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The LORD Reigns Habakkuk 2

Please take your Bible and open to Habakkuk 2. As we continue our study of Habakkuk remember what we are learning. Habakkuk is a man we can all learn from because like all of us Habakkuk had concerns about the world around him. The world around him was living for sin and not for the Lord and this bothered Habakkuk. How Habakkuk works through his concerns is a great model for us to follow when things happen in our world that we don't like or don't make sense.

Habakkuk works through his problems with the Lord in prayer and in praise. Habakkuk ministered a little over 600 years before the coming of Christ in Judah, part of the Southern Kingdom. He lived through a good king and a bad king. Under good King Josiah God brought spiritual reform to the nation. Life was better for Habakkuk under King Josiah. Then he died and a very wicked king named Jehoikim became king and he was a very wicked man. He hated God and His Word and under his rule the nation returned to its wicked ways.

Under this wicked king the nation spiraled out of control. This bothered Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a godly man who understood why God made the world. God made the world for His own glory and when the people of God trust Him and do what He says God is glorified and the nation is blessed. We really do reap what we sow. God will not be mocked.

Here is what makes Habakkuk unique - **He did not speak for God to the people but rather spoke to God about the people and the nation.** He had legitimate concerns about the world around him and he took those concerns to the only One who could do anything about it. Isn't it interesting how we usually do the opposite? We have concerns about other people and we take those concerns to other people as if people have the power to change people. Are you still with me? I know the thunderstorms may have kept some of us up last night. We don't always work through our problems vertically like Habakkuk.

When we have problems with people we should always start with the Lord. Instead of taking our problems to people who forget where they park on Sunday mornings we should take our problems to the One who made the stars and calls them all by name. The Lord God is the only One who can change people's hearts and change the course of history. This is what we're learning in Habakkuk - How to grow in glorifying God by trusting Him more and more. Less of us and more of Him. Not our will but His Word. Not our power but His strength. He must increase and we must decrease.

What we have learned so far in Habakkuk 1 is that after Habakkuk takes his complaints to the Lord God answers Habakkuk in a way that he was not expecting. Habakkuk wanted God to send revival but instead God is sending the Babylonians. This is both comforting and discouraging. It's comforting because it is a reminder that Israel's God controls the whole world. He's not just Israel's God - He's everybody's God. The fact that God can raise up a notoriously wicked nation to accomplish His purpose for His people shows us that God is completely sovereign. This really is our Father's world.

This is also challenging for Habakkuk because of what he knows about God. Habakkuk knows that God is holy. He knows that God cannot look on wickedness with favor. He is concerned that what God is doing will make God look bad. Judah is a wicked nation but Babylon, come on, those people are muy muy wicked. Habakkuk has to learn to trust the Lord when things don't make sense to him from a human perspective.

Richard Patterson, “Habakkuk’s prophecy reminds the believer of the possibility of an intimate communion with God that can overcome his deepest depression and darkest seasons of doubt. God hears and answers prayer. The believer may thus live a life of faith, walking before Him in patient trust and joyful service.”

This is where we are in our study of Habakkuk. Habakkuk 1:1–2:5 is a dialogue between God and the prophet in which two stylized complaints are answered by two penetrating replies. The opening complaint from Habakkuk in Habakkuk 1:2–4 has to do with Judah’s moral and spiritual decline and the apparent unwillingness of Yahweh to intervene. The first reply from the Lord in Habakkuk 1:5–11 sets forth the coming destruction of Judah by Babylon as Yahweh’s discipline for errant Judah. For Habakkuk, the patriotic and nationalistic covenant Israelite, this was hardly a solution. Habakkuk returns serve with another complaint in Habakkuk 1:12–17 that such a solution would only aggravate the problem of God’s working in history and the apparent compounding of injustice. How can God use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish His people? This is more than his little Hebrew brain can fathom. God is not working in a way that makes sense to Habakkuk.

But here is a major lesson we can learn from Habakkuk - when the Lord didn't do what he thought he should do Habakkuk didn't give up on God.

