

Is God Fair
Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

Well, this morning we'll be returning to the book of Habakkuk, and as you're making your way there, I'm sure that you've heard of several times...maybe even had your own personal interactions with those who have brought assaults on the Christian faith. They've brought attacks against the faith of Christianity and the Bible and what it professes to say, and what we profess to believe, and no doubt there are many. People like to throw out several, and you probably have interacted with these personally in conversation, but one of the biggest accusations and assaults that gets thrown out against Christianity is probably the title here; is God fair? If there is a God, if I grant that God does exist, this God of the Bible that you claim to believe, is He really fair? If there is a God, and He is a good God, and He's a powerful God, then why is there this evil in the world? Why is there just such turmoil? Why do I just look around - doesn't take long - and I just see wickedness? How is that possible? Why does this exist if there's a good, powerful, and loving God? That doesn't seem very fair...doesn't seem like that makes a whole lot of sense; therefore, the argument goes, God must not exist, or maybe He does and He's just not powerful. He can't do anything about the evil, or He does exist and He is powerful, but He doesn't really care; He's not loving or good enough to do something about the evil. Well, I'm happy to say that obviously neither of those options are satisfying.

The Bible doesn't say either of those options are satisfying, and hopefully you aren't thinking that, but we have a more satisfying option, and that is what we get to find today in Habakkuk chapter 2, specifically. So, as you make your way there, I just want to remind you of what we've covered so far in this book as we've introduced it in chapter 1. We covered the first eleven verses the last time, and so what we got to see was the setting of everything that's happening in the prophetic ministry of Habakkuk. If you don't know when he's doing this, if you don't know who he's talking to, it's kind of hard to understand the significance of what he's saying, what God gives him to say. But we established last time, through the historical kind of background and understanding of where this fits in, that this is right after...coming on the heels of...a time of a spiritual reformation in the nation of Israel, specifically in Judah, the southern kingdom.

In Judah, the southern kingdom, they had just had Josiah as the king. He was a good king. Of all the kings that you had throughout Israel's history, you had good kings; you had bad kings. Josiah was definitely one of the good ones. In fact, he gets the nickname, the second Moses, and a big part of that is because they discover the law of Moses, and then they actually put it into practice, and that's largely in part due to Josiah's leadership. So a great time in the nation of Judah under Josiah, and then we get to the tail end of that; Josiah passes away, and we get a new evil king on the throne, an evil king, Jehoiakim, and he basically reverses all that Josiah did, and he has no desire to uphold the spiritual reformation that just took place. So we have evil; we have wickedness, and that's pretty evident just by the first few verses of Habakkuk, chapter 1.

In the beginning of this book, we saw Habakkuk's complaint, his initial complaint to God in chapter 1, verses 2 through 4, when he was saying "How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, and [why do You] cause me to look on wickedness?" So Habakkuk simply looks around. He sees the evil. He sees the wickedness because of the king Jehoiakim, and he cries out to God; probably in a righteous calling out to God in a righteous way, saying, this is wrong. We just had a time of reformation under the law, and now this is happening, God. Why? Are You there? Are You going to allow this to continue? And so, this was Habakkuk's initial complaint to God, and God responded; and we saw that last time, God had a profound response, an answer that more than likely wasn't very happy or soothing for Habakkuk nor the people of Judah. The response from God was, oh, I am working. I am here. I'm alive and well, and I'm doing something that you wouldn't even believe even if I told you; I'm raising up this people group called the Chaldeans, also known as the Babylonians. So, we talked about how this was God's response, and we talked about how, at the time, the Chaldeans weren't necessarily the main super power or nation that was running the known world. At the time, the more important or probably more prominent nation would have been Assyria as you can see from that map. We have Assyria doing a lot of the dominating as well as Egypt being proactive in this time. And so, Judah's caught in the middle of this, and they're trying to maintain their own nation in Jerusalem, and you have Assyria dominating.

