

Habakkuk's Dilemma #2

Scripture: Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

Introduction

- Review:
 - Habakkuk – a godly Israelite – living in Jerusalem near its end (just before the exile)
 - Habakkuk in Jerusalem & Judea, a troubled nation with a worsening spiritual climate, being threatened by the world's superpower
 - Habakkuk's dilemma: God seemed to be either impotent or unconcerned
 - God's answer: He will cleanse away the evil, the spiritual adultery by raising up the Babylonians, a great though pagan and evil power
- God's answer raises a further dilemma (or complaint): How can it be that a holy God could or would use an unholy instrument as cruel and idolatrous as the Babylonians?
- Application questions/issues:
 - On a national scale: Can it be conceived that God could use a person or a people – who either have no regard for God or a very distorted and untrue knowledge of God – whose behaviour is despicable and sinful – for the purpose of purifying His people?
 - On a personal level: Is it possible that God could use a mean, non-Christian boss, or an unkind family member, or a teasing, taunting school mate to work a cleansing and renewing work deep within us?
- The issue is *not* the actual event that we might face – rather how we respond to God's intentions and purposes through the events and circumstances He allows to touch our lives?

1) THE SHOCKING, APPARENT INCONSISTENCES IN THE WORLD

- a) Habakkuk appeals to God's character:

- i) God is everlasting – v.12a; cf. Psalm 90:1-2 – not like the arbitrary ways of the gods of other nations
 - (1) Implication: “It is impossible that You can ever be destroyed – will You let Your people, Your holy city and holy place perish?”
 - ii) God is holy – v.12b – He is totally distinct from any other god that the peoples worship and submit to.
 - (1) Note: “*my Holy One*” – the beautiful combination of the intimate with the unique and distinctive attribute of God’s character – the one aspect that separates God from man (“holy”) together with the relational aspect that unites God with man
 - (2) Implication: “We will not die” – God is not like the other gods who would delight to see the destruction of his people.
 - iii) God is the just Judge – v.12c – He executes judgment upon the doers and workers of evil
 - iv) God is the Rock – v.12d – the Safety, Security and Defense of the righteous
 - v) God is pure – v.13a – in Him there is no trace of evil.
 - (1) Implication: “It is unthinkable that our God would tolerate any evil in any shape or form” – rather He will execute judgment with a vengeance.
 - vi) Conclusion:
 - (1) All these are true statements about God – truths that comfort God’s true people who take refuge in Him – see Psalm 90:1
 - (2) But the question arises: Are man’s interpretations and conclusions concerning these truths about God complete or perfect? Is God bound to man’s understanding of God and His ways? How free is God to carry out His divine purposes according to God’s infinite purposes and knowledge?
- 2) Habakkuk shares his dilemma with God – v.13b
- a) It appears to him that by allowing evil to go unchecked, and by using evil people, God is condoning evil.
 - b) Habakkuk opens his heart up further telling God how he views the circumstances of life around him – vs.14-17 – N.B. The believing person may walk before God in all honesty, yet in a holy fear of God

- c) The realities that Habakkuk is grappling with include:
 - i) Man is like a fish in an ocean = the weaker the prey of the stronger – v.14
 - ii) The wicked, like a fisherman who worships his net, lives in luxury at the expense of others – vs.15-16
 - iii) How can this condition go on unchecked? – v.17 – can a God of mercy allow a people without mercy to destroy others?
- 3) Habakkuk takes his stand to hear God’s response – 2:1
 - a) He likens himself to a “watchman” guarding a city – v.1a
 - b) He expects God to respond, i.e. he looks with expectancy to hear and see what His response will be – v.1b
 - i) Compare: Some shoot up questions or arguments to God but don’t expect an answer, or don’t wait to hear what God will say – and some don’t even want an answer nor are they interested in listening to what He would say anyhow. Consequently, they fail to hear God’s voice – just listen to their own voice. (Cf. Luke 18:11).
 - c) Notice that the “complaint” is not a personal one – rather he wants to be ready to answer the questions of others – v.1c
 - i) Compare: A common question or issue raised by people – God’s people need to be ready to give a reasonable and biblical answer to the questions of others – see 1 Peter 3:15.

2. THE TERRIBLE YET REAL INEVITABILITIES FOR THE WORLD

- a) God’s answer is a “revelation” – v.2 – truth/facts that He knows will happen – truths that can and must be trusted and believed by God’s people – these are far more than “inspired insights” like man’s predictions concerning the “times” or future.
 - i) To be written down – v.2 – as a testimony to God’s character after it has taken place
 - ii) To be shared with God’s people – v.2 – as a source of encouragement to them

