

## **Bible Study – Habakkuk**

### **Chapter 2**



#### **1. God’s Answer – A Vision**

In the first chapter, we are introduced to a persistent and disillusioned prophet named Habakkuk. Although not much is revealed about his personal life, it is evident that he is caught between the people of Judah and God, struggling to understand God’s ways. Habakkuk recognizes that God is holy and does not tolerate wickedness; however, he cannot comprehend why God allows such wickedness to persist and why He chooses to use the unrighteous to fulfill His plans and purposes.

In Chapter 2, Habakkuk climbs a watchtower on the city walls to gain a better perspective from which he hopes to receive an answer from God. This watchtower serves as a refuge from the chaos of daily life. It is here that God responds to Habakkuk while he awaits guidance.

Habakkuk 2: 2-3

<sup>2</sup> Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. <sup>3</sup> For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end, it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

Why was it necessary for someone to run with the vision?

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Considering that someone must transport those clay tablets, possibly over long distances, how would you have designed those tablets?

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What do you think is meant by the term “appointed time”?

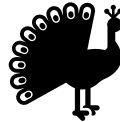
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#### **Scripture for Additional Reading**

Deuteronomy 10:2; Isaiah 21:8

There are only two references to stone tablets in the Old Testament. Unlike Moses, whose tablets were specifically designed to fit into the Ark of the Covenant, the design of Habakkuk's tablets is left to our imagination. Archaeological discoveries of

Babylonian tablets from Habakkuk's time suggest that they were small enough to fit into a backpack. Therefore, it is likely that Habakkuk's tablets were of a similar size, making them easy to carry while running. The content and urgency of the vision given to Habakkuk appear to be the main focus rather than practical details. However, it is intriguing to consider how individuals executed the commands given to them by God. Whoever was running with those tablets must have been a strong runner!



## 2. The Proud – Habakkuk 2: 4 – 5

The focus shifts to a detailed description of “the proud” and “the just”. Maybe at his point, Habakkuk was starting to put two and two together.

<sup>4</sup> “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith. <sup>5</sup> Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he *is* a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he *is* like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples.

### Questions for Reflection

The vision presented in Habakkuk mentions the proud but does not identify any specific individual. It uses singular language without naming anyone directly. However, we can infer the subject of the vision. Could it be referring to the King of Babylon? Let’s explore the characteristics of such a person by creating a word-match puzzle.

|   |                           |               |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | His soul is •             | • wine        |
| 2 | He transgresses by •      | • death       |
| 3 | He does not stay •        | • all nations |
| 4 | He enlarges his desires • | • not upright |
| 5 | He is like •              | • as hell     |
| 6 | He cannot be •            | • people      |
| 7 | He gathers to himself •   | • at home     |
| 8 | He heaps up to himself •  | • satisfied   |

(Key: 1-4; 2-1; 3-7; 4-5; 5-2; 6-8; 7-3; 8-6)

The King of Babylon was reveling in the glory of his victories, enjoying his status as the dominant superpower of the time. It's no surprise that his vision was depicted so vividly. In contrast to the life of the proud, we gain insight into the life of the righteous. We learn that the righteous shall live by faith. What a striking comparison!

### 3. Warning to the proud! Habakkuk 2: 6 - 12

The vision that Habakkuk received continued with several warnings, often referred to as "woes," aimed at the prideful. The negative consequences of these actions are clearly outlined. There are five of these warnings, which we will examine one by one. For this study of the chapter, we have also included another translation: The Message Bible.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Warning

##### NKJV

<sup>6</sup> "Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, '**Woe** to him who increases *What* is not his—how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges? <sup>7</sup> Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. <sup>8</sup> Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land *and* the city, And of all who dwell in it.

##### The Message

<sup>6</sup> Don't give people like this a second thought. Soon the whole world will be taunting them: "'Who do you think you are - getting rich by **stealing** and **extortion**? How long do you think you can get away with this?' <sup>7</sup> Indeed, how long before your victims wake up, stand up and make you the victim? <sup>8</sup> You've plundered nation after nation. Now you'll get a taste of your own medicine. All the survivors are out to plunder you, a payback for all your murders and massacres.

#### Questions

What wrongful actions do the first warnings address?

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What will the consequences be of "tasting your own medicine?"

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They never thought that their own medicine was going to taste that bad!

