

# Habakkuk 2 Commentary

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<b>HABAKKUK:                      THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE BY FAITH                      "From Worry to Worship"</b>		
<b>Problems of Habakkuk</b> Hab 1:1 -2:20		<b>Praise of Habakkuk</b> Hab 3:1-19
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<b>Watch and See</b>			<b>Stand and See</b>	<b>Kneel and See</b>
<b>Habakkuk Troubled</b>			<b>Habakkuk Taught</b>	<b>Habakkuk Triumphant</b>
<b>The Prophet Wondering &amp; Worrying</b>			<b>The Prophet Watching &amp; Waiting</b>	<b>The Prophet Worshiping &amp; Witnessing</b>
<b>Habakkuk's First Question</b> Hab 1:1-4	<b>God's First Answer</b> Hab 1:5-11	<b>Habakkuk's Second Question</b> Hab 1:12-2:1	<b>God's Second Answer</b> Hab 2:2-2:20	<b>Habakkuk's Prayer of Praise</b>
<b>Habakkuk Speaks: Why Does God not Punish Wicked Judah?</b>	<b>God Speaks: Judah Will Be Punished!</b>	<b>Habakkuk Speaks: Why Will God use Pagans to Punish Judah?</b>	<b>God Speaks: Yes And Pagans Will Punish Babylon!</b>	<b>Word of Praise Hab 3:1-15</b> <b>Words of fear &amp; faith Hab 3:16-19</b>
<b>Oracle Related to Judah</b> ca 607BC				

Habakkuk moves from **burden to blessing**, from **wonder/worry to worship**, from **restlessness to rest**, from **a problem to God's Person**, and from a **complaint to consolation**, from confusion to confidence! Beloved, only our great God and Savior can supernaturally turn sighing into singing so we must like Habakkuk take time to wait before Him in prayer and listen to His Word. It is always "worth the wait!"

#### Timeline of Habakkuk

##### BC

**722:** Northern Kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) falls & is exiled to Assyria

**627:** Jeremiah begins his prophetic ministry

**621:** Rediscovery of Book of Law which had been lost in House of God! Josiah's reformation (but not lasting revival)

**612:** Fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria

**609:** Death of godly King Josiah

**607:** Habakkuk begins his prophetic ministry

**605:** Nebuchadnezzar defeats Pharaoh Necho of Egypt at Battle of Carchemish = "the turning point of world history"

**605:** First invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon; Daniel taken captive

**597:** Second invasion of Judah by Babylon; Ezekiel and 10,000 taken captive

**592:** Ezekiel begins his prophetic ministry to Babylonian exiles

**586:** Fall of Jerusalem, Destruction of Temple

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**Habakkuk 2:1 I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.:**

- **Stand:** Ps 73:16,17 Isa 21:8,11,12
- **Rampart:** 2Sa 18:24 2Ki 9:17 2Ki 17:9 Isa 21:5 62:6
- **Will keep watch:** Hab 1:12-17 Ps 85:8
- **To me:** 2Co 13:3 Gal 1:16) (Job 23:5-7 Job 31:35,37 Jer 12:1
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#)

## **QUESTIONS ON THE TABLE ANSWERS ON THE WAY!**

**Keep the context in mind** (context is always the best guide to accurate interpretation) -- Recall that Habakkuk had asked God two questions in Habakkuk 1: Why don't You do something? Why are You using the wicked against the righteous? (cp Hab 1:17) And so we see that God's prophet is perplexed. What is this but a triumph of evil? Is there a **Divine Providence**? Is there a just Ruler of the world?

**Hastings** writes that...

Habakkuk had to face the problem of the strength of the wicked and the humiliation of the just. It had been the problem with which Job had wrestled, and the Psalmist and Ecclesiastes; but now it thrust itself into notice under serious and startling aggravations... Habakkuk had spoken out his doubt and his distress, and therefore he had not to wait long for an answer. As one who stands upon a watch-tower, straining his eyes for the first gleam of the spears and helmets of a hostile or a friendly army, so he watched, as from the fenced place whence the vision of the truth was seen, to see what the Lord would say to him, what answer he should give when men mocked and taunted him. ([The great texts of the Bible](#))

**I will stand** - This reflects a conscious choice of Habakkuk's will. Habakkuk made the volitional choice to keep a lookout, to keep his eyes open and to keep his ears open so that he would not miss the answer that he was confident would come. And God did not disappoint His servant. And beloved, He never does! **May all God's children learn from this ancient prophet the timeless lesson of waiting and watching for God when the circumstances cause us to be confused (as was Habakkuk!)**

**Achtemeier** introduces **Habakkuk's** willingness to wait for God to answer...

As has been his habit (Hab 1:2, 12-13), Habakkuk now waits on God for the answer to his perplexity. There is no wisdom in the world that can find out the ways of God (cf. 1Co 1:21; Eccl 3:11; Job 11:7). If we search only nature's workings or history's lessons for proof of the Divine activity, apart from their interpretation by the Word of God, we will end up despairing of God's interest in us and in his world (cf. Isa 40:27) or we will become cynically convinced that God does nothing at all (cf. 2Pe 3:3-4; Jer 17:15; Zeph 1:12). Worse yet, we may end up worshipping the creation rather than the Creator (Ro 1:18-23). The true revealer of God is the Word of God (cf. Jn 3:13; 17:25 et passim).

As long...as we judge according to our own perceptions, we walk on the earth; and while we do so, many clouds arise, and Satan scatters ashes in our eyes, and wholly darkens our judgment, and thus it happens, that we lie down altogether confounded. It is hence wholly necessary...that we should tread our reason under foot, and come nigh to God himself ... let the word of God become our ladder...(Calvin, IV, 59). (Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching)

**John Trapp** writes that Habakkuk stands...

To see what becomes of my prayer, and what will be the issue of my doubts and temptations about God's providence, ruling the affairs of the world. See Habakkuk 1:17. There are **spaces** between **our prayers** and **God's answers**. God hear what Habakkuk speaks; and Habakkuk must hear in a while what God speaks. This he had learned from David, Ps 85:8. Prayer is a Christian's *angel, seed, dove, messenger*; and must be looked after. Who shoots an arrow, or casts a bowl, and takes not notice where it lights? They that observe not the answer of their prayers do as scoffing Pilate, who asked in scorn of Christ what is truth (Jn 18:38) but stayed not for an answer. (**Ed**: Big mistake!)

**Stand... station** - Notice two similar words emphasize the prophet's resoluteness to remain until he hears God's voice! Remember that Habakkuk is a very unusual book because it is based entirely on a dialogue between a man and God! **Beloved, may God grant that this same description would be true in our lives - that our "Book of Life" so to speak would be based entirely on an unceasing dialogue between us and our Father Who art in heaven!** (cp 1Th 5:17-note)

**Achtemeier** observes that Habakkuk's actions manifest his "firm confidence that God has yet more to speak and do, and the persistent, patient waiting and watching for that divine speech and action." (**Ed**: See passages re "**waiting on God**" = Ps 33:20; 106:13; Isa. 40:31; Zeph. 3:8; cf. Lk 11:5-12).

**Station** ([03320](#))(**yatsab**) literally means to stand, and figuratively to stand firm as in a state of inner strength, reflecting the fact that one is not moving or running away from something or someone (Ex 14:13). **Yatsab** often functions in a military context (1Sa 17:16, Jer 46:4), **Yatsab** functions also in a cultic context with the sense of presenting oneself formally before God, frequently in anticipation of something major: e.g., the commissioning of a new leader (Dt 31:14; cf. 1Sa10:19), covenant renewal (Jos 24:1), the performance of a miracle (1Sa 12:16) or as in the present passage, a revelation from God (Hab 2:1).

**On the rampart** (KJV = tower) is used figuratively, for in ancient times when one wanted to look into the distance, they would ascend to a high place. Thus Habakkuk did not mean he was going to literally ascend a tower to wait but that he is expressing "his innermost attitude by the symbol of a watchman. He remained silent and eagerly looked for the reply." (Gaebelein). In a sense, the waiting, expectantly looking prophet in these opening verses of Chapter 2 is a wonderful illustration of Jesus' instruction to "seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." (Lk 11:9) Indeed, in Hab 2:2ff God begins to speak to Habakkuk's *seeking* heart.

**J Vernon McGee** quips that "Habakkuk says that he is going to the watchtower to wait. (When he says, "watchtower," he doesn't mean that he is going to read a magazine!)"

**John Trapp** - Set me firm and fast (as a champion that will keep his ground) upon the tower or fortress of Divine meditation, upon God's Word, which alone has a settling property to compose the soul when distempered (unsettled), and to lodge a blessed calm, a Sabbath of rest in it, far above all philosophical consolations.

(I will) **keep watch to see what He will speak to me**- OT prophets are repeatedly referred to as **watchmen** for God (Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; Ezek 33:7; Hos. 9:8), watching His people and watching to receive communication from Him to speak to the people they were watching over. Their messages as watchman often had the sense of giving a warning to the people...

Ezek 3:17-note "Son of man, I have appointed you a **watchman** to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, **warn** them from Me.

Ezek 33:7 "Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you **awatchman** for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them **warning** from Me.

**Keep watch** ([06822](#))(**tsaphah-word study**) conveys idea of being fully aware of a situation in order to gain some advantage or keep from being surprised by an enemy. It speaks literally of keeping watch for some event (a Watchman).

**McGee** - In a walled city the watchman was the one who watched for enemies during the night; if he was faithful, the city was safe. But if he should betray the city or fail to sound the alarm when an enemy approached, the city was in deep trouble. So Habakkuk, God's prophet, says that he is going to the watchtower to wait for a message from God.

## **STANDING, STATIONED, WATCHING IMPLIES WAITING ON JEHOVAH**

The implication of Habakkuk taking his **stand** and **stationing** himself is that he is **waiting** (directly stated in Hab 2:3) on the Lord. This is never a futile or vain endeavor beloved, as Isaiah records...

Yet those who **wait** (this implies trust - I wait because I believe He is true to His promise) for the LORD will

gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:31-note)

**What He will speak to me** - The point is that Habakkuk expected God to speak and help clear up his dilemma. This brings up the important point that it is only by Divine revelation (more properly Divine illumination in our day when the canon of Scripture is closed to new Divine revelation) that "the genuine perplexities of God's dealings with human beings be comprehended." (Robertson)

This declaration also reflects the prophet's willingness to submit to God's Word. He said he wanted to hear from God and know how to reply when he was reproved. Dear Christian reader, is this how you respond when God gives you an answer that is not "easy to swallow," (cp Hab 1:17) so to speak?

**Trapp** applies Habakkuk's attitude and action to God's modern day prophets (in the sense of those who speak forth the Word - preachers of the Word)

Preachers must still hearken to what the Lord God says **to** them and **in** them (**Ed**: Spirit "speaking" through urges, burdens, etc - see example below); speaking as the oracles (utterances) of God (1Pe 4:11-note) and able to say with Paul, "I have received of the Lord that which also I deliver unto you" (1Cor 11:23).

**Pastor Chuck Swindoll** discusses several examples of God speaking **to** and **in** him during his 50 years in ministry writing:

I can think of several surprising moments when I have been the recipient of the Spirit's disclosures.

- Biblical insights I would otherwise have missed.
- A sudden awareness of God's will or the presence of danger or a sense of peace in the midst of chaos.
- A surge of bold confidence in a setting where there would otherwise have been fear and hesitation.
- A quiet, calm awareness that I was not alone, even though no other person was actually with me.
- The undeniable, surrounding awareness of evil ... including the dark sinister presence of demonic forces.

In each case I was made aware of the truth, which the Spirit disclosed to me. (I highly **recommend Embraced by the Spirit: the Untold Blessings of Intimacy with God**)

**Watch** ([06822](#)) (**tsaphah**) means to keep an eye on something or someone and so to guard or watch over. God watches over men (Ge 31:49) and nations (Ps 66:7). **Click here** for more discussion on **watchman**.

Would it be that all God's people had a "Habakkuk Habit" of keeping our eyes open and on guard for the approaching messenger (as well as approaching danger), especially the one bringing a message from God!

## **ARE YOU LIVING LIFE AS A "GOSPEL WATCHMAN"?**

**Wiersbe** - The image of the **watchman** carries a spiritual lesson for us today. As God's people, we know that danger is approaching, and it's our responsibility to warn people to "flee from the wrath to come" (Mt. 3:7, cp 1Th 1:10). If we don't share the **Gospel** with lost sinners, then their blood may be on our hands (**Ed**: See Ezek 3:17,18-note). We want to be able to say with Paul, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26NKJV-commentary). (**Be Amazed**) ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament, Victor](#))

**Habakkuk's** contemporary prophet Jeremiah was also a "**watchman**" on the wall speaking to Judah before (during and after) the Babylonian invasion. Listen to what he recorded and the response of most of those in Judah...

And I (Jehovah speaking) set **watchmen** (tsaphah - same word used in Hab 2:1) over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' (this should have produced alarm and preparation!) But they said, 'We will not listen.' (Jer 6:16, see Judah's sad response in Jer 6:16!)

**Spurgeon comments**: "one of the devices of Satan" is that "he seeks to lull God's prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The **wakeful watchman** he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise; but if he can cast **God's watchman into slumber**, then he is well content, and thinks it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead: he would certainly sooner see him in hell, but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep." (**Ed**: Are you a slumbering sentinel at your Gospel guard post?)

**How I may reply when I am reproved** - Most of the other versions translate **reproved** as "**complaint**" and so were read -- "what

answer I will get to my complaint." (HCSB); "What I will answer concerning my complaint" (ESV) The NET Bible has "how I should answer when he counters my argument" (NET). Habakkuk's "complaints" were in the form of questions (Hab 1:13, 17) as to why God would choose to use the excessively evil Babylonians to defeat evil Judah.

Notice Habakkuk's assurance that God will answer him - He does not say **if** I am reproved, but **when** - He expected God to speak to him."

**McGee** - The word **reprove** here is not the best translation of the original word: Habakkuk did not expect God to rebuke him or, to use the common colloquialism, "*bawl him out*" because he was questioning God's ways. Habakkuk felt that God would give him the right answer so he would understand God's ways. And he was willing to wait for it. (Listen to [Habakkuk 2:1 Commentary](#))

**Reproved** ([08433](#)) (**tokeha** from **yakah** = to argue, convince, convict, judge, reprove) is a noun which describes a rebuke, a correction, a chastening (Ps 73:14) a reproof (Ps 39:11) or an argument (Job 13:6, 23:4). The main idea of tokeha is correcting a wrong.

The **Lxx** translates **tokeha** in most of the OT passages with **elegchos** (**word study**) which strictly speaking refers to trying or testing for the purpose of proving. In the negative sense it is an expression of strong disapproval (reproof, censure) as in 2Ti 3:16.

**Webster's definition of reproof** = criticism for a fault; Blame expressed to the face; censure for a fault; reprehension.

**NAS Usage:** argument(1), arguments(2), chastened(1), rebuke(1), rebukes(2), **reproof**(14), reproofs(2), reproved(1).

**Tokeha** - 24v in NAS - Job 13:6 ("argument" - Lxx = elegchos); Job 23:4 ("arguments" - Lxx = elegchos); Ps 38:14; 39:11; Ps 73:14; Pr 1:23, 25, 30; 3:11; 5:12; Pr 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; Pr 13:18; 15:5, 10, 31-32; 27:5; 29:1, 15; Ezek 5:15; 25:17; Hab 2:1. - **There are 4 more verses in the KJV** - 2Kgs 19:3 = rebuke Ps 149:7 = punishments Isa 37:3 = rebuke Hos 5:9 = judgment;

Take a moment to study the uses of **tokeha** to get a sense of the value of **reproof**.

Proverbs 1:23 "Turn to my **reproof**, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

Proverbs 1:25 And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my **reproof**;

Proverbs 1:30 "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my **reproof**.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His **reproof**,

Proverbs 5:12 And you say, "How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And **reproofs** for discipline are the way of life

Proverbs 10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who ignores **reproof** goes astray.

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

Proverbs 13:18 Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, But he who regards **reproof** will be honored.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards **reproof** is sensible.

Proverbs 15:10 Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates **reproof** will die.

Proverbs 15:31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving **reproof** Will dwell among the wise.

Proverbs 15:32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to **reproof** acquires understanding.

Proverbs 27:5 Better is open **rebuke** Than love that is concealed.

Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much **reproof** Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and **reproof** give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

**Warren Wiersbe** sums up Habakkuk 2 noting that...

Habakkuk needed a right perspective on what God was doing in His world. Although it is good to pray about these things, it is also good to "be still and know that [He is] God" (Ps. 46:10). The Lord emphasized two truths about Himself.

**God is just.** The five “woes” made it clear that God knew the sins of His people and would deal with them in due time. He hates pride, greed, selfishness, murder, drunkenness, lust, and idolatry.

**God is faithful.** Three key verses (Hab 2:4, 14, 20) reveal this trait. You can trust Him because His character never changes and His Word never fails (Hab 2:4). It may not seem that way now, but one day His glory will be revealed in all the earth (Hab 2:14). Meanwhile, God is on His throne and has everything under control (Hab 2:20). **So, instead of looking around and asking God a lot of questions, LOOK UP and LAY HOLD of His assurances.** [Wiersbe, W: With the Word: Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook. Nelson](#) (Bolding and color added for emphasis)

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**F B Meyer applies Habakkuk's actions to our life** - The prophet had made his complaint in the preceding chapter; and now he climbs the watch-tower, much as the watchman did who waited for tidings of the battle between Joab and Absalom. He looks forth for God's answer. This, to say the least, is respectful in our dealings with the Almighty.

