

## Book of Habakkuk

### Chapter 2:2-20

#### The Lord Answers Again

<sup>2</sup> Then the LORD **answered** me and said, "**Record** the vision and inscribe it on **tablets**, That the one who reads it may run. <sup>3</sup> "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it **hastens** toward the **goal** and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.

**Answered** > (Strong's) to eye or (generally) to heed, i.e. pay attention; by implication, to respond

**Record** > (Strong's) to grave, by implication, to write

**Tablets** > (Strong's) a tablet (as polished), of stone, wood or metal

**Hastens** > (Preceptaustin) The word *hastens* is literally "puffs" or "pants" which draws a great word picture, personifying God's fulfillment as a runner racing to the finish line, the final goal!

**Goal** > (Strong's) an extremity; adverbially (with prepositional prefix) after

**Wiersbe** > The revelation God gave was for a future time and about a future time. While the immediate application was to the end of the Babylonian Captivity, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews interpreted it to refer also to the return of Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, he changed "it" to "He" and applied it to our Lord. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37) ... A discouraged Jew in Babylonian exile might ask, "Will the Lord come and deliver us?" and the answer is, "Yes! Wait for him!"

<sup>4</sup> "Behold, as for the **proud** one, his soul is not **right** within him; but the **righteous** will live by his faith.

**Keil and Delitzsch** > With these verses the prophecy itself commences; namely, with a statement of the fundamental thought, that the presumptuous and proud will not continue, but the just alone will live.

**Proud** > (Strong's) to swell; figuratively, be elated

**Victor** > The Babylonians thought "their justice and authority originate with themselves." (Hab 1:7) and considered their "strength is their god." (Hab 1:10, 11).

**Right** > (Strong's) to be straight or even; figuratively, to be (causatively, to make) right, pleasant, prosperous

**Righteous** > (Strong's) just

**Faith** > (Achtemeier) faithfulness here means trust, dependence, clinging to God; it means living and moving and having one's being in him alone; it means relying on him for the breath one draws, for the direction one takes, for the decisions one makes, for the goals one sets, and for the outcome of one's living... Faithfulness means placing one's whole life in God's hands and trusting him to fulfill it, despite all outward and inward circumstances; despite all personal sin and guilt; despite all psychological and social and physical distortions. Faithfulness is life by God's power rather than by one's own; and therefore it is truly life, because it draws its vitality from the living God who is the source of life.

**Preceptaustin** > The Old Testament is the New concealed, while the New Testament is the Old revealed. And so we can "unravel" Habakkuk 2:4 best by observing the three NT passages which place the emphasis on different aspects of "the righteous shall live by faith"...

- The Righteous > **Romans 1:17** > *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*
- Shall Live > **Galatians 3:11** > *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*
- By Faith > **Hebrews 10:38** > *BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.*

**Martin Luther** > 'Before those words broke upon my mind,' he says, 'I hated God and was angry with Him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood these words—

"The just shall live by faith!"

"The just shall live by faith!"

—then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God!' 'Henceforward,' he says again, 'I saw the beloved and holy Scriptures with other eyes. The words that I had previously detested, I began from that hour to value and to love as the sweetest and most consoling words in the Bible. In very truth, this text was to me the true gate of Paradise!' 'An open door into the very Paradise of God!' 'This text was to me the true gate of Paradise!' And they who enter into the City of God by that gate will go no more out for ever.

<sup>5</sup> ***“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.***

**Furthermore** > (Keil and Delitzsch) Habakkuk 2:5 is closely connected with Habakkuk 2:4, not only developing still further the thought which is there expressed, but applying it to the Chaldaean. (The Hebrew word) always means "still further," or "yea also, that;"

**Wine betrays ...** > Literal drunkenness was a sin of the Babylonians under the Persian rule, so that even a pagan says of Babylon, "the Babylonians give themselves wholly to wine, and the things which follow upon drunkenness."

