

February 25, 2024

“Faith in God’s Purpose”
Lesson 4

Habakkuk 2:1-5

Intro

Habakkuk is one of the minor prophets in the second half of the Old Testament. He likely served in the last decade of the 7th Century BC (meaning the years 610-600 BC), based on God’s promise to raise the Babylonians to punish Judah. The Babylonian exile happened in 586 BC, so this time seems about right. The book itself is a conversation between Habakkuk and the Lord, with Habakkuk asking questions and God answering them. When Habakkuk complains that God has not listened to his cries for the people’s sins to be confronted/corrected, God tells him (1:5-11) that He will use the Babylonians to punish Judah. Habakkuk’s response is essentially, “Why would you use an unrighteous nation to punish a more righteous nation?” Today’s text is the tail end of Habakkuk’s second complaint to God. Our main theme for this week is “Faith in God’s Purpose”, which Habakkuk doesn’t understand yet, so he questions God about it. Here is God’s reply.

Read Habakkuk 2:1-5

1. vs. 1: This is Habakkuk’s plan for a response to his second complaint to God

“I will stand at my watch...I will look to see what he will say to me”

This shows a determination to wait on God’s response

We know that God does not always answer immediately, or in the way we want

The phrases that Habakkuk uses here describes a lookout, watching for the enemy

They are responsible to sound the alarm should any enemy be spotted

Habakkuk is a spiritual lookout for the people

He warns them of God’s coming wrath and judgment if they don’t change

He is accountable to God if he fails to warn the people, as it is his job to do

2. vs. 2: God answers Habakkuk by telling him to write down the revelation he’s about to see

Usually prophets would write on papyrus scrolls

God here commands the revelation be written on tablets, like the 10 Commandments

This makes them much more permanent

The phrase “etched in stone” comes to mind

Some prophetic messages are sealed until a later time (see Dan. 8:26 and Dan. 12:4)

This message was meant to be seen immediately

A herald is to “run” with this message

This shows that the message is important to be known as quickly as possible

3. vs. 3: God tells Habakkuk that this revelation will come true at “an appointed time”

God will make it happen, but at His timing, not when Habakkuk wants it to be

This is God’s way of reminding Habakkuk He’s the one in control of everything

He has heard Habakkuk’s complaints before

Just because He didn’t respond when Habakkuk wanted doesn’t mean He’s not listening

4. vs. 4: Two kinds of people are described here—the unrighteous (called the enemy) and the righteous

The enemy is referring to the Babylonians and the Assyrians

Both groups had big and strong armies, which led them to boast of their power

God says “the enemy is puffed up”

These groups saw themselves as special because of their military power

But this pride and arrogance was also found in people in Judah and Israel

They were too proud to acknowledge God, to repent and to change their actions

For both groups, God says his enemies are those whose “desires are not upright”

Those who are God’s enemies will experience dire consequences

This happens later when the people are taken captive to Babylon and Assyria

The other group is the righteous, who “live by their faith (or faithfulness)”

This group has faithfulness as the cornerstone of their daily lives and actions

They follow God’s standards, live with integrity

Psalm 15 shows the qualities found in the righteous life

They speak well of others (15:2-3)

They keep their word (15:4)

They treat others fairly (15:5)

These actions please God because it is His nature to be righteous—this is who He is

Doing what God calls His people to do is one mark of righteousness

We are also to remember that we can never be righteous by ourselves

We are sinners in need of forgiveness and redemption

Our right standing before God (our righteousness) is because of Christ’s death and resurrection

Jesus Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30)

5. vs. 5: This verse goes back to talking about the enemies, like the first half of vs. 4

The phrase about being drunk is not clearly understood by commentators

It could refer to getting drunk after a victory in battle

It could refer to the idea of success in battle as being “intoxicating”

The qualities that follow are definitely those that mark one as an enemy to God

He is arrogant, and never at rest, never satisfied

These descriptions were definitely true of Babylon

They were arrogant in their power

They were not satisfied to stay at home, but chose to expand and conquer

This ties in with the phrase describing them as “greedy as the grave”

The grave is “never satisfied”—it never says “enough”

This is true of these people; they are never satisfied with what they have acquired

The Bible addresses the danger of pride and arrogance more than 200 times!

Most of these are found in Psalms and Proverbs

Arrogant and prideful people always incur God’s disfavor

The usual way these nations expand their power is through military conquest
They “gather”, like a farmer gathers crops
They collect the peoples they have conquered as Babylon did to Judah
They will, however, but subject to God’s judgment
Judah’s enemies will suffer five “woes” as noted in Hab. 2:16-19

Application: God usually allows people to question Him if they don’t understand. Sometimes he even welcomes it. It seems that here, however, He cuts short the questions if they deal with how just God is. Consider this paraphrased thumbnail sketch of Habakkuk:

Question 1: Why do you, O God, tolerate the sins of your people?

Response 1: Don’t worry about it—I’m sending the Babylonians to punish them.

Question 2: How is it fair to use the less-righteous to punish the more-righteous?

Response 2: Don’t worry about it—the Babylonians will get theirs too.

God’s ending of the discussion: Be quiet!

When suffering occurs, it is frequently deemed “unfair.” Many people question God about “why” this is happening. God wasn’t obligated to answer Habakkuk, and He isn’t obligated to answer us. Habakkuk was to have the faith of the righteous to trust in God’s plans and actions. We are called to do the same.

Prayer: Father God, help us to face the challenges and hardships of life with faith that You are wiser and see and know more than we do. Help us maintain and grow our confident faith in You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

.