

The Questioning Prophecy of Havakuk (Habakkuk) ~ Part 3

Wicked Always Punished ~ Part 2

It's not the custom to find the **Word of God** in the **Tanakh** in **Red Letters**, but that's exactly who is talking in 2:6–20. The taunt against the **Babylonians** consists of **five “woe oracles,”** divided into two parts (vv. 6–14 and vv. 15–20), both of which end with summary statements that declare the glory and greatness of **God**. These woes oracles (vv. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19) describe the reasons why **Babylon** deserves its coming punishment (cf. Isaiah 5:8–23). Woe oracles are generally composed of two parts: declaration of the wrong, and pronouncement of impending judgment as a result.

2⁶ Won't all these take up taunting him and say about him, in mocking riddles, 'Woe to him who amasses other people's wealth! - How long must it go on? - and to him who adds to himself the weight of goods taken in pledge! 7 Won't your own creditors suddenly stand, won't those who make you tremble wake up? You will become their spoil. 8 Because you plundered many nations, all the rest of the peoples will plunder you; because of the bloodshed and violence done to the land, the city, and all who live there. 9 "Woe to him who seeks unjust gain for his household, putting his nest on the heights, in order to be safe from the reach of harm. 10 By scheming to destroy many peoples, you have brought shame to your house and forfeited your life. 11 For the very stones will cry out from the wall, and a beam in the framework will answer them. 12 " 'Woe to him who builds a city with blood and founds a town on injustice, 13 so that people toil for what will be burned up, and nations exhaust themselves to no purpose. Isn't all this from Adonai-Tzva'ot? 14 For the earth will be as full of the knowledge of Adonai's glory as water covering the sea. 15 "Woe to him who has his neighbor drink, adds his own poison and makes him drunk, in order to see him naked. 16 You are filled with shame, not glory. You, drink too, and stagger! The cup of Adonai's right hand will be turned against you; your shame will exceed your glory. 17 For the violence done to the L'vanon will overwhelm you, and the destruction of the wild animals will terrify you; because of the bloodshed and violence done to the land, the city and all who live there.'"

God Is in Control

18 What good is an idol, once its maker has shaped it, a cast metal image and a teacher of lies, that its maker puts his trust in it, and goes on making non-gods, unable to talk? 19 Woe to him who tells a piece of wood, "Wake up!" or a speechless stone, "Rouse yourself!" Can this thing teach? Why, it's covered with gold and silver, without the slightest breath in it! 20 But Adonai is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him.

Anticipating great destruction at the hands of the **Babylonians**, **Havakuk** has radically changed—he began by informing **God** how to run his world. He ended by trusting that **God** knows best and will bring about justice.

Havakuk's Prayer

Havakuk asks for a new demonstration of God's wrath and mercy, such as God demonstrated so powerfully in the past, and closes with a confession of faith and trust in God.

3¹ This is a prayer of Havakuk the prophet (on musical instruments called shigyonot). 2 Adonai, I have heard the report about you. Adonai, I am awed by your deeds. Bring your work to life in our own age, make it known in our own time; but in anger, remember compassion. 3 God comes from

Teman, the Holy One from Mount Pa'ran. (Selah) His splendor covers the sky, and his praise fills the earth.

Teman means "south"; with reference to **Mount Pa'ran** (Numbers 13:3, 26; Deuteronomy 33:2), it may suggest the time following **Israel's** exodus from **Egypt**. When the biblical authors refer to **God's** mighty acts in the **Exodus**, they often use images to evoke fear or awe of God (see Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4–5; Psalm 18:7–15; etc.). **Selah** is a term that appears frequently in the **Psalms** and has an unknown meaning; it is probably a musical direction.

⁴ His brightness is like the sun, rays come forth from His hand—that is where His power is concealed. ⁵ Before Him goes pestilence, and close behind, the plague.

Havakuk likens **God's** presence at **Mount Sinai** to a thunderstorm, with darkness and flashes of lightning (see Exodus 19:18–20; Psalm 18:9–14). **Pestilence** and **plague** are often used as pictures of divine judgment.

⁶ When He stands up, the earth shakes; when He looks, the nations tremble, the eternal mountains are smashed to pieces, the ancient hills sink down; the ancient paths are his. ⁷ I saw trouble in the tents of Kushan and the tent hangings shaking in the land of Midyan. ⁸ Adonai, is it against the rivers, against the rivers that your anger is inflamed? Is your fury directed at the sea? Is that why you ride on your horses and drive your chariots to victory? ⁹ You brandish your naked bow and order it filled with arrows. (Selah) You split the earth with rivers. ¹⁰ The mountains see you and tremble; a torrent of water streams by; the deep thunders forth, as it raises enormous waves. ¹¹ The sun and moon stand still in the sky at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your glittering spear.

God's power is stressed in these words. Verse 11 refers to the famous event at **Gibeon** during which the **Lord** worked a mighty miracle in the sky to help **Joshua** win the battle (Joshua 10:12).

*¹² In fury you stride across the land, in anger you trample the nations. ¹³ You come out to save your people, to save your anointed one; you crush the head of the house of the wicked, uncovering its foundation all the way to the neck. ¹⁴ With their own rods you pierce the head of their warriors, who come like a whirlwind to scatter us, who rejoice at the prospect of devouring the poor in secret. ¹⁵ You tread down the sea with your horses, churning up the mighty waters. ¹⁶ When I heard, my whole body trembled, my lips shook at the sound; weakness overcame my limbs, my legs gave way beneath me. But I wait calmly for the day of trouble, when it comes upon our assailants. ¹⁷ For even if the fig tree doesn't blossom, and no fruit is on the vines, even if the olive tree fails to produce, and the fields yield no food at all, even if the sheep vanish from the sheep pen, and there are no cows in the stalls; ¹⁸ still, I will rejoice in Adonai, I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ Elohim Adonai is my strength! He makes me swift and sure-footed as a deer and enables me to stride over my high places. For the leader. With my stringed instruments.*¹

Anticipating great destruction at the hands of the **Babylonians**, **Habakkuk** has radically changed - he began by informing **God** how to run His world, and ended by trusting that **God** knows best and will bring about justice. **For even if the fig tree doesn't blossom**. Verse 17 contains a frequently quoted list of material

¹ Havakuk 2:6-3:19.

disasters in which all crops and livestock are lost, and as a result, it is unclear how there will be food to eat. Yet even amid suffering and loss, **Havakuk** has learned to trust **God**.

In our next post, we will begin to explore **Tz'fanyah** (Zephaniah).