He didn't take his scroll home and burn it. **He kept pursuing the Lord and waiting on the Lord.** He pressed on when he didn't know why God was doing what God was doing. That's where we find him. Habakkuk 2:1 leaves the prophet sitting on his spiritual tower awaiting an answer.

God's answer to Habakkuk's second complaint is what Habakkuk 2:2 all the way to Habakkuk 2:20 is all about. Habakkuk's waiting on the Lord is rewarded with an answer from the Lord. Hebrews 11:6 reminds all of us, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

I don't know what problems all of you are facing this morning but I know we all have problems. We all have things in our life that are hard. We all have things in our life that we wouldn't have put there if it was up to us. Kids or grandkids with major health problems. Financial distress. Marriage problems. Persecution for following Christ. Sin struggles that don't seem to be improving. The same wicked heart is there every morning when we wake up waiting to be dealt with. What do we do? We keep drawing near to God believing His promises.

I like this summary of what we see Habakkuk doing from Gerard Christian, "Habakkuk's open approach to God causes him to voice everything to Him, even his inability to understand what is happening and how God seems to act against His own character. In turn, this leads to his being content to accept God's way and God's word. God controls the affairs of men, even bringing good out of evil circumstances and through enemies. God is so sovereign that He can take and use those who sin against His standards and His Word, to produce His own perfect pre-planned will, without ever being the author of their sin. The cross of Calvary is all about that, too."

There are things in Habakkuk 1 that Habakkuk now knows. He knows God is going to send the Babylonians to discipline God's people. But Habakkuk doesn't know what God intends to do with this wicked nation. He doesn't know God's future plan for those who are about to do evil where he lives. Does God control only the good things in this world or does He also control the evil things that happen in this world? Habakkuk 2 is God's plan for the wicked Babylonians.

The title for this lesson is The Lord Reigns.

Let's pick up Habakkuk in Habakkuk 2:2 and let's read the rest of the chapter together this morning:

Habakkuk 2:2-20

The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith

- 2 And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.
- 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.
- 4 "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.
- 5 "Moreover, wine is a traitor,
an arrogant man who is never at rest.
His greed is as wide as Sheol;
like death he has never enough.
He gathers for himself all nations
and collects as his own all peoples."

Woe to the Chaldeans

- 6 Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—
for how long?—
and loads himself with pledges!”
- 7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise,
and those awake who will make you tremble?
Then you will be spoil for them.
- 8 Because you have plundered many nations,
all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you,
for the blood of man and violence to the earth,
to cities and all who dwell in them.
- 9 “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house,
to set his nest on high,
to be safe from the reach of harm!
- 10 You have devised shame for your house
by cutting off many peoples;
you have forfeited your life.
- 11 For the stone will cry out from the wall,
and the beam from the woodwork respond.
- 12 “Woe to him who builds a town with blood
and founds a city on iniquity!
- 13 Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts
that peoples labor merely for fire,
and nations weary 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 makes his neighbors drink—
you pour out your wrath and make them drunk,
in order to gaze at their nakedness!
- 16 You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.
Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision!
The cup in the Lord’s right hand
will come around to you,
and utter shame will come upon your glory!
- 17 The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them,

for the blood of man and violence to the earth,
to cities and all who dwell in them.

- 18 “What profit is an idol
when its maker has shaped it,
a metal image, a teacher of lies?
For its maker trusts in his own creation
when he makes speechless idols!
- 19 Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;
to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold
and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.
- 20 But the Lord is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him.”

What is the role of a prophet? To make God's Word clear to the people. This is what God tells Habakkuk to do in Habakkuk 2:2 with this new revelation. God makes it clear that He has a future plan for this wicked nation. **God is going to punish the people who punish His people.** God always has the last word. Sin will not win in the end.

In verses 2-3 we have:

1. The Prologue

What's the context of these verses? Habakkuk 2:2-3 is what the Lord tells Habakkuk to write down for the people. It's a revelation or a vision concerning the coming Babylonians. God wanted His people to know that God was still in control and God was still fulfilling His part of the covenant that God and Israel made together all the way back in Exodus 19.

