, proud of his unbelief.

Here is the establishment man, proud of his place in society.

There is the counter-cultural man, proud of his “outcast” status.

Here is the learned man, proud of his intelligence and learning.

Here is the simple man, proud of his simplicity.”

The rich and famous are proud of themselves and just as much as they, the poor and the immoral are just as proud of themselves. The famous Spurgeon said: **“Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?”**

Verse 6. Habakkuk was perplexed that God would use the Chaldeans as the instrument of chastisement. Judah had followed the apostate footsteps of their brother Israel and most certainly deserved punishment; still the thought that God would use a heathen nation, steeped in gross sin to punish Judah was a hard pill to swallow.

We see that when it comes to the punishment of sin, God does not think or act in the way we do. Notice how people are quick to point out the sins of others even when they are themselves facing judgment due to their sin. In the eyes of God all sin is sin; if we forget the covenant and behave like pagan or heathen nations we will face the wrath of God.

Yet in the midst of this God assures Habakkuk that the wicked Chaldeans will not escape judgment. God insists to Habakkuk that He is at work. The Babylonians will receive judgment for their sins. There will be a taunting or mocking of them because of their sins. Woe is pronounced on them because they have made themselves rich unjustly by taking what was not theirs. All the nations that Babylon had squeezed to death to enrich themselves and fulfill their unrighteous ambitions, according to verse five **God** will certainly have the last laugh. So the prophet declares a “woe” against those who are covetous, who the more they have the more they want, the greedy who make it their business to take everything for themselves. Sentence is passed. His Doom is declared.

He has been proud, he has dishonored and disgraced others and that same will be his punishment. He will be laughed at and despised. He will be brought down to nothing. Those that he has abused will have the pleasure of insulting him.

Judah's judgment may seem very grievous but believers must not despise the chastening of the Lord, for it is devised to restore people to God. On the flip side it not good to fall into the hands of God.

Nebuchadnezzar had set himself up as a god. His pride was fueled by his massive conquest of many nations, creating to that point the greatest world empire. His excessive cruelty did not go unnoticed, as he amassed the possession of many people. God would deal with Nebuchadnezzar in such a way that the proverbial saying concerning his actions would forever be warnings to those who dare follow his ungodly path; the king who God reduced to a wild beast, crawling in the field and eating grass like an ox; his empire taken from him with the rise of the Persian empire.

This is the first of five prophetic woes; when used in prophetic literature the 'woe' introduces a judicial indictment or sentence of judgment (Is 5:8,11,18,20-22; Jer. 22:13, 23:1; Amos 5:18, 6:1) It is the most ominous warning of coming judgment. It warns of doom.

Resigned to the fact that God is in control, the prophet asks *'How long ...'*

This may refer to how long would the people be subject to the heavy taxation and oppression of the Babylonians, or directed at God as to how long He would allow this evil regime to oppress the people of God and the poor. The answer is revealed in verse seven.

Verse 7-8. In reply to the question in verse six, *'how long...'* the end of the Babylonian tyranny will happen suddenly; and in the manner in which they have oppressed they will face severe treatment themselves.

"The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw: Lift up a banner on a bare mountain, exalt the voice to them, shake the hand, so that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded My holy ones, I have also called My mighty ones for anger, those who rejoice in My highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together; Jehovah of Hosts gathers an army for the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of the heavens, Jehovah and the weapons of His indignation, to destroy all the land." (Isa. 13:1-5).

"And their children shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be robbed, and their wives raped. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not value silver; and they shall not delight in gold. And bows shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not pity sons. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the majestic beauty of the Chaldees, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isa. 13:16-19).

The reason for such terrible retribution is here stated as the violence that they had perpetrated on other nations and in particular on Judah. Those that Babylon stole from would rebel. The tables would be turned. Babylon would be plundered. They would suffer the same punishment they inflicted on others.

It is never a good thing for nations to shed the blood of other peoples. It is not a good thing for nations to plunder other nations. It is not a good thing to be proud of yourself and to depend on your own strength.

