

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-31-18

Habakkuk 2

The LORD's Second Reply - Verses 1-8

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. ² Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. ³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. ⁴ "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness—⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples. ⁶ "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, "Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?" ⁷ Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey. ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

2:1 The watchman on his watchtower, often used by the prophets to show an attitude of expectation (Isaiah 21:8, 11; Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17), illustrates Habakkuk's attitude of patient waiting and watching for God's response. Stone watchtowers were built on city walls or ramparts so that watchmen could see people (enemies or messengers) approaching their city while still at a distance. Watchtowers were also erected in vineyards to help guard the ripening grapes (Isaiah 5:2). Habakkuk wanted to be in the best position to receive God's message.

2:2 This chapter records God's answers to Habakkuk's questions: (1) How long would evil prevail (1:2-3)? (2) Why was Babylon chosen to punish Judah (1:13)? God said that the judgment against evil, though slow to come, was certain. And though God used Babylon to punish Judah, God also knew Babylon's sins and would punish it in due time.

2:3 Evil and injustice seem to have the upper hand in the world. Like Habakkuk, we often feel angry and discouraged as we see what goes on. Habakkuk complained vigorously to God about the situation. God's answer to Habakkuk is the same answer he would give us: "Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come." God is able to work out his plans in his perfect timing. It isn't easy to be patient, but it helps to remember that God hates sin even more than we do. Punishment of sin will certainly come. God reminded Habakkuk to wait patiently, and we should do the same.

2:4 The wicked Babylonians trusted in themselves and would fall; but the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God. This verse has inspired countless Christians. Paul quotes it in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. The writer of Hebrews quotes it in 10:38, just before the famous chapter on faith. And it is helpful to all Christians who must live through difficult times without seeing signs of hope. Christians must trust that God is directing all things according to his purposes.

The LORD's Second Reply - Verses 9-20

9 "Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin! **10** You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. **11** The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. **12** "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice! **13** Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? **14** For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. **15** "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies! **16** You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed^[e]! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. **17** The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. **18** "Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. **19** Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it. **20** The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

2:9-13 Babylon's riches had come from the misfortunes of others, but these riches would only be fuel for the fire. The victims and their cities would cry out against Babylon. Money in itself is not evil, but God condemns the love of wealth and the evil ways it is often acquired (1 Timothy 6:10). Be careful not to hunger for wealth so much that you lose your appetite for God. Do not allow money to take the place of family, friends, or God.

2:18 Idolatry may seem like a sin that modern people need not worry about. But idolatry is not just bowing down to idols; it is trusting in what one has made, and therefore in one's own power as creator and sustainer. If we say we worship God but put our trust in bank accounts, homes, businesses, and organizations, then we are idolaters. Do you trust God more than you trust what your hands have made?

2:20 Idols have no life, no personhood, no power; they are empty chunks of wood or stone. Temples built to idols are equally empty; no one lives there. But the Lord is in his temple. He is real, alive, and powerful. He is truly and fully God. Idolaters command their idols to save them, but we who worship the living God come to him in silent awe and reverence. We acknowledge that God is in control and knows what he is doing. Idols remain silent because they cannot answer. The living God, by contrast, speaks through his Word. Approach God reverently and wait silently to hear what he has to say.