Well, as time goes on, the Chaldeans do rise up. These Babylonians rise up from down there in the south of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers; and so, they will rise and they will start to march and make their way and take back some of the Assyrian land. Eventually, they'll go all the way up to the north where Assyria's capital is in Nineveh, and they will take that as well. So the Chaldeans will rise up and they will become the new kind of Assyria. They will become the new nation that's ruling the world, essentially; and so, that's what God says because this is how God works. He is the God that knows the end from the beginning, and He can tell you before it happens, and He even says I'm the one allowing it to happen. I'm the one paving the way for this to happen, so that's what God tells Habakkuk; I see the wickedness that's taking place in Judah, and I have a plan to deal with it. I have these people, the Babylonians. They're going to come and they're going to deal with the wickedness that is among you. And this is where we left off last time as God describes these Chaldeans as a terrifying people that come in swift fashion to take every city and nation they come upon.

So with that, we get to transition into a second complaint from the prophet today, and then a second response from God. So this is the unique kind of format of the book of Habakkuk. Where a lot of prophets get a word from God, and then they speak it to the nation. Habakkuk has an interesting format where he actually speaks to God. He calls out to God and cries out to Him, and he gets a conversation going with God; and so, that's what this book is, in its unique prophetic fashion. So Habakkuk chooses to respond. He is obviously understanding God's answer, but he has more to say and has more to talk about. So that's what we get to see today...Habakkuk's second complaint come up in chapter 1 verse 12. So, we will look at the first two verses here, and we will see the inconsistency in the first two verses of Habakkuk's complaint. So, you can follow along in Habakkuk chapter 1 starting in verse 12; "Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?" So, this is the beginning of Habakkuk's complaint and, as you can see, he's drawing forth what in his mind appears to be some inconsistency. He's not fully wrapping his mind around God's plan and what God has answered to him in his first complaint. Interesting to note though, that once again throughout the process

of the book of Habakkuk, people go back and forth saying that some people say Habakkuk was not righteous in this process, that he needed to be put in his place because he was out of line in talking to God this way. Other people argue on the other side and say, actually, this was a righteous interaction between Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk did need to get put into his place, but this is a righteous interaction. I would lean more towards the fact that this looks like it's a righteous interaction because look how he starts; "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One?" He's got respect for God. He says, "You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct." He understands who God is. He's right now, right in this beginning of his complaint, he's referencing who he knows God to be. All the way back from the law in the book of Deuteronomy, God is described as the Rock; and so, he's calling these terms to mind because he knows who God is. He knows who he's talking to. He's not coming in some rebellious and kind of flippant fashion to God. He's coming with reverence. He's coming with respect because he does know who God is. He has seen and he does know the word of what God has done. So here is Habakkuk, starting off affirming who God is. You are eternal God, and he describes God not only as eternal but also the Holy One, another title for God that is seen throughout scripture, and, really, affirming this idea of Habakkuk fearing the Lord, understanding Him for who He is.

It's interesting to note that Habakkuk accepts God's appointment of the Babylonians. Right? He says, "You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct." He acknowledges that, he even accepts that and says, You are everlasting. You are holy, and You have raised up these people to correct us and to judge us. He grants that he acknowledges that. In fact, more than likely, this is because Habakkuk knew the law; because all the way back in Deuteronomy and even in Leviticus, God made it very clear to the nation of Israel. He said, if you obey my commandments, if you walk in the way that I set before you...you walk in holiness, then blessings will come upon you; however, if you choose not to, if you disobey me and choose not to walk in these commandments that I'm giving to you today, then curses will come upon you. And God gets more specific; He tells you what kind of curses will come upon the nation of Israel, He says, specifically some of the plagues you experienced in the nation of Egypt when I was bringing down the ten plagues upon them, when I brought you out. Some of those types of things will come upon you, and

more specifically, I will take you to a land that you do not know amongst people you do not understand.

So, God had said this clearly in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. So Habakkuk is probably mindful of this as he's talking here. He's mindful in understanding that God...this is in fact Your plan, Your plan that You've laid out from the beginning, that if we don't follow Your ways, if we remain wicked and violent, then You will judge us. You will correct us, and You have every right to do it with a nation that's not us. You have every right to do this. So, Habakkuk is probably affirming all of this; that God is eternal, that God is holy, that He's even righteous in raising up another nation to bring judgment upon them, to bring correction. In a sense, God has answered Habakkuk's complaint when He said, I am dealing with the wickedness, and Habakkuk says, that's a good answer. That is a fine answer for You, God, to give because You are dealing with the wickedness then, and You are dealing with that which dwells among us, the violence, and the disobedience to the law.