Nations and people must remember that there is no permanent power for evil people. The shedding of other people's blood means inevitably that your blood will be shed. The powerful that destroyed the weak will themselves be brought to their knees. The history of mankind has demonstrated this rule that God has established.

Violence and blood-shedding will bring no lasting benefit to individuals or to nations.

Verse 9-11. The second woe is a judgment against those who use unrighteous and evil means to build their house, whether an individual or a nation. Just as judgment came on the Egyptians for building their cities on the backs of Israelite slaves, today's nations that exploit other people especially the poor, should pay particular attention to this woe.

Jehoiakim's fate was sealed for he acted in this evil manner and for this reason he was given up to the Chaldean oppressor (Jer_22:13); his greed and covetousness led to his undoing and Judah's punishment; the Chaldean's would face a similar fate.

Nebuchadnezzar wished to aggrandize his family and make his empire permanent: but both family and empire were soon cut off by the death of his son Belshazzar, and the consequent destruction of the Chaldean empire. Nebuchadnezzar's walled cities, towers and palaces were built to be impregnable and the hanging gardens of Babylon were a feat of engineering and beauty as to be considered an ancient wonder of the world. Historically men that consider themselves great, typically built monuments to themselves. However, what he does is to bring certain ruin on his family and in the case of national leadership upon his nation, because his plans to make himself great included the slaughter and destruction of many people. The result of such sins will affect future generations; in this case the Babylonian empire would be totally decimated.

The buildings are a testimony against them, the personification of the stones and the beams that cry out are a constant reminder of the harsh and brutal condition endured by those slaves who laboured to erect those buildings.

Unjust acquisitions will never be secure and will never protect against calamity. The greedy man is ripe for judgment. No matter what he does to protect himself and his dynasty, it will come to naught. The greedy and covetous are doing things to lose their own soul. Their actions constitute sinning against themselves. It was a shame for the Babylonians to destroy others. It was shameful that they were doing things guaranteed to destroy themselves.

Whether we like it or not it is shameful when people and nations do things designed to sin against their soul and hurt themselves. How stupid it is to hate one's own flesh! But that is what Babylon did and unfortunately Judah was following in their footsteps, trusting in their own ability for deliverance and not trusting in God.

Undoubtedly, Babylon had taken treasures, stones, woodwork and precious ornaments and decorations from all the peoples' cities to beautify their own city. But in doing that Habakkuk says, the very stones of the house they had built with the captured treasures would cry out against the greed and violence of the thieves of Babylon.

It is sad that men laud and sing the praises of powerful nations and of rich men who have built their splendor on the backs of the weak and vulnerable. It is a shame and a sin. One must build one's wealth and prosperity by hard work and righteousness, not by thievery. God is watching and doom will come to the wicked.

Verse 12. This is the beginning of the third 'woe', the declaration of judgment for the excessive violence and killing that took place in order to bring into reality their vision of grandeur. Note the repetition. God is certainly hostile to this behavior. God's position is repeated for emphasis.

It was impossible to accomplish such construction projects without the massive employment of slave labour; an aggressive building schedule inevitably led to harsh treatment of the slaves in order to meet deadlines. One writer comments:-

"Nebuchadnezzar "encircled the inner city with three walls and the outer city also with three, all of burnt brick. And having fortified the city with wondrous works, and adorned the gates like temples, he built another palace near the palace of his fathers, surpassing it in height and its great magnificence." He seemed to strengthen the city, and to establish it by outward defenses. But it was built through cruelty to conquered nations, and especially God's people, and by oppression, against His holy Will. So there was an inward rottenness and decay in what seemed strong and majestic, and which imposed on the outward eye; it would not stand, but fell. Babylon, which had stood since the flood, being enlarged contrary to the eternal laws of God, fell in the reign of his son."

The chief inequity of Nebuchadnezzar was his awful treatment of the poor in establishing his city. Construction was completed in twelve months; that is unheard of, but it cost the lives of many people to accomplish this. *"Therefore, O king, let my advice be pleasing to you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, whether there will be duration to your prosperity."* Dan 4:27

Daniel had warned the king to turn from this wickedness, for such inequity would not go unpunished. God takes particular notice of one's treatment of the poor.