#### 2nd Warning

##### NKJV

<sup>9</sup> "**Woe** to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster! <sup>10</sup> You give shameful counsel to your house, Cutting off many peoples, And sin *against* your soul. <sup>11</sup> For the stone will cry out from the wall, And the beam from the timbers will answer it.

##### The Message

<sup>9</sup> "Who do you think you are - recklessly **grabbing** and **looting**, Living it up, acting like king of the mountain, acting above it all, above trials and troubles? <sup>10</sup> You've engineered the ruin of your own house. In ruining others you've ruined yourself. You've undermined your foundations, rotted out your own soul. <sup>11</sup> The bricks of

your house will speak up and accuse you. The woodwork will step forward with evidence.

## Questions

What actions do the first warnings address as wrongful?

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What do you think it means to "sin against your own soul"?

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It can't get much worse than this! When the bricks and the woodwork of your own house start speaking out against you!

## 3rd Warning

### NKJV

<sup>12</sup> "Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity!

### The Message

<sup>12</sup> "Who do you think you are - building a town by **murder**, a city with **crime**?

The following 2 verses are significant and especially verse 14 is often quoted. Let us read them and consider their meaning.

### NKJV

<sup>13</sup> Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain? <sup>14</sup> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

### The Message

<sup>13</sup> Don't you know that God-of-the-Angel-Armies makes sure nothing comes of that but ashes, Makes sure the harder you work at that kind of thing, the less you are?

<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the earth becomes aware of God's glory as the waters cover the sea.

How would you describe the "glory of the Lord"?

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It is not of God, nor by Him, that the people of nations fan the flames of iniquity. These acts of wrongdoing will ultimately be in vain, resulting only in ashes. In contrast, where this iniquity has left a void, an awareness of the glory of the Lord will cover all corners of the earth. The nature of this glory is a topic for another day, but it is apparent that this glory stands in stark contrast to the efforts of those who seek to bask in their own fame—an endeavor that will never truly fill the earth!

## 4<sup>th</sup> Warning

### NKJV

<sup>15</sup> **Woe** to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing *him to* your bottle, Even to make *him* drunk, That you may look on his nakedness! <sup>16</sup> You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also—drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD's right hand *will be* turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory. <sup>17</sup> For the violence *done to* Lebanon will cover you, And the plunder of beasts *which* made them afraid, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land *and* the city, And of all who dwell in it.

### The Message

<sup>15</sup> "Who do you think you are - inviting your neighbors to your **drunken** parties, Giving them too much to drink, roping them into your sexual **orgies**? <sup>16</sup> You thought you were having the time of your life. Wrong! It's a time of disgrace. All the time you were drinking, you were drinking from the cup of God's wrath. <sup>17</sup> You'll wake up holding your throbbing head, hung over - hung over from Lebanon violence, Hung over from animal massacres, hung over from murder and mayhem, From multiple violations of place and people.

### Questions

What wrongful actions does the fourth warning address?

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Starting the day with a typical headache is unpleasant, but waking up with a hangover resulting from violent actions against others is truly disgraceful. Unfortunately, there is no remedy for that.

### 5th Warning

#### NKJV

<sup>18</sup> "What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, The molded image, a teacher of lies, That the maker of its mold should trust in it, To make mute idols? <sup>19</sup> **Woe** to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone, 'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it, there is no breath at all.

#### The Message

<sup>19</sup> Who do you think you are - saying to a stick of wood, 'Wake up,' Or to a dumb stone, 'Get up? Can they teach you anything about anything? There's nothing to them but the surface. There's nothing on the inside.

### Question for Reflection

What wrongful deeds does the 5th warning address?

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Have you ever spoken to a piece of wood or stone? There is truly nothing inside!



