

**6) GOD WILL JUDGE THE WICKED, PART 2**  
**(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2020)**

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**Scripture reading** – 2 Cor. 5:1-11; Habakkuk 2:15-20

**INTRODUCTION**

The word anger is used over 200 times in our English translations.

The word is used both for God and for man.

And for man it is used mainly in terms of sinful expressions but not entirely.

**Judges 14:19** and **1 Samuel 11:6** are two examples of the Holy Spirit coming upon men, Samson and Saul, where in the face of a situation there was an expression of righteous anger.

Otherwise mainly there is the warning against sinful anger.

**Psa. 37:8** Cease from **anger**, and forsake wrath;

Do not fret – *it only causes harm.*

**Prov. 19:11** The discretion of a man makes him slow to **anger**,

And his glory *is to overlook a transgression.*

**Eph. 4:31** Let all bitterness, wrath, **anger**, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

We must be careful not to allow sinful anger to dominate our actions and response.

But we also must not be sinfully silent.

There is an important place for righteous anger and action in the face of evil.

Our text from Habakkuk is another depiction of the horror of sin as well as being a very strong expression of God's justice.

**God will deal with perverts and idolaters. Let us always be reverent before Him.**

We will look at the final verses of Habakkuk 2 in two parts, verses 15-17 and verses 18-20.

### 1) GOD WILL DEAL WITH PERVERTS, HAB. 2:15-17

Before we look at these verses, I want to briefly review what we saw last week.

Starting with verse 6 through the end of the chapter is a series of 5 expressions of judgment.

The Word Biblical Commentary states:

This series of woes is designed to show that ultimately sin, evil, crime, greed, oppression, debauchery, and idolatry are doomed to destruction. Often people look at the power and structures of evil and become depressed. Is this really God's world? Has it gotten away from him? Does he still have control over the world and its inhabitants? Habakkuk says, "Yes."<sup>1</sup>

The word "woe" as I mentioned last week has a connection with death and also expresses that **God is mocking the mockers.**<sup>2</sup>

Then finally in terms of introduction, I mentioned that there is a structure to each woe that you see in the first four woes.

1. The sin
2. The judgment
3. The reason for the judgment

The last woe as we will see has a different structure.

Let's focus now on the horrible description that we find starting with verse 15.

Likely in this hideous description is the blending together of actual and metaphorical actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Word Biblical Commentary,

<sup>2</sup> Chantry, 47.

The Babylonians did not just simply defeat other armies in battle. No, they were extremely cruel and disgusting in the way that they expressed their power over others.

The NET Bible writes:

The Babylonian's harsh treatment of others is compared to intoxicating wine which the Babylonians force the nations to drink so they can humiliate them.

Indeed, it is very likely that those conquered by the Babylonians were humiliated by being stripped naked.<sup>3</sup>

Listen to Rev. 14:9-10 which brings together the imagery of judgment and wine.

**Rev. 14:9** And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, **10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger**, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

We don't need to focus on this disgusting subject, but we know that there is a connection between drunkenness and debauchery.

O. Palmer Robertson wrote:

"Part of the depravity inherent in sin is its insistence on involving others in its debauchery. The Babylonian king is not satisfied with making himself drunk; he can rest contentedly only when he has forced his degradation on others."<sup>4</sup>

Verse 16 shows how seriously God will deal with perverts. The language is shocking, but it shows God does not ignore the evil of men and women.

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<sup>3</sup> NET Note citing J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 124.

<sup>4</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, 201.

The verb **filled (satisfied)** is commonly used in the OT.

God as Creator is the one who satisfies man and creation. Man as a sinner abuses food and drink.

Man in his rebellion seeks to be satisfied and filled but finds it very unfulfilling.

And so the word filled is used in a number of passages in the context of judgment.

**Jer. 50:10** And Chaldea shall become plunder; All who plunder her shall be [filled] satisfied," says the LORD.

**Ezek. 32:4** Then I will leave you on the land; I will cast you out on the open fields, And cause to settle on you all the birds of the heavens. And with you I will fill the beasts of the whole earth.

Part of what we see in verse 16 is the theme of divine justice in terms of reversal and appropriate retribution.

Babylon brought great shame on other nations through her violence and perversion. She would experience great shame.

She stripped the nations of their clothes.

The mighty God would strip Babylon and show her lack of submission to the God of all the earth.<sup>5</sup>

Look at the phrase, **the cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you...**

It is truly an awesome expression.

**Psalm 75:8** For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

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<sup>5</sup> Robertson, 202.

**Jer. 25:15** Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

**Jer. 51:7** Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad.

**Rev. 14:8** Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

We should pause here to consider how all of this language of shame and judgment is connected with what our Lord endured for us in His suffering and death on the cross.

**Matt. 20:22** Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."

**Matt. 26:42** Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

It is very easy to sanitize the horror and shame of the cross.

It cannot be just reduced to physical pain.

Our Lord endured not just the anger and cruelty of the Romans and Jewish people.

He drank the cup of the Father's righteous wrath that we as sinners deserve to drink!

There is nothing that truly can be compared to what our Lord endured for us.

The hymn writer Thomas Kelley did his best to capture this awful truth in the hymn "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted," number 192 in our blue *Trinity Hymnal*.

Ye who think of sin but lightly

Nor suppose the evil great

Here may view its nature rightly,

Here its guilt may estimate.  
Mark the Sacrifice appointed,  
See who bears the awful load;  
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,  
Son of Man and Son of God.

In verse 17 we see the third part of the woe structure – the reason for God’s righteous judgment.

**Three** related reasons are given for God’s fearsome judgment on Babylon.

The first is the violence done to Lebanon.