Babylon was built with blood money, at the expense of the lives of people of other nations and their own people. It was founded on injustice. It was certainly beautiful and ostentatious, but its existence screamed about the awful nature of the builders.

"At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

The king spoke and said, Is this not great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan 4:29-30

Verse 13. *"is it not for Jehovah of Hosts that the people labor only for fire..."* The beautiful building and massive structures and walls for the defense of the city will all be built in vain; all their labour is appointed for the fire, for God is the author of divine judgment.

"So says Jehovah of Hosts: The broad walls of Babylon shall be completely broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor in vain, and the people shall be in the fire, and they shall be weary." Jer. 51:58

The Scripture is replete with examples and warnings of judgment against those who despise the word of God, who break the covenant and treat the poor with cruelty. Their house will not stand.

Note that the emphasis in this taunt or mocking song is on the Almighty power of the Judge Yahweh. Yahweh has decided that the hard work of the Babylonians was vanity, amounting to

nothing. His fire of judgment would burn up everything. It was all a waste of time. God pronounced doom on such builders.

Verse 14. *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah...”* Since Yahweh was Almighty, his decrees stood. His judgment was final. Yahweh was in control and what He liked, namely, the things of righteousness would win out.

The prophetic word is in part a demonstration of the power and omniscience of God. It demonstrates God’s knowledge of the future and his control and power to bring those things to pass. Thus the destruction of Babylon and all those things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God will be brought down.

“The king spoke and said, Is this not great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice fell from Heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you. And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will. The same hour the thing was fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar. And he was driven from men, and ate grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the heavens, until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.” Dan 4:30-33

God will use the destruction of those who exalt themselves as a means to spread the knowledge of his power and glory. At the appointed time as prophesied, Nebuchadnezzar was restored for a season to acknowledge the glory of God and such a declaration be made know throughout the vast Babylonian empire. Thus through the humiliation, restoration and ultimate captivity of the people, the knowledge of the glory of God will be made know all over the world.

“And at the end of days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes to Heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him who lives forever, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His rule is from generation to generation.” Dan 4:34

The future application of this verse can also be seen in the ministry of Jesus and the spread of the gospel by the apostles; and finally the ultimate fulfillment at the return of Christ. One writer comments:-

Adapted from Isa_11:9. Here the sense is, "The Jews shall be restored and the temple rebuilt, so that God's glory in saving His people, and punishing their Chaldean foe, shall be manifested throughout the world," of which the Babylonian empire formed the greatest part; a type of the ultimate full manifestation of His glory in the final salvation of Israel and His Church, and the destruction of all their foes.

All of human history flows according to the will of God, his testimonies are true and judgment is sure, we should seek to know the glory of God.

Verse 15. The fourth ‘woe’ demonstrates the intoxicating effect that conquest has on ones neighbor and how they led others to pursue the same ungodly desires that would ultimately lead to the same destruction that the Babylonians faced.

There is more than one view as to who this verse applies; it is probably an apt description of both. One commentator suggests that **“This has been considered as applying to Pharaoh-hophra, king of Egypt, who enticed his neighbors Jehoiachin and Zedekiah to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, whereby the nakedness and imbecility of the poor Jews was soon**

discovered; for the Chaldeans soon took Jerusalem, and carried its kings, princes, and people, into captivity.”

Another view is that other nations desired the same kind of world dominance that Babylon had and go after it in the same manner; waging war, assuming the property of others, forcing people to pay tribute and heavy taxation; enslaving conquered people to build their empire. The scripture says that their end will be the same as Babylon, their nakedness or their shame is the result as God humbles them as He did Nebuchadnezzar.

Some commentators attempt to interpret these verses as either applying specifically to Babylon or Judah; in fact God’s grievance against both of them is practically the same and thus probably applies to both in varying measures.

Verse 16. Here the writer introduces a metaphor that uses the intoxicating effect of wine, to show how ones glory is turned to shame. The excess and success of the Babylonian conquest considered to be their glory would in the face of destruction be their humiliation and shame.