#### 4. The Lord is in His Temple!

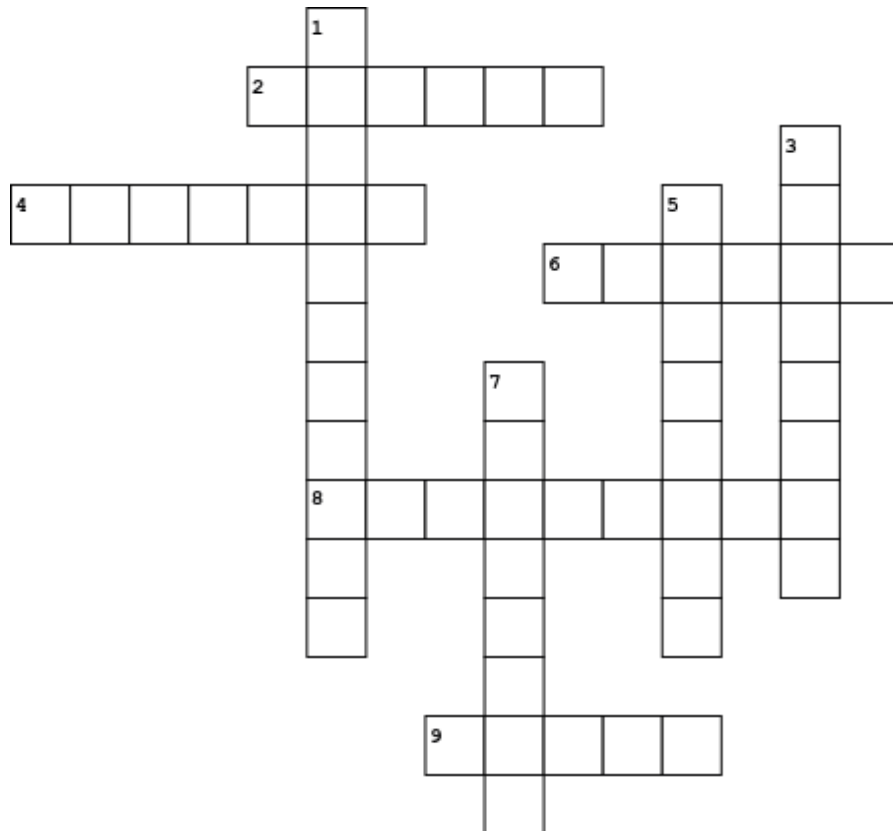
<sup>20</sup> “But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

This chapter ends with an encouraging message. While Habakkuk was receiving the vision, everything described in that vision will happen at the right time. The Lord God was, is, and will always be in His temple. Therefore, all the earth should remain silent.

#### 5. The “warnings” crossword puzzle.

Using your answers from section 3 see if you can complete this puzzle.

| Across:           | Down:                    |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 2. fourth warning | 1. fourth warning        |
| 4. first warning  | 3. second warning        |
| 6. third warning  | 5. first warning         |
| 8. second warning | 7. warning fifth warning |
| 9. third warning  |                          |





## **Answer Key**

(1-drunkenness 2-orgies. 3-stealing 4-looting 5-grabbing 6-murder 7-idolatry 8-extortion 9-crime)

## **6. Key Facts about the King of Babylon**

**Name:** Nebuchadnezzar or Nebuchadnezzar II.

**Time of Rulership:** 605 to 562 BC.

**Place of Birth:** Babylon

**Parents:** His father was Nabopolassar, founder of the Chaldean Dynasty.

### **Major Achievements:**

- Defeated the Egyptians under Pharaoh Neco at the Battle of Carchemish.
- Attacked Jerusalem in 526 BC and led many Hebrews into exile. He returned to besiege and capture Jerusalem in 586 BC, destroying Solomon's Temple in the process.
- Built Babylon into a world-class city.

**His Death:** He died in August or September of 562 BC at the age of 84. He passed away peacefully in the city he had built, after a reign of 43 years. However, Babylon did not last another 25 years after his death; the city fell to the Persians in 539 BCE. Attempts to restore it to its former glory by Alexander the Great were ultimately unsuccessful.

### **Where do we read about Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible?**

- 2 Kings 24 and 25 (The Fall of Jerusalem)
- 2 Chronicles 35 and 36 (The Fall of Jerusalem)
- Jeremiah 21 to 52
- Daniel 1 to 4 (Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar Service)

Despite being a Godless king, he garnered a significant amount of attention!

### **His Strengths and Weaknesses**

- He allowed conquered nations to retain their own religions.
- He "imported" the most intelligent individuals from these conquered regions to assist in governing his kingdom, such as Daniel.
- Ultimately, his pride led to his undoing and downfall.

## **7. In Conclusion**

Corruption and arrogance have an expiration date. Let us move on to Chapter 3. There is more trembling news, and good news to come!



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