



Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

Last week we looked at the prophet Habakkuk's first complaint to God.

He pointed out that the people of Judah weren't living as they had promised to do.

Judah wasn't living up to its covenant promises.

Habakkuk wanted God to Do Something About It.

And God replied that he was Doing Something About It;

he was raising up the Babylonians who would conquer Judah along with every other country in the area.

This week we're going to look at Habakkuk's second complaint to God, and God's reply. The Babylonians have arrived; they destroyed Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah as well

They also plundered the land and took whatever they wanted.

Habakkuk is now standing with the remainder of his suffering people, and once again he speaks to God.

And once again, God replies, and tells Habakkuk what is to come.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:20.

12 LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, LORD, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish. 13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? 14 You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. 15 The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. 17 Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

2 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.

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! 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.

Poor Habakkuk!

He has seen the Babylonians come, seen them round up his fellow citizens and march them back to Babylon as captives, and seen the plunder and destruction that has devastated Judah.

He still trusts that God is Lord of all things

He understands that God will not tolerate “wrongdoing” in his covenant people.

The Babylonians are far, far worse than the Judahites ever were!

He compares the people of Judah to helpless fish, being scooped out of the water with nets; and he compares the Babylonians to ruthless, idolatrous fishermen who even sacrifice to their nets.

So where is there any hope for the remains of Judah?

What is Habakkuk to say to the people who are left, in a devastated land?

God replies, Yes, there is an answer.

In Chapter 2, vv 2, God says, “Write down the revelation (that I’m going to give you), and make it plain on tablets

(i.e., write it in big letters so everyone can see it and spread the message to others.)

To summarize God’s answer:

he says that Babylon is puffed up with pride and its desires are not upright

And because of all the devastation Babylon has caused, Babylon will in turn be devastated.

And that is exactly what happened.

Less than 50 years later, the Persian empire conquered the Babylonians;

they released the Babylonian captives, and told them that they could return to Judah if they wished.

Some did return, and others chose to remain in Babylon.

Wherever they were, they generally did well under Persian rule.

They rebuilt their Temple and their cities.

Habakkuk probably didn't live to see that; but he knows that his prayer has been heard.

He has been assured that God would set things right once again; for God was and is indeed the Lord of all the earth, and all its nations.

So he responds to God's answer by saying,

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”

God is in control.

Let all the earth be in awe of God.

Let all the people of the earth surrender themselves to him.

Twenty five hundred and sixty three years later, awful things still happen between nations.

It's because there is such a thing as sin on a national level, just as there is on a personal level.

He is everyone's God;

and he does deal with sin on a national level, just as he deals with it on an individual level.

As God says to Habakkuk, one day “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

As Christians, we trust God with our selves.

We have given ourselves to God through Jesus, who has redeemed us and set us free from slavery to sin.

We do our best to open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides us, to the extent we will allow it.

We know that we're not perfect.

We know that we still sin.

we also know that God is with us and in us;

and the more we surrender ourselves to the work of the Spirit, the more God's love pours through us.

As Christians, we trust God with our church.

It's true that this church is not perfect, and never has been; how could it be perfect, since it's made up of imperfect people?

As Christians, can we also trust God with our country?

And not just our country, but with all the countries of the world?

Just as God reminded Habakkuk, so he also reminds us:
the earth is his creation, as is all of life upon it.

He is the Lord.

No country rules the world; that would be God's job, not ours.

God's answers to Habakkuk remind us as well, that one day, all of human history will come to its conclusion.

After all, God is everyone's God, whether they believe in him or not.

And just as God's word to Habakkuk regarding Babylon came true, so also God's word regarding all the earth will one day come true.

One day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. One day all the earth will be silent before him.

Let's pray.

Almighty God, you are Lord of everyone and Ruler of every country. We entrust our country, and all the earth's countries, to you; for you are God of everyone, whether we acknowledge you or not. Forgive our country, and all the earth's countries, for our shortcomings and wrongdoings. May the day soon come when all of us, throughout this earth, stand silent before you. May the day soon come when we treat one another with mercy, justice and goodwill, as you would have us do. For it is in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord, that we pray.

Amen.