**Stay (at home)** > (Strong's) to rest (as at home)

**Never satisfied** > (Strong's) to sate, i.e. fill to satisfaction

<sup>6</sup> ***“Will not all of 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?’***

**Taunt-song** > (Strong's) a pithy maxim, usually of metaphorical nature; hence, a simile (as an adage, poem, discourse)

**Mockery** > (Strong's) an aphorism\*; also a satire

(\*aphorism > a pithy observation that contains a general truth)

**Woe** > (Ron Blue) The destruction of Babylon intimated in God's comments to Habakkuk was announced in fuller detail in a song of woe in five stanzas of three verses each ("woe" occurs in vv. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19).

The first woe compares the Babylonians to an unscrupulous pawnbroker who lends on extortionate terms. As spoil for their own gain they had been merciless in heaping up the wealth of the nations. It was, of course, sheer theft. The valuables taken were not the property of the invaders.

<sup>7</sup> ***“Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them. <sup>8</sup> “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.***

**Will not your creditors ...** > (Clarke) Does not this refer to the sudden and unexpected taking of Babylon by Cyrus, whose troops entered into the city through the bed of the Euphrates, whose waters they had diverted by another channel; so that the Babylonians knew nothing of the matter till they saw the Persian soldiers rise up as in a moment, in the very heart of their city?

**Because you have looted many nations ...** > Reading the background of Cyrus the Great (the individual who conquered Babylon) you'll find a common theme ... and individual who had the ability to combine many peoples and cultures. It appears he brought a multi-national force against Babylon.

<sup>9</sup> ***“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity!***

**Woe** > (Ron Blue) Not only were the Babylonians guilty of unjust gain (vv. 6-8), but they also used that plunder for self-aggrandizement. They sought their own exaltation ... From the low-lying valley of their homeland, these conquerors used their illegal gain to build a towering world empire. To elevate themselves, the Babylonians trampled others down.

**To put his nest on high** > (Homberg) “those walls, 335, or 330 feet high, and 85 feet broad ; a fortified palace, nearly 7 miles in circumference; gardens, 400 Greek feet square, supporting at an artificial height arch upon arch, of "at least 75 feet," forest trees; a temple to its god, said to have been at least 600 feet high.

<sup>10</sup> ***“You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. <sup>11</sup> “Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework.***

**You have devised a shameful thing for your house ...** > (Clarke) The splendid and costly buildings of Babylon have been universally celebrated. But how were these buildings erected? By the spoils of conquered nations, and the expense of the blood of multitudes; therefore, the stones and the timber are represented as calling out for vengeance against this ruthless conqueror.

**Robertson** > According to one of his own inscriptions Nebuchadrezzar said that one of the chief purposes for his strengthening the walls of Babylon was to make an everlasting name for his reign. He also prays to his god Marduk: “Life for many generations, an abundant posterity, a secure throne, and a long reign, grant as thy gift.”

***So you are sinning against yourself*** > (Robertson) the king of Babylon has counseled shame for himself and his own household. Little did the king understand that by his covetous ways he was sinning against his own soul. He had thought that he was assuring the preservation of himself and his own house. But ironically he was only laying a foundation for their destruction along with his own.

<sup>12</sup> ***“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence!***

**Woe** > (Ron Blue) The cities of the Babylonian Empire were built by the blood and sweat of enslaved peoples. Murder, bloodshed, oppression, and tyranny were the tools employed in this building project.

**Pusey** > Nebuchadnezzar “encircled the inner city with three walls and the outer city also with three, all of burnt brick. And having fortified the city with wondrous works, and adorned the gates like temples, he built another palace near the palace of his fathers, surpassing it in height and its great magnificence.”

