

Habakkuk 2:6-20 – God Does Not Pass Over The Wicked

I. The Taunt Song Introduction (2:6a)

- A. All “these” will take up a taunt with scoffing and “mockings”
- B. All these refers to the nations from the end of v.5
 - 1. the nations Babylon has conquered and subjected will one day see the judgment of God upon Babylon
 - 2. God will judge Babylon for her wickedness and he tells Habakkuk that all oppressed nations will see it
 - 3. God is responding to Habakkuk’s question as to why God would look idly at the wickedness of Babylon. – He is not.

C. 5 Woe sections follow

- 1. Each section is given in poetic and prophetic language
- 2. Babylon and her atrocities are shown in figurative language as God pronounces the judgment that will befall them
- 3. These woes apply on two levels – as a general truth for humanity – as well as a prophetic foreshadowing of what would come upon Babylon
 - a. All these woes are upon any nation or people that do not listen to the principle given in verse 4 – those who are righteous are those who live by their faith
 - b. All these woes have theme of violence running through them

II. Woe To Those Who Plunder (6b-8)

A. The Proverbial General Truth (6b)

- 1. Woe to the one who steal things not his own, who loads himself with pledges
 - a. NOTICE: the third person “him” – (it changes to “you” when speaking of Babylon)
 - b. pledges are things taken as collateral when borrowing a debt
 - i. The picture is those who pile up debts for themselves over the years that will one day be called in
 - c. This is a woe against those who heap unto themselves what is not theirs
- 2. “For how long?” – hard to decipher why it is in the middle of the sentence
 - a. Possibly – Habakkuk’s own lament as to how long this oppression will take place
 - b. Possibly – included in the woe as the cry of those plundered

B. Babylon’s Judgment As A Plunderer (7-8)

- 1. Babylon is seen figuratively as a borrower who’s debtors arise to give justice (7)
 - a. Habakkuk is shown the judgment that will come upon Babylon’s wickedness
 - b. Those who Babylon has plundered will rise up and make her tremble
 - 1. Babylon like Assyria before it (Nah 2:9; 3:1), piled up treasure at the expense of vanquished nations.
 - 2. they have acted unjustly in their plunder of nations, treating people with no worth other than to be subjected
 - c. The judgment will come suddenly – they are storing up debt which will be called in
 - d. He who sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail’ (Pr. 22:8).
- 2. Reason For Babylon’s Judgment (8)
 - a. Will be judged because they plundered many nations so they will be plundered
 - b. They will pay for the blood they have shed and the violence they have committed

- c. All debts will be called in
- 3. God is showing Habakkuk that He is not acting apart from His nature
 - a. He will bring judgment upon Babylon the wicked nation
 - b. He will return upon Babylon what she has given to other nations

III. Woe To Those Who Exploit (9-11)

A. The Proverbial General Truth (9)

- 1. God pronounces woe upon any who build their “house” by evil gain
- 2. Those who exploit others in building their own house may try all manner of things to make themselves safe and free from harm but judgment will find them

B. Babylon’s Judgment As An Exploiter (10-11)

- 1. Though Babylon build their empire for glory in exploiting peoples, in God’s view they have devised shame for their house
 - a. Babylon sought after glory for their empire – See Dan. 4:30
 - i. Nebuchadnezzar pursued glory for himself, his house and his empire.
 - b. Because the empire’s house was built on evil gain it will not stand God’s judgment
- 2. Babylon had forfeited their life by exploiting and destroying nations
 - a. There is no clearer message in the Scriptures as a whole than the certain collapse of the proud. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon experienced what is at the heart of Habakkuk’s vision (4). In spite of gaining the whole world, he was told: you have forfeited your life (10). In direct contrast to God’s revealed truth that the righteous by faith shall live, the Chaldean ‘commits spiritual suicide’ in his headlong pursuit of power, wealth and security
 - b. An inscription found in ancient Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar’s name declared that ‘one of the chief purposes for strengthening the walls of Babylon was to make an everlasting name for his reign’.
- 3. The house that Babylon built is depicted as one who’s walls and beams are under strain and cannot hold
 - a. Images and sounds of those whom the Chaldean has tortured and ravished will haunt him at night and hound him by day. There may even be a reference to the writing on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast when the end eventually arrived.

