

HABAKKUK: A THEODICY
III: God's Just Punishment On Babylon And Judah
(Habakkuk 2:5-20)

I. Introduction

- A. Habakkuk trusted in the Lord, but he struggled to understand how God Who was good and all-powerful would function at times seemingly indifferent to the existence of great evil in the world.
- B. The book of Habakkuk is thus a theodicy, a “defense of God’s goodness and power in view of the existence of evil,” Ryrie Study Bib., KJV, 1978, p. 1296, “Introduction to the Book of Habakkuk: Habakkuk’s Questions.”
- C. Habakkuk 2:5-20 predicts God’s judgment on Babylon after He had used Babylon to punish Judah. However, the sins of Babylon were the same as those of Judah, showing God was **just** to let Babylon punish Judah though Babylon was more wicked! We thus view this passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Just Punishment On Babylon And Judah, Habakkuk 2:5-20 ESV.

- A. When Habakkuk had told the Lord how upset he was over Judah’s sins, God had replied that He would send the Babylonians to invade and punish Judah for these sins, Habakkuk 1:1-4 with 1:5-11.
- B. Habakkuk was more upset at this reply, and he asked God why He would send a nation like Babylon that was more wicked than Judah to punish her, Habakkuk 1:12-2:1. The Lord had answered that He would eventually punish Babylon, but that believers would survive Babylon’s invasion by a life of faith in God, Hab. 2:2-4.
- C. The Lord then gave more details on His punishment of Babylon in Habakkuk 2:5-20, B. K. C., O. T., p. 1513:
 - 1. God pronounced a “woe” on Babylon for the sin of greed, Habakkuk 2:5, 6-8; Ibid., p. 1514.
 - a. Being typically addicted to wine, arrogant and restless, the Babylonians never satisfied their greed, gathering to themselves the wealth of other nations by force, seizing what belonged to others, Hab. 2:5.
 - b. Accordingly, the day would come when surviving nations that had been victimized by Babylon would take up a taunt against Babylon, scoffing her during her shameful fall to invaders, Habakkuk 2:6.
 - c. That taunt would deride Babylon because she was being plundered of all of stolen wealth, Hab. 2:7-8.
 - 2. God pronounced a “woe” on Babylon for her arrogant selfish use of her plunder, Habakkuk 2:9-11:
 - a. The Lord was opposed to the use of the plunder the Babylonians had seized from other nations to build up their own homes and empire in an effort to be impregnable to harmful invasion by others, Habakkuk 2:9.
 - b. Thus, the Babylonians had only devised shame for themselves in having acquired their plunder by destroying other peoples as God would direct their nation to fall and itself be plundered, Hab. 2:10-11.
 - 3. God pronounced a “woe” on Babylon for building up her empire by abusing others, Habakkuk 2:12-14:
 - a. God’s third “woe” was levelled at Babylon’s building a town or city by murder and abuse, Hab. 2:12.
 - b. Accordingly, the Lord had determined that the constructions of the Babylonians would only serve as items that would serve as altars upon which the Babylonians would be destroyed in just judgment, Hab. 2:13.
 - c. In sharp contrast to the final ash heap of the Babylonian empire, the earth would one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, Habakkuk 2:14.
 - 4. God pronounced a “woe” on Babylon for her inhumane and cruel mistreatment of her victims of war, likened to getting one’s victims drunk so as to mistreat them shamefully, Habakkuk 2:15. For this evil, God would cause the Babylonians themselves to be treated shamefully in their fall, Habakkuk 2:16-17.
 - 5. God pronounced a “woe” on Babylon for her idolatrous worship of false idols, Habakkuk 2:18-20. The Lord mocked the foolishness of the Babylonians’ trust in inanimate idols they had formed themselves (v. 18), pronouncing a “woe” on those who urged their own formed idols to “Awake” and “Arise” when they had no life in them, no breath at all, Habakkuk 2:19. In great contrast, the true, living God was in His holy temple, so all the earth should keep silence in reverence for Him in His presence, Habakkuk 2:20!
- D. Remarkably, “(t)hese woes are not pronounced against the Babylonians only, but also against Israelites who practiced these evils,” Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Hab. 2:6. It was thus very fitting for God to use the more wicked Babylon to punish Judah, for Judah was more accountable to the Lord than Babylon since Judah had His Law!

Lesson: *Though Babylon was more evil than Judah, God justly used Babylon to punish her, for Judah’s sins were like those of Babylon, and Judah was more accountable than Babylon since she had God’s Law. (Luke 12:47-48)*

Application: *(1) May we realize that the more we know of God’s Word the greater is our accountability to obey it, that if God must punish us for disobedience, our punishment will be more severe than it would be for those who had less knowledge! (2) May we never doubt God’s justice, for He operates with perfect fairness!*