**Too often we ask questions, and do not wait for replies; shoot prayer-arrows into the air, without stopping to see where they alight, or what quarry they strike. We are in too great a hurry, to take time and trouble for climbing the watch-tower, and awaiting the Divine reply.**

God still speaks to the waiting soul. Sometimes, there is a direct answer to its perplexity; at others, there is the assurance that the **vision is yet for the appointed time, but that it is hastening towards the end** O long-waiting soul, dost thou hear those words? Thou hast been standing long upon the watch-tower. Hope has almost died; but the vision is panting in its haste to be fulfilled. If it tarry, wait for it; because it is already on the way. Every throb of the pendulum brings it nearer. The express train is hurrying towards thee, with its precious freight.

How often God's answers come, and find us gone! (Ed: **Interesting thought. Cannot think of a specific Scriptural example however. I suggest that we need to Be a Berean when reading Meyer's comments in this last paragraph of the homily** - Acts 17:11) We have waited for awhile, and, thinking there was no answer, we have gone our way; but as we have turned the first corner the post has come in. God's ships touch at our wharves; but there is no one to unload them. His letters lie at the office; but no one calls for them. It is not enough to direct your prayer unto God; look up, and look out, until the blessing alights on your head. When we ask what is according to his will, we receive while we pray. (**Our Daily Homily**)

In his introduction to Habakkuk 2 **Richard Patterson** has an interesting list of literary techniques utilized in this chapter...

Other literary features command the reader's attention: taunt songs/woe oracles (Hab 2:6–8, 9–11, 12–14, 15–17, 18–20), proverb (Hab 2:6), simile and metaphor (Hab 2:5, 7, 8, 15, 16), allegory (Hab 2:15–16), hendiadys (Hab 2:2, 3[?], 6[?]), metonymy and merismus (Hab 2:5), personification (Hab 2:5, 11), rhetorical question (Hab 2:13, 18), alliteration (Hab 2:15, 18), assonance (Hab 2:2, 6, 7), paronomasia (Hab 2:19), enjambment (Hab 2:8), gender-matched parallelism (Hab 2:5), and chiasmus (Hab 2:3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 16). Despite its difficulty of interpretation at places (e.g., Hab 2:4; see Excursus on Habakkuk 2:4), it is a masterpiece of prophetic literature. ([Habakkuk: Verse by Verse Commentary](#))

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## God's Delays

Read: Habakkuk 1:12–2:3

I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me. —Habakkuk 2:1

Waiting is hard for me. I want answers now. Postponements perplex me; deferrals daunt me. I'm baffled by God's delays, wondering why and when. “How long, O Lord?”

The prophet Habakkuk wanted answers as well, but God chose to take His time. “I will stand my watch . . . to see what [God] will say to me,” Habakkuk wrote (Hab 2:1). “The vision is yet for an appointed time,” God replied. “Wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab 2:3).

Faith never gives up. It knows that despite appearances, all is well. It can wait without signs or significant indications that God is at work, because it is sure of Him. “Each delay is perfectly fine, for we are within the safe hands of God,” said Madame Guyon (1648–1717).

We too must learn to view each delay as if it were “perfectly fine.” Postponements are reasons to pray rather than grow anxious, impatient, and annoyed. They're opportunities for God to build those imperishable but hard-to-acquire qualities of humility, patience, serenity, and strength. God never says, “Wait awhile,” unless He is planning to do something in our situation—or in us. He waits to

be gracious.

So take heart! If God's answer tarries, "Wait for it; because it will surely come."

Soon shall the morning gild  
The dark horizon rim,  
Thy heart's desire shall be fulfilled—  
"Wait patiently for Him."  
—Havergal

God stretches our patience to enlarge our soul.

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**Spurgeon** - first, dear friends, we shall notice, in our text, THE ATTITUDE OR THE LORD'S SERVANT.

That is expressed in the one word, "**watch.**" When you are puzzled,—when you are troubled,—when you do not know what to do, then may God help you to say, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Before we can do any real service for God, we must first of all receive our commission from him. We cannot teach others aright unless we are ourselves taught of God, and his truest servants are those who continue waiting upon him that they may receive from him the words which afterwards they are to speak in his name to the people. Habakkuk is a model to us in this respect. Troubled in heart, he resolves to set himself to watch his God, and to listen for the message he is afterwards to deliver.

We learn from him that the attitude of the Lord's servant towards God is, **first, an attentive attitude:** "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me." If we have a deaf ear towards our Lord, we must not marvel if he gives us also a dumb tongue. If we will not hear what God speaks, we may not expect to be able ourselves to speak in his name; or, if we do pour forth a flood of words, yet we may not expect that they will be such as he will approve and bless. O dear friends, if we would work for God in the right spirit, we must begin as Jesus did, of whom it was written in prophecy, long before he came to the earth, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." In the fulness of time, Jesus came forth, and taught to others what he had thus learned in secret; and, if we would teach others, we must first be ourselves taught by the Spirit of God. How much more we might know if we were only willing to listen to the Lord's messages! There is, in the Word of God, a voice which is often inaudible because we are so engrossed with other things. There is, also, the voice of the Christian ministry which oftentimes speaks to us, but it is like the cry of one in a wilderness, and it is not heard by us. There is, too, a voice in God's providence. How much the Lord says to his flock by every stroke of his rod, and by every blessing of his daily providence! There is a voice from every grave,—a message in every bereavement when friends are taken away. There are voices everywhere speaking to those whose ears are open. Above all, there is the blessed Spirit ever waiting to communicate to us the things of God by that soft mysterious whisper which none know but those who are themselves spiritual, but which they know at once to be the very voice of God within their spirits. Brethren, we must be attentive; we must not allow a single sound from the Lord to escape us. Some men seem as if God must speak thunder and lightning before they will ever hear him; but his true children sit at his feet, that they may catch the slightest movement of his lips, and not let a single syllable from the Lord fall to the ground. The attitude of the Christian worker must be one of attention.

But, next, it must be a **patient attitude.** Observe what Habakkuk says, "I will stand upon my watch;" not merely, "I will be upon my watch for a moment;" but, "I will take my place like a sentinel who remains on guard until his time of watching is over." Then the prophet puts it again, "I will set me upon the tower,"—as if he took his position firmly and resolutely upon the tower, there to stand, and not to stir till he had seen and heard what God the Lord would have him see and hear. Do you think, dear friends, that we are sufficiently resolved to know our Master's will? Do we frequently enough get upstairs alone, and with our open Bibles search out what God would have us learn? And do we pray over the Word till we have wormed ourselves into the very heart of the truth,—till we have eaten our way into it, as the weevil eats its way through the nutshell, and then lives upon and in the kernel? Do we do this? Do we set ourselves upon the tower, determined that we will not go forth to speak for the Lord till the Lord has spoken to us, lest we go upon a fool's errand, to deliver our own inventions, instead of proclaiming the message that comes from God himself?

Your attitude, my brother or my sister, if you are a servant of the Lord, is that of **attention and patience.**

To which I may add that it is often a **solitary attitude:** "I will stand upon my watch." The church has gone to sleep, but "I will stand upon my watch." Like flocks of sheep they lie all around us, the multitudes of souls for whom we have to care; but there are still shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, to whom the glory of the Lord is often revealed when the sheep perceive it not. The city lies wrapped in slumber, and no sound is heard among her ten thousand sleepers; but there is one who knows no sleep, nor gives slumber to his eyelids, for he is the appointed watchman of the night; and he keeps to his tower, and sets himself in his



place, firmly resolved that, till the morning breaks, there shall be somebody to keep guard over the city. Well, sometimes, I say, that watchman has to be quite solitary. O brothers and sisters, it would be better for us if we had more solitude! It often becomes needful to us because we cannot find kindred spirits that can watch with us a single hour. The higher you get up in the Church of God, the more solitary you will be. For the sheep, there are many companions; but even for an under-shepherd, there are but few. As for that Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, the Good Shepherd, you know that his most favoured apostles could not watch with him even one hour, but he had to endure his terrible agony in Gethsemane alone; and such of his servants as he honours most will know best what is the meaning of Gethsemane, the olive-press, and the solitude which often accompanies the stern watch that the faithful servant of God must keep. Never mind if all others around you say that you are hot-headed, and zealous, and enthusiastic, and foolish, and I know not what; say to yourself, "I will stand upon my watch." What if they should think that you carry things much too far, and have too much religion, or are too consecrated? Reply, "I will set me upon the tower, and will still watch, for that is my business even if I must attend to it all alone." The man who has God for his Companion has the best of company; and he that is a solitary watcher for the Most High God shall one day stand amidst yon shining legions of angels, and himself shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of his Father. Expect, therefore, if you are a servant of the Lord, sometimes to have to watch alone, and be thankful for that position if God honours you by calling you to occupy it.

**Observe, further, that the attitude of the child of God who is called to be a prophet to his people—as I know that many of you are,—is one in which the mind must be entirely engrossed.** The true servant of the Lord thinks of nothing else than this,—“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me.” He is wholly taken up with that one matter. Many of you have your secular callings to follow; but, without neglecting them, you can still, in spirit, be watching and waiting to hear the voice of God; for God speaks to us not only when we are in the study, or kneeling in prayer by our bedside, but he has ways of talking with us while we are going along the road, and so he makes our hearts to burn within us. He can speak with us in the thick of the greatest throng; and, perhaps, some of us were never more conscious of the voice of God than amid the rushing of ten thousand spindles, or in the midst of the crowded street. At such times, the noise and turmoil of this busy world have not been able to drown the gentle voice of God within our spirit. May you, beloved, be thus engrossed! If you intend to serve the Lord, give your whole soul to the learning of his truth and the hearing of what he has to say to you, that you may afterwards be able to tell out to others what you have yourselves been taught of God.

**Observe, also, that the prophet was entirely submissive to the will of God. He put himself into this attitude, that he might hear whatever God should say to him, and that his only thought, all the while, should be, “What shall I answer when I am reproved?”** We need to be as much as possible like clean white paper for God to write upon. Our mind is often far too much occupied, and too prejudiced, to receive a clear impression of the will of the Lord. How many make up their mind as to what they will see in a text, and so they never learn what the passage would teach them if it were allowed to speak freely to them. If thou wouldst serve God, say unto thy soul, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and I will give both my ears and all my heart to understand what God would have me know, and to learn what he would teach me.” May this be the happy privilege of us all!

**The last remark I will make upon this first head is, that the attitude of the Lord’s servant was eminently practical.** The prophet did not watch and wait merely that he might know the secrets of the future, or be able to prophesy, or show his wonderful knowledge. No; but he wanted to know what he should answer when he was reproved. He knew that, when he went out into the world, men would begin to reprove him for being a prophet at all; they would rebuke him for his zeal and his earnestness, and he waited that he might have the right answer to give, with meekness and fear, to all who opposed themselves. That should be your wish and mine, beloved; for, if we serve God faithfully, we are sure to meet with objectors. Well, if this opposition is only against us, it does not matter much; but, alas! sometimes their critical and cruel remarks are against the truth itself; and, worst of all, against our blessed Lord. In such a case, it is well to have something with which we can stop the mouths of the snarling dogs. It is a blessing to have heard God’s voice, for, if you repeat the message he speaks to you, even the echo of God’s voice will break the rocks in pieces, and cause the cedars of Lebanon to split in twain. There is nothing that can stand against the Word of the Lord. In the twenty-ninth Psalm, David says, “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty;” and, if we have heard that voice, and know how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to echo its mighty tones, they will strike the objector dumb; and even when he hates the truth, he will still be compelled to feel what force there is in it. So the servant of the Lord says, “I will watch and wait to hear what God will say unto me, for then I shall know what to answer when I am rebuked and reproached for the truth’s sake.”

This, then, is to be the attitude of the children of God. Get away to your watch-towers, brethren; get away to your tower by the brook Jabbok, and wrestle with the angel there; get away to the top of Carmel, and put your head between your knees, and cry unto the Lord until the heavens are covered with clouds, and the thirsty earth is refreshed with rain. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;” but they who do not hear God’s voice cannot effectually pray, for God will not hear their voice if they will not hear his. If we have been deaf to him, he will be deaf to us. The intercourse and communion necessary to prevailing prayer render it absolutely essential that we should first set ourselves to hear the voice of God, and then again it shall be said that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man, for the man first hearkened to the voice of the Lord.

**Habakkuk 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run.:"**

- **Write:** Dt 27:8 Dt 31:19,22 Isa 8:1 Isa 30:8 Jer 36:2-4,27-32 Da 12:4 Rev 1:18,19 Rev 14:13 Rev 19:9 Rev 21:5-8
- **Make plain (KJV):** Jn 11:28,29 1Co 14:19 2Co 3:12
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#)

**NLT** = Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others.

**Then** - This **time sensitive** word should always prompt us to **pause** and **ponder** the **passage**, asking **the 5W/H questions** such as what is happening now?, why?, what has just happened?, etc. Habakkuk does not say how long he had to wait for the Lord's answer, but from verse 1 his attitude and action clearly reflect the fact that he **trusted (believed, had faith)** in the LORD that He would answer!

**The LORD answered me and said** -

**Record** (command) **the vision** - "Write down this message" (NET)

**Inscribe** (command) **it on tablets** - "Record it legibly on tablets" (NET)

**MacArthur** - Habakkuk was to record the vision to preserve it for posterity, so that all who read it would know of the certainty of its fulfillment (cf. similar language in Da 12:4, 9). The prophecy had lasting relevance and thus had to be preserved. Although a period of time would occur before its fulfillment, all were to know that it would occur at God's "appointed time" (cf. Is 13; Jer 50, 51). Babylon would fall to the Medo- Persian kingdom of Cyrus ca. 539 B.C. (cf Da 5).

**That the one who reads it may run** - "So that the one who announces it may read it easily." (NET), "So he may run who reads it" (ESV); "So that a herald may run with it" (NIV).

Note that this phrase "**reads it may run**" is translated in some versions with the idea of whoever reads it may run to proclaim what he has read. However as rendered in the **NET** version, the idea could be that "may run" means "*run through it quickly with one's eyes.*" In other words, read the message easily. Irregardless, the idea of **run with the vision recorded on tablets** suggests that the message is important and urgent.

However it is not clear whether the **one who reads it** is a *herald* as in the NIV rendering. The *herald's* task would be to run from location to location reading the proclamation aloud. Alternatively, **the one who reads it** could refer to anyone who reads the recorded **vision**. In summary, in the NIV rendering, the inscribed **tablets** would be entrusted to a formal herald whereas in the latter, the **tablets** would be set up for example in a public place. Then as individuals read the record of the vision, they would in run (**one who reads it may run**) to disseminate the message of the vision to others.

**The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament** favors the idea of a herald reading the message explaining that...

Preference lies with the former, since the text here speaks of tablets. Publicly posted inscriptions would usually be on stelae. Professional messengers were a common fixture in royal courts such as those at ancient Mari and Babylon. They were needed as "runners" to carry their lord's commands (see also Jer 36:4 and Baruch's mission as Jeremiah's scribe and messenger).

**Henry Morris** - This common saying carried two implications. First, it was to be written so large and clear that even a person hurrying by could not fail to understand. Second, it was so urgent that the reader would hasten to spread the word to others. Both should, of course, characterize our witness for God.

**Ronald Blue** - This phrase has been mistaken by some to signify that the messenger should be able to read the tablet on the run. On the contrary, the point is that the messenger would read it and then run to spread the news to others. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Habakkuk 2:3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it carries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.:**

- **vision:** Jer 27:7 Da 8:19 Da 9:24-27 Da 10:1,14 Da 11:27,35 Ac 1:7 17:26 Gal 4:2 2Th 2:6-8
- **but** (KJV): Ex 12:41 Ps 102:13 Jer 25:12-14 Heb 10:36
- **Though it tarries, wait for it:** 2Ki 6:33 Ps 27:14 Ps 130:5,6 Isa 30:18 La 3:25,26 Mic 7:7 Lk 2:25 Jas 5:7,8
- **it will certainly:** Lk 18:7,8 2Pe 2:3
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** For the message is a witness to what is decreed; it gives reliable testimony about how matters will turn out. Even if the message is not fulfilled right away, wait patiently; for it will certainly come to pass— it will not arrive late.

**ESV** 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.

**NIV** For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

**NKJ** 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.

**LXE** (English of Septuagint) For the vision is yet for a time, and it shall shoot forth at the end, and not in vain (kenos - empty, without content): though **He** should tarry, wait for **Him**; for **He** will surely come, and will not tarry.

**Comment:** Note how the Jewish translators of the **Septuagint (Lxx)** rendered this verse! They changed the impersonal pronoun **IT** to the personal pronoun **HE**. The significance of this change is discussed in more detail below.

The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage and converts the "it" of Habakkuk into the "**He**" Who is the King of kings, Christ Jesus, Who is coming quickly (Rev 22:12)

**For** - When you encounter this **term of explanation**, it is always an opportunity to pause and ponder ask **5W/H questions** and one you can always ask is what is being explained. In this case **for** assigning the cause why the vision should be committed to writing. The answer is because its fulfillment belongs to the future. Though the time appointed by God for the fulfillment be yet future, it should be enough for your faith that God has spoken it (cp La 3:26).

**The vision is yet for the appointed time - When is the "appointed time?"** The **NET note** feels that the **appointed time** "refers to the time when the divine judgment anticipated in Hab 2:6-20 will be realized." That is certainly a reasonable conclusion, but see the following discussion.

Note that God knows when the **appointed time** will come to fruition. That truth should comfort us. The One Who is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev 21:6) sets the "appointment" schedule of world history (Gal 4:4, cp Mk 1:15, Eph 1:10 = Messiah's First Coming) and only He knows when the final act will be played out (Mt 24:36, 37, Mk 13:32 = Messiah's Second Coming).

There is a similar phrase in the prophecy in **Daniel 8:19** (note)

And he said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at **the final period of the indignation** (See note on "The Final Period of Indignation"), for it pertains to **the appointed time** (See note on "The Appointed Time") of the end.