Lebanon is a country famous for its trees.

The flag of Lebanon has a green cedar tree on it.

Various commentaries point out that Nebuchadnezzar ordered his armies to build a road so that the mighty trees of Lebanon could be used for various building projects in Babylon.

We don’t know as much from ancient records about the plunder of beasts, but it would not be at all a surprise that the armies of Nebuchadnezzar hunted and wiped out many animals in the area.<sup>6</sup>

We don’t treat animals like people. There is a vast difference.

However, animals are part of God’s creation.

Cruelty and destruction of God’s creation brings His deserved judgment.

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<sup>6</sup> Lane T. Dennis and Wayne Grudem, eds. *The ESV Study Bible*. Accordance electronic ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), paragraph 15584.

And even more does the shedding of man's blood through violence.

Now you might wonder, why was Lebanon singled out here in Habakkuk?

Well, Lebanon is very close to Israel, and therefore can represent all the nations in the area conquered by Babylon including Judah.<sup>7</sup>

## 2) GOD WILL DEAL WITH IDOLATERS, VV. 18-20

This final woe you can see has a different structure.

The woe is not found right at the beginning but in the middle.

There is also no direct statement of the Lord's fearsome judgment, though the word "woe" does imply judgment.

This final woe has the structure of a question, the declaration of woe, and a final command.

Notice also how this final woe is structured around the theme of silence.

Verse 18 - mute idols

Verse 19 - silent stone

Verse 20 - Let all the earth keep silence before Him

I quoted part of an article last week on Babylon.

This same article talks about the **idolatry** of Babylon.

At the heart of the city of Babylon were 14 different sanctuaries and another 29 were distributed throughout the rest of the city. This does not count hundreds of street-site chapels and shrines.

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<sup>7</sup> W. Hall Harris, eds. *The NET Bible Notes*. 1st, Accordance electronic ed. (Richardson: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), n.p.

Wow!

One of the biggest shrines was named Esagil, dedicated to Marduk. It was 280 feet by 260 feet with gateways 30 feet high.<sup>8</sup>

Babylon was a city dominated by idols and pagan temples.

Let's consider more the language of these verses.

Verse 18 asks the question, what is the profit of an idol?

You are trusting in something that you have made?

And notice that although the image is mute, it is also a teacher of lies.

The lies come through the false priests who claim to receive guidance through the false god.<sup>9</sup>

Verse 19 pronounces the words of judgment in the form of a woe.

What a powerful, even humorous, indictment on those who speak to wood and stone and call for their help and teaching.

Obviously, there is no breath or spirit<sup>10</sup> in these images.

Listen to two other passages quite similar to the words of Habakkuk here.

**Psa. 115:4** Their idols *are* silver and gold,

The work of men's hands.

**5** They have mouths, but they do not speak;

Eyes they have, but they do not see;

**6** They have ears, but they do not hear;

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.livescience.com/28701-ancient-babylon-center-of-mesopotamian-civilization.html>

<sup>9</sup> See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 126. Cited by NET Bible.

<sup>10</sup> *Ruach* – 405x OT.

Noses they have, but they do not smell;  
7 They have hands, but they do not handle;  
Feet they have, but they do not walk;  
Nor do they mutter through their throat.  
8 Those who make them are like them;  
*So is everyone who trusts in them.*

**Is. 40:18** To whom then will you liken God?

Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

19 The workman molds an image,  
The goldsmith overspreads it with gold,  
And the silversmith casts silver chains.  
20 Whoever *is* too impoverished for *such* a contribution  
Chooses a tree *that* will not rot;  
He seeks for himself a skillful workman  
To prepare a carved image *that* will not totter.

Let's focus our attention on verse 20.

Listen again to several similar passages.

**Psa. 11:4** The LORD *is* in His holy temple, The LORD'S throne *is* in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

**Zeph. 1:7** Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; For the day of the LORD *is* at hand, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests.

**Zech. 2:13** Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"

O. Palmer Robertson wrote:

“Habakkuk had begun his dialogue in an effort to understand the mysterious ways of a holy God with sinful people. Now he stands in the presence of the Lord’s holy temple, hushed in reverential awe. He may not have grasped fully all the implications of the divine answer to his query. Yet he stands assured of the abiding lordship of his God, of his justice in prosecuting all violators of his holy law, and of his infinite mercy in granting life to all who will trust in him and in the provisions he has promised for the sinner.”<sup>11</sup>

What does it mean to be silent before the Lord?

In more vulgar language it means to shut up.

In its context here the word has connection with reverence before the Lord.

Carefully consider His mighty power.

Be humble before Him.

Yes, the Lord does give answer when we call on Him, but He does not answer to us.

Though we by faith believes that God works all things for good, it is not that we understand all the ways that God is at work.

This is the place for godly silence.

John Calvin pointed out that the silence commanded here is that of submission to God.

We are to be silent in terms of being directed by God and His word.

We are to be silent in terms not complaining against God.

Stop all of your whining and complaining against God and His Providence.

This is not some mystical silence. It is a silence of faith, reverence, and waiting on the Lord.

**God will deal with perverts and idolaters. Let us always be reverent before Him.**

A few final points of reflection and application.

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<sup>11</sup> Roberston, 211.

1] This passage is another reminder of the depravity of man and as such the godly revulsion that we should demonstrate.

There is a righteous anger even as we make sure we keep our trust in God and not seek to take matters into our own hands.

In the face of great evil, let us not be lulled by the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world.

2] Futility of trusting in anything but the Lord.

## **Prayer**

**Closing Hymn: 236**

### **BENEDICTION - JUDE 24-25**

But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.