However, the inconsistency starts to settle in in verse 13. Habakkuk continues to go on and talk about who God is. He says, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor." So, he shows more of who God is. God is pure in His holiness. He cannot "approve evil." He does not "look on wickedness with favor." And then the question comes, "Why do You look with favor with those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?" So, Habakkuk points out what he sees, and what he thinks is an inconsistency as he logically builds a case for God's character. That God is holy, and He is righteous in all that He does, and, therefore, with that comes the inability for God to look favorably upon wickedness and on evil; and yet Habakkuk brings in this point, well, what about the Babylonians? Are they righteous? Did the Babylonians have it all together? Are the Chaldeans the ones who are actually fulfilling Your law and living according to the statutes that You've laid out? And Habakkuk, basically, by his questions, is saying they're not. In fact, I know that they're worse than us, these Babylonians, especially in how God described them at the end of chapter 1, they're not good people. They're not gracious and merciful people that are conquering the land. They're ruthless, and they're relentless in the way that they go about all of their conquering; and so, Habakkuk brings this to the forefront in front of God. Why do you look favorably upon them? Why are you going

to bless them, then? These are wicked people, and yet, you're going to allow them to take the land and just sweep on through, and have their way with the world. He says, why do you remain silent as the evil overwhelms the righteous?

I mean, Habakkuk understands that there's a disease in the nation of Judah. He understands that there's a disease of wickedness, and evil, and disobedience to the law, yet the cure that God is using is more evil than the disease we have. The cure is worse. It doesn't make sense. You're going to solve the problem, I get it, but You're going to bring something worse to solve it, and that's the part that Habakkuk is identifying as inconsistent, and he's trying to understand. How does this work, God? How are You doing this? How does this fit with who You are and how You work? This is inconsistent in Habakkuk's mindset and knowledge of God from the law, and knowledge of God from the Word. So, this is the inconsistency he points out at the beginning of his complaint.

He moves on to describe this even more with an illustration. As you read on, he brings up this really vivid illustration that's quite fitting for the situation and the time. So, starting in verse 14 and down through the end of the chapter...verse 14 through 17, this is the illustration, "Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them? The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net, and gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore, they rejoice and are glad. Therefore, they offer a sacrifice to their net. And burn incense to their fishing net; because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful. Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?" So Habakkuk starts with elaborating more on this inconsistency by creating this scenario here of fishing, of fishermen and fish. He says, why God? Why do You make all the nations of the earth like helpless fish, fish that are just kind of in a pond? Fish that are just sitting there waiting to be caught? Why do you make all the nations just like fish that can't band together? They can't form a plan to fight back against the fishermen. They're fish, alright? They're stuck. They have no way of actually forming some alliance or defense against the fishermen; and who is the fishermen? The Chaldeans. You allow the Chaldeans to come with their fishing net, and You allow them to go down and just keep bringing up more and more fish, all the nations, and they don't stop. They just keep going, and Habakkuk says, why do You do this? I mean, here they are, they're just