- iii) Its fulfillment “awaits an appointed time,” i.e. a time appointed by God – v.3a – “it speaks of the end.”
 - (1) Implication: The fulfillment will take place in God’s time frame, not man’s – therefore, wait patiently for God to act
- iv) Certainty and assurance – “and will not prove false it will certainly come and will not delay” – v.3
 - (1) Application – how does this truth/fact relate to Jesus’ return?
 - (a) It was written down – hence it is rooted in God’s divine and authoritative Word – it is truth even though it might appear to be nonsense to the world
 - (b) It is to be shared with God’s people – His servants are to act as “heralds” of His second coming – brings comfort and encouragement to them so that they do not lose heart – cf. 1 Thess.4:18
 - (c) Its fulfillment will take place in God’s appointed time – see Mark 13:32
 - (d) It is certain – there is no delay – cf. 2 Peter 3:8ff.
- b) God’s true people are called to respond:
 - i) “Wait for it” – v.3c
 - (1) We are prone to impatience and unbelief if something isn’t immediately or soon visible
 - (2) We do not find puzzling delays easy to cope with – often all we have to hold on to as we press on in the face of such mysteries is God’s Word – how important it is that we hold on to it and wait patiently for God to act rather than trying to sort out all the unsolved mysteries and unraveled dilemmas – cf. Rom.8:22-25.
 - ii) “But the righteous will live (be kept safe) by his faith” – v.4b
 - (1) The righteous, godly and faithful people of God were those who kept an undying trust in God, in His promises and in His perfect character, i.e. those who held on to the revelations that God gave to His servants like Jeremiah, Daniel, and Habakkuk – cf. the sinful and unbelieving attitude of many to the messages that God had given to His servants, the prophets.

- (2) Compare: Paul quotes this verse in Rom.1:17 – applies this truth to NT believers. How can persecuted believers survive the tests of their faith today? Only by living by a conviction that God is just, righteous and sovereign. Cf. Jer.9:23-24.
- c) God’s “revelation” was given in order to reassure Habakkuk and God’s true people of His righteous and holy character:
- i) The revelation speaks of the SINS of the Babylonians:
- (1) Their pride and arrogance – vs.4,5 – Jer.50:31-32; Dan.4:29f; Prov.16:5,18.
 - (2) Their greed – vs.5,6,8a,9a.
 - (3) Their unbridled, unchecked bloodshed and wanton destruction – vs.8b,10,12,17
 - (a) N.B. They had no reverence for the sanctity of human life, no regard for God’s creation – v.8d; Gen.9:5b-6, even for animals – v.17.
 - (4) Their lust – v.15
 - (5) Their idolatry – vs.18-19; cf. 1:11,16.
 - (a) N.B. Idolatry = the root of all these evils – is a refusal to acknowledge God as GOD – cf. Rom.1:21.
- ii) The revelation declares clearly God’s JUDGMENT upon the Babylonians because of their sin – (“Woe” = Trouble and disaster is looming and coming soon to):
- (1) Inherent in their sin is the inevitable judgment of God towards their sin – the results of their sin are just the beginning of God’s meting out His justice – sin always, in every case, “finds” or catches up with a person both in the present as well as in the future – vs.7-8.
 - (a) Compare: Whoever breaks one of God’s laws though for a period may seem to get off scott-free will sooner or later eat the bitter fruit, e.g. unfaithfulness in breaking the marriage covenant.
 - (2) All man’s toil rooted in ambitions of vainglory are empty/vain – v.13 – Ecclesiastes – in other words, a complete, utter and final loss.

- (3) Finally God will bring His own judgment upon the ruthless Babylonians in His appointed time – v.16
- (a) Compare: All who rebel against God – unless they repent and turn to God for mercy – will face the coming judgment – it is not for God’s people to implement God’s vengeance – see Rom.12:19.
- iii) The revelation foresees the coming day of God’s GLORY – v.14:
- (1) Nothing can prevent or hinder this day from coming
- (2) Note: “Knowledge” (not to be confused with an intellectual or academic knowledge of facts) – see 2 Cor.4:6; John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16-18 – hence it is important to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of God to the ends of the earth dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unbelief – 1 Tim.1:13.
- (3) This day is yet to come – we will witness it – cf. Matt.25:31; 24:30-32; Rev.1:7.

Conclusion

- In the light of this “revelation” = “God is in His holy temple – God is alive and observing all that is going on in this world – governing and determining all things for the purpose of accomplishing His eternal purposes – see Isaiah 9:7.
 - Therefore, God summons all to SILENCE before Him – v.20: “Let all the earth be silent before Him.”
 - Therefore, let us ...
 - Throw off our anxieties and fears, also our many attempts to understand and work out the world’s problems, even our negative talk about all that is going on – all such talk is “vain” and shot through with unbelief (cf. Heb.3:12-13)
 - Focus on God – keep filling your minds and hearts with the unchanging and glorious truths of the knowledge of God – these truths will carry us through “the evil day” (Eph.5:16;6:13) – cf. Hab.1:12 – this is what Habakkuk did.
- God’s answer for Habakkuk’s dilemma, also for us and our dilemma:

- God is always GOD – perfect in all His ways, wise, loving, all-powerful – His ways are always consistent with His perfect character.
- At times we may not comprehend God and His ways – or and we may fail to correctly interpret them to others – however, our weaknesses and limitations do not for one moment alter the truth/facts – they are as solid as a rock – cf. 1 Peter 1:24-25.
- God calls us to walk by “faith”, not according to “sight” (i.e. our reason that demands evidences before we accept the truth), holding on to HIS WORLD as the unchangeable truth.

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