IV. Woe To Those Who Oppress (12-14)

A. The Proverbial General Truth (12-13)

- 1. Woe to those who “build on blood” of others and sin
 - a. From the very beginning of the biblical record, blood is used in this vivid way to describe the violent death of a human being at the hands of another.
 - b. There can be nothing but woe—an experience of God’s curse instead of the blessing he desires to give—in any town (or enterprise or empire) built on blood. The voice of every victim cries out to God. Their agony rings through the streets and squares, through the marketplaces and corridors of power. They reach the throne-room of heaven and rend the heart of God.
- 2. This is a woe for those who oppress others to gain benefit
- 3. God decrees that this “building will not stand”
 - a. Visitors to Babylon, and to other Chaldean towns and cities, saw unrivalled magnificence and grandeur. They were hugely impressed by what they saw, but all

they could see was splendid buildings. God looked at the city and saw bloodshed. So far from being impressed, he issued a decree: all this will be consigned to fire and will prove an empty nothingness. And so it proved.

B. Though There is No Specific “you” statement here – It is directed at Babylon

1. Whatever built by this means cannot stand
2. They labor just to feed the flames and weary themselves for nothing
3. This is “from the Lord of hosts” – (hosts is Hebrew for armies)

C. God will have the Last Word (14)

1. No matter how empires rise and fall – eventually the earth will be filled with His kingdom – and His glory
2. No kingdom built on sin and oppression will stand in that day
 - a. It is important to see God’s judgment on Babylon (and on all future ‘Babylons’) in the context of God’s glory. If the glory of God is to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea, leaving no room for anything else, then everything and everyone hostile to the glory of God must be destroyed. That essentially means the removal of all those concerned to promote their own glory. If the kingdom of God is to come in its fullness, all other kingdoms must be swallowed up.
 - b. ‘The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea’ (Is. 11:9). Isaiah’s statement was in the context of Assyrian empire and practices

V. Woe To Those Who Humiliate By Violence (15-17)

A. The Proverbial General Truth (15)

1. Couched in figurative language of drunkenness – this woe is against those who humiliate, degrade, and shame others (especially through violence – see v.17)
2. The cup that is made to drink here is “wrath” (not wineskin as NIV)
3. Those who use their power to humiliate and disgrace (gaze at nakedness)
 - a. ‘The imperial conqueror degrades and humiliates those whom he has conquered, in order to rob them of their self-respect and destroy their will to resist.’

B. The Lord’s wrath will come upon you

1. You will be filled with shame instead of glory
 - a. Psalm 75:8 - 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.
 - b. The way that God’s wrath will work itself out for Babylon is in her having to drink the wine with which she has compelled others to get drunk
2. You will show your uncircumcision
 - a. Some translations have stagger here – there is only two letters swapped between the two words
 - b. The point seems to be that, as the oppressed has exposed the nakedness of others, so he for his part, uncircumcised as he is, will have his own nakedness exposed and be covered with shame.’

C. Violence will overwhelm you – The same violence you have shown

1. In Lebanon
 - a. Lebanon known for lush forests and cedar trees

b. The cedars of Lebanon, evocatively called 'the trees of the LORD' by the psalmist, were a constant and ready target for rulers committed to grand, if not grandiose, building projects. These splendid palaces and temples became settings for banquets of unparalleled luxury, epitomized by Belshazzar's feast on the night of Babylon's capture by the Medes. The wild animals (boar, bear, lion) became game for the hunter and food for the table.

VI. Woe To Those Who Are Idolaters (18-19)

A. An Idol offers No Benefit (18)

1. they are lifeless, created by man

B. Woe To the One Who Trusts In Idols (19)

1. This constitutes the complete antithesis of Habakkuk's key truth, that the righteous by faith shall live (2:4).

2. Idolatry is essentially the worship of that which we make, rather than of our Maker. And that which we make may be found in our 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.

C. The Lord Alone Is God – All The Earth Will Give Honor (20)

1. Idols are not alive – Yet the Lord rules from His Temple

a. This assures Habakkuk that God indeed is Holy and sees what is happening

b. The Lord is indeed in control despite the circumstances the prophet sees

c. The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men (Ps. 11:4)

2. The earth must keep silent before him

a. This is the retort to Habakkuk's questions – as Job receives

b. All the world must not presume to know God's ways

c. This silence is not just quietness but submission to His will – whatever that may be