

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 7, 2019 // BOOK OF HABAKKUK

"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH..." (2:2-4)

After Habakkuk's original complaint to God about why God allowed evil to go unpunished in Judah, God answered by revealing His plan to punish evil in Judah through Babylon.

- Habakkuk struggled to understand HOW God could use such an evil nation to judge evil.
- Now we see God's response to Habakkuk's 2nd series of questions.

God answers Habakkuk in vs. 2 telling him to, "write the vision" and "make it plain", so "he may run who reads it".

- "Running" with the vision is a reference to heralds in the ancient world who would run from place to place declaring a message publicly.
- God is saying that His message is to be clearly recorded, preserved, and proclaimed to all.
- We also have a message to proclaim!

This vision that God is going to reveal to Habakkuk "awaits its appointed time", but it will "hasten to the end" and it will "not lie" (vs. 3).

- Habakkuk is to wait for what God is going to do, even if it seems slow.
- God often calls us into seasons of waiting because in those seasons our trust is built, our patience is grown, and the value of what we're waiting on increases.

What is this thing that Habakkuk is told to wait on?

- God's judgment of Babylon and end to their tyrannical, global rule, but also in a broader sense God's victory over all evil at the end of days.
- In 586 B.C., Babylon invaded Judah and took residents back to Babylon as captive slaves.
- In 539 B.C., Babylon fell and was conquered by the Persians.

The violence, pride, and wickedness of Babylon was going to be brought down by God in a dramatic and decisive manner.

- God knew what He was going to do and what He had planned- but Habakkuk couldn't see it.
- God's plan to judge Babylon was roughly 50 years from this time, and while that seemed like a LONG time for Habakkuk, in God's timing that's almost immediate (2 Peter 3:9).

In the first part of vs. 4 God affirms the wicked character of Babylon- as a culture, they were "puffed up" and there was no "uprightness" within them.

- In other words, He's saying to Habakkuk, "I see, I know, I understand- and I'm going to act...you just need to wait."
- Sometimes the most difficult answer we can get from God is that we just need to wait.

The reason that it's often so difficult is because it requires us to have faith that He's working and He's able to do more than we can.

- God then contrasts the "puffed up", wicked character of the Babylonians with this profound declaration- "the righteous shall live by his faith".
- This goes to the heart of God's method for salvation and the Christian life- both are by faith.

We receive eternal life and are declared righteous not because of our works to earn righteousness, but by our faith in Christ.

- Our faith in Jesus Christ and what He's done for us on the cross is what makes us righteous in the sight of God- not our works (Romans 3:20-22)
- In fact, there's no uprightness in us and faith in our own works to make us righteous actually causes us to become "puffed up"!

The righteous "live" (receive eternal life) by faith, but they also "live" (live their daily lives) by faith in the goodness, mercy, and power of God.

- In its context, this verse is saying that the wicked trust in their own might and perish, but those who put their faith in God will live.
- God is assuring the faithful that those who kept their faith and trusted in Him would be OK, no matter what.

"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH..."

- Faith in Christ's saving work to be made righteous before God.
- Faith in Christ is displayed in our lives through holy living and good works.

Faith that God is at work in our lives, trusting Him, and waiting on Him even when the results seem slow.

BABYLON'S GREED, PRIDE, & INJUSTICE (2:5-14)

God assures Habakkuk that He sees the Babylon & He's going to bring them down.

- In the rest of this chapter, God pronounces 5 "woes" to Babylon as a means of warning to them and assurance to Judah that He will judge fairly and equitably.
- Babylon at this time was essentially a bully- how does God handle bullies?

The 1st woe that is pronounced upon Babylon is due to their greed (vs. 5-8).

- Because of their greed, they're "never at rest" (vs. 5) because they always want more.
- According to God, their greed is like death in that they never have enough and that their greed brings suffering to others.
- Profit and personal gain at all costs will eventually lead to exploiting others.

The 2nd woe God pronounces on Babylon is due to their pride (vs. 9-11).

- Babylon essentially coveted what other nations had, took what they had for themselves, and built a "nest on high to be safe from the reach of harm" (vs. 9).
- God essentially says, "the gain you've gotten from your house is from evil, and it should cause you shame- not pride!" (vs. 9-10)

The 3rd woe God pronounces on Babylon is due to their injustice (vs. 12-14).

- The cities of Babylon were built by taking advantage of people and shedding innocent blood (vs. 12).
- Vs. 14 states that any attempt of the wicked to build their empires on greed and violence won't succeed because such pursuits are an affront to a holy God.

The nations "weary themselves for nothing" because every empire will eventually fall and the "earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the seas" (vs. 14)

- In our world where sin, crime, oppression, injustice, and tyrannical governments and organized crime runs rampant- someday the King will come and a new day will dawn.

BABYLON'S LUST & IDOLS (2:15-20)

The 4th woe against Babylon is because of their lust and drunkenness.

- Vs. 15 connects drunkenness to immorality, and the two often go hand in hand.
- This is literal, in that the book of Daniel records incidents of Babylon's drunkenness, immorality, and brazen blasphemy in the account of King Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5).

But this is also symbolic imagery that states Babylon was seducing their "neighbors" with pleasure and drunkenness, but only in order to "gaze at their nakedness" (vs. 15) by exploiting, taking advantage of, and assaulting them.

- What God says to them is, "as you're pouring out that wine in order to get others drunk so you take advantage of them, my wrath will be poured out on you" (vs. 16-17).

The 5th woe on Babylon is due to their idols and worship of false gods (vs. 18-19).

- Idols are items crafted by people that are considered objects of worship.
- Idols in our culture can be work, money, possessions, other people, entertainment, or even our own image.
- Whatever you worship defines what you will become- we become empty, hollow, and lifeless when we worship false gods!

In contrast to the lifeless, empty, and dead idols, the LORD- the one, true, living, almighty God- reigns from his holy temple.

- The command is for "all the earth to keep silence before Him"- this is a sign of worship, awe, reverence, and recognition of His rule.
- The bullies of the earth and all of their wickedness will be shut up, defeated, and brought down- so keep silent, trust, watch, and wait on God.

God is saying, "I know what I'm doing, I'm on the throne, shut up and trust Me!"

- Silence in our relationship with God is this- we stop complaining, doubting, worrying, rebelling against or fighting God.
- We get still before Him and release our expectations and ideas and surrender to His will.
- In this place of "silence" is true rest for our souls.

Full worship only comes when we fully trust God and fully trust Him for who He is.

- Real trust only comes when we let God be God and stop trying to control our lives and situations.
- God is perfectly capable of fighting your battles and conquering your bullies- let go and trust Him.

In this life we face forces that seek to harm or scare us, especially when we're vulnerable. We are no match for the bullies in our lives- we need a champion.