gladly doing this. They're just kind of rejoicing and kind of not reverencing God at all, not even acknowledging God in the process. They're just going about this and joyfully bringing up all these fish, like they're the nations as they're overcoming them and conquering them. It gets even worse, though, because it's not just that they're like fishermen that are dominating a bunch of fish, it goes on and he basically says, not only do they do this...verse 16, "Therefore, they offer a sacrifice to their net. And burn incense to their fishing net." Who gets the glory? Who gets the praise? It's themselves. They have no concept or awareness of God doing this for them. So God is paving the way for these Babylonians, allowing them to take over whatever nation, or city, or fortress, they'd like, and in the process, does Babylon have any concept or awareness of God doing it? No, not at all, because in this illustration, they're like a fishermen that's catching all the fish and rather than thanking God for the fish and the plentiful catch that they just had, instead, they turn to themselves. They turn to their own equipment. They turn to their own military strength just like the nation of Babylon did. They turn to themselves. They worship themselves. This is very consistent with what God already told us about the Babylonians in verse 11. In verse 11, He said, "Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god." There's no other concept of a god around them. Their own strength is their god; and so, this is Habakkuk's complaint; here they go taking up fish constantly and they're not even acknowledging You, God. They look to themselves. They praise themselves. They offer sacrifice and incense to their own abilities, and their own equipment, and their own weapons. He goes on and says, "Because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful." Verse 17 is the final question that summarizes the complaint; "Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?" How long is this madness going to continue, is what Habakkuk asks? This is already madness, but they're going through and sweeping from nation to nation and taking them all up like a fisherman. Is this going to continue? Is there any end in sight to this? Is this fair? I mean, does this even work with who You are, that You're just going to let them continue to do this; all the while, they're evil? They don't even worship You. This is inconsistent. This doesn't make sense.

Then we get to the end of Habakkuk's complaint in chapter 2 verse 1, which is the interval here - how he transitions. After pointing out God's character and the seeming inconsistency between who God is, how He acts, and what

is happening with the Babylonians, after illustrating it, Habakkuk ends with these words in chapter 2 verse 1, “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.” So, Habakkuk now changes and assumes the position of a watchman. He says, I’ve spoken. Right, I acknowledge who You are, God. I acknowledge what’s happening, and I don’t understand how these things make sense, but I’m bringing it before You, and I’ll wait to see what You have to say. Once again, Habakkuk is looking to God, legitimately wanting to hear from God, wanting to know and understand how this works with God; not just flailing out this complaint just to be a complainer, but legitimately wanting to hear and understand how this works. So he stations himself like a watchman, like someone who’s guarding a city, and their job is to...day and night, to look out to see if anybody’s coming, if there’s any threat of attack, and if so, to sound the alarm, to blow the trumpet, to wake the city up, and get ready for what is to come; and so, he stations himself probably in a figurative fashion here as one who’s waiting and looking for the word of the Lord to respond...what God has to say to this. Lots of other prophets assume this same role. In fact, God would tell prophets this often; you are my watchman for the nation of Israel. When you see the Word, when you hear the Word, you must declare it to the people, and if you don’t, responsibility will be upon you. This is what He told Ezekiel. This is what He told Jeremiah and Isaiah; and so, the same thing here with Habakkuk. He now functions himself. He puts himself in that role as a watchman for the city, to keep guard, so I would argue that here, what we’re seeing is really a righteous interaction with God, and the way that it ends is something that could be modeled.

Waiting upon the Lord, is that a biblical theme? Is that a biblical concept? Absolutely. Waiting upon the Lord is something that we are called to do, and I would think that if you’ve been a Christian for some time you probably experienced this. I doubt that you’ve had every prayer that you prayed answered within two hours. More often than not, we are left in this position where God is calling us to wait; and some of those times, we end up waiting for years, and sometimes, it might be beyond even the time we have on this earth. But here is the point; Habakkuk stands and positions himself to wait and hear from the Lord, which is the best place to be. As we’ve said, this is what we’re called to do. Psalm 130 is a good Psalm that describes this in two verses. In Psalm 130, verses 5 and 6, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than the

watchman for the morning; indeed more than the watchman for the morning.” So, these people that have it as their job to watch for the city, and to guard the city, and keep an eye out, and look out, in that very same way we ought to be in our expectation and waiting upon the Lord; not a prayer that we offer up once and then walk away and forget about but something that we are expectantly, vigilantly, coming back to God, and waiting, and waiting to see what He will say, to see how He will answer that, and in the meantime, what do we do? As the psalmist says, “...in His word do I hope...in His word do I hope.” We have a legitimate foundation upon which we can hope in while we wait and while we see what God will do; and so, this is, really, what I see happening with Habakkuk. He’s putting his hope in the Word because he’s affirming who God is, the Holy One, the Righteous One, the One who’s from everlasting to everlasting. He’s hoping in the Word of God who describes who God is and what He does, yet he brings forth this complaint and he waits to see what God will do, and how God will respond. So do you wait on the Lord? Do you make your requests unto God? Do you take these moments in life that are difficult, that plague you...do you bring them before the Lord in the first place? And secondly, do you keep coming back to them and expecting and waiting to see how the Lord will respond; and in the meantime, do you hope in the Word? Is your foundation the word of God? So this is Habakkuk’s second complaint here in the book.

