

Hab. 2:6-20 Lessons in Divine Judgment (part 2)

Divine Judgment is our topic again today as we continue in Hab. 2. Let me recall our 3 truths from last week: 1) Divine judgment is sure; 2) Divine judgment is right; 3) Divine judgment is for the good of God's people. Today, I have 2 more lessons: 1) Divine judgment always comes at the right time; and 2) Divine judgment is for the glory of God. So let's begin.

1. Divine Judgment Always Comes at the Right Time. Look at 2:3: **“For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”** As God has reminded Habakkuk that judgment will come upon Israel for their sins, judgment will also come upon the Babylonians, and this at the RIGHT TIME. This is another great mystery. “WHEN?” And “HOW LONG?” we often ask. Even the Lord Jesus said to his disciples: **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority”** (Acts 1:7).

Let me give an example from Scriptures. In Gen. 15:16, we read: **“And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”** What is this verse about? Well, these words are to Abraham. God had already made a covenant with him, saying, I will bless you! I will give you a great land! I will multiply your descendants! (Gen. 12). And Abraham believed God (Gen. 15:6). However, the fulfillment of this promise was still far off. In fact, Abraham would not see these things in his lifetime. The Bible tells us that a **“deep sleep fell upon Abraham.”** And, a **“great darkness fell upon him”** (v. 12). Then the Lord said to Abraham (my paraphrase), **“your offspring will be afflicted for 400 years,”** which we know to be their time in Egypt. And then we come to v. 16 where God says they shall come back to the land of Canaan. And this “coming back” is referenced with the completion of the “iniquity of the Amorites.” In other words, **“I will judge the Amorites at the time I have determined.”** In this truth God is saying, **“their sins will be judged, but in my time. For I know EXACTLY when their full sins will be measured.”**

When we think about Amorites, they were always wicked and unrighteous, deserving of punishment. But, many generations came and went, living under times of relative peace. And then, at the right time, **“the sins of the fathers falls upon the sons.”** In Job 21:7 we read: **“Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?”** And then down in vv. 19-20 he says, **“You say, ‘God stores up their iniquity for their children.’ Let him pay it out to them, that they may know it. Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.”** Jesus says the same of the Pharisees of his day in Matt. 23, after pronouncing “woe” upon “woe” for their sins, says, **“Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers”** (v. 32). And we know that judgment came upon that generation and their children in 70 A.D. Deut. 32:34 God says, **“Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.”** Brothers and sisters, there is a DAY of judgment coming. It will happen at the appointed time. AND, until then, there will be, to use a favorite phrase of our culture, sure and clear, “equitable” judgments of God for sin.

Let me give some applications here.

Application: The measure of sin fills gradually. Those that continue in unrepentance and wickedness are treasuring up unto themselves divine judgment. With Habakkuk the judgment of Israel was close, but still some years away. And with Babylon there would still be at least 2 generations. There will come a time when God says “enough” and judgment will come. This is still a great mystery, but nonetheless true. When I look at our own country, I do not know where we are in the great plan of God’s judgment. One thing is sure. If we continue to disregard the truth; if we continue to sin as we do against God, we are storing up for ourselves great judgment.

At the same time we must consider another application: the long-suffering of God. As we saw last week, divine judgment is for the good of God’s people. If we consider our sins, judgment should come immediately. But, it does not. This is God’s long suffering. And in this time, we repent. I think of the 2 Pet. 3:9 which says, “**The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**” This truth applies to both nations and individuals. But when I think of my own rebellion and disregard for the Gospel as it was preached to me in various ways and at various times in my life I can only rejoice at the mercy of God shown to me in Christ.

Application: Divine judgment will come suddenly upon those who are not prepared. This is general truth taught throughout the Bible. Jesus says to us: “**But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.**” Therefore, as a non-Christian, repent! Look unto Christ! Believe upon Him! Receive Him! . . . As the ONE who died on the cross and bore the divine judgment (wrath) of God in the place of sinners.

Application: As Christians we must also take heed to the warnings of judgment, seeing that we have not believed in vain. Let me read one passage in Hebrews 10:23-27: “**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.**”

Application: Judgment comes to curtail sin in this world. In other words, judgment comes so we don’t merely destroy ourselves. If God does not judge Israel, they will grow more and more ungodly. I thank God for judgment that we do not become mere beasts. I think of some of the sins we are committing now as a country (not as Christians, but as a nation). I must say, as hard as it is, from one perspective as Christians we must say with Habakkuk: “God, judge our country so that we might not sin, that we might not abort more babies, that we might not trample your commands by confusing the distinction of men and women, that we might have good husbands

and wives, mothers and fathers, raising children in families under your common grace, that we might know that there is one ONE race, and that You are no respecter of persons and never discriminate, that we might not use the minds you have given us to make weapons of mass destruction, or impose our sinful wills upon unethical medical research, that we might not lie and cheat and steal, etc. Let's move on.