**Comment:** While there is not a clear consensus on this passage in Daniel, the historical subject is clearly Antiochus Epiphanes. I interpret this evil dictator as an anti-Semitic ruler who foreshadows an even more horrible anti-Semitic ruler, the Antichrist, who will arise at the **appointed time of the end**. For more detail see discussion on **the "time phrases" in Daniel 8**. It is not unreasonable to see **the appointed time** in Habakkuk as referring not only to the historical defeat of Babylon (past tense), but also foreshadowing an final and complete destruction of Babylon at the end of the age (future tense). ([See more discussion of this topic below](#))

**It hastens toward the goal** - The word **hastens** (puwach/puah - 06315) is literally "puffs" or "pants" which draws a great word picture, personifying God's fulfillment as a runner racing to the finish line, the final goal! The **NIV** says "it speaks of the end and will not prove false." For those in Judah about to experience the terrifying Babylonian invasion and Seventy Years of Captivity, this assurance of fulfillment should have been a great comfort (which is why is recorded for all to read - Hab 2:2). Their barbaric captors

would themselves in God's **appointed time** suffer divine judgment!

**A C Gaebelein** writes...

we hear of the certainty of the vision. It is for **the appointed time**. It **hastens** toward the end, and "**shall not lie** (fail)". The prophet is commanded to wait for it, though it tarry, and then receives the assurance that it will surely come and not tarry. These are important instructions by which many a believer might profit. God has an appointed time for all His purposes and their fulfillment. He cannot be hastened, for His schedule was made before the foundation of the world. When the appointed time comes all visions will be accomplished. It hastens toward the end. That end is the end of the times of the Gentiles, which began with the rising of the Babylonians, and the first great king, Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head in the prophetic image of Daniel 2. When the end of the times of the Gentiles comes, the world-power then, final Babylon as revealed in the last Book of the Bible, will be judged and the Lord will be manifested in all His glory. The prophet's business is, as well as that of every believer, to wait for it and not to be disturbed if there is delay, for the assurance is given that it will surely come and not tarry. And here faith can rest.

**It will not fail** - "Fail" is Hebrew *kazab* which means to speak what is untrue, false and so more literally (as in the KJV) it reads "It will not lie!" Why not? Because the source of the message is the "**non-lying God**" (Nu 23:19a, Titus 1:2). Beloved, let us not miss the broader personal application of this statement that every single word of God's Book, the Bible, will come to pass exactly as He has declared and decreed! So wait patiently for His fulfillment. His perfect plan will happen in His perfect time. You may be suffering for Him now, but one day, He will right all wrongs. This prophecy in Habakkuk is absolute proof of that declaration. You can stake your life on it! This reminds me of the parting words of Joshua to the Israel...

Now **behold** ("Listen Up", "Pay attention!" is the idea), today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one word** of **all the good words** which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has **failed; all have been fulfilled** for you, **not one of them has failed**. (Joshua 23:14)

**Comment:** Notice that three times Joshua underscores the truth that **every single word** spoken by God is absolutely trustworthy! Dear follower of Christ, if you are wrestling with God like Habakkuk was in chapter 1, **May the Holy Spirit take the truths of Habakkuk 2 (and the affirmation by Joshua) and literally renew your mind and transform your thinking from doubting into trusting, for the sake of the Name of Jesus. Amen.**

**Though it tarries, wait** (command in Hebrew) **for it** - Patience is a virtue that carries a lot of wait! Isaiah 64:4 reminds of why it is always worthwhile to **wait** on the Lord and His promises...

For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear,  
Neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee,  
**Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.**

**Spurgeon** has an interesting thought on the **vision tarrying** writing that...

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk's day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away, and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot, and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast, in order that the gold may be divided from the dross...

Those who looked like true believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the saints; but, alas! this is often the impatience of mere professors, and God thus makes men see what they really are. They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked, - that men's true character may be discovered, and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierceness of the furnace-heat of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." Then there is another class, namely, the just; and of these the text says, "The just shall live by his faith." My dear friends, when trial comes on us, — as it surely will, — may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men who can endure it; and if it be so, we shall live by faith; that will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud, and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do

wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts." ([Habakkuk 2:4](#)  
[Pride the Destroyer](#))

**Robert Spendera** - The tension between God's timing and human time is evident from the list of temporally related words found in verse three (**yet for the appointed time... hastens... will not fail... tarries, wait... will certainly come... will not delay**). Waiting becomes a matter of faith, as the Lord informs Habakkuk that he must wait (Hab 2:3). This was the task of a watchman. And it is the task of those who are faithful.

In the NT **James** issues a similar exhortation...

**Be patient (aorist imperative** - Do this now! See makrothumeo), therefore (See context = James 5:1-6 = Rich persecuted the righteous, etc), brethren, **until (time phrase** - What's the point? IT WILL END! Sufferings, persecutions, trials, adversities, afflictions WILL END! When? Read on... at... ) the **Coming of the Lord**. Behold (James now paints a picture with which all readers should be familiar - he is using the picture of a farmer waiting for his crops as a term of comparison), the farmer waits (ekdechomai = eager anticipation, as his lifestyle) for the precious produce of the soil, being patient (present tense = as his habitual practice; makrothumeo) about it, **until (time phrase)** it gets the early and late rains. You too **be patient (aorist imperative** - Do this now! See makrothumeo); **strengthen (aorist imperative** - Do this now! See **sterizo**) your hearts, **for** (term of explanation - Always pause and ponder to question the **for** - you will be amazed at how the Spirit will use this simple discipline to "unlock" a passage! And so, what is James explaining? What has he just commanded them to do? How is that going to be possible?) the **Coming of the Lord** is at hand. (James 5:7, 8)

**Comment:** Habakkuk was standing as a **watchman waiting** and in Hab 2:3ff God gives him the sure promise that the evil Babylonians would be defeated. But as discussed more below, this prophecy has a "**double fulfillment**." In other words, ancient Babylon would be defeated, but future revived Babylon (Rev 17-18-[note](#)) would also be destroyed at the **Second Coming of the Messiah**. Whether Habakkuk fully understood this latter aspect of the fulfillment is uncertain. What is not uncertain is that this truth from God had a radical impact on his thinking and helps us understand how he could be transformed (by the Holy Spirit) from **Worry** in chapter 1 to **Worship** in chapter 3!

And so in the NT passage, James is saying that persecution will end, and (in essence) all wrongs will be made right at the **Coming of the Lord**. He adds that the Lord's return is "**at hand**", the idea being that it could occur at any time (it was always "at hand" - it was **imminent** [note] [see another note on imminency] then [in the first century] and is still imminent in our day!). What was the effect of this truth? It was to be the foundation for them to "be patient, strengthen" their hearts! Truth about the future is not ethereal but practical, for ultimately it should impact our present tense salvation. Since we have been given such a sure word of prophecy, such an absolutely certain hope (cp "Blessed Hope" Titus 2:13), we can "stand on our guard posts" like Habakkuk. As we by faith (cp Hab 2:4b) receive this truth, the Holy Spirit will take this sure word of prophecy and renew our minds, strengthen our inner man and transform us from glory to glory (2Cor 3:18). Such is the incalculable value of the truth that Jesus is Returning and His Return is always imminent. It is little surprise that one in twenty verses in the NT refers either directly or indirectly to the Second Coming! Beloved, you can **mark it down**...

**WHO YOU ARE LOOKING FOR  
WILL IMPACT WHO YOU ARE LIVING FOR!**

**Simeon** was living proof of the dictum that who you are looking for will impact who you are living for, for he was a believing Jew, part of the **remnant**. Luke describes him as follows...

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout (eulabes = cautious, reverencing God, God-fearing, discreet, undertaking prudently), **looking for the consolation of Israel**; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2:25)

**Comment:** Does this not sound somewhat like Hab 2:1? Habakkuk was in a sense looking for the consolation of Judah in light of the fact that God was sending the dread Babylonians!

**"IT" IN HABAKKUK  
BECOMES "HE" IN HEBREWS!**

**For it will certainly come, it will not delay** - "because it will surely come; it will not be behindhand on its appointed day." (Amplified)

Remember Jehovah is speaking and here He gives His sure word (His guarantee) that what is written on the tablets will come to pass. Dt 18:21-22 says that the test of a true prophet is whether his prophecy comes to pass, which in this case it would because God said so (through His prophet Habakkuk).

This Hebrew idiom is translated by the Greek

*auton* (masculine singular pronoun = "he") *hoti* (because) *erchomenos* (coming - present middle participle) *hexei* (future tense - will come, will be present, will happen - used to express the certainty of a future event happening - eg, 2Pe 3:10, Lk 13:35 "until *the time* comes") *kai ou me* (double negative signifying absolute negation - i.e., it absolutely will not "tarry" is the idea!) *chronise*" (to tarry - aorist tense).

Translated into English the Greek phrase would read "**He who is coming will come and absolutely (will) not tarry.**" The writer of Hebrews under the inspiration of the Spirit quotes this same Greek phrase to describe the **Second Coming of Messiah** writing...

**"He who is coming will come and will not delay."** (Hebrews 10:37b+)

**Comment:** Remember that the Jewish believers were being persecuted and the writer refers to the sure word of prophecy in Hab 2:3b to encourage them. He makes one addition to the Greek text from Hab 2:3 by placing a definite article (ho) before the verb for coming, which would serve to define this "coming" as a very specific one, in fact the Second Coming of Christ.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, you can mark it down that **one of the great values of prophecy** is not to appeal to our curiosity but to stabilize our faith in difficult times. We can know that even though the times may be difficult, the trials will eventually give way to the eternal truth. In this case the truth is that Jesus is coming again and temporal trials will end forever. How can we be so sure? Because Babylon was defeated just as prophesied in Hab 2:6-20. In the same way, the future literal city of Babylon (See [The Destruction of Babylon-Revelation 17-18](#)) will finally be totally destroyed once and for all time. Related Resource: The Identity of Babylon in Rev 17-18. YOU CAN STAKE YOUR (ETERNAL) LIFE ON IT!

**Gaebelein:** From this quotation (Heb 10:37) we learn that **the vision which will surely come** is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ (**Ed:** In other words Habakkuk's vision described a past historical event and a future historical event). He is the center of every vision and without Him there is no vision.

**Strauss:** "This secret which God made known to the prophet Habakkuk had its primary application to Israel in those dark days following the cutting-off of King Josiah. Israel's hope was in the coming of Messiah, and it is to His coming that the **five 'its'** of verse three refer. They were to wait for **HIM**. But the Hope of Israel is also the Hope of all nations in all ages, for the **five 'its'** in the prophecy of Habakkuk become '**He**' in Hebrews 10:37+, where we read: 'For yet a little while, and **He** that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' If all seemed hopeless to Israel, God would assure His people that there was still hope if they would but believe in Him who was to come. But faith must be exercised. In this vision given to Habakkuk Israel would find food for her faith. Though circumstances all around them seemed to contradict their hopes, they would live in the present through faith in Messiah's coming." ([Galatians and Ephesians](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that "The revelation God gave was for a future time and about a future time. While the immediate application was to the end of the Babylonian Captivity, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews interpreted it to refer also to the return of Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, he changed "**it**" to "**He**" and applied it to our Lord. **'For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry'**" (Heb. 10:37). Along with the scoffers Peter wrote about, some readers might ask, "Where is the promise of His coming? (2Peter 3:3ff) and God's reply is, "**Wait for it! It will surely come!**" A discouraged Jew in Babylonian exile might ask, "Will the Lord come and deliver us?" and the answer is, "Yes! Wait for him!" (Be amazed)

**KJV Commentary** - The writer of Hebrews quotes the last part of this verse (cf. Heb10:37) to apply to the coming of our Lord. We, like Habakkuk, wait for fulfillment of the Lord's Word; but the Word given to each is different. Habakkuk waited for the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord pertaining to the destruction of Chaldea, but we wait for the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord pertaining to His return. **From our perspective we can see that the Lord completely fulfilled His Word to Habakkuk, and we can have assurance that He will fulfill His Word to us just as completely.**

**Achtemeier** writes...

that which may seem delayed or halted by our reckoning has not been impeded at all. God's purpose cannot be thwarted (cf. Isa 55:10, 11); it is speeding toward its completion. Indeed, those actions of God that seem to reverse his march toward his goal—as the Babylonian conquest of Judah seemed to Habakkuk to reverse that march (Hab 1:12–17)—may not be reversals at all but integral parts of God's purpose to save his earth.

Certainly Luke (**Ed**: "the times of the Gentiles" will be fulfilled! Lk 21:24), Paul (Ro 9:22–24), and the author of Second Peter were sure that was true

The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2Peter 3:9).

God's envisioned Kingdom for his earth surely comes and will not be late. Such is the word Habakkuk faithfully passes on to those who live "in the meantime" and who, wearied and dismayed by evil, cry out, "How long, O Lord?" For his contemporaries, he writes the assurance on a placard large enough to be read by every passer-by. For those who come after him, he preserves the assurance in writing. For us, Habakkuk's words have been handed on by a cloud of faithful witnesses, and they bid us still wait in hope for the fulfillment that will not be tardy (cf. Ro 13:11). (Ibid)

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**VISION** - If we lose "the heavenly vision" God has given us, we alone are responsible— not God. We lose the vision because of our own lack of spiritual growth. If we do not apply our beliefs about God to the issues of everyday life, the vision God has given us will never be fulfilled. The only way to be obedient to "the heavenly vision" is to give our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory. This can be accomplished only when we make a determination to continually remember God's vision. But the acid test is obedience to the vision in the details of our everyday life— sixty seconds out of every minute, and sixty minutes out of every hour, not just during times of personal prayer or public meetings.

**"Though it tarries, wait for it..."** (Habakkuk 2:3). We cannot bring the vision to fulfillment through our own efforts, but must live under its inspiration until it fulfills itself. We try to be so practical that we forget the vision. At the very beginning we saw the vision but did not wait for it. We rushed off to do our practical work, and once the vision was fulfilled we could no longer even see it. Waiting for a vision that "tarries" is the true test of our faithfulness to God. It is at the risk of our own soul's welfare that we get caught up in practical busy-work, only to miss the fulfillment of the vision.

Watch for the storms of God. The only way God plants His saints is through the whirlwind of His storms. Will you be proven to be an empty pod with no seed inside? That will depend on whether or not you are actually living in the light of the vision you have seen. Let God send you out through His storm, and don't go until He does. If you select your own spot to be planted, you will prove yourself to be an unproductive, empty pod. However, if you allow God to plant you, you will "bear much fruit" (John 15:8). It is essential that we live and "walk in the light" of God's vision for us (1 John 1:7). ([Oswald Chambers](#))

**The passion of patience** Though it tarry, wait for it. Hab. 2:3.

Patience is not indifference; patience conveys the idea of an immensely strong rock withstanding all onslaughts. The vision of God is the source of patience, because it imparts a moral inspiration. Moses endured, not because he had an ideal of right and duty, but because he had a vision of God. He "endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." A man with the vision of God is not devoted to a cause or to any particular issue; he is devoted to God Himself. You always know when the vision is of God because of the inspiration that comes with it; things come with largeness and tonic to the life because everything is energized by God. If God gives you a time spiritually, as He gave His Son actually, of temptation in the wilderness, with no word from Himself at all, endure; and the power to endure is there because you see God.

"Though it tarry, wait for it." The proof that we have the vision is that we are reaching out for more than we have grasped. It is a bad thing to be satisfied spiritually. "What shall I render unto the Lord?" said the Psalmist, "I will take the cup of salvation." We are apt to look for satisfaction in ourselves—'Now I have got the thing; now I am entirely sanctified; now I can endure.' Instantly we are on the road to ruin. Our reach must exceed our grasp. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." If we have only what we have experienced, we have nothing; if we have the inspiration of the vision of God, we have more than we can experience. Beware of the danger of relaxation spiritually. (Chambers)

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## Divine Perspective

Read: Habakkuk 2:2-14

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; . . . it will surely come. —Habakkuk 2:3

Jason took a trip to New York during spring break. One afternoon he and some friends piled into a cab and headed for the Empire State Building. To Jason, the ride on the ground seemed chaotic and dangerous. But when he got to the observation deck of the skyscraper and looked down on the city streets, to his amazement he saw order and design. What a difference a change in perspective made!

Habakkuk learned a similar lesson. When he looked at life from his earthly vantage point, it seemed that God was indifferent to the evil permeating society (Hab. 1:2-4). But God gave him a divine perspective and showed him that life is more than what it seems. The deeds of men cannot thwart the purposes of God (2:3).

Those who don't show any regard for God may seem to prosper at the moment, but God will ultimately right all wrong. God acts sovereignly in all that comes to pass so that everything works toward His good purpose. God's plan will surely take place and be on schedule (v.3).

We can't sort out the whole picture from where we are in life; only God can. So let us continue to live by faith and not by sight. From His perspective, all things are working together for the believer's good and for His honor.

Sovereign Ruler of the skies,  
Ever gracious, ever wise,  
All my times are in Your hand,  
All events at Your command.  
—Ryland

Our times are in God's hands; our souls are in His keeping.

By Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith:"**

- **His soul:** Job 40:11,12 Da 4:30,37 5:20-23 Lk 18:14 2Th 2:4 1Pe 5:5
- **But:** Jn 3:36 Ro 1:17 Gal 2:16 3:11,12 Heb 10:38 1Jn 5:10-12
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE WAY TO BECOME RIGHTEOUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Given the importance of this verse, here are the various renderings of Habakkuk's great text. As you will notice, there is considerable difference in the way this passage is translated, because the first line is notoriously difficult. The differences seem to depend primarily on which original language text is followed. For example, in Hebrew the word translated **faith** in the **NAS** is more accurately (literally) the word **faithfulness**. However, the Hebrew scholars who translated the Hebrew text into Greek (the Septuagint) choose to use *pistis* (see below) which is the noun which means faith. To help illustrate which original version the translation team favored, the following passages color code **faith** (Greek - Septuagint) and **faithfulness** (Hebrew - Masoretic Text), beginning with the Amplified which uses both terms (Note some versions use other words which I've highlighted in **bold**)...