And then we get to turn now to the Lord’s response. He does in fact respond in chapter 2 to Habakkuk. So there’s really two parts to this response. The first part is the Lord addressing the prophet. He addresses Habakkuk, and we see these in the first few verses. In verse 2 of chapter 2, “Then the Lord answered me and said, record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens towards the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.” So this is God’s initial response to Habakkuk. So starting in verse 2, we see the Lord’s command to Habakkuk, write down this vision. Record this vision. You are in a place where you’re looking for it, and you’re listening for it. When it comes, write it down. He says, “Record the vision...” “... inscribe it on tablets...” More than likely the word for tablets used here is referring to tablets that go up in the city square, tablets for all to read, not just for Habakkuk himself, but for everyone. Record this vision publicly for all to see, and display it for all to see. It’s why He says, “That the one who reads it

may run.” Here’s a couple of ideas. Some people say that he’s just asking Habakkuk to write it nice and big so that way when someone’s running by real quick or they’re quickly getting by the public square, they can look and see the vision and actually read it from far away or in haste. Other people propose that it’s more than likely referring to a simple message that’s clear, that can be easily transmitted, so, that way, the person who reads it can run and shout it to others, and tell others the message, the vision, from the Lord. So God commands Habakkuk, you are to write this down, display it publicly for all to see, and if it doesn’t take place, if it doesn’t come through immediately, wait for it. In verse 3... it is “for the appointed time.” God gives Habakkuk some revelation, but He says, the timing of it, that’s up to Me. God himself will decide when the time will be perfect, when this vision can come to pass. He says it certainly will come. It will not delay.

And then we come to verse 4. This is known to be one of the paramount verses of, really, the entire book, and, some people would argue, all of scripture. Once again, “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.” And you might think, I’ve heard these words before and that would be correct. That would be true because you find these words throughout scripture. We find them all the way back in Genesis, and then we can go ahead to the New Testament, and we find them in the book of Hebrews. We find them in the book of Romans and in the book of Galatians. These words are important words; and so, how do they fit in here with what is first happening in Habakkuk’s day? Well, God addresses “the proud one.” That was the source; really, that was the point of Habakkuk’s complaint to God. How are you going to use these prideful Babylonians to bring about your righteousness? They’re more wicked than we are. How’s that possible, that you’re going to use them? And God says, “Behold, as for the proud one,” as for those Babylonians, there’s an issue with them. “His soul is not right within him.” So, while you, Habakkuk, might be looking around and seeing the Chaldeans, or you will see the Chaldeans, running through taking all the gold, all the wealth of the earth, taking all the people captive like fish in the sea. While you see them taking all the fortresses, and taking all the land, there’s something that is completely wrong with them. It’s the most basic and most necessary condition of man; their soul - their soul is not right within them. That’s a huge statement. God is saying, I’m raising these people up. I know what I’m doing and they have the biggest problem possible; they’re soul is not right within them, in their pride.

But this is key; the second half of the verse. “But the righteous,” the one who is right with God, “...the righteous will live by his faith.” So God’s answer to Habakkuk’s question, how is it possible that I can raise up the Babylonians? How is it possible that I can take someone so evil and judge your wickedness in Judah? God says trust me. Trust me. If you truly are righteous, if you want to display that you are right with Me, you will trust Me. You will have faith and believe in who I am and what I’m doing because that’s the characteristic of the righteous. Those that are God’s own children, those that are followers of God, they are characterized by this very trait, faith, absolute trust in God, in who He is, in what He does. And that’s how it totally sinks up across scripture. You go back to Genesis 15, and that’s how it all started with God’s covenant people through Abraham. Abraham had faith, and what? It was counted “to him as righteousness.” Abraham was right before God because of his faith. He trusted God. He trusted completely in God, that He would take Abraham from the land of his home and bring him to a new land, not an easy thing to do, but he had faith, and it was counted “to him as righteousness;” and then you understand why you can see it come up here again where God’s just saying, “the same thing that was the case with Abraham, that needs to be the case with you Habakkuk. You need to trust Me with what I’m doing.”