2. The Purpose of Divine Judgment Is the Glory of God. Look at v. 14: **“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”** Some may find the interpretation of this verse to be difficult since it is found right in the middle of divine judgment. In other words, why speak about the glory of the Lord filling the earth when God is about to judge both Israel and then Babylon. There is a lot of truth here. But, in the immediate context we see the Babylonians doing everything they can to build their civilization for their own glory. They only think of themselves and their own glory. In v. 4, he is full of pride. His **“soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him.”** In v. 5 his greedy: **“His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough.”** In v. 6 he **“heaps up what is not his own-- . . .”** In v. 9 **“he gets evil gain for his house.”** In v. 12 he **“builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity.”** (etc.) Now look at v. 13: **“Behold it is not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing.”** Here, Habakkuk is saying, *“Babylon, you sin by thinking that you are on the throne. You are working for your own glory. But, divine judgment is coming your way. And, this judgment will come to ALL who sin against God.”* Again, v. 14: **“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”**

Brothers and sisters, I am reminded of the words of Jesus who says **“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”** (Matt. 16:26). Civilizations throughout history have done what the Babylonians did in Habakkuk's day. They work and conquer and subject other nations as if survival of the fittest were their only rule. As Nimrod built the city of Babylon upon iniquity, so do the nations of this world build their cities. And the reason they do this is because of their great pride that elevates themselves above God. Yet, as quickly as they elevate themselves above God, judgment falls upon them.

I think of Ps. 2; turn with me there. **“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?”** This is exactly what we see in Habakkuk. V. 13b the **“peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing.”** And in vv. 2-3: **“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”** Brothers and sisters, this is what sinful people do! We gather together for our own glory to do our own things in our own time, in our own ways.

I must recall briefly what we talked about last week. Think back to Gen. 1 before sin entered the world. What was God's command to Adam and Eve? Gen. 1:27-28: **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** Our task is to spread the glory of God throughout the earth as we have children and multiply. But, what happened? Sin entered the

world. Adam disobeyed. And instead of spreading righteousness they spread sin. Adam and his kin do not fill the earth with the glory of God, but instead they fill it with the glory of themselves . . . as sinners. But Habakkuk, right in the middle of a book on judgment, says, **“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”** He is saying, God will judge. But, in his judgment will come glory; and his glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Is there anything in the sea that is not covered with water? So how will God do this? With Habakkuk, it will be the judgment of both Israel and Babylon. And God certainly gets the glory in this judgment . . . And in ALL judgments upon sin. But, there is the still the problem of sin, even after these judgments. So How will this happen? It will happen through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Turn back with me to Ps. 2. Vv. 4-5: **“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury . . .”** But notice what he says next in v. 6 ff. **“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”** Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. **Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”**

These words look forward to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, divine judgment has fallen upon the Son. This is the cross, the judgment of God upon the sinless Son. And those look upon the Son, those who “kiss” the son, do not find the judgment of God, but instead find mercy and grace and forgiveness. **“And if any man be in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION”** (2 Cor. 5:17). And what do we do now. We follow the command of Christ by making disciples in this world. And what is happening. Instead of the sinful glory of man, now, as a new creation, having the image of God restored in us, we now do as God commanded back in Gen. 1:28. We make disciples of the nations. And as we do, the glory of God is spreading throughout the earth. And so our greatest application is to be obedient to the command of Christ who says in Matt. 28:19 **“Go and make disciples . . .”** Let me end with a couple more applications.

Application: Divine “judgments” for sin will continue until Jesus Comes back and then the final judgment will take place. In Mark 13:6-13 Jesus says: **“Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them**

put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Application: God's people will not escape these greater judgments on the nations. This is a mystery. Sometimes they do escape. But, at other times, they go through them. I am sure Habakkuk, if living, and those with faith, were either killed, had their property plundered, and/or carried off to Babylon. But, even in the midst of such judgments, we are not condemned ourselves because of the gospel. And, in the middle of such judgments and suffering, we ourselves show the world that our hope is not on the things of this world. But instead, we look to heaven where we find our citizenship.