**Amplified** Look at the proud; his soul is not straight or right within him, but the [rigidly] just and the [uncompromisingly] righteous man shall live by his **faith** and in his **faithfulness**.

**Berkeley** (MLB) Look, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him! But the righteous shall live by his **faith**.

**BBE** As for the man of pride, my soul has no pleasure in him; but the upright man will have life through his good **faith**.

**CEV** I, the LORD, refuse to accept anyone who is proud. Only those who live by **faith** are acceptable to me.

**KJV** Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his **faith**.

**Darby** Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright within him: but the just shall live by his **faith**.

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

**GWT** Look at the proud person. He is not right in himself. But the righteous person will live because of his **faithfulness**.

**Holman Christian Standard Bible** (HCSB) Look, his ego is inflated; he is without integrity. But the righteous one will live by his **faith**.

**International Children's Bible** See, the nation that is evil and trusts in itself will fail. But those who do right because they **trust** in God will live.



**Complete Jewish Bible** Look at the proud: he is inwardly not upright; but the righteous will attain life through trusting **faithfulness**.

**MSG** Look at that man, bloated by self-importance— full of himself but soul-empty. But the person in right standing before God through loyal and steady **believing** is fully alive, really alive.

**NAB** The rash man has no integrity; but the just man, because of his **faith**, shall live.

**NCV** The evil nation is very proud of itself; it is not living as it should. But those who are right with God will live by **trusting** in him.

**NET** Look, the one whose desires (**Ed**: "soul" in most translations) are not upright will faint from exhaustion, but the person of integrity will live because of his **faithfulness**.

**NIV** See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous will live by his **faith**--

**NIV2011** See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous person will live by his **faithfulness**—

**NJB** You see, anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb, but the upright will live through **faithfulness**.'

**NLT** Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their **faithfulness** to God.

**NKJV** Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his **faith**.

**NRSV** Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their **faith**.

**RSV** Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his **faith**.

**TEV** And this is the message: 'Those who are evil will not survive, but those who are righteous will live because they are **faithful** to God.' "

**TLB** "Note this: Wicked men trust themselves alone [as these Chaldeans do], and fail; but the righteous man **trusts** in me and lives!

**Young's Literal** Lo, a presumptuous one! Not upright is his soul within him, And the righteous by his **steadfastness** liveth.

Finally here is the **English** translation of the Greek (**Septuagint**)

**LXE** If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him: but the just shall live by my **faith**.

**Comment:** Notice that the sense of the first phrase is considerably different in the Greek text (the writer of Hebrews quotes the Greek not the Hebrew in Heb 10:38).

**James Hastings** writes that...

THERE is no single text in the Old Testament that plays a larger role in the doctrinal discussions of the New Testament than this little sentence from the prophecy of the prophet Habakkuk. It is also one of the foundation stones on which Martin Luther built his anti-papal doctrines of the Reformation, and changed the course of Church History. ( [Live by Faith](#) )

**Dr. John Walvoord** commenting on Hab 2:4 writes that

This statement is not only the central theme of Habakkuk but of the entire Scripture. (The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook)

**Barker** sums up this passage...

Finally, God revealed the message itself. "It is short but comprehensive." In the day of turmoil and destruction, the righteous person shall live by his faithfulness to God. The answer dealt with Habakkuk's frustrations and fears. Would God leave the guilty—in Judah and in Babylon—unpunished? Would the righteous be consumed with the wicked? (Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

**Behold** (Sometimes translated "**Lo!**") (**hinneh**) is used over 800x in the OT to call attention to the text which follows, directing the reader to give it special attention. So be on the lookout for **behold**, Hab 2:4 being one of the most important texts in all of Scripture to carefully "**behold!**"

**GOD IS IN CONTROL!**  
Great Song to Remind you of this Truth

**Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him** - In the context who is the **proud one**? Is this not the wicked proud Chaldeans (Hab 1:7, 11, 13)? In Hab 2:6-20 God proceeds to describe the woe filled end of their pride! This warning of course would also be applicable to all in Judah (and indeed every man still in Adam - cp 1Cor 15:22), who read this divinely inspired, inerrant, inscribed record and in their pride reject its warning and its contrasting offer of hope (Hab 2:4b), for they too would be laid low by the even more proud Babylonian hordes!

<b>A CLEAR CONTRAST</b>	
<b>HABAKKUK 2:4</b>	
<b>PROUD ONE</b>	<b>JUST ONE</b>
<b>Trusts in himself</b>	<b>Lives by Faith</b>
<b>Way of the Ungodly</b>	<b>Way of the Godly</b>
<b>Way of Unbelief</b>	<b>Way of Faith</b>
<b>Way of the Wicked</b>	<b>Way of the Righteous</b>
<b>Submits to No One</b>	<b>Submits to God</b>
<b>Puffed up, Arrogant, Proud</b>	<b>Exhibits Trustworthiness, Faithfulness</b>
<b>"The Lost"</b>	<b>"The Saved"</b>
<b>Not right with God</b>	<b>Right with God</b>
<b>"The Ain'ts"</b>	<b>"The Saints"</b>
<b>Will die (Eternally)</b>	<b>Will live (Eternally)</b>
<b>Their destiny described by Jesus... Mt 7:13b-note</b>	<b>Their destiny described by Jesus... Mt 7:14-note</b>

As **Boice** notes...

The life of faith mentioned in this key verse is nevertheless only one of two distinct paths the chapter sets before us. One is the **way of faith**. The other is the **way of "un-faith" or unbelief**. The contrast is seen in Habakkuk 2:4 itself. Even the most casual reader can see that the greater part of this verse deals with the wicked. It begins, "See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright..." Then there is a dash, followed by the part of the verse we have been studying ("but the righteous will live by his faith"), followed by another dash. Then the passage continues, "indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied..." (Hab 2:4-5).

The **way of the righteous** is the **way of faith** in God. The **way of the wicked** is the way of drawing back from faith in God. The first submits to God and trusts God. The second submits to no one. The person who chooses the second way is arrogant. He says, "I don't need religion. I can take care of myself. I can do without God." The bulk of this chapter shows the course and dismal end of the ungodly.

The challenge presented to us in this chapter is that choice. Will it be the world's way, the way of the ungodly with its emptiness, frustration, and eventual ruin? Or will it be God's way, the way of faith in Him who alone is worthy of that faith?... Though the world should rise up against us, the righteous will live by faith. It is by faith in the righteous God alone that we can stand against it. (Recommended Resource: [The Minor Prophets: Micah-Malachi: James Montgomery Boice](#))

**Proud** (06075) ('**aphal**) is a verb which means to be swelled, to be puffed up, to be lifted up and so pictures rank audacity and pride. The metaphor is of a person with their head held high or one having a swollen head, analogous to our modern idiom accusing

someone of having "the big head". This same Hebrew word is describes Israel's presumptive attitude in Nu14:44 ("heedlessly"), their pride netting them an embarrassing national disaster (Nu14:45). In the present context the idea is that the "puffed up" one chooses to rely on his (her) own self or personal resources to secure and sustain his (her) life.

**Ronald Blue** draws this word picture from the Hebrew verb **'aphal**...

Like a bloated toad, these arrogant people hopped along toward destruction. They were swollen... with evil passions. Their desires were not upright. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

The proud, arrogant Chaldeans serve as a fitting prototype of all godless individuals who reject God as Savior, in favor of relying on their Self as psuedo-savior!

**The proud one** - The Babylonians thought "their justice and authority originate with themselves." (Hab 1:7) and considered their "strength is their god." (Hab 1:10, 11). Some commentators think Yahweh is speaking to unbelieving Jews, but the immediate context would support that His address is primarily directed at the proud Babylonians. Of course the principle of the danger of pride and trusting in one's self is applicable not only to all the unbelieving Jews in Judah but to anyone who rejects God and His Gospel.

The King of Babylon, **Nebuchadnezzar** in the ultimate display of arrogance ask...

Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? (Da 4:30, cp Da 4:31-33 for God's "answer" to such blatant arrogance!)

**Barker** puts the **proud** person in proper perspective...

Wherever human beings rely on something of this earth—whether it be intellectual achievement or wealth or military might or aesthetic ability and appreciation or pride of birth and status or even the ability to cope and solve problems and master the complexities of modern life—wherever confidence is placed in human prowess and not in God for the achievement of a satisfying and secure manner of living, there true life cannot be had.”(Vol. 20: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

**Spurgeon** wrote that ...

If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk? ([Habakkuk 2:4 Pride the Destroyer](#))

**Guzik**...

**Pride** can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to John Bunyan after a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he preached. "You're too late," Bunyan answered. "The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit." Satan can tell the praying brother to be proud of his ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

**Soul** (05315)(**nephesh**) probably originally meant "to breathe" and so it refers to a breathing creature and hence to vitality and is translated *soul* over 200x in the NAS. However about 14x (NAS) it is translated *desire*. The Septuagint translates nephesh with the Greek word **psuche** which means *soul*.

**Right** (03474)(**yashar**) literally means straight and ethically describes an upright (morally sound) life (Ps 119:128, Pr 11:5), which seems to be the meaning in Hab 2:4.

**His soul is not right within him** - The Greek translation is rendered "my soul has no pleasure in him" which obviously places the emphasis on God ("My soul"), not on the proud man ("his soul"). The NT uses the Greek version in Heb 10:38b-note "if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

**Comment:** "Shrinks back" is the verb **hupostello** which describes one who consciously retreats or draws back from a previously held position. Hebrews 10:38 in the historical NT context refers to Jews who were being persecuted for considering the claims of Christ and were tempted to fall away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and return to Judaism which would be the opposite of **faith** described in the first part of Heb 10:38-note. Only faith pleases God (Heb 11:6). "The man of faith receives life by faith, he walks by faith, and he moves into

eternity by faith—not by his own ability but on the strength and the ability of Another." (McGee) In Heb 10:39-note the writer goes on to declare that he is not among **"those who shrink back to destruction (apoleia = eternal separation from God - also used in Mt 7:13-note), but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."**

**McGee** puts it plainly

He is wrong. He is going down the wrong pathway. "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but its end is the way of death" (Pr 14:12).

**Wiersbe** adds that the puffed up person is inwardly "twisted"...

for the soul of the unbeliever is "not upright," which means his inner appetites are *crooked* and *sinful*. He delights in the things that God abhors, the things God condemns in the five "woes" in this chapter.

**But - Terms of contrast** are always important to observe, but this contrast is especially notable as it marks the dividing line between life and death, a principle that permeates the entire Bible, the principle that faith is the way to real life in this short time on earth and more important prepares one for life eternally with God.

In Habakkuk 2:4 Yahweh draws a sharp **contrast** between the wicked, personified by the Babylonians, and the righteous, represented by the **remnant** (believing remnant) **of Judah**. In short, the wicked are proud and thus refuse the ancient ways (Jer 6:16), instead choosing paths that lead to death and defeat (in this life and that to come!). In contrast, the righteous by faith choose to walk on a path that leads to life and victory (See summary of these two paths in Ps 1:1-note; Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note; Ps 1:4-6-note). This is a word of comfort to Habakkuk (and the **remnant**) and marks the turning point in the prophet's personal confusion over why the Lord would use the wicked Babylonians as a rod of chastisement against Judah.

Consider the fact that the Babylonian star is just beginning to rise. Habakkuk recorded this prophecy about 607BC. In 605BC Nebuchadnezzar would defeat Pharaoh Necho at Battle of Carchemish at what has been referred to by some historians as "the turning point of world history". What God is relating to His prophet Habakkuk, is prophetically speaking, Babylon's star had already begun to set! Daniel was correct when he affirmed that God is the One Who **"removes kings and establishes kings!"** (Da 2:21, Read Da 4:17, 32, 1Sa 2:7,8, Job 12:18, Ps 75:5, 6, 7, Pr 8:15, 16 - These passages describe YOUR God, YOUR Father! Be encouraged!)

**Righteous** (just, "the justified one") (06662) (**tsaddiya/saddiq**) is an adjective derived from a root which basically means conformity to an ethical or moral standard. In simple terms a righteous person is one who is "in the right." In the present context the word has a forensic sense (as if one were in a court of law) and ultimately speaks of right relationship and right conduct toward God. The person who is righteous or just is one who conforms to a certain standard, ultimately God's perfect standard. As someone has well said, righteousness is all that God is, all that God commands, all that God demands, all that God approves, and ultimately all that God provides in Christ.

The Septuagint translates **tsaddiya/saddiq** and its sense of *faithfulness* with the adjective **dikaiois [word study]** which is the NT word for *faith*. Hastings writes that "The NT reduces faithfulness in conduct to its root in the heart and calls it "faith."" In simple terms **dikaiois** describes one as being in accordance with what God requires. The **righteous** man does what he ought. He is the person who conforms to the standard, will or character of God.

Who are the **righteous** in this context? Those described in Hab 1:4 are probably in view. The implication is that they have faith in God and His promises.

**Blue** explains that...

A righteous Israelite who remained loyal to God's moral precepts and was humble before the Lord enjoyed God's abundant life. To "live" meant to experience God's blessing by enjoying a life of security, protection, and fullness. Conversely, an apparently victorious but proud and perverse Babylonian would die. Faithfulness (niv marg.) and faith are related. One who trusts in the Lord is one who relies on Him and is faithful to Him. (Ibid)

**Live** (be preserved) - In context refers to primarily to physical preservation in the coming Babylonian invasion.

**Boice** emphasizes that **live** "does not say that the **righteous** shall begin by **faith** and then proceed on some other principle. It does not say that the righteous shall draw on faith from time to time as faith is needed. It says "the righteous will live [continuously] by his faith." That is, the righteous will operate on this principle twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year—so long as life lasts... Paul uses Habakkuk 2:4 to challenge living by the law. He says, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'" (Gal. 3:10, 11). The only way to live is to "**live by faith**." This world may crumble about our ears. All that we know and love may vanish. **But the**

**righteous will live by his faith.**" He will live by faith in the one who keeps us, not only in the moment of our initial belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, but in every later moment of life as well. ([The Minor Prophets: Micah-Malachi: James Montgomery Boice](#))

**Faith** (0530) (**emunah** from **aman** = to confirm or support) is a noun which means firmness, steadfastness, fidelity, truth, faithfulness, trustworthiness, a condition of being dependable. The root idea is certainty or firmness.

It is therefore fitting that **emunah** is used to describe God...

(Deut 32:4) "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of **faithfulness** and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. (All the following Psalms refer to God's faithfulness - Ps 33:4; 36:5; 37:3; 40:10; 88:11; 89:1f, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49; 92:2; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5, Ps 119:75, 90, 138, 143:1)

Used initially in Scripture to describe Moses hands held up with the staff of God until sunset (Ex 17:12), of the stability of the times (Is. 33:6); of the trustworthiness of one in office (2Ki 22:7); of an office as a trust (1Chr 9:22, 26); in connection with righteousness (Pr 12:17); and of right conduct in general. **Emunah** is used later to describe God's total dependability (Dt 32:4) and *faithfulness* is frequently listed among the attributes of God (1Sa 26:23; Ps 36:5; 40:10; La 3:23). **Emunah** is also used to refer to those whose lives God establishes. He expects to see faithfulness in them (Pr 12:22; 2Chr 19:9). Indeed, such faithfulness or a life of faith is characteristic of those **justified** (declared righteous) in God's sight (Hab 2:4).

**Emunah** is translated (NAS) as faith (1), faithful (3), faithfully (8), faithfulness (25), honestly (1), responsibility (1), stability (1), steady (1), trust (2), truth (5).

**Hastings** says "The root-idea of the noun (*emunah*) is belief in, and faithfulness exercised toward, God in true whole-hearted obedience."

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates **emunah** with **pistis [word study]** which means **faith, trust** or **belief** and is the conviction of the truth of anything. In Scripture **pistis** speaks of **belief** in regard to man's relationship to God. Whereas the Hebrew word primarily describes *faithfulness* the fact that the Septuagint translators used **pistis** has led most of the modern translations use the noun *faith*. (exceptions are NET Bible, see above) As James Hastings say "The NT reduces **faithfulness** in conduct to its root in the heart and calls it **faith**."

**Emunah** - 48 verses -

Ex 17:12; Deut 32:4; 1 Sam 26:23; 2 Kgs 12:15; 22:7; 1 Chr 9:22, 26, 31; 2Chr 19:9; 31:12, 15, 18; 34:12; Ps 33:4; 36:5; 37:3; 40:10; 88:11; 89:1f, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49; 92:2; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30, 75, 86, 90, 138; 143:1; Pr 12:17, 22; 28:20; Isa 11:5; 33:6; 59:4; Jer 5:1, 3; 7:28; 9:3; Lam 3:23; Hos 2:20; Hab 2:4

We get a good sense of the meaning in the following passage...

2Kings 12:15 (see also 2Ki 22:7) Moreover, they did not require an accounting from the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay to those who did the work, for they dealt **faithfully**. (Here it speaks of honesty, the state of being completely truthful.)

**Watkinson** - **Faith** means vision. The constant sense of things unseen and eternal. Faith means trust. Daily confidence in the faithful Creator, the loving Redeemer. Faith means expectation. The anticipation of the recompense of the reward. Faith is the root, hope is the blossom, charity is the flower of true religion. Let me beware of the technical, the tangible, the formal in my religious life; let me keep intact the ethereal cords which bind me to the upper universe, and which bring into my life the spiritual electricity on which everything depends. I live by trust, love, admiration, fellowship, revealing themselves and justifying themselves in obedience. (The Gates of Dawn as quoted in Great Texts of the Bible)

**Faith** is not believing in spite of evidence, but is obeying in spite of consequence, resting on God's faithfulness.

**Achtemeier** adds that "faithfulness here means trust, dependence, clinging to God; it means living and moving and having one's being in him alone; it means relying on him for the breath one draws, for the direction one takes, for the decisions one makes, for the goals one sets, and for the outcome of one's living... Faithfulness means placing one's whole life in God's hands and trusting him to fulfill it, despite all outward and inward circumstances; despite all personal sin and guilt; despite all psychological and social and physical distortions. Faithfulness is life by God's power rather than by one's own (cf. 1Co 1:30-31); and therefore it is truly life, because it draws its vitality from the living God who is the source of life. (Ibid)

**Spurgeon** in a sermon on Hab 2:4 described **faith** this way - The faith which saves is not one single act done and ended on a certain day: it is an act continued and persevered in throughout the entire life of man. The just not only commences to live by his faith, but he continues to live by his faith: he does not begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, nor go so far by grace, and the rest of the way by works of the law... Faith is essential all along; every day and all the day, in all things. Our natural life begins by breathing,

and it must be continued by breathing; what the breath is to the body, that is faith to the soul ([Habakkuk 2:4 Luther Sermon at the Tabernacle](#)).