Remember after God delivered His people out of Egypt showing that He is the only true God Israel entered into a covenant with King Yahweh. God became their God and they became His people. Stipulations were put in place. Obedience will be rewarded by God and disobedience will be

punished by God. Obedience glorifies God and brings blessing.
Disobedience dishonors God and brings cursing.

It seems that many people in Judah at this time forgot God in the midst of pursuing their own sinful pleasures. They were too busy sinning to study the Word of God to know who God is and what God wants for His people. So what does God do? He patiently and persistently pursues His people. They hated Him but He still loved them. What do I mean?

God's relationship with Israel was an intimate love relationship. It was not about merit. It was about grace. God speaks through Moses clearly in Deuteronomy 7:6-10 about His unique affection for Israel, "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. **It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.** Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face."

Do you know why God loved Israel? Because He chose to love Israel. God loves who He chooses to love. It's never ever been about merit. There was nothing in Israel that was worthy of God's affection. They were wicked people just like everyone else. But God chose them because He loved them and because He loved them he made promises to them and

because He made promises to them He redeemed them and because He redeemed them they were to live for Him and if they did not live for Him His love showed up in the form of discipline.

God loved these people so much He keeps pursuing them in their sin. Aren't you thankful God loves you and sent His Son to save you and sent His Spirit to seal you for the day of redemption? Aren't you thankful God loves you enough to pursue you in your sin? He doesn't give up on you when you consider giving up on Him? He keeps pursuing you. He keeps loving you with stubborn love. He keeps using difficult circumstances to humble you so you are forced to go back to Him and trust Him again and get your heart back in line with His will that is good, and pleasing and perfect.

Habakkuk 2:2-3 is the prologue.

- 2 And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.
- 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.

When I first studied these two verses I thought what God was doing was making the message plain to His people so they would literally run. **The Babylonians are coming, run for your lives, gather your kiddos and belongings and head for the hills.** But that's not what is going on here. God is making His plan plain to the people because He is giving them an opportunity to repent. Punishment is coming, it will not delay, you might die, so get right with the Lord.

God has a plan and His plan will happen. It will not delay. This world is under the control of one God with a plan and His plan will happen. Nothing

can stop God from doing what He wants. This is His world. God always gets His way. The prologue in verses 2-3 is followed by:

2. The Purpose - Habakkuk 2:4-5

The purpose of Habakkuk and really the purpose of the whole Bible is condensed in these two verses. Habakkuk 2:4-5 is a reminder that there are only two kinds of people. There are humble people who trust the Lord and are ultimately rewarded by Him and there are proud people who trust in themselves and are ultimately punished by Him.

Habakkuk 2:4-5

4 “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.

5 “Moreover, wine is a traitor,
an arrogant man who is never at rest.

His greed is as wide as Sheol;
like death he has never enough.

He gathers for himself all nations
and collects as his own all peoples.”

Who is God describing in the first part of verse 4? He is describing the arrogant Babylonians. Habakkuk 1 reminds us that this nation was a notoriously wicked nation. They were a puffed up proud people. They trusted in themselves and their own power. They were a puffed up people. How does God feel about pride? He hates it. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. God is going to show Habakkuk in the rest of Habakkuk 2 that He has a future plan for this proud nation.

At the end of verse 4 God describes a different kind of person, "But the righteous shall live by faith." This is the central message of Habakkuk and for that matter the central message of the whole Bible. It reminds us that

there are only two options in life. We live by faith in God and His plan or we live by faith in ourselves and our plan. The righteous shall live by faith. Faith in God and His plan. When we know His plan and trust His plan and follow His plan we are living by faith.

Remember faith in Scripture is not something blind. It's not - Just have faith. No. Biblical faith is active trust in God according to His plan. It is taking God at His Word. It is trusting His character and His promises. It is abandoning any hope in yourself and relying totally on the Lord.