There is no doubt however that much drinking and drunkenness was typical of Babylon, Judah and the surrounding nations. But here it seems that God is attacking those that have the nations practicing or imitating their particular forms of corruption.

As for Judah, they had received more ‘light’ than Babylon, but they had turned from the covenant and embraced the pagan practices of the nations around them; they had treated the poor among them with such contempt that Micah describes them as: *You who hate the good and love the evil; who pull their skin off them, and their flesh from their bones; who also eat the flesh of My people, and strip their skin off them. And they break their bones and chop them in pieces, like that in the pot, like those in the middle of the kettle.*” Micah 3:2-3

Judah is seen as behaving as the uncircumcised Babylonians, thus the judgment that will fall on Babylon also looms over the head of Judah. They would all be subjected to judgment from Yahweh’s right hand. Unquestionably this is God personally acting to bring retribution.

The Babylonians would be disgraced rather than glorified. Their nakedness would be exposed just as they had exposed the nakedness of others. When they were made naked they would automatically become vulnerable to others and so they would not survive. The picture of Babylon is of one who had lost self-control and respect of others. They would be filled with shame and not with glory.

“The cup of Jehovah’s right hand shall turn on you...” you shall now drink of the cup of divine judgment. All that you have amassed and what was yours will be taken from you and your shame will be as drunkard vomiting on himself.

“So you shall say to them, So says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Drink and be drunk, and vomit, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.” Jer. 25:27

Verse 17. The violence perpetrated on the people of Lebanon shall come back on you and the wild animals will terrorize your people as you did them. The extreme wickedness that took the lives of all those that were not enslaved will be your reward and your glory will be as shame.

Obviously Babylon had rapaciously stripped Lebanon of its vegetation, its famous timber to build its palaces. They were guilty of tremendous bloodshed and slaughter. The Babylonians are here being accused of creating an ecological disaster.

Some hold however that “Lebanon” was here used as a picture of Jerusalem.

Verse 18-19. The prohibition against idolatry is in general applicable to the prince, priest and the people. Both Babylon and Judah were engrossed in idolatry; this is particularly terrible in the case of Judah who was the people of God.

These are all dumb idols, gods made by one’s own hands – worshipping them is the height of foolishness; they cannot save anyone from the wrath of God’s judgment. Israel went that way as did Babylon, and now Judah is heading full speed down the same road.

“What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it;- What did Baal and Ashtaroth profit you? What availed it ever but to draw down the wrath of God? Even so neither shall it profit the Chaldaean. As their idols availed them not, so neither need they fear them. Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar were propagandists of their own belief and would destroy, if they could, all other worship, false or true: Nebuchadnezzar is thought to have set up his own image (Dan. 3). Antichrist will set himself up as God (2Th_2:4; Rev_13:15-17). We may take warning ...The Jews did, in the main, learn this in their captivity.”

The last woe is directed to those false prophets and teachers that are self-deceived and go about deceiving others. It is they who give voice to dumb idols and preach the doctrines of demons; on them will fall the greater weight of God’s judgment. They have led the people away from God and have chosen to believe a lie.

Such is God’s hatred of idolatry that it will not go unpunished.

CONCLUSION

So in conclusion we are faced with the living and true God who is contrasted with lifeless idols.

God is in his heavenly temple, a place not made by the works of human hands. All men are told to be quiet before him, to be in awe of Him. He is the sovereign Majesty.

So here God is reminding Habakkuk that he is the Almighty, that He has wisdom and strength, that he knows everything, that he knows best how to deal with the wicked and the righteous.

God stands in the heavenly courts. We are told not to fall for the idols made with wood, stone, gold, or silver for they are all life less, and all are nothing compared to the true God.

So we must ask. What idols have you created in your life? If you have created idols whether they be the love of money and material possessions, or the magnificent edifices that you have built, just remember that God is just as angry with you as he was with the Babylonians over their idols.

There are many voices in the world that is calling on us to follow after them.

The God of Heaven and Earth, the Creator, the judge, is in his holy Temple in heaven, a temple of worship not made with hands. All the world must be silent before God.

Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way.

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