And then we go to the New Testament, and we have Paul dealing with this in the book of Romans and in the book of Galatians, and he makes a very clear statement that the righteous will live by faith. That is the necessary requirement for being right with God. That is the necessary requirement for being a child of God, a follower of God, just as it was for Abraham before the law was even in effect because Moses wasn’t in existence. Just as it was for Abraham, that he had faith and trusted God and it was righteousness, so it is today. There’s no delineation. It’s the same thing. It’s faith. It’s complete trust in God. We obviously have more revelation now because we know more, because God has revealed more. We have knowledge of His son. We have knowledge of Jesus and what He did and His work on the cross, so our faith has a more poignant, a more specific goal in mind but it still is the same thing in the Old Testament as it is today; we have faith in God, His plan, His promise, His provision of the Messiah through Jesus Christ. This is God’s answer to Habakkuk. You think it’s unfair? You think I don’t know what I’m doing? You need to trust Me. If you trust Me, then you will so demonstrate your righteousness, the fact that you are right with Me,

and that is really what the characteristic of all of the nation of Israel ought to have been, complete trust in God, complete faith.

So it's important to note that this is not just a one-time act. This is not just simply saying, I believe in You, God, and then you move on with your life, and you've made that decision at one point. This is a continual response to God. This is a continual way of living for the believer. It's faith, trust, complete trust in God, and what He's doing, and that's exactly how the book of Hebrews will use this. The author of the book of Hebrews at the end of chapter 10 will talk about it this way, and he will describe the one that is faithful, that is pressing on, that is continuing, not shrinking back to the old ways of Judaism, but pressing forward into Christ and Christianity, that is the one that is identified as the follower of Christ. And then you have the wonderful chapter of Hebrews 11. By faith, everyone in the Old Testament accomplished what they accomplished for God...absolute trust in who God is and what He was doing...so when you take a step back, you realize this verse is huge. It's paramount for all of scripture and for us. And it really does raise the question, are you proud? Are you exalting? Are you trusting in something else? Is your soul not right within you because you have looked to something else or someone else for your trust, for your security, or have you surrendered all that completely to Christ? Have you bowed your knee and surrendered to Christ, and do you have full faith and trust in Him, and do you continue in that faithfulness? Do you continue in that trust in Christ, in God, in His plan, and what He's doing? That's the question, and if you have that characteristic of faithfulness in God and trusting in Him, then the question of whether or not God's fair answers itself. I trust God. He knows what He's doing. This is how the Lord addresses the prophet, Habakkuk. Well, He's not done. He's got more to say specifically regarding these Babylonians. This is really the icing on the cake. So in verse 4, as we just saw, God makes a kind of line between the proud and then the righteous, those who are living by faith and those who are living in their pride; and so, the rest of chapter 2 will go on to describe the proud, and in chapter 3, we'll see the description of those who have faith.

So for the rest of this chapter, we see the Lord addressing these Babylonians. We see these woes take place. We'll start in verse 5 and work our way down to verse 8; "Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all

peoples. Will not all these take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him, and say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his-for how long-and makes himself rich with loans?’ Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you’ll become plunder for them. Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you-because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.” So we have these different woes. We have 5 woes that come up in the rest of this chapter. So here’s the first woe that God brings in regards to these Babylonians, a woe to the Babylonian looting. Babylon at this point obviously was becoming more and more prominent, and as they would continue on, they would amass for themselves tons of wealth. The question is where did they get it from? They got it from all the nations that they conquered, all the nations that they ran through. They then started to mass up in their treasuries, this wealth, and they looted these nations, and so that’s where we have here these nations now responding to Babylon and will be their judgment, saying, woe to them for all these things. Woe in the sense of they’re good...they’re as good as dead. There is no hope for them. They are judged in God’s eyes. Essentially, what goes around comes around is what Habakkuk is saying here. As the Babylonians have treated others, so it will come back upon them. That’s what God is saying. They have gone about destroying these other nations, stealing the money from them, and now it will come back upon them. The nations will rise up, and as the Babylonians have plundered, they too will become plundered. They will be looted themselves. This will all come back upon them.

