

Prophetic Fall Feasts of The LORD

July 31, 2019 Lesson #29 Habakkuk's Vision

Spurgeon: "Habakkuk truly was one who saw the promises afar off and was persuaded of them and embraced them. He took fast hold upon the goodness of the Lord and rested there."

The message of Habakkuk is unique; it records a conversation between the prophet and His Lord - God Almighty. It starts off quite high on the 'gloomy' scale (for difficult days ahead were foreseen by the prophet). He unburdens his soul to God - telling God his emotion when it seems God isn't listening - he tries to grasp the agonizing of his spirit over issues that seem to have no solution. In spite of things he couldn't understand, he embraces God.

He concludes his book with tremendous hope and expectation that fittingly backs up the central message of the text: "The just shall live by his faith".

Habakkuk's 1st Complaint & God's Answer

O LORD, How long shall I cry, and You will not hear! I cry [shavah = Scream] out to you, "Violence!" yet You do not save. Why do you make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore, the law is ignored (paralyzed), and justice is never upheld. The wicked surround the righteous, therefore justice comes out perverted.

Habakkuk lived when Israelites had moved far from God and the principles on which their nation was founded. He stood in the midst of the decay of Israel and he cried against the sin of his generation but no one heard him and wickedness continued to increase. He saw his nation in decline and he was overwhelmed with frustration. As Habakkuk surveyed the world in which he lived, he saw unbelievable injustice, violence and inequality that never seemed to be judged. He sought God's help in life only to see days/months go by without anything being communicated back.

God's answer - Prepare to be amazed!

Habakkuk 1:5-11 Behold ye among the heathen. Look at the nations and watch-- and be utterly astounded. For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians (Chaldeans)...They all come bent on violence.

Note: Purpose of the invaders is to perpetrate VIOLENCE in the land.

God's reply is not one that Habakkuk had been expecting. Habakkuk thought that God was strangely silent and absent yet the truth was quite the opposite. The truth was that God was already raising up the nation of Babylon to come against Judah. Habakkuk was hoping God would send a revival to His people. [Hab. 3:2], judge the evil leaders and establish righteousness in the land. Then the nation would escape punishment; the people and the cities would be spared.

However, God had warned His people time and again, but they didn't listen. Prophet after prophet had declared the Word [II Chron. 36:14-21] only to be rejected. God had sent various natural calamities and military defeats, but the people wouldn't listen. Instead of repenting, the people hardened their hearts more and turned to the gods of the nations around them for help. They had tried God's longsuffering long enough and it was time for God to act.

Habakkuk's Response -

Habakkuk 1:12-17 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O LORD, have appointed [ordained] them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established [marked] them to correct.

This is who God is going to use? As he mulls this over our prophet struggles with 2 main issues:

- How could a pure, holy God, approve and use those that are wicked?
- How could God judge Judah using a nation that was more wicked than they?

Habakkuk Waiting for a Reply from the Lord

Hab. 2:1 "I will stand my watch (resolutely waits) and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.

- ❖ Habakkuk spoke of himself as if he were a sentry on guard duty.
- ❖ After hearing from the Lord, he will report the information to the people.

God has shown Habakkuk that He was not blind to the sins occurring in the world and that a time had been set aside in which judgment and recompense for these actions would be made.

Hab. 2:2-3 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 toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

We know this prophecy has a "double fulfillment." In other words, ancient Babylon would be defeated, but future revived Babylon [Rev 17-18] would also be destroyed at the Second Coming of the Messiah. This truth from God had a radical impact on his thinking. We will see him transformed from Worry to Worship.

The Law of Double Reference: The inspired writers at times spoke of something close at hand and then blended the description with a situation more remote. The vision, recorded in Hab. 1:5-11, illustrates the law in the description of the Chaldean army.

- ❖ The prophet at first saw the well-disciplined, trained, and equipped Chaldean army in the immediate future. He described the rapid movements and the irresistible force of the Chaldean army and Nebuchadnezzar whom God would use in punishing Judah.
- ❖ The Babylonian horses were not swifter than leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen could not fly as an eagle.

- ❖ Since the description goes far beyond the realities of the ancient Babylonian army, it is certain that this vision blends the description of the Babylonian army with a prediction of another army of the future, which will be a mechanized force of modern warfare, and which will answer to the description of the passage. *Army Of The Antichrist*

Another Example Of The Law Of Double Reference Or Manifold Fulfillment Of Prophecy

Hab. 2:4a "Behold the proud, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him."

To whom does this language apply? The one, or ones, who were seen in the vision, Hab. 1:5-11. Habakkuk saw Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, immediately in the foreground of the vision. This picture blends with the great ruler of the end time, namely, the Antichrist.

God hates PRIDE above all other attitudes or actions.

Pride always goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov. 21:24 "The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name; He worketh in the arrogance of pride."

Nebuchadnezzar certainly was proud, strutting and boasting about his accomplishments, saying, Dan. 4:30 "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"

While the words were still in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying:

Dan. 4:31-33 "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee: and thou shalt be driven from men; and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over thee; until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

The Antichrist will be puffed up with pride and conceit and act in a manner similar to Nebuchadnezzar but making far greater claims. Concerning his boasting and exalting himself, Daniel gives us this information: Daniel 11:36-39 The king shall do according to his own will; he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god and shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods; and shall prosper until the wrath be accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know shall he honor with gold, and silver, with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he act against the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god: which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain."

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the same one called him the man of sin and the son of perdition, who "opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." [II Thessalonians 2:4].

Hab. 2:4b "But the just shall live by his faith."

The principle of their life is faith, instead of pride that looks to self.

Proud and arrogant rulers seem to vent their spleen against the humble, non-resistant, and righteous ones. Under the reign of the Antichrist, while the world-wide revival is being conducted, he will persecute the righteous and will martyr untold numbers, as is seen in Rev. 15.