Faith also implies obedient commitment. Faith follows God's plan. This is the quote on the top of your notes:

"A proud person relies on himself, whereas a righteous person relies on God. While the phrase "his soul is puffed up" refers primarily to Babylon in this context, it could include anyone who is proud. It will take faith to wait patiently for God's plan to unfold, but the righteous believe that God will accomplish it. The phrase but the righteous shall live by his faith is quoted in the NT to emphasize that people are saved by grace through faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; cf. Eph. 2:8) and that Christians should live by faith (Heb. 10:38–39). The kind of faith that Habakkuk describes, and that the NT authors promote, is continuing trust in God and clinging to God's promises, even in the darkest days. The righteous person trusts in God; he believes that God's promises are true and that he will bring to pass his righteous purposes. This trust anticipates trust in Christ (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:37–38), in whom the promises of God are fulfilled (2 Cor. 1:20)."

Last night about 250 men got together for Meatfest. We talked about following Christ as a band of brothers. We follow Christ together. We are

always learning from godly examples. Paul modeled faithfulness for Timothy in 9 specific areas of the Christian life. One of those areas was faith, what Paul calls My Faith. Paul modeled for Timothy an active trust in God. Paul went where the Spirit led him to proclaim the gospel, baptize believers and teach believers how to obey Christ. Paul's faith was worked out in this world as Paul aligned His purpose in life with God's purpose in life.

I told the men a true story about something that happened in a girls junior high basketball game. Molly and Addison, my two older daughters, played Junior High basketball for the little Christian school they went to in Kansas. After we moved here they kept following the team and streaming the games. The fact that I would watch middle school girls basketball in games my daughters were not playing in shows how much I love my girls.

One night we were watching a game and players started getting hurt. It was close to the end of the game and we saw the coach motion to one of the girls and she walked down to him and they talked and then she went back to her chair and sat down. After the game my daughter texted her friend about what was going on. Evidently, the coach wanted to put her in at the end of the game in crunch time but she told the coach, "I have no idea what I am doing. I don't want to go in."

She didn't want to go into the game because she didn't know the plan and she didn't want to look foolish. Habakkuk's faith in God is the response to His plan. Habakkuk now knows that God has a future plan for the wicked nation that is about to come in and punish the people of God. He has to trust God even though what God has planned is going to make his life on earth a lot more difficult. His life is pretty much over from a human perspective. When the Babylonians come in starting in 605 life is going to

get brutal where Habakkuk lives. This wicked nation is going to cut off supplies for the people and their source of living.

People are going to starve to death. Mom's are going to eat their own children. Read Lamentations. Lamentations is Jeremiah reflecting on what happens on the other side of the Babylonian invasion. It's absolutely brutal beyond our ability to fathom. It's wicked people doing wicked things and what we find in Habakkuk is that none of this is happening by accident. This is the result of the people's persistent sin against God.

Does God take our sin serious? He killed His Son for our sin. Yes, He takes it serious. The person who truly fears God should consider God dangerous when sin is present and awesome when sin is covered. If there is willful sin in your life this morning that you are not seeking to put to death with the help of the Holy Spirit can I remind you that you need to be killing sin or sin will be killing you. We can't read God's response to evil and act like sin doesn't matter to a holy God. Believe the gospel and replace sin with righteousness with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The rest of Habakkuk 2:6 all the way to Habakkuk 2:20 is called a taunt song. In this section the Lord taunts the wicked Babylonians. God does have a future plan for this wicked nation.

Let's finish with:

3. The Plan - Habakkuk 2:6-20

Notice in this section there are 5 woes for the wicked. You see the word woe in verse 6, verse 9, verse 12, verse 15, and verse 19. Woe was a word used by the prophet, that has the idea of a coming judgment. The Lord reigns over all the nations and the Chaldeans will ultimately be

judged. Judged for what? What does pride look like in real life? What does the one who is proud in heart look like as he or she goes through daily life? Because they do not trust in God's ways revealed in God's Word the proud are marked by:

Woe 1 - Greed (Habakkuk 2:6-8). Greed is a characteristic of a proud person. "Greed is a natural but destructive characteristic of the one who will not trust God. If a person trusts God, he does not need to be covetous of more and more material possessions." Instead of trusting the Lord to provide the proud person takes matters into his own hands. He does things his own way which means stealing and gaining material possessions through extortion. They borrow with no intention of giving back. They rip people off because they're only concerned with what they can get for themselves out of their one fleeting life.