The second woe is a woe to Babylonian greed. In verse 9, “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high to be delivered from the hand of calamity! You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework.” In their greed, they were taking the wealth and they were using it to build themselves houses, not just to look nice, but to be secure, to be on high, to be away from everyone, to be exalted and untouchable so to speak. Well, the very things that they have stolen, they’ve put on display in their house. The very material of their house, that it’s built of, is not theirs. It’s their greed, and it cries out. The house itself, the stones, and the rafters, and the framework of the house is crying out to God, saying that this was all

unjust gain. This was not done appropriately, and so it's woe to this nation for their greed.

The woes continue. Next we see woe to the Babylonian violence; "Woe to him who builds the city with bloodshed and founds the town with violence. Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." These Babylonians built cities "...with bloodshed and [found their towns] with violence" Verse 13 is interesting. It's "...from the Lord of hosts that [these] peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?" So you have this picture of nations that lie in ruins, and the question is simple to the Babylonians, why is it that these nations lie in ruins? Do you think you guys are the ones that really did it? Do you think it was really your strength, and you, Babylonians, that destroyed these nations? No, it was from the Lord of Hosts. Is it not, indeed, from the Lord of armies, the true Lord, the Lord of armies, the Lord of Hosts, that has done this? Because ultimately, verse 14... "...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord," not with the knowledge of the glory of Babylonian. "...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." And I love this illustration, this simile here, "as the waters cover the sea." So, what part of the sea isn't covered with water? Kind of a dumb question, right? You have sea; you have water. That's kind of like, by definition, a sea is covered with water; a pool is covered with water. And so, in the same way, this is the expectation. This is exactly what's to come. The whole earth will be, by definition, covered with the glory...the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. So these Babylonians mounted up all their violence, not realizing it was God who is allowing them to do it in the first place.

Fourth, we see woe to the Babylonian shame. "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness! You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory. For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beast by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants." The Babylonians had this habit of basically, in a political sense, kind of wining and dining people. They could wine them and dine them. They

would work with them, and basically, trick nations into being in alliances with them, into treaties of some sort, and then they would break it, and they would overcome that nation, and they would shame that nation, and allow that nation to be disgraced. Once again as we've seen, the cycles going to come right back around to them. As they have disgraced nations, nations will come back to them and utterly shame them. They could not get away with this for so long. This shame will come right back on them.

And finally, ultimately, here we see a woe to the Babylonian idolatry. I mean, the wording is just almost hilarious here. "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' to a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him." So here it is, finally, delivering the final woe against Babylon for trusting in themselves, trusting in their own idols that they're making with their own hands that have no life at all. It's a joke. It's an absolute joke. The prophets talk about this time and time again; and so, Habakkuk only contributes to God's ultimate hatred of idolatry because it's other people trying to steal glory from Him, the true God, who deserves the only glory. Psalm 11:4 says, "The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven;" and Zachariah 2:13, "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation." I mean, what is presented today, really, is two options. One is to be proud, and to put yourself above God, and say I have better options. I have better things that I will trust in, and put my faith in, and live for, as the Babylonians did, as we often can do. Or I will humble myself and have faith and trust ultimately in God because there's no other way to be right with God apart from faith and trust in Him. So, is God fair to do this? The better question is: do you trust God? Do we trust God? Hopefully, that is our heart; that our desire is to completely surrender to God in everything that He's doing because of who we know Him to be, and what He already has done, so we trust Him, not just now, but we trust Him tomorrow, if He grants us it. We trust Him next week if He grants us that day to live. This is the key; that we will live by faith as the scriptures affirm all throughout; and that really is the anthem of Christianity for us, living by faith in God.

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