There is an interesting side note as to how bad (evil) things were in Jerusalem at the same time Habakkuk was predicting about Babylon. Jeremiah (in 22:17-19) in his prophesy regarding King Jehoiakim states > <sup>17</sup> *But your eyes and your heart are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood and on practicing oppression and extortion.* <sup>18</sup> *Therefore thus says the LORD in regard to Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, “They will not lament for him: ‘Alas, my brother!’ or, ‘Alas, sister!’ They will not lament for him: ‘Alas for the master!’ or, ‘Alas for his splendor!’* <sup>19</sup> *“He will be buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.*

<sup>13</sup> ***“Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? <sup>14</sup> “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.***

**People toil for fire** > (Barnes) literally, to suffice the fire? By God's appointment, the end of all their labor is for the fire, what may suffice it to consume. This is the whole result of their labor; and so it is as if they had toiled for this; they built ceiled palaces and gorgeous buildings, only for the fire to consume them.

**Jeremiah 51:58** > *Thus saith the Lord of hosts! The broad walls of Babylon, shall be utterly destroyed, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor in vain (for vanity), and the folk in (for) the fire, and they shall be weary.*

**For** > (Constable) Rather than "the earth" being filled with the glory of Babylon, it will one day "be filled with the knowledge of" God's "glory," as comprehensively "as the waters cover the sea". This has yet to be. This prediction refers to the ultimate destruction of Babylon in the eschatological future.

**For the earth will be filled ...** > (Robertson) Only when the problem of the wicked is resolved will the glory of God fill the earth. Only when righteous judgment rewards the wicked according to their deservings will true knowledge of God's holiness shine forth in all its splendor. The imagery of waters covering the sea for this universal spread of the knowledge of God's glory inspires optimism.

**Preceptaustin** > *When will this prophecy be fulfilled?* Following the fall of "Babylon" (Rev 17-18) the Messiah will return "with power and great glory" and every eye will see Him (Rev1:7) and the Land of Israel will be restored to the Jews at the beginning of the 1000 year reign in fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham (Ge 17:8). And so amid all the woes, the prophet catches a glimpse of the glorious Messianic Kingdom in which the tide of evil will be stemmed and the knowledge of the Lord shall flourish (Isa 11:9-11).

<sup>15</sup> ***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!***

**Woe** > (Ron Blue) The focus here is on the inhumanity and the indignity of the conqueror to his subjects. He is pictured as a drunkard giving his neighbors wine to intoxicate them so that he may indulge in some evil wantonness and expose his victims to shame.

<sup>16</sup> ***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.*** <sup>17</sup> ***For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.***

**Violence done to Lebanon** > (Zondervan Illustrated Bible) According to his royal annals, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his army to construct a road "for the transport of the cedars" of Lebanon. He describes how they "cut through steep mountains, split rocks, [and] opened passages" to build this commercial logging road. This was done in the name of freeing the land of its foreign enemies. However, these trees actually were used to build his palace and to enhance the temple of Marduk in Babylon.

<sup>18</sup> *“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** > (Ron Blue) The final stanza does not open with the hollow and ominous “Woe!” (That comes in v. 19.) Rather it begins with the penetrating question, *Of what value is an idol?*

<sup>19</sup> *“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.*

**Robertson** > But the ridiculousness of the whole scheme! The person trusts in a speechless, immobile nonentity that he himself has created. How can he be so foolish as to expect that this carving, this poured design, shall intervene on his behalf? The idol seems to have a mystical power to hypnotize, an uncanny ability to make an obvious lie believable. It is designated appropriately a teacher of lies.

<sup>20</sup> *“But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”*

**The Lord is in His holy temple** > (Barnes) awaiting, in His long-suffering, to judge. "The temple of God" is where God enshrines Himself, or allows Himself to be seen and adored. "God is wholly everywhere, the whole of Him no where." There is no contrast between His temple on earth, and His temple in heaven. He is not more locally present in heaven than in earth. It were as anthropomorphic but less pious to think of God, as confined, localized, in heaven as on earth; because it would be simply removing God away from man.

**Ronald Blue** writes that "For Habakkuk, the message was clear. Stop complaining! Stop doubting! God is not indifferent to sin. He is not insensitive to suffering. The Lord is neither inactive nor impervious. He is in control. In His perfect time Yahweh will accomplish His divine purpose. Habakkuk was to stand in humble silence, a hushed expectancy of God’s intervention."