When this lawless one is at the height of his pride and arrogance, the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed from Heaven. With the breath of His mouth He will slay and, by the manifestation of His coming He will bring to nought the Antichrist [II Thessalonians 2:8].

Pride and self-sufficiency never pay.

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

- ❖ Put the message in writing in order to preserve it, "for the vision is yet for the appointed time." What is the "Appointed Time?"

Daniel 8 which speaks about the time of the end, sheds light on this subject.

Dan. 8:17, 19 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end." And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

- ❖ The vision "hasteth toward the end." The nearer one comes to the concluding days of this dispensation, the events pick up speed.
- ❖ It hastens toward the goal. - The word hastens (puwach/puah - 06315) 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!
- ❖ Future & final destruction of Babylon; redemption & deliverance of God's people [Future Day Of Atonement]; Establish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

- ❖ The vision is certain of fulfillment because it "shall not lie." For those in Judah about to experience the terrifying Babylonian invasion and Seventy Years of Captivity, this assurance of fulfillment should have been a great comfort [recorded for all to read].
- ❖ Their barbaric captors would themselves in God's appointed time suffer divine judgment!

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

- ❖ The source of the message is the "non-lying God." He gives His sure word (His guarantee) that what is written on the tablets will come to pass.

Deut. 18:21-22 the test of a true prophet is whether his prophecy comes to pass, which in this case it would because God said so (through His prophet Habakkuk).

- ❖ God watches over His Word to perform it, to fulfill every promise and to carry out every threat. No word from God is without power (Luke 1:37).

The Vision: Coming of The Babylonians & Their Future Fall & Destruction

- ❖ The Vision Tarries: You Wait For It: It Will Surely Come; It will not delay
- ❖ Though things may appear to slow down, the vision is going to be fulfilled as given.
- ❖ As a watchman waiting, God gives him the sure promise that the evil Babylonians would be defeated.

I Kings 8:56 ...there hath not failed one word of all his good promise,...

Question: Can we see someone else in the vision? Yes

This fact is proved by an examination of Habakkuk 2:3-4, which is quoted in Hebrews 10:37-38, interpreted, and applied to the local situation of the Hebrews to whom the Book of Hebrews was written. [They were facing severe persecution.] The writer of Hebrews changes the wording somewhat and instead of talking about the vision of Habakkuk he speaks of the Messiah and His Coming. Habakkuk = vision = Historical Event; Hebrews = vision = Person, Jesus Christ Warren Wiersbe adds ... The revelation God gave was for a near time and about a future time. While the immediate application was to the end of the Babylonian Captivity, the writer of Hebrews interpreted it to refer also to the return of Jesus Christ.

Heb. 10:36-38 For ye have need of endurance (patience), that after you have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a little while, HE who is coming will come, and will not tarry, Now the just shall live by faith...

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." [Heb. 10:37]

Consider: Habakkuk waited for the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord pertaining to the destruction of Chaldea. A discouraged Jew in Babylonian exile might ask, "Will the Lord come and deliver us?" and the answer is, "Yes! Wait for him!" (Be amazed)

Wiersbe: Along with the scoffers Peter wrote about in II Pet. 3:3-4, some readers might ask, "Where is the promise of His coming? God's reply is, "Wait for it! It will surely come!"

Consider: We wait for the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord pertaining to His return.

We know the Lord completely fulfilled His Word to Habakkuk.

Therefore, we can have assurance that He will fulfill His Word to us just as completely.

James 5:7-8- James tells us that persecution will end, and all wrongs will be made right at the Coming of the Lord. He adds that the Lord's return is "at hand;" it could occur at any time (it was always "at hand" - it was Imminent then [in the first century] and is still imminent in our day!). What was the effect of this truth?

It was to be the foundation that would result in "patience and strengthen" their hearts!

Truth about the future is not ethereal but practical, for ultimately it should impact our present tense salvation = my sanctification!

Since we have been given such a sure word of prophecy, such an absolutely certain hope ("Blessed Hope" Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,)---- we can "stand on our guard posts" like Habakkuk.

As we by faith (Hab 2:4b) receive this truth, the Holy Spirit will take this sure word of prophecy and renew our minds, strengthen our inner man and transform us from glory to glory. II Cor 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

One of the great values of prophecy is not to appeal to our curiosity but to stabilize our faith in difficult times. We can know that even though the times may be difficult, the trials will eventually give way to God's eternal truth.

In this case the truth is that Jesus is coming again and temporal trials will end forever.

Spurgeon: "God still speaks to the waiting soul. Sometimes, there is a direct answer to its perplexity; at others, there is the assurance that the vision is yet for the appointed time, but that it is hastening towards the end. O long-waiting soul, dost thou hear those words? Thou hast been standing long upon the watch-tower. Hope has almost died; but the vision is panting in its haste to be fulfilled. If it tarry, wait for it; because it is already on the way. Every throb of the pendulum brings it nearer. The express train is hurrying towards thee, with its precious freight."

This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, "will be an exercise of faith and patience and will try men and discover what they are", v. 4.

Spurgeon's thoughts on the vision tarrying. Excerpt from his Sermon: "Pride: The Destroyer" "The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk's day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away, and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot, and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast, in order that the gold may be divided from the dross.... Those who looked like true believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the saints; but, alas! This is often the impatience of mere professors, and God thus makes men see what they really are. *They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked, - that men's true character may be discovered, and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.*"

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierceness of the furnace-heat of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." Then there is another class, namely, the just; and of these the text says, "The just shall live by his faith." My dear friends, when trial comes on us, — as it surely will, — may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men who can endure it; and if it be so, we shall live by faith; that will be our distinguishing mark.