Wiersbe...

We are not only saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but we are instructed to live by **faith**. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4NKJV).

**Faith is a lifestyle that is just the opposite  
of being "puffed up" and depending on your own resources.**

Habakkuk knew the difficult times were coming to the people of Judah, and their only resource was to trust God's Word and rest in His will. Living by faith is the major theme of the Book of Hebrews (Heb 10:30), for in that book the phrase "by faith" is found over twenty times. To live by faith means to believe God's Word and obey it no matter how we feel, what we see, or what the consequences may be. This is illustrated in Hebrews 11, the famous "by faith" chapter of the Bible. The men and women mentioned in that chapter were ordinary people, but they accomplished extraordinary things because they trusted God and did what He told them to do.

**But the righteous will live by his faith** - This is the full, final, ultimate answer to Habakkuk's questions and indeed to all the deepest questions of all men throughout the ages-What happens when we die? Where will I spend eternity?, etc. This phrase indeed is the key to the book of Habakkuk, for in his appropriation of this truth, the Spirit transformed him from worrying in chapter one to worshipping in chapter three. This passage is the key to the Creator's relationship with men created in His image. In the most simple of terms God is saying.

**"TRUST ME!"**

**John Phillips** notes that Habakkuk 2:4b...

made history with a vengeance, since it brought about the conversion of Martin Luther. He was seeking plenary indulgence for his sins by crawling on his knees up the *Scala Santa* (Pilate's staircase) in Rome and saying the required prayer to the virgin Mary on each step when **this verse** thundered in his soul. Luther was trying to earn salvation by works when it dawned on him that justification and life was **by faith**. He rose from his knees, dusted off his robe, stood upright, and marched back down the steps and out of the church of Rome. He took half of Europe with him (**Ed: Luther was the primary impetus for the Protestant Reformation! All beginning with this one verse - Habakkuk 2:4b!**). ([Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Martin Luther** said of Hab 2:4

'Before those words broke upon my mind,' he says, 'I hated God and was angry with Him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood these words—

"The just shall live by faith!"

"The just shall live by faith!"

—then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God!

'Henceforward,' he says again, 'I saw the beloved and holy Scriptures with other eyes. The words that I had previously detested, I began from that hour to value and to love as the sweetest and most consoling words in the Bible. In very truth, this text was to me the true gate of Paradise!'

'An open door into the very Paradise of God!' 'This text was to me the true gate of Paradise!' And they who enter into the City of God by that gate will go no more out for ever. ([Frank W Boreham - A Bunch of Everlasting or. Texts that made History](#)) - this is a fascinating book which chronicles Bible texts that had eternal impact on a variety of God's men over the ages - For list of these men see [Table of contents](#))

**LIVE BY FAITH  
NOT FEELINGS!**

Habakkuk was not "feeling" good about what God had told him in Chapter 1, but faith lives not by what it sees but by what it does not see (2Cor 5:7-note, 2Cor 4:18-note). From Habakkuk's transformation described in Chapter 3, we can be certain that he began to live by faith in spite of his feelings, a pattern all God's children (enabled by the Spirit, Php 2:13-note) do well to imitate (cp Heb 6:11-

12-note). Don't misunderstand the phrase "faith lives... by what it does not see." Although we cannot see God's Person today, we can "see" Him in the Bible, in His character and His promises. So faith is not in some ethereal invisible God, but in an invisible God Who has made Himself visible in the Word of Truth. Habakkuk's faith had a firm foundation - the faithful God, everlasting, Holy One, Jehovah, Elohim who promised that his prophet had not yet seen the end of the story but "though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come, it will not delay." Why? Because the faithful, promise keeping God said it would. This was the firm foundation for Habakkuk's faith and it is still the firm foundation for all God's children who are declared righteous (justified) by grace through faith!

**Guzik** notes that...

We are called to live by faith, and nothing else.

- Some Christians live by devotions
- Some Christians live by works
- Some Christians live by feelings
- Some Christians live by circumstances

Each of these is meaningless and perhaps dangerous without faith.

## **HABAKKUK 2:4 IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament is the New concealed, while the New Testament is the Old revealed. And so we can "unravel" Habakkuk 2:4 best by observing the three NT passages which place the emphasis on different aspects of "the righteous shall live by faith"...

- The Righteous (Ro 1:17)
- Shall Live (Gal 3:11)
- By Faith (Heb 10:38)

**Romans 1:17+** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, **BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**"

**Comment:** In the Romans quote, Paul places the emphasis on **righteous**.

**Boice:** The revelation to Habakkuk shows that a person can be **righteous** (or justified) before God. In ourselves we are not righteous. This is what bothered Luther so deeply. Instead of being righteous, as we ought to be, we are sinners and therefore under God's just wrath and condemnation. How can a person who is a sinner and under God's condemnation attain righteousness? How can such a one become perfect? The answer is that nobody can attain to righteousness. No one is capable of perfect goodness. How do we get it then? It is God's gift to us in Jesus Christ. This is what Romans explains. It shows that the justified person is the one who has ceased trying to please God by his own efforts and who has turned to Jesus instead for the righteousness that God gives freely. This is what it means to be a Christian. It means to stop trying to attain heaven by our own good works and instead to receive what God has done for us in Christ. The foundation of our Christian life is not what we can do for God but what God has done for us. Therefore, the entrance into that life is not by working but by receiving. It is opening our hands to God's gift. (Ibid)

**Galatians 3:11+** Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, **"THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

**Comment:** In the Galatians quote, Paul places the emphasis on how we **live**. We don't live by keeping the law (Gal 3:10, 12) but we live by faith, beginning on the day we first believed in Jesus to the day we die or are raptured to be with Him forever.

**Heb 10:38+** **BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;** AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

**Comment:** The writer of Hebrews places the emphasis on **faith**. as shown the juxtaposition to Hebrews 11 the great "Hall of Faith" chapter.

**Boice:** How do we receive God's gift? The answer is found in the second word in Habakkuk 2:4: **'by faith.'** The Book of Hebrews is the New Testament commentary on it. What is faith? According to Hebrews, particularly Hebrews 11, faith is **believing** God and **acting** upon that belief (**Ed: See related**

**discussion of phrase Obedience of faith and Relationship of faith and obedience).** It is important to stress faith's action, because we have a definition of faith in our day that reduces it to mere intellectual assent and that is therefore far less than what the Bible means by belief. We can meet somebody on the street today and say to him, "Do you believe in God?" and have the person answer, "Of course I do. What do you think I am, an atheist?" He does not want to be an atheist, so he believes in God. But this does not necessarily mean that he is a Christian or that this faith makes any difference in his life. Belief includes intellectual assent. We must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). But faith is more than this. In salvation matters, it means trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as the One Who died in our place and thus also turning from sin to follow Him. This is the context of the use of Habakkuk 2:4 in Hebrews. It occurs just before Hebrews 11, in Heb 10:37-39

**Heb 10:37** FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. (Ed: Quoting Septuagint of Hab 2:3 - Habakkuk speaks of a revelation which is coming. Hebrews changes *it* to a personal masculine pronoun **He**, referring to Jesus. Since Jesus is both a person and God's last word to man Heb 1:1, the change is appropriate.)

**Heb 10:38** BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. (Ed: Quoting Septuagint of Hab 2:4 but inverting the position of the passages.)

**Heb 10:39** But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. (Ed: The writer of Hebrews warns those among his readers who only made a profession of faith, that if they draw back to the temple sacrifices, renouncing their professed faith in Messiah, God shall have no pleasure in that person. In short, they are unregenerate, spiritually lost!)

#### RELATED RESOURCE:

- **C H Spurgeon's sermon** on Hab 2:4 entitled [Faith: Life](#) in which he discusses the three NT quotations of Hab 2:4.

In summary, Habakkuk 2:4 is so important that it takes three NT verses to explain it!

**Blue** explains that "The key clause **"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH"** sparkles like a diamond in a pile of soot. In the midst of God's unrelenting condemnations of Babylon stands a bright revelation of God's favor that is quoted three times in the New Testament (Ro 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). In those passages the words "will live" have a broader meaning than in Habakkuk. In the New Testament they mean to enjoy salvation and eternal life. In contrast with the self-reliant, boastful ways of the unrighteous, the righteous are found to be reliant on God and faithful to Him. (Ibid)

**Heflin** - It is better to live in faith than in rebellion, trusting God when answers are not to be found, living a life of faithfulness even when evil seems to have the upper hand. This approach to life is wise because God is the omnipotent Ruler; He will ultimately prevail over evil.

**A C Gaebelein** has an interesting note "There is profound significance in the fact that God gave one of the very greatest of all spiritual insights – "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4b) – to a man who cried out to Him against injustice and violence. For Habakkuk there was no incompatibility between impassioned concern for social righteousness and the faith by which a man is justified. In this prophet's perplexity, God revealed to him the moral pattern of history that tyranny and oppression are self-destroying but that faith in the Lord is life-giving. God showed this concerned man how He would use the Babylonians as a scourge to punish the wickedness of His people and then how He would require the Babylonians for their cruelty. His ultimate response to Habakkuk's perplexity about the problem of evil came through the great theophany described in the third chapter of the book. In it God showed the prophet something we too need to know – that the divine logic in answering our profoundest problems transcends our human reason.

#### Sidlow Baxter...

This prophecy of Habakkuk puts into words a struggle and triumph of faith which took place in the soul of the prophet himself. It begins with a sob, and ends with a song; and it is in the process from the one to the other that the little book discloses the heart of its meaning to us.

Ch. I. A "BURDEN": FAITH GRAPPLING WITH PROBLEM.

Ch. II. A "VISION": FAITH GRASPING THE SOLUTION.



Ch. III. A "PRAYER": FAITH GLORYING IN ASSURANCE.

The key verse to Habakkuk is Hab 2:4 – "The just shall live by his faith"; and around this truth precious lessons for faith are written. The living message of the little book is clear.

**Faith still has its problems. If Habakkuk's days seemed draped with dark enigmas, even more do our own. But this book tells us not to judge merely by the appearances of the hour. God has given us great promises, and is working out great purposes. He cannot tell us the whole in so many words; but He has revealed enough to make faith intelligent, and to give it scope for development.** (Explore the Book)

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**C. H. McINTOSH.** Faith is the grand principle of the divine life from first to last. By faith we are justified, and by faith we live; by faith we stand, and by faith we walk. From the starting-post to the goal of the Christian course it is all by faith.

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Rabbi Simlai in the third century noted that Moses gave us 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands. David in Psalm 15 reduced them to eleven: Isaiah—in Isa 33:14, 15—made them six: Micah 6:8 binds them into three: and Habakkuk 2:4 reduces them all to **one**, namely—"The just shall live by faith." (Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times)

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**Robert Morgan - Luther's Verse**

One famous verse in the Bible is repeated three times in the New Testament—Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. That was too many times for Martin Luther to miss.

Luther had intended to become a lawyer, but while caught in a violent lightning storm, he cried, "Help me, St. Anne! I will become a monk!" So off he went to the monastery, and within two years he was a priest. But Luther had no inward peace, and he grew increasingly terrified by the wrath of God.

These words, The just shall live by faith, kept coming to Luther. While it is difficult to pinpoint the moment this phrase first impacted him toward personal conversion, there is an interesting handwritten letter displayed in a glass case in the Library of Rudolstadt in Germany. It is written by the reformer's youngest son, Dr. Paul Luther.

In the year 1544, my late dearest father, in the presence of us all, narrated the whole story of his journey to Rome. He acknowledged with great joy that, in that city, through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he had come to the knowledge of the truth of the everlasting gospel. It happened in this way. As he repeated his prayers on the Lateran staircase, the words of the prophet Habakkuk came suddenly to his mind: "The just shall live by faith." Thereupon he ceased his prayers, returned to Wittenburg, and took this as the chief foundation of all his doctrine.

In the preface to his collected Latin works, Martin Luther described an event that occurred sometime after returning to Wittenburg, while he was in the "toilet"—monastic slang for "in the pits." As he meditated on Habakkuk's words as quoted in Romans 1:17, I began to understand. This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From that moment, I saw the whole face of Scripture in a new light. The Christian world was never again the same. (From This Verse)

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**Only One Option** - If you were to ask several people to draw a crooked line on a piece of paper, no two lines would be identical. There is a lesson in this: There are many ways to be crooked, but only one way to be straight.

The Lord tells us that the righteous person has only one option—to "live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). In the chapter prior to this declaration from the Lord, the prophet Habakkuk had complained about the violence and injustice around him. It seemed as if the wicked were swallowing up the righteous (Hab 1:13).

God responded to Habakkuk by saying that His people were to be "just" and were to live by faith. They were not to be like the one who is "proud" and "not upright" (2:4). A proud and self-sufficient person will rationalize his faults and imperfections. He doesn't want to admit that he needs God. His ways are crooked.

Wickedness seems to prevail in our world. God urges us to live our lives in faith, taking to heart His assurance to Habakkuk that there will be a day of reckoning for the wicked.

The only way to please God now and to be ready for that day of reckoning is to live by faith.— Albert Lee ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant me grace throughout this day  
To walk the straight and narrow way,  
To do whatever in Thy sight

Is good and perfect, just and right. —Huisman

**The only right way is the straight and narrow way.**

**Habakkuk 2:5 "Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.:"**

- **Wine:** Pr 20:1 23:29-33 31:4,5 Isa 5:11,12,22,23 21:5 Jer 51:39 Da 5:1-4,23 Na 1:9,10
- **Haughty:** Hab 2:4 Ps 138:6 Pr 30:13,14 Isa 2:11,12,17 16:6 Jer 50:29 Da 5:20-23 Jas 4:6
- **Stay:** 2Ki 14:10 1Th 4:11
- **He enlarges:** Isa 5:8 Isa 10:7-13
- **Like Sheol:** Pr 27:20 30:15,16 Ec 5:10
- **Gathers:** Hab 2:8-10 Isa 14:16,17 Jer 25:9,17-29
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **NEVER AT REST NEVER SATISFIED**

**Wine betrays the haughty man** - Wine is treacherous. The word "betray" (Hebrew - bagad) denotes unfaithfulness.

**NET Note** feels that...

**Wine** is probably a metaphor for imperialistic success. The more success the Babylonians experience, the more greedy they become just as a drunkard wants more and more wine to satisfy his thirst. But eventually this greed will lead to their downfall, for God will not tolerate such imperialism and will judge the Babylonians appropriately

**He enlarges his appetite like Sheol and he is like death, never satisfied** (Heb = male' = full, filled up) - In context this speaks of the greed of the Babylonians. However it is more broadly applicable and continues the contrast from Hab 2:4, in that the one who is declared just by faith is **satisfied**, but the proud man is never satisfied and is forced to keep grasping for more. His insatiable flesh cries "More, more, more", his cry that shall echo through the halls of hell for all eternity. More is never enough!

**Boice...**

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. The Lord is the portion of the righteous. Besides, the Lord amply supplies his need. (cp Mt 6:30-note, Mt 6:33-note) If a person trusts God, he does not need to acquire more and more possessions, since he knows God will provide what he needs. If he does not trust God, then the need for things becomes a burden. This world is an insecure place, and the individual is insecure within it. So he works to get more and more in the hope that if he only has a little more land or stocks or capital, he may get by. (Ibid)

The two similes (**terms of comparison**) **like Sheol, like death** picture the insatiable appetite of the Babylonians as like the hell, and death and the grave, which never says, "*Enough*" but always wants more! (Pr 30:15-16). The unseen world is never satisfied and the graves are never full. Evil men typified by the Babylonians are constantly seeking for some new experience to thrill them or some new achievement to make them important, but their search is in vain.

[Sheol](#) and [Abaddon](#) are never satisfied,  
Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.  
(Pr. 27:20-[note by Bridges](#); [note by Lawson](#))

**Smith** comments that...

**Death** never takes a holiday. The Babylonian, like death, continues to sweep the nations into his net (cf. Hab 1:15). (Word Biblical Commentary, Page 108).

**Jamieson** writes that...

The use of excessive wine serves to display the pride of Babylon. They felt so secure in their strength that they put down their guard, becoming drunk. The city of Babylon actually fell to the Medes and Persians during a

drunken feast held by Belshazzar (Dan. 5:2-4, 30; cf. Pr. 20:1; 30:9; 31:5).

The culmination of evil is **frustration**, for by its very nature it seeks after a **falsehood**. The "joy" that evil seeks is a lie; true joy rests only with God. Evil seeks after the "**nothing**" that is in direct opposition to the "**something**" that is God. Thus the Babylonian' clamoring **lust** and greed could never be filled. ([Habakkuk 2 Commentary](#))

## McGee

Now how about the other crowd—those whose soul "**is not upright in him**"? The following "**woes**" are directed to them and refer primarily to the plundering Babylonians who would conquer Judah. These "**woes**" are just about as systematic and orderly as anything you will find in Scripture. They are presented in five stanzas of three verses each.