Woe 2 - Injustice (Habakkuk 2:9-11). The second woe is against injustice. Notice there is a slippery slope to these 5 woes. It begins with greed and then it goes to injustice. James Montgomery Boice, "Picture a nobleman in the Babylonian army. He wants to rise to a high position and enjoy its rewards—to have an opulent house and to be secure in it. So he cuts down a forest that belongs to somebody else and from the trees of that forest makes great beams for his home. Then he destroys someone else's home and takes the beautiful stone blocks it was made of for himself. When he finishes he has a beautiful house, a "nest on high" (v. 9). But everyone who looks at it knows where the stones and beams came from, and his pride and joy become a cause for shame. When the opportunity arises they will see that the nobleman is treated as he treated others."

Woe 3 - Violence (Habakkuk 2:12-14). You know someones heart is not right on the inside if they are willing to kill to get what they want. Greed leads to injustice and injustice leads to violence. Not content with what their

injustices can procure, they are now adding crimes of violence to their vices, so great is their desire to have things. Violence has been a big problem in Habakkuk so far. Violence is the English translation of the Hebrew word *Hammas*. We know about *Hammas* don't we? We still have some people around who go by that name. People who resort to violence, people who resort to destroying the innocent to try to get what they want. God promises judgment for all who resort to violence to satisfy their sinful greed.

Woe 4 - Seduction (Habakkuk 2:15-17). James Montgomery Boice, "These are indelicate words. They are referring to seduction, and seduction is fairly far along the slippery slope of moral decline that this chapter highlights. We can note the progression. First there is greed. Then there is mild injustice, followed by more serious injustice. Next comes violence. Now there is seduction and perversion." Sinful pride ultimately leads to sexual shame.

Woe 5 - Idolatry (Habakkuk 2:18-19). The final problem with a proud person is a worship problem. Failing to worship and follow the one true God they end up worshipping idols. "In the context of the references to the Babylonians, it is clear that this involves not merely simple idolatry, a case of an individual bowing down to a wooden or stone idol. It involves the Babylonians' whole religious system with its divination, sorcery, spiritism, and demonism. Babylon was a center for such practices."

We look at this list of woes and we think, "That right. Get em Lord. Those wicked proud people with this long list of sins." But, friend, we need to be careful. Aren't all of our hearts still prone to some form of idolatry? To some degree don't we all struggle with idols of the heart.

I heard someone say one time, “Anything other than the Lord that you cannot stop thinking about is an idol.” How’s your thought life this morning? What do you spend the most time thinking about? Is it things below or things above? I know this is a fight to keep our heart trending upward and outward on Christ.

Colossians 3:1-4

- 3:1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
- 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

There are two commands in these verses based on our position in Christ, Seek the things that are above and set your minds on things that are above. Seek and set. Gerald Peterman, “Since the Colossians have indeed **died** with Christ and been **raised up with** Him, their focus should not be on earthly **things** (v. 2). Their focus should be supremely on Christ who is exalted—at God’s **right hand**—above all others.” This is where we have to keep turning our heart. For ever one look at yourself take ten looks to Christ.

Let’s finish with Habakkuk 2:20, “But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” Notice the word but in verse 20. God is contrasting how His people are to respond to this new revelation.

“For Habakkuk, the message was clear. Stop complaining! Stop doubting! God is not indifferent to sin. He is not insensitive to suffering. The Lord is neither inactive nor impervious. He is in control. In His perfect time Yahweh

will accomplish His divine purpose. Habakkuk was to stand in humble silence, a hushed expectancy of God's intervention."

In Habakkuk 2:2-20 we see the prologue, the purpose and the plan that God has for a wicked nation that will punish His people. Friends, sin never wins. It's a lie that sinners win in the end. God will not be mocked. We reap what we sow. People who sow to their own sinful nature reap destruction but people who know Christ and sow to the Spirit reap eternal life. We can trust God when the world doesn't make sense because we know God has a plan for the righteous and a plan for the wicked and we trust Him. Let's pray.