

How Long, O Lord – Part 5
All Are Accountable – Hab. 2:6-20
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 5th, 2024

Intro:

- My hope this morning is to persuade you to continue to live by faith that God Almighty, the Lord in His holy temple, will fulfill His promises to shield the righteous with His salvation while He pours His wrath upon sin, wickedness, and injustice.
- Our friend, the prophet Habakkuk, who speaks to God for people and speaks from God to people, has complained to God, asking how long he and his people have to suffer from violence, injustice, wrongdoing, destruction, and wickedness. When would God listen, see, and respond to their prayer for salvation and help (1:1-4)?
- God replies to this complaint by telling Habakkuk to look up and look out, that He has heard, and does see, and is working His plan among the nations to deal with the injustice and wickedness in His nation and in this situation. God will use a ruthless nation to discipline a rebellious one (1:5-11).
- Habakkuk replies by rehearsing what He knows about God, His character, and His covenants. From that understanding, he asks God what He is going to do about the ruthless wickedness of the Babylonian raiders. Is God going to let those who hook people like fish off the hook and allow them to get away with their utter destruction, cruelty, and idolatry? Will God allow them to live in luxury and comfort and permit them to continue in this way (1:12-17)?
- Then in chapter two, God replies, “Listen up and write this down, Habakkuk.” Understand the certainty of accountability for all humanity. What I am going to reveal to you will happen; it speaks of the end, and it will not prove false. You must wait for my plan to work out, but work out it will, and I will also deal with this puffed up, low down, unrighteous, arrogant, restless, greedy Babylon and all the “Babylons” of the world in the end. In the meantime, live by faith in Me, that I will keep my promise of salvation and justice as I work my plan (Hab. 2:2-5, Rev. 16-18).
- Habakkuk, warn them about what will happen to this Babylon and all those who are like them. In the end, all those who have suffered from people like this, those who have waited for me in faith, will be the ones who will stand like a jury and pronounce my judgment on those who rebel against my righteousness.
- Here are specific issues God addresses in this passage that He will judge.

Woe to those who abuse their position to gain wealth

Hab 2:6-8 NIV

“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 debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man’s blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

- People who immediately come to mind are those who prey on others because they are desperate. These are the loan sharks, payday loan companies, credit card companies that charge exorbitant interest, predatory lenders for cars, houses, etc. People who keep the poor, poor because they can do so.

- These are slave labor places that pay their “employees” next to nothing as they continue to get rich. These are wealthy countries taking advantage of poor ones by buying up their lands for their own exploitation.
- These are insurance companies that charge high rates but fight to pay as little as they can. This list goes on, and on, and on. And God will call these people to account.

Woe to those who use their wealth for self-preservation and self-glorification

Hab 2:9-11 NIV

“Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set 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.

- Often, these are the well-connected and ultra-wealthy people who see themselves as untouchable. They use their wealth and position to “build their realm” and have contingency plans to save themselves from all harm. They own houses in secluded, select “member only” places, and they have bunkers and escape pods of all sorts. The most important person is themselves; they will do whatever it takes and step on anyone “below them” to preserve themselves. Instead of using their wealth to help others, they use all they can for themselves and their interests.
- They “plot ruin” for others so they can gain advantages, positions, and glory. They think they are saving their lives; however, they are losing their lives (see Luke 9:24). And the very building materials they use to build their “kingdoms” will cry out against them.
- It seems they are untouchable but they’re never out of God’s reach. There’s a great line from an old African American sermon: “Your arm’s too short to box with God.” It certainly seems that there are powerful forces which are un-accountable to anyone, but that is never, never true.

Woe to the corrupt political powers

Hab 2:12-14 NIV

“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime! 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.

- These are the political powers and dictators who abuse their positions and powers for the glory of the “motherland,” for their place in history, and for personal gain. These people are everyone from Nebuchadnezzar to Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un. Corruption in positions of power is a major problem in the world and millions upon millions have died and currently suffer because of their deeds. Aid doesn’t make it to the people who need it the most. Genocide and ethnic cleansing occur because of the corruption of those in power. America has not gone untouched by corruption and abuse of political power as well. God will hold these people accountable.
- These are people who want the earth to be filled with the knowledge of their glory. The reality is that someday, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth, as deep and as full as the waters that cover the sea. The Lord is the only one who is due this glory. His glory will be established, and His goodness will fill the earth.
- “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

Woe to those who intoxicate and intimidate

Hab 2:15-17 NIV

“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 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 man’s blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

- This is drinking with evil intent. This happens in bar rooms, ballrooms, boardrooms, and bedrooms. People use substances to take advantage of others, and, as mentioned in this passage, to “gaze on their naked bodies.” Afterward, while gloating over the “glory,” they add numbers to their “body count.” This is to their shame, not to their glory. The Lord will expose those who expose others.
- Woe also to those who use violence to destroy, control, and intimidate. Domestic violence and control occur in families, gangs, and in military might. God will hold people accountable for the horrible things that are done on the earth. They do not get away with all this, perhaps for some time, but not for all time (See Rev. 18 the fall of Babylon).

Woe to those who trust in other gods

Hab 2:18-19 NIV

“Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he 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.

- This form of idolatry is less likely in this country than in other places in the world, the form where a physical idol is made and then worshipped. It does happen, however, and I have seen this for myself, especially in India. We are prone to want something physical that we can pray to or towards, something we can follow.
- However, this passage also mentions a second category of idolatry, “an image that teaches lies.” Now this is an issue for sure in our country. Images that are still, and images that are moving, we turn to these all the time. From pin-ups on the walls of our homes to wallpaper on our phone. This type of idol, the “image that teaches lies,” is all around us. We have access to these images 24/7. We have to ask ourselves, what are these images teaching me? Are they teaching “lies,” information that does not line up to reality? Lies that tell us money is the measure of success, or how beauty is defined, or if you buy this, or do this, or are like this then you will be happy. Idols are things we turn to for guidance that we think will help us to be like them or guide us in our choices. What we turn to and give credit to or strive to become.
- We tend to turn to the only one who truly is God and turn to lesser “gods” of our own making, and we become like what we worship, and if it is anything less than the one true God, we are in trouble.

- All of the “gods” of this world, those who have power, or position, or pedigree, all of them are accountable to the Holy Lord in His temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.

Hab 2:20 NIV

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

- God has the first word, and God has the last word. His word is eternal. His word has authority, and His word is final. This is our great God, the “balancer of the scales,” the one who sees all in truth, who will act in power, and justice and truth. The one whom all will answer, He is holy.

Conclusion

- It is a fearful and glorious thing that God judges sins and holds all people accountable. If this were not the case, then our actions and choices would have no eternal significance or consequence. God holds individuals accountable for their actions, both good and evil. This is a consistent message over the entirety of the Bible.

2 Cor 5:10 ESV

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

- Our salvation is based on the mercy that comes through Jesus Christ, who saves us from the wrath of God on sin. He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Our salvation is based upon God’s mercy, and our reward is based on what is done in the body. What we trust truly matters, and what we do will be rewarded (see also 1 Cor. 3:10-15).
- In the end, all will be silent before Him. We will see His glory and bow down to worship. His children, those who have accepted His salvation, will enjoy His goodness for all eternity.

Testimony – Christopher Johnson

Benediction

May you see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, may you be filled with strength and confidence as you wait for the Lord. (Ps 27:13-14)

Questions for Growth Groups

- Do you struggle with or find solace in the judgment of God?
- Why is it important that God holds people accountable? Couldn’t God just pardon everyone for everything? Why does He not do so?
- How does the wrath of God give meaning to His salvation?