**He gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples** - This apparently refers to the fact that Babylon practiced taking captives into exile just as had the Assyrians before them. In addition the Babylonians would bring captives from other lands to occupy the lands of those that had been deported. One effect of this shifting of nations and peoples was to destroy the identifies of those who were gathered and collected to Babylon. However this did not happen to the Jews who remained a distinct ethnic group, as of course they have to this very day, because they are God's chosen people and He has kept them unique and separate.

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**NEVER "ENOUGH!"** Habakkuk 2:4-5 - "**Greed is good.**" With those words, celebrated Wall Street whiz [Ivan Boesky](#) revealed his basic business philosophy to his class of undergraduate students. Even to the "Me generation" of the 1980s, Boesky's unapologetic endorsement of old-fashioned **greed** came as a shock. But the multi-millionaire got a little too greedy and wound up serving time in prison for using insider trading information to his advantage. Greed ought to shock us. Its place on the list of the so-called [Seven deadly sins](#) reminds us that for many centuries greed has been considered one of the sins that have the greatest appeal to the human appetite. Given greed's place of shame in the Bible, it's hard to argue with that view.

Today's text is not really a definition of greed, but gives us a fascinating and sobering look at the nature of greed. Habakkuk was given a hard prophetic message to deliver. God was going to judge sinful Judah by giving His people over to infinitely more wicked conquerors: the cruel Babylonians. In the process of delivering his message, Habakkuk drew a word picture of the coming invaders. The Babylonians were "**puffed up**" and "**arrogant.**" We know what pride does to individuals or to a nation. But Habakkuk also noted that the Babylonians were "**as greedy as the grave.**" They were like death, which is "**never satisfied.**"

**This is about the best illustration of greed you'll find. Death won't stop taking until everyone is in its grasp.**

We are told in Proverbs 30:15-16 that the grave is one of four things that never says '**Enough!**'

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - When do you say "**Enough**"? Most people don't say it at all. Greed is easy to spot in others but tough to pinpoint in ourselves. Here's a brief self-test that may help focus the issue. Jot down the three things you want most right now; then ask these questions about each item: **1.** Is this a legitimate need or desire?**2.** Is this something I want just because I want it?**3.** Is the lack of this item standing between me and true contentment? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Habakkuk 2:6 "Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him and say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his-- for how long-- and makes himself rich with loans?':**

- **Take:** Nu 23:7,18 Isa 14:4-19 Jer 29:22 50:13 Eze 32:21 Mic 2:4
- **Five woes** Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19
- **Increase:** Hab 1:9,10,15 Job 20:15-29 22:6-10 Pr 22:16 Jer 51:34,35 Jas 5:1-4
- **For how long** - Ps 94:3 Lk 12:20 1Co 7:29-31 1Pe 4:7
- **Makes himself rich:** Hab 2:13 Isa 44:20 Isa 55:2
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A TAUNT SONG HABAKKUK 2:6-20

While the "**taunt song**" in context is directed to the wicked Babylonians, the timeless principles in this next section describe the misery of any person or any nation that thinks it can take God out of the picture (no prayer in schools, no Bible reading in schools,

no Ten Commandments in public buildings, etc)

**Ray Stedman** writes that

The rest of Chapter 2 is a picture of how five different forms of pride by which men seek to live are shown to be self-destructive... The man of pride will fall apart, but the man of faith has present power to live. Not only will he wind up a victor, but even now he will live by his faith. That is the great lesson of this book.

**Achtemeier** writes that...

Everything that follows in Habakkuk's book is confirmation of the vision given him in Hab 2:3–4. Specifically, the series of woes in Hab 2:6–20 is intended to reinforce the promise given in 2:4 by showing that those who rely on their own powers and not on God cannot sustain their self-contained life or find permanent satisfaction in it. (Ibid)

## **FIVE WOES AGAINST THE INJUSTICES & EVILS OF BABYLON**

- **Hab 2:6-8** Greed - wealth by extortion; promise of plunder
- **Hab 2:9-11** Arrogant self-assertion - set nest on high; shame will come
- **Hab 2:12-14** Violence - Resort to bloodshed which will only fuel their own destruction
- **Hab 2:15-17** Inhumane/Insolent - Treating people disgracefully will come back to haunt them
- **Hab 2:18-20** Idolatry -Trust their own creation, fail to bow to Creator; Result = no redeemer

**Woe #1 – Extortion -- The Looter Will Be Looted** ([Paul Apple](#)) Hab 2:6-8 describes the Babylonians as greedy usurers.

Lest we read this chapter with our accusing finger pointed solely at Babylon, we do well to recall that these woes were also against similar sins practiced in Judah, and indeed against all men or women who practice these evils as a lifestyle!

**Will not all these... ?** - Rhetorical question which expects an affirmative answer "Yes, they will!" To whom do **these** refer? The NET Bible says "all these nations" - the nations once humiliated by Babylon will rise up to humiliate them!

**Taunt-song** (KJV = parable) (04912) (**mashal**) is derived from a root meaning "to be like, to be similar", often referring to a simple comparison. Thus **mashal** represents is a pithy maxim also suggesting special insight and authority. Depending on the context, mashal can convey the sense of a proverb, a parable, an allegory, a byword, a taunt, or a discourse.

The Septuagint translates **mashal** with the Greek noun **parabole** which is defined as "a rhetorical figure of speech, setting one thing beside another to form a comparison or illustration" (Friberg).

**Mockery** (KJV = "proverb") (04426)(**meliysah**) is a literary device which serves as a mocking expression. It is closely related to the previous Hebrew word mashal.

**Insinuations** (02320) (**chidah**) is a riddle or ambiguous saying and designates "something by enigmatic allusions."

**Woe** ([01945](#))(**hoy**) is an interjection of distress used primarily by the prophets, 6x in mourning for the dead (1Ki 13:30 Jer 22:18; 34:5), and 40x as negative warnings specifying Divine punishment in the form of disaster, etc, for failing to repent from certain sins. The wicked are under the judgment of God (cp Ro 1:18ff) and therefore face a time of ruin and mourning, so that the only thing left for an unrepentant people is to mourn the destruction of their lives! Woe!

**Patterson** - Woe oracles typically contain the following elements: invective ("woe to"), threat, and criticism (the reason for the denunciation and threatened judgment).

**Carpenter** - It expresses great emotion and can be an interjection of warning or distress. It represents a thought transformed into a feeling and expressed in a word—hoy, "woe!" ... Hoy can be used to introduce a prophetic declaration of judgment, as when Isaiah announced the coming destruction of Assyria (Isa. 10:5). It conveys a note of certainty about what is said and an atmosphere of finality—such as in, "Woe unto you, the end has come!" The word is also applied to groups of people and individuals who are wicked (Isa. 5:8, 11, 18, 20–22). (Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words )

**Hoy** is used >50x in prophets and only once elsewhere. 6x = mourning for the dead (1 Ki13:30), 40x = negative warnings or threats of God's physical chastisement. R. J. Clifford found 53 occurrences of **hoy** in the Old Testament. Of these he listed three possible uses: (1) to describe funeral laments (eight times), usually translated "**alas**"; (2) a cry to get attention (four times), usually translated

“ho” or “ah”; (3) an announcement of doom (forty-one times and used only by the prophets), usually translated **woe to**.” The wicked were under the judgment of God and therefore faced a time of ruin and mourning. The only thing left for an unrepentant people was to mourn the destruction of their lives.

**Hoy** translated in NAS as - Ah(2), alas(11), ho(2), ho there(1), woe(34). **Hoy** is translated in the Septuagint with **ouai** which an interjection of grief, horror, pain, displeasure, disaster, calamity or denunciation. (Mt 11:21, Mt 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, Rev 18:10, 16, 19, etc)

**Woe** - 47 verse -

1Kgs 13:30; Isa 1:4, 24; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9f; 55:1; Jer 22:13, 18; 23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1; 50:27; Ezek 13:3, 18; 34:2; Amos 5:18; 6:1; Mic 2:1; Nah 3:1; Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zeph 2:5; 3:1; Zech 2:6f; 11:17

**Makes himself rich with loans** - The KJV is difficult to understand "to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!" The ESV has "loads himself with pledges!" The NET has "he who gets rich by extortion!"

**Wiersbe** feels that

The image seems to be that of a creditor giving a pledge to the banker (a clay tablet) and promising to pay his debt at a specific time. Habakkuk wrote, "The predator (Babylon) is really a creditor and his victims will one day rise up to collect what is due. It will be payday!" (Ibid)

**For how long?** - Hab 2:7 answers this somewhat rhetorical question, stating that it won't be long before Babylon will have **pay day** and it would be a day of that came upon them **suddenly**. Note that Habakkuk had earlier ask "**How long?**" (Hab 1:2)

**Pusey...**

Truly wealth ill-gotten by fraud or oppression, is not his who wins it, before he had it, nor when he has it, but is a **woe**.

**Laetsch**

The first **woe** refers to the rapacity of the Chaldean, his eagerness to enrich himself at the expense of others by conquest of their home countries, making vassals of the nations, extorting from them huge contributions of materials, money, and men, bleeding them white.

**Jamieson...**

The Babylonians are compared to a ruthless *loan shark*, and their ill-gotten treasures to piles of contracts in the hands of a *usurer*.

**Habakkuk 2:7 "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them."**

- **Your creditors:** Pr 29:1 Isa 13:1-5,16-18 21:2-9 41:25 45:1-3 46:11 47:11 Isa 48:14,15 Jer 50:21-32 51:11,27,28,57 Da 5:25-31 Na 1:9,10 1Th 5:3)
- **Bite** [KJV]: Eccl 10:8 Jer 8:17
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PLUNDERERS WILL BE PLUNDERED!**

NLT - Suddenly, your debtors will rise up in anger. They will turn on you and take all you have, while you stand trembling and helpless.

KJV - Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

**Will not your creditors rise up suddenly?** - Rhetorical question. Answer "Yes" Divine retribution is coming and its arrival is certain and sudden! The *spoiler* will be *spoiled*. This is the divine retribution which may be read in all of world history, and which still continues true for nations and individuals for...

**Whatsoever a man sows**

## This he will also reap.

Gal 6:7-note

**Creditors** (05391) (**nashak**) means literally to a snakes bite (Nu 21:6), the "bite" of alcohol (Pr 23:32), the "bite" of adversaries God would send against Judah (Jer 8:17) intending to injure or wound. It also has the meaning of lending or borrowing at interest (Dt 23:19, 20).

In a sense this is a prophecy that was at least in part fulfilled when the Medes and Persians rose up and overthrew Babylon in 539 BC as described in Daniel 5

"Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out. 25 "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' 26 "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27 " 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 28 " 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two. (Daniel 5:24-31-note)

**Suddenly** (06621)(**petha'**) means in a moment, a wink, in an instant. Which is exactly what happened in Daniel 5:30-note ("that same night")! Used 7x - Nu 6:9; Nu 35:22; Pr 6:15; Pr 29:1; Isa 29:5; Isa 30:13; Hab 2:7

Pr 6:14 Who with perversity in his heart devises evil continually, Who spreads strife. Pr 6:15 Therefore his calamity will come **suddenly** (petha'); Instantly he will be broken, and there will be no healing.

**Plunder** (04933)(**meshiccah**) means loot or booty (objects and/or people) taken in war by the conquerors (2Ki 21:14; Isa 42:22, 24; Jer 30:16; Zeph 1:13)

**Habakkuk 2:8 "Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you-- Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.:"**

- **Because you:** Hab 2:10,17 Isa 33:1,4 Jer 27:7 30:16 50:10,37 51:13,44,48,55,56 Zec 2:8,9
- **Bloodshed:** Hab 2:17
- **Violence:** Ps 137:8 Isa 47:6 Jer 50:11,17,18,28,33,34 51:8,24,34,35 Mic 4:11-13 Zec 1:15 2:8 12:2-4 14:12 Rev 6:10 Rev 18:20-24
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Because** - A term of explanation explaining why the plunderers would be suddenly plundered, exactly what happened when the Medes took the seemingly impregnable fortress of Babylon in one night! (Read Daniel 5:1-31)

**Criswell** writes...

Protected by its huge wall more than 85 feet thick and 11 miles long, Babylon seemed as impregnable and inaccessible as an eagle's nest (Hab 2:9), but nevertheless it fell to the Medes and Persians under Cyrus in 539 B.C. The spoiler is spoiled, the plunderer plundered and reduced to ignominy (Hab 2:16).

**All the remainder of the peoples will loot you** - This is one of many prophecies that foretell of Babylon's fall ([Babylon's Predicted Destruction](#)) which was historically fulfilled ([Babylon's Historic Fall](#)) in 539BC when Babylon was conquered by the Medes (Da 5:30-31). Note that although Babylon was conquered, and in subsequent centuries became a place of little importance, the location has never been completely destroyed, contrary to what many commentaries teach. **Tony Garland** comments that...

In more recent times, Saddam Hussein built himself a palace on a man-made hill beside the footprint of the original city. ([Babylon - Wikipedia](#)) Then, in 1987, he ordered construction of a replica of Nebuchadnezzar's vast palace on the original site. Museums were also built. But since his fall from power in 2003, his private palace was ransacked by mobs and two museums at the site were looted. **During almost this entire time, there have been people occupying the site or living nearby—in stark contrast to the predictions of Scripture concerning the uninhabitable wasteland it is predicted to one day become.** ([Babylon's Historic Fall](#))

Those who "loot" others are eventually "looted" but they did not just lose their loot but their very souls! As **Jesus** said...

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36)

**Violence** (02555)(**chamas/hamas** from the verb **chamas** = to treat violently or wrong) means wrong, violence (to God's law = Ezek 22:26, Zeph 3:4, "violent hatred" = Ps 25:19), malicious (witness - Ex 23:1, Dt 19:16), , and is used almost always in connection with sinful violence, not with the violence of natural catastrophes. Chamas signifies extreme wickedness and the first two uses are very instructive (especially God's reaction)...

(Ge 6:11) Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with **violence**. (**Lxx** translates with **adikia** = an act that violates the standards of right conduct)

(Ge 6:13) Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with **violence** (**Lxx** translates with **adikia**) because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

**NASB Usage:** malicious(3), violence(48), violent(6), wrong(3).

**Vine** - Basically **chamas** connotes the disruption of the divinely established order of things. It has a wide range of nuances within this legal sphere. The expression "a witness in the case of violent wrongdoing" means someone who bears witness in a case having to do with such an offense (cf. Dt. 19:16). In this context the truthfulness of the witness is not established except upon further investigation (Dt. 19:18). Once he was established as a false witness, the penalty for the crime concerning which he bore false witness was to be executed against the liar (cf. Deut. 19:19). In Ex 23:1 Israel is admonished: "Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness," i.e., a witness who in accusing someone of a violent crime intends to see the accused punished severely.

**Chamas** - The noun usually denotes physical violence (Ezek 7:23). It suggests crimes (Jdg 9:24) or violent wrong (1Ch 12:17). Chamas provoked the Flood (Gen 6:13). It describes suffering that involves elements of violence (Gen 16:5). It appears (7x) with shod ("destruction"; Am 3:10). Chamas functions adjectivally as violent (Isa 59:6); vicious (Gen 49:5), or malicious (Ex 23:1), and adverbially as violently (Ps 25:19). A malicious witness falsely accuses another (Dt 19:16). The verb **chamas** (8x) means do violence. Priests did violence to the law by disregarding and failing to teach it (Ezek 22:26). God did violence to the temple by destroying it (Lam 2:6). One harms himself (Pr 8:36) and wrongs (Job 21:27) or brutalizes others (Jer 22:3). Vines drop unripe grapes (Job 15:33). The passive phrase body ravished is literally "heels having endured violence"; it indicates physical abuse (Jer 13:22). (HCSB)

**Chamas** - 59 verses - Ge 6:11, 13; 16:5; 49:5; Exod 23:1; Deut 19:16; Judg 9:24; 2 Sam 22:3, 49; 1 Chr 12:17; Job 16:17; 19:7; Ps 7:16; 11:5; 18:48; 25:19; 27:12; 35:11; 55:9; 58:2; 72:14; 73:6; 74:20; 140:1, 4, 11; Proverbs 3:31; 4:17; 10:6, 11; 13:2; 16:29; 26:6; Isa 53:9; 59:6; 60:18; Jer 6:7; 20:8; 51:35, 46; Ezek 7:11, 23; 8:17; 12:19; 28:16; 45:9; Joel 3:19; Amos 3:10; 6:3; Obad 1:10; Jonah 3:8; Mic 6:12; Hab 1:2f, 9; 2:8, 17; Zeph 1:9; Mal 2:16

**Habakkuk 2:9 "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity!:"**

- **woe** Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19
- **Gets evil gain:** Ge 13:10-13 19:26-38 De 7:25,26 Jos 7:21-26 1Ki 21:2-4,19-24 2Ki 5:20-27 Job 20:19-28 Jer 22:13-19 Zec 5:1-4 Ac 1:17-25 Jude 1:11
- **Put his nest:** Ps 10:3-6 49:11 52:7 Pr 18:11,12 Isa 28:15 47:7-9 Jer 49:16 Ob 1:4
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Woe #2 - Pronouncement of Woe – False Security** ([Paul Apple](#))

In Hab 2:9-11 the Babylonians are described as like extortioners who thought they were secure.

A s **Wiersbe** quipped "Thou shall not covet" may be the last of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:17), but if we're guilty of covetousness, we're in danger of breaking the other nine!

**Put his nest on high** - The evil man may get evil gain to make his "nest" more and more protected, but he can never protect himself from the long arm of the LORD's righteous wrath!

The Babylonians were like their ancestors who said "Come, let us **build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven**, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (Ge 11:4). That did not work very well as we see in Genesis 11:8!

**To be delivered from the hand of calamity**- This is the deception of riches and, especially obtained wrongfully (as did the Babylonians), that you can make a house "high enough" to deliver you from the righteous wrath of the Most High God. Solomon (a fairly rich man himself) wrote "A rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But humility goes before honor." (Pr 18:11-12)

**Habakkuk 2:10 "You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself.:**

- **Devised:** 2Ki 9:26 2Ki 10:7 Isa 14:20-22 Jer 22:30 36:31 Na 1:14 Mt 27:25
- **Sinning:** Nu 16:38 1Ki 2:23 Pr 1:18 8:36 Isa 33:11
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples**- This is straightforward - they destroyed others (Hab 2:5,8) and in doing so were sinning against themselves.

**You are sinning against yourself** - Literally against your own **soul** (*nephesh* also in Hab 2:4)! (Cp Nu 16:38, Pr 1:18). In other words like an Australian boomerang, the Babylonians "threw out" destruction, but that "boomerang" would eventually come back on their own head. Isn't this the principle of reaping what you sow (Gal 6:7-8-[note](#), Hos 8:7 - note that "they sow the wind And they reap the whirlwind" - the return is delayed, is certain and is even bigger than what was sown! Woe! We need to ponder this the next time we consider carrying out some willful sin! As the Coke commercial used to say "It's the pause that refreshes!"

**Guzik** writes that "The greedy man thinks in terms of nothing but gain, but ends of losing his own soul. Jesus' parable in Luke 12:16-21 is the perfect example of the greedy man who sins against his own soul. "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night **your soul** is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Lk 12:20-21-note)

**Habakkuk 2:11 "Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework:**

- **Stone:** Ge 4:10 Jos 24:27 Job 31:38-40 Lk 19:40 Heb 12:24 Jas 5:3,4 Rev 6:10
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The stone will cry out** - This is a figure of speech that speaks of the **stone** and the **rafter** serving as *witnesses* against the evil deeds of the Babylonians (Compare "*the blood of Abel*" = Ge 4:10, the stone with the Words of God written on them = Jos 24:26, 27; The rich person's "*gold and silver... pay of laborers*" = Jas 5:3,4) As someone has written "*The building is so much the result of wickedness that even its materials cannot forego protest!*"

**Constable** - The stones and woodwork taken from other nations to build the Babylonians' fortresses and palaces would serve as visual witnesses to the sinful invasions that brought them to Babylon. They would testify to the guilt of the Babylonians in the day that Yahweh would bring Babylon to judgment. Ostentatious buildings and cities make statements about their builders ([Expository Notes](#))

**NET Note** - The house mentioned in Hab 2:9–10 represents the Babylonian empire, which became great through imperialism. Here the materials of this "house" (the stones in the walls, the wooden rafters) are personified as witnesses who testify that the occupants have built the house through wealth stolen from others.

**Rafter** ([03714](#))(**kapiys**) refers to a wooden beam or support in a royal building.

Some commentators feel that Habakkuk was speaking not just to the wickedness of Babylon but also to the evil of Judah (Hab 1:2-4-note). In that regard it is interesting to note that the houses in Palestine were constructed of **stone** and wood (cp *rafters*). In Babylon brick replaced **stone** as the primary element of construction, although clearly Babylon is in view also in this context.

**Jeremiah** issued a similar warning specifically to [King Jehoiakim](#)...

**Woe** to him who builds his house **without righteousness** and his upper rooms **without justice**, who uses his neighbor's services **without pay** and does not give him his wages (Jehoiakim used forced labor), who says, 'I will build myself a roomy house With spacious upper rooms, and cut out its windows, paneling it with cedar and painting it bright red.' (Jer 22:13-14)



**Ryrie comments** (Read Jer 22:13-19): Jeremiah predicted that the normal form of lament would not be used when Jehoiakim died and that he would not be buried, but simply dragged out of the city and dumped on the garbage heap (the absence of "and was buried" in 2 Kings 24:6 is significant!).

**Guzik** - Habakkuk pictures a beautiful house built by a greedy man, and the very stones of the house cry out from the wall against the man's greed.

Sadly, many in Judah were guilty of amassing fortunes by exploiting the poor and using that money to build expensive houses. (Amos 3:15, 6:11).

**Ronald Blue** writes that "Even if every single enemy were exterminated, the very stones and lumber would testify against the rapacious and cruel hands of the Babylonians that had fashioned these building materials to show off their empire's strength and glory. The stones and timber with which the houses and palaces were built had been obtained through plunder and injustice." (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

### Habakkuk 2:12 "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence!:"

- **woe** Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19
- **Woe to him** - Ge 4:11-17 Jos 6:26 1Ki 16:34 Jer 22:13-17 Eze 24:9 Da 4:27-31 Mic 3:10 Na 3:1 Jn 11:47-50 Rev 17:6
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Woe #3** – Exaltation -- Ruthless Kingdom Building Will Be Frustrated By the Dominion of the Messiah ([Paul Apple](#))

In Hab 2:12-14 the Babylonians are described as rulers who build cities with the blood, sweat and tears of others less fortunate.

**Constable** - The Babylonians could expect distress because they had built their cities at the expense of the lives of their enemies. We speak of "blood money" as money obtained by making others suffer, even shedding their blood. Babylon was built with "blood money" and the blood, sweat, and tears of enslaved people. It was a town founded on injustice; without injustice it could not have become what it had become. ([Expository Notes](#))

**Gaebelein** writes that the next verses (Hab 2:12-14) are "of special interest, for they give us a picture of a godless civilization and its appointed end (**Ed**: In other words yes, it pictures the Babylonians demise, but their demise foreshadows the demise of all ungodliness at the Second Coming of Christ, Whose glory will fill the whole earth!). (Babylon's) cruel oppression, their ungodly gains, had built up a magnificent city. Excavations have shown what a marvelous civilization was in force when Babylon was mistress of the world. But the foundations of it all were iniquity and the blood of victims. Is it any better today? We have seen the top-notch of a boasted civilization, steeped in iniquity and defiance of God, suddenly collapsing and producing a war of horrors and cruelty which makes the conquests and atrocities of the Chaldeans pale into insignificance.

Judah's King Jehoiakim (see comment on Hab 2:11) was subject to this woe for he had squandered state funds and used forced labor to build a new palace for himself.

The prophet **Micah** accused **Judah** of this same sin...

Who (see Mic 3:9) build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice. (Mic 3:10)

### Habakkuk 2:13 "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?"

- **Is it not**: Ge 11:6-9 2Sa 15:31 Job 5:13,14 Ps 39:6 127:1,2 Pr 21:30 Isa 41:5-8 50:11 55:2 Jer 51:58,64 Mal 1:4
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The **NLT** helps understand the sense of this passage...

Has not the LORD Almighty (follows the Lxx kurios pantokrator = "Lord Almighty") promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain!

**Is it not indeed...** ? - This is a negative rhetorical question which (with the interrogative) conveys the sense of a strong positive declaration. This passage emphasizes the futility of "getting and spending" without depending on the Lord. Solomon's psalm Ps 127:1 illustrates the principle of the ultimate vanity in all *labor* that does not *co-labor* with the LORD (See Ge 11:4, 7 for illustration of

this principle fulfilled in the history of a people group at the Tower of Babel, the predecessor of the nation of Babylon)...

Unless the LORD builds the house,  
They labor in **vain** who build it;  
Unless the LORD guards the city,  
The watchman keeps awake in **vain**.  
(Ps 127:1 [note](#))

**Gaebelein** comments "how true it is today (that) "The peoples labor for the fire, the nations weary themselves for vanity." The day is approaching when this civilization will be swept away, and before the better things come, the kingdom is established and He reigns whose right it is, there will be the fires of judgment. And after that it will be true, as it cannot be true before, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

It is surprising that the **NAS** does not translate the Hebrew particle of interjection (hinneh is present in the original Hebrew text) which means "**Behold**", pay close attention to what follows.

**Jeremiah 51:58** records a similar prophecy...

Thus says the LORD of hosts,  
"The broad wall of Babylon will be completely razed,  
And her high gates will be set on fire;  
So the peoples will toil for nothing,  
And the nations become exhausted only for fire."

**LORD of hosts** - This is the name **Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts (of armies)**. This is the only other use of a specific Name of God by Habakkuk other than Hab 1:12.

**Peoples toil for fire** - In other words the "glory" of the Babylonian cities built by bloodshed were only fuel for the fire and like fuel would vanish in a moment, whereas the glory of the LORD would endure forever. One of the [Seven Wonders of the Ancient World](#) was Babylon's famous [Hanging Gardens](#), but where are those gardens today? And if there are any remains of the great architectural feats of the City of Babylon, they are but a few residual pieces or small models in museums!

**Barker** reminds us that...

**All work not serving God's purposes is futile work good only for the flames of history forgotten. God causes plans and peoples who are opposed to Him to fail.** (Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

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**GOD STILL RULES** - As the year 1999 came to a close, great leaders of the century were remembered, including Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt. During World War II, they led Great Britain and the United States to defeat Nazism and Fascism. Did you know that both men nearly lost their lives before the war began? In December 1931, Churchill was struck by a car as he crossed Fifth Avenue in New York City. In Miami in December 1933, an assassin's bullet barely missed Roosevelt and killed the man standing beside him. Both leaders could have died, but they survived. Why? I believe God wanted these two men alive to lead their respective nations to victory over the enemy.

The Bible teaches that God causes nations and their leaders to rise and fall (Daniel 2:21; 4:32-35; 5:21). When Habakkuk complained that it didn't seem right for God to use wicked Babylon to discipline Israel, the Lord assured the prophet that this did not mean evil would triumph. God was still in control and would one day bring about perfect justice (Habakkuk 2:13-14).

We too can be sure that our times are in God's hands. No matter what may happen in this world, God still rules!— by David C. Egner

This is my Father's world—  
Oh, let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the Ruler yet.  
—Babcock

**God's sovereignty  
overrules any calamity.**

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- **The earth:** Ps 22:27, Ps 67:1,2 Ps 72:19 Ps 86:9 Ps 98:1-3 Isa 6:3 Isa 11:9 Zec 14:8,9 Rev 11:15 Rev 15:4
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE COMING GLORY OF THE LORD

Then the GLORY of the LORD will be revealed,  
And all flesh will see it together;  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.  
(Isaiah 40:5)

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky,  
and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn,  
and they will see the SON OF MAN  
COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY  
with power and great GLORY .  
(Mt 24:30)

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His GLORY ."  
(Isaiah 6:3)

WORSHIP THE GLORIOUS ONE...  
SING IT OUT...

[O Glorious Day](#)

**For** - This is a **term of explanation**, which always begs the question "What is God explaining?" Hab 2:12-13 says that those who build a city with bloodshed and violence engage in an empty, futile effort, because that temporal "glory" would be eclipsed, indeed replaced, by the greater glory of the LORD. God explains to His perplexed prophet Habakkuk (**and to all His children** who have suffered injustice over the ages) that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD!

The antithesis of bloodshed and violence used to build a city (Hab 2:12) is the the justice and glory of the LORD filling the earth! What a striking contrast between the self-glorification of the Babylonians and the abiding glory of God! Play the song -

**Barker** explains the "**for**" this way...

Shame on those who build a city with bloodshed! (Hab 2:12) Their labor will come to nothing (Hab 2:13), but God is at work doing a great thing: spreading the knowledge of Himself. "The Lord declares that all punishment results as part of His plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of Himself... Because God is righteous and sovereign, no sin can go unpunished lest God's glory be diminished and [His] name sink in esteem." (Ibid)

This great prophecy of the coming glory of the Glorious One is given five times in the OT! Clearly God desires that His Name be exalted above all names. See Nu 14:21 Ps 72:19 Isa 6:3-note Isa 11:9-note Hab 2:14.

**A C Gaebelein** writes that...

The day is approaching when this civilization will be swept away, and before the better things come, the kingdom is established and He reigns whose right it is, there will be the fires of judgment. And after that it will be true, as it cannot be true before, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Although some writers spiritualize this prophecy, one could hardly say that the earth in Habakkuk's day was filled with much glory, nor is it today. This prophecy clearly awaits a future fulfillment at the Second Coming when the King of glory (Ps 24:7-10) returns to take His rightful Throne in Jerusalem.

Jehovah was buoying up His prophet's faith, emphasizing that the glory of God would one day fill this world now filled with evil, violence and corruption. We can begin to comprehend how Habakkuk was being transformed in his heart and mind, from an attitude of worry to one of worship!

The righteous Habakkuk was living by faith, trusting in God's promises to right all wrongs. Dear reader, struggling with "How long God?", "Why God?", may the Spirit of Truth bring about the same supernatural transformation in your heart and mind as you meditate on and receive this truth implanted which is able to

deliver your soul from doubt and worry, from sighing or sobbing to singing and shouting that His glory will one day fill this entire earth! You can stake your life on this truth!

**The earth** - This earth belongs to God as David declared...

The **earth** is the LORD'S, and all it contains,  
The world, and those who dwell in it.  
(Ps 24:1-[note](#))

**When will this prophecy be fulfilled?** Following the fall of "Babylon" (Rev 17-18) the Messiah will return "with power and great glory" [Mt 24:30 Mt 16:27) and every eye will see Him (Rev1:7) and the Land of Israel will be restored to the Jews at the beginning of the 1000 year reign in fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham (Ge 17:8). And so amid all the woes, the prophet catches a glimpse of the glorious Messianic Kingdom in which the tide of evil will be stemmed and the knowledge of the Lord shall flourish (Isa 11:9-11).

**Henry Morris** writes...

Despite the Nebuchadnezzars of the world (and the Napoleons and Hitlers and other would-be world rulers), God will establish His own Kingdom on earth at His **appointed time** (Habakkuk 2:3). Habakkuk here repeats the promise of Isaiah 11:9 (**Ed**: In other words at Messiah's **Second Coming** He will set up His Kingdom on earth - See **Millennium 2**).

**Knowledge** (03045) (**yada'**) in Hebrew thought means more than information. Knowledge is seen in fundamentally relational terms so that to **know** God is to be in a **right relationship with Him**, with characteristics of love, trust, respect, and open communication." Knowing involves intimacy and experience, as in the marriage relationship. So when God declares the earth **will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord** He is saying that is related to the inhabitants of the world **knowing** God not just **knowing about** God. **Jeremiah** also pictured a knowledge of the Lord that transcended geographical borders in his announcement of the New Covenant in Jer 31:31-34. **Ezekiel** used the phrase "**you will know that I am Jehovah**" 76 times indicating that His heart was that He be known relationally, intimately.

**Glory** ([03519](#)) (**kabod**) had the basic meaning to be heavy or weighty from which derives the idea of a "weighty" person, one who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect. Kabod is used 189x in the OT and more than 50% of uses convey the figurative sense.

In the OT **kabod** or **glory** is a technical term for God's manifest presence (see Ex 16:7), often connected with the **Shekinah glory cloud** (Ex 16:10) and with the Ark of the Covenant. It can also be represented as a consuming fire (Ex 24:17). Glory also involves "honor" or position of power. The **Glory of the LORD** reveals His person and dignity, and the proper response to such a revelation is to give God honor or glory" (cp. Ex 33:18). God's **glory** is essentially the profound, glowing, visible, confluent expression of the attributes of Deity which bears witness to a still more profound and incomprehensible reality of His essence. In His character and essence, He is "Spirit," and thus invisible to man (Jn 4:24), but He has made Himself known to man through revelation by His many names and titles, by His attributes, by His written Word, and finally by His living Word, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14). In the OT, God revealed His "GLORY" at Sinai (Ex 24:16, 17), in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38), and in the Jerusalem temple (1Ki 8:10, 11).

## **OH GLORIOUS DAY A SURE WORD OF PROPHECY!**

HOW LONG GOD? WHY GOD? Habakkuk was deeply distressed by the evil and injustice that surrounded him and cried out to Jehovah Who answered in part in chapter 2 with one of the most beautiful prophecies in the Bible, a prophecy giving all of God's children the promise of a future GLORIOUS DAY when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the GLORY of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab 2:14) What a Word of Promise and Hope this prophecy from Jehovah (Hab 2:14) must have been to the heart and soul of the perplexed prophet, who had been given an oracle (Hab 1:1, 5, 6) of the fierce Chaldean's (Babylonian's) coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, a destruction he knew would include the Holy Temple where the ("**Shekinah**") GLORY of God was manifest! Indeed, not many years later, the prophet Ezekiel watched in his vision of the final destruction of the Temple as "the GLORY of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been (on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies), to the threshold of the Temple" (Ezekiel 9:3) and finally "the GLORY of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city" (Ezekiel 11:23). The Glory of God had departed the Temple. But God in the midst of wrath remembered mercy (Hab 3:2) and so He sent His GLORIOUS ONE (Jesus) Who returned to the Temple some 500 years later, John recording that "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us and we beheld His GLORY, GLORY as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:1, 14) "He (Jesus) came to His own and those who were His own did not receive Him" (Jn 1:11). Paul added that "none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the LORD OF

GLORY." (1Cor 2:8). Then Jesus "ascended far above all the heavens." (Eph 4:10) Once again the GLORY had departed. But centuries earlier God had promised Habakkuk that a GLORIOUS DAY was coming, a day when all wrongs will be made right, all evils will be perfectly vindicated (Ro 12:19, Dt 32:35), all suffering will become GLORY (2Cor 4:17, Ro 8:18), for in that GLORIOUS DAY "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and GREAT GLORY" (Mt 24:30), the GLORIOUS DAY when all "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the GLORY of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." In light of such soul satisfying and heart encouraging truth, such "a sure word of prophecy, (we) do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the (GLORIOUS) DAY dawns and the Morning (Day) Star arises in (our) hearts." (2Peter 1:19). Until that GLORIOUS DAY, may He find us daily LOOKING for Him, our LOOKING motivating us to be LIVING for Him (enabled by His Spirit). In the meantime, may our Father grant that His Spirit enable us to pray without ceasing -

**"Blessed be His glorious Name forever and  
MAY THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY.  
AMEN AND AMEN."**

(Ps 72:19)

Take a moment to praise and worship the King of GLORY (Ps 24:7-10) as you sing GLORIOUS DAY...[GLORIOUS DAY](#)

**See Related Resource: Glory of God**

**As the waters cover the sea** - This **term of comparison** (simile) gives us a clear picture of the pervasive nature of Jehovah in this great (glorious) future day.

How futile for fallen men and nations to labor in vain to fill the world with their fame and power! Indeed, the day is on its way when God's glory will fill this earth, not the glory of the Chaldeans, nor any other man or nation! **Maranatha**, Jesus Christ! (1Cor 16:22)

**Isaiah** records a parallel description...

They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, **for** (explaining why they will not hurt or destroy) the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 Then it will come about in that day that the nations (Gentiles) will resort to the root of Jesse (Messiah), Who will stand as a signal (a "Banner") for the peoples (Gentiles); And His resting place will be glorious (His glorious throne in Jerusalem). 11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the **remnant** of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (Isaiah 11:9-11-**note**)

**Wiersbe** observes that...

In contrast to the shame and infamy of Babylon, God promised that His glory would one day cover the earth (Hab 2:14). The "glory" of Babylon didn't last, but the glory of the Lord will abide forever. Certainly, the Lord was glorified when Babylon fell before her enemies in 539BC (see Jer. 50-51), and He will be glorified when the Babylon of the last days is destroyed, that final great world empire that opposes God (Rev 17-18). When Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom, then God's glory will indeed cover the whole earth (Isa 11:1-9). The fall of "Babylon the great" is a reminder to us that what man builds without God can never last. The exploiter will eventually lose everything, and man's "utopias" will turn out to be disasters. We can't exploit people made in God's image and expect to escape God's judgment. It may take time, but eventually the judgment falls. ([Be Amazed \(Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Malachi\)](#))

**The Homiletical Commentary** writes...

God is glorious in character and procedure. And of this glory He is so jealous that He will not give it to another (Isa 42:8) The glory here is the revelation of impartial just and irresistible power; a manifestation condemning sin and honoring truth. Not only the glory, but the knowledge of it, shall fill the earth. Men shall recognize it, see mercy and judgment, and learn that "verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, He is a God that judgeth the earth." The measure in which this blessing is bestowed. "As the waters cover the sea." This indicates (1) Depth. God's judgments are a mighty deep, and the knowledge of them shall not be superficial. The nations shall feel them, and be convicted by the revelation of the Divine glory (2) Abundance. The waters cover the sea, and spread far and wide. This knowledge will fill the earth. 3. Permanence. The waters of the sea abide, can never be exhausted nor diminished.

The earth to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. His moral excellencies- holiness, righteousness, and grace; His natural perfections - power, wisdom, omniscience and omnipotence to made known. The

Necessity of Doing It: God is seen in the physical universe, and in the powers of the human mind (Ro 1:20, 21); but sin, like a mist, hides His glory. No intellectual effort, no human light whatever, can do the work. God must shine in Christ, shine into the world and into the soul "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (2Cor 4:6) Will it ever be done? How dark the days of the prophet! How improbable the present signs! Yet how much has been done already. Sufficient to guarantee future success. God Himself has pledged His Word. ([Homiletical commentary on the Minor prophets](#))

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**OUR ONLY HOPE** - We should live... godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope.- Titus 2:12, 13

An unknown author wrote, "When I was first converted, and for some years afterward, the second coming of Christ was a thrilling idea, a blessed hope, a glorious promise, the theme of some of the most inspiring songs of the church.

"Later it became an accepted tenet of faith, a cardinal doctrine, a kind of invisible trademark of my ministry. It was the favorite arena of my theological discussions, in the pulpit and in print. Now suddenly the second coming means something more to me. Paul called it world."

From the human standpoint, there is no solution for the problems of the world. Leaders seem to be completely frustrated in trying to deal with the unrest and increasing violence in society. The only complete and permanent solution is found in the return of Christ. When He comes, He will set up His kingdom. He will rule the nations in righteousness, and "**the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea**" (Hab. 2:14).

As we await our Savior's return, let us keep on praying, working, and watching, while "looking for the blessed hope" - our only hope for this world. Richard W. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

And for the hope of His return,  
Dear Lord, Your name we praise;  
With longing hearts we watch and wait  
For that great day of days! - Sherwood

**As this world grows darker,  
the promised return of the Son grows brighter.**

**Habakkuk 2:15 "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness!:"**

- **Five woes** Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19
- **So as to look** - Ge 9:22 Ex 32:25
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SHAMEFUL EXPLOITATION

**Woe #4 - Excessive Debauchery – The Shamers Will Be Exposed to Public Shame** ([Paul Apple](#))

In Hab 2:15-17 the Babylonians are described as lascivious people who use alcohol as a prelude to perversion.

**Gaebelein** sees drink as a figurative description of Babylon "Drunkenness here is a figure of the utter prostration of the nations which the Chaldeans had conquered; they stripped them in their wicked endeavors of all they possessed."

**Constable** - God would judge Babylon because the Babylonians had deceived their neighbor nations with the result that they were able to take advantage of them. The Babylonians had behaved like a man who gets a woman drunk so she will lose her self-control and he can then undress her. That the Babylonians took advantage of their victims sexually is implied in the illustration as is their love for wine. ([Expository Notes](#))

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**Habakkuk 2:16 "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own**

**nakedness. The cup in the LORD'S right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory.:**

- **Filled:** Pr 3:35 Isa 47:3 Ho 4:7 Php 3:19
- **Drink:** Ps 75:8 Isa 49:26 51:21-23 Jer 25:26,27 51:57 Rev 18:6
- **Expose:** Isa 20:4 47:3 Na 3:5
- **Cup:** Jer 25:27-29
- **Disgrace:** Isa 28:7,8 Ho 7:5
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Gaebelein** - For this they will have to drink the cup of fury from the hand of the Lord, and shall be covered with vile shame, so that their glory will be blotted out.

**MacArthur on nakedness** - This word refers to **foreskin,** expressing in Hebrew thought the greatest contempt, the sign of being an alien from God. See note on Jer 4:4. **cup in the LORD's right hand.** A metaphor referring to divine retribution, served up by His powerful right hand (cf. Ps 21:8). What the Chaldeans did to others would also be done to them (Hab 2:7, 8). **disgrace will come upon your glory.** Carrying out the metaphor of drunkenness, here is a reference to the humiliation of "shameful spewing." The very thing in which they gloried would become the object of their shame (**ED: THIS REMINDS ONE OF Gal 6:7-8-note**). While the Lord's glory would be "as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14), Babylon's glory would be covered with shame. (MacArthur Study Bible)

**Constable** - As they had made their neighbors drunk, so the Lord would give them a cup of judgment that would make them drunk. Yahweh's right hand is a figure for His strong personal retribution, giving back in kind what the person being judged had given (cf. Isa. 51:17–23; Jer. 25:15–17; Lam. 4:21; Matt. 20:22; 26:42; 1 Cor. 11:29). Having swallowed the cup's contents the Babylonians would disgrace themselves rather than honoring and glorifying themselves as they did presently. Their future disgrace contrasts with Yahweh's future glory (v. 14). They would expose their own nakedness as they had exposed the nakedness of others (v. 15). Nakedness involves vulnerability as well as shame (cf. Gen. 9:21–25). The Lord pictured Babylon as a contemptible, naked drunk who had lost his self-control and the respect of everyone including himself. ([Expository Notes](#))

**Habakkuk 2:17 "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, And the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants.:**

- **Violence:** Zec 11:1
- **Because:** Hab 2:8 Ps 55:23 137:8 Pr 28:17 Rev 18:20-24
- **Town:** Jer 50:28,33,34 51:24,34-37
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** - This is **term of explanation** begs the question "What is God explaining?" Why does utter disgrace come? Reason - the violence done to Lebanon.

**Constable** - Babylon's violence (ethical and moral injustice) would come back to cover him because he had rapaciously stripped Lebanon of its vegetation and animals. However bloodshed in Lebanon's main town and the slaughter of its inhabitants was an even more serious crime. "Lebanon" is probably a [synecdoche](#) for Israel, as it is elsewhere (cf. 2 Kings 14:9; Jeremiah 22:6; Jeremiah 22:23), and "the town" most likely refers to Jerusalem. ([Expository Notes](#))

**Ryrie** comments on the violence done to Lebanon - The violence done to Lebanon by several rulers in cutting down its great forests and killing its cattle would be done to Judah (see Isa 14:7-8).

**Habakkuk 2:18 "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols.:**

- **Profit:** Isa 37:38 Isa 42:17 Isa 44:9,10 Isa 45:16,20 Isa 46:1,2,6-8 Jer 2:27,28 Jer 10:3-5 Jer 50:2 Ro 6:21)
- **Teacher:** Jer 10:8,14,15 Jonah 2:8 Zec 10:2 Ro 1:23-25 2Th 2:9-11 1Ti 4:1,2 Rev 13:11-15 Rev 19:20)
- **Handiwork:** Ps 115:4-8 Ps 135:15-18 Isa 1:31 Isa 44:14-20
- **Speechless idols:** 1Co 12:2
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FIFTH WOE: IDOL WORSHIP!

In Hab 2:18-20 the Babylonians are described as idolaters who worship inanimate objects.

**What profit is the idol** - Good question. Isaiah describes the "profit" of idols...

Isaiah 41:24 Behold, you (IDOL) are of no account, And your work amounts to nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

Isaiah 44:9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

**Idol** (graven image) ([06459](#))(**pesel** from **pasal** = to hew, cut as in Ex 34:1) is a noun that refers to something carved (graven) or cast image - normally carved from wood or chiseled from rock, but it can also be poured or cast (Isa40:19; 44:10). Isa40:19 describes the "casting" of an idol that is then plated or overlaid with gold.

The first use of **pesel** is Ex 20:4 (Lev 26:2-note, Dt 5:8) which is God's command "You shall not make for yourself an idol." In the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) the Greek word used for **pesel** in Ex 20:4 is **eidolon** (from **eidos** = that which is seen, what is visible, figure, appearance) is primarily a phantom, form, image, shadow or likeness. Note that other uses of **pesel**, including the use here in Hab 2:18, are translated with a word found only in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), the adjective **gluptos** which means a thing carved or a graven image. In Dt 4:23-note the result of forgetting the Mosaic covenant is that they make a graven image. Dt 4:25-note is a prophecy saying Israel would make idols. In Dt 27:15 God says the man who makes an idol is cursed! The concentration of uses of **pesel** in Judges 17:1-13-note and Judges 18:1-33-note shows the defiling, abominable effect of forgetting the LORD their God (Judges 3:7-note) as summarized in the tragic statement " In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Jdg 21:25-note).

**Gaebelein** - They worshiped wood and stone. Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image in the plain of Dura (Da 3:1-note) and demanded worship for it... Finally the age ends in idolatry, for the **image of the beast** of Revelation 13 (see Rev 13:14-note, Rev 13:15-note, see also topic = [Image of Beast](#)) is still future, making its appearance at the end of this age, specifically at the mid-point of Daniel's Seventieth Week), which marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, cp Mt 24:15, 21) (See also Rev 9:20-note, Rev 21:8-note, Rev 22:15-note)

**Speechless idols** - Paul writes to the saints living in the idol filled city of Corinth, many of whom had been idol worshipers...

You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the **dumb** (**aphonos** from *a* = without + *phone* = voice > voiceless) idols, however you were led. (1Co 12:2)

**Habakkuk 2:19 "Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, And there is no breath at all inside it.:"**

- **Five woes** Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19)(Who says to a piece of wood: 1Ki 18:26-29 Ps 97:7 Isa 44:17 Jer 51:47 Da 3:7,18,29 Da 5:23 Jonah 1:5
- **It is overlaid:** Isa 40:19 46:6 Jer 10:4,9 Da 3:1 Acts 17:29 Rev 17:4
- **No breath:** Ps 135:17
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Woe #5 – Extreme Idolatry – The Worshipers of Idols Will Be Mocked** ([Paul Apple](#))

**Piece of wood "Awake!" To a mute stone "Arise!"** - How much more foolish could one be than to speak to an inanimate object! Such is the incredible power of idolatry to ensnare and deceive!

This reminds one of **Elijah's mockery** of the false gods of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in First Kings...

And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." (1Kgs 18:27)

**Jeremiah** also issued a bit of biting sarcasm against God's chosen people who had been ensnared by the deception of idolatry describing them...



Who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' And to a stone, 'You gave me birth.' For they have turned their back to Me, And not their face; But in the time of their trouble they will say, 'Arise and save us.' (Jer 2:27)

**James Montgomery Boice** writes...

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. Unfortunately, we also have this in our time.

**It is hard to understand why an educated, scientifically minded, modern people such as we imagine ourselves to be should be so intrigued by spiritism and the occult; but our chapter explains it perfectly. It is simply the end condition of a people who will not walk by faith in God but who trust to their own devices instead. We trust ourselves, but we are not adequate for the trust. So, finding no help in mere human beings and having rejected the true God, we turn to superstition.**

The most widespread American version of occult practices is astrology, and I have often asked myself why astrology is so popular in our "enlightened" age. I have found three explanations. First, astrology offers religion without moral responsibility. This is inherent in the very axioms of astrology, which substitute a causality of stars and planets for human free will, liberty, and responsibility. It is fatalism, and fatalism absolves man from duty. This outlook is also evident in other forms of occult practices where nothing is taught or said that might possibly make an individual feel guilty for something he or she has done. Second, astrology offers revelation without the disconcerting doctrines of the Bible. It pretends to give a word from beyond, but it does not speak of sin, death, or judgment. The Bible does. It says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Third, astrology offers salvation without a real Savior. ([The Minor Prophets: Micah-Malachi: James Montgomery Boice](#))

**Habakkuk 2:20 "But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.!"**

- **The LORD:** Ps 11:4 Ps 115:3 Ps 132:13,14 Isa 6:1 Isa 66:1,6 Jonah 2:4,7 Eph 2:21,22
- **Silent:** Ps 46:10 Ps 76:8,9 Zep 1:7 Zec 2:13
- [Habakkuk 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The LORD Himself testifies that the final outcome of human history will be worship of the one Holy and Righteous King. Hallelujah!

**Gaebelein** - First, by way of contrast, their idols are dumb; Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the living God. He is in His holy temple; from there He takes notice of the doings of men. He is the Sovereign, the only Potentate; the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance (Isaiah 40:15). "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22). But this closing verse of the chapter of woe has a prophetic meaning. When at last the world-power is dethroned, when the Lord returns, He will take His place as King of Kings. He will be in His holy temple, and then all the earth will keep silence before Him.

**Ronald Blue** writes that "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." (BKC)

**QUIET TIME** - Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10). A group of British miners in Australia heard the sweet song of a thrush one evening as they worked. The lovely sound hushed these hardened men into absolute silence. In the stillness their hearts became tender as memories of their boyhood days in their beloved England swept over them. Similarly, when we are quiet, God speaks to us most clearly and effectively.

Stepping into the stillness of a cold winter morning and gazing upon fields and buildings coated with dazzling frost or covered with sparkling snow have been unforgettable experiences. During the night, the silvery frost had come silently, its unseen fingers deftly touching the landscape. Or feathery snowflakes had descended with-out awakening a single soul. The silence of such a moment brings to mind the words of Psalm 46:10:"Be still, and know that I am God." I would also think of Habakkuk 2:20"The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

God speaks to us during other times of silence as well. Sooner or later we lie sleepless as a result of illness, grief, or anxiety. These can be precious moments of quiet solitude when we tell the Lord we love Him and want Him to speak to us. In the stillness we can learn lessons we'd learn in no other way. We experience a new peace—a fresh sense of His presence. But we need not wait for a sleepless night! —H. V. Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**The quiet hour is the power hour.**

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**The Beauty Of Silence** - Truly my soul silently waits for God.—Psalm 62:1 Written on the wall behind the pulpit of the church we attended in my teens were these words: "The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Habakkuk 2:20). And keep silence we did! All eight of us boys said nothing to one another as we sat waiting for the service to begin. I loved this quiet time and often succeeded in pushing thoughts about girls and the Detroit Tigers out of my mind. The best I could, I tried to reflect on the wonder of God and His salvation. And in the silence I often sensed His presence.

Today we live in a noisy world. Many people can't even drive without music blaring from their car, or the beat of the bass vibrating their vehicle. Even many church services are marked more by noise than by quiet reflection.

In ancient times the pagans cried out in a noisy frenzy to their idols (1Kings 18:25, 26, 27, 28, 29). In sharp contrast, the psalmist saw the wisdom of silence, because in quiet reverence God can be heard. In the stillness of the night under a starry sky, in a hushed sanctuary, or in a quiet room at home, we can meet the living God and hear Him speak.

The psalmist's words are relevant today: "Wait silently for God alone" (Psalm 62:5).

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Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
While I wait on Thee;  
Hushed my heart to listen  
In expectancy.  
—Grimes

**To hear God's voice,  
turn down the world's volume.**

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**Our God Is Marching On** - The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him. —Habakkuk 2:20 In 1861, during the US Civil War, author and lecturer Julia Ward Howe visited Washington, DC. One day she went outside the city and saw a large number of soldiers marching. Early the next morning she awoke with words for a song in her mind. She was aware of all the ugliness of the war, but her faith led her to write: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." She saw, I believe, that in spite of and through all the ugliness, God was "marching on" toward the day when He will right the wrongs of the ages.

The prophet Habakkuk came to a similar conclusion. Chapter 1 of his book tells us how troubled he was when he learned that God was going to punish the people of Judah by letting them be conquered by the wicked Babylonians. In chapter 2, God assured His servant that—in spite of and through all the ugliness and wrongs of history—He is "marching on" toward the day when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab 2:14). If we believe that God is "marching on," in spite of all the brutal conflicts that mark our day, we will not despair. We can quietly await the final verdict from our Lord, who rules the universe from "His holy temple" (Hab 2:20). —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God rules as Sovereign on His throne,  
He judges great and small;  
And those who would His earth destroy  
Beneath His rod shall fall.  
—D. De Haan

**Someday the scales of justice will be perfectly balance**