

Hab. 2:6-20 Lessons in Divine Judgment (part 1)

This week, we continue through the Book of Habakkuk and come to cp. 2. Let me recall the story. Habakkuk looks out and sees the sins of Israel and prays to God, asking “*How long shall I cry for help and you will not hear:* (1:2). And then in v. 3, “*Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?*” In other words, I look around and see the great sins of your people and ask, “*When are you going to judge?*” And God says, “*I will do something you do not expect; I WILL send the evil, proud, ungodly Babylonians.*” And though Habakkuk doesn’t understand why God will send a nation more ungodly than Israel in judgment, He trusts God’s providence. He says in 1:12-13: “**Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy one . . .**” And then “**O Lord you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.**” And then Habakkuk sits back and waits for God’s response (2:1). And God says in 2:4: “**The righteous shall live by his faith.**” And then God answers by saying, “*I will also judge Babylon.*” Let me read God’s answer in vv. 6-20. From this text, I want to highlight 3 general truths about divine judgment. (Next week, we will focus primarily on the application of these truths.) Here they are: 1) Divine judgment is sure; 2) Divine judgment is fair; and 3) Divine judgment is for the good of God’s people.

1. Divine Judgment Is Sure. Look back at 2:3. God says to Habakkuk, “**For still the vision awaits its appointed time.**” In other words, I am God, and I will do what I say. Judgment is coming. And then we read: “**it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.**” He is saying, “*As surely as I am the living God, my judgment is coming.*” This is a BIG truth, found in the entire Bible. EVERYWHERE, we see the judgment of God in the Bible. Why? It is because of sin; if there were no sin there would be no judgment upon it. God is holy and just. Habakkuk knows this as we’ve noted from 1:13: “**You are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong . . .**” In other words, Habakkuk is saying, “*You are holy and just . . . How can you not judge?*” Divine judgment is sure because of the character of God.

In the Garden of Eden, God provides Adam and Eve with the most beautiful place and the most wonderful provisions. And he says, “*I have given you this world to take care for, to have dominion over. Therefore, have children and spread my glory throughout the earth*” (Gen. 1:26-28). And then He gave Adam a commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, saying, “*if you eat it, you will die*” (Gen. 2:17). He is saying, “*If you do this, I will judge; and my judgment will be death.*” And we know the story. Adam and Eve disobeyed their Maker and death entered the world. This is the ultimate judgment for sin! This divine judgment includes physical death, separation from God, and eternal punishment in hell. And as we will see, there is a way of escape. But, divine judgment is SURE.

2. Divine Judgment Is Fair. Now, the reason divine judgment is fair is because, as we have seen, we all deserve judgment because of our sin against a holy God. As David says in Ps. 143:2: “**Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.**”

But, what I would like for us to notice in our text is the truth that judgment is exactly and completely fair. In other words, God’s judgments ALWAYS . . . EXACTLY, fit the sin committed against Him. The entire context of these 5 woes against Babylon emphasize the fact

that what the Babylonians are doing to others, will come back to them EXACTLY in the same measure they are given. Look at v. 6: **“Woe to him who heaps what is not his own . . .”** Here we see the sin of theft, as they take what is not their own. But then in v. 7 God says, **“Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them.”** And then in v. 8: **“Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you . . .”** In v. 15: **“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink . . .”** And then in v. 16b: **“The cup in the Lord’s right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!”** V. 17: **“The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you . . .”**

If Babylon make others “drink” he shall be made drunk. If Babylonian indulges in sexual perversity . . . he shall be exposed. If Babylon advances his own glory, he shall be shamed. If Babylon lives by senseless violence, he shall die by righteous violence. In other words, “Babylon will get EXACTLY what is fair . . . an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” God is an impartial judge! And his judgments are fair. I remember as a child I used to sometimes fight with my sister. Now, I wouldn’t hit her or anything like that (though I wanted to) because I knew my dad would give me a bit of judgment. Well, sometimes my sister would take advantage of this by starting something and then appealing to dad against me. But, when this happened, my dad usually knew the truth and he would say, “if you can’t take it don’t dish it out.” In other words, you may deserve what you get from your brother. In this he was trying to be fair.

This isn’t the best example. But, in the same kind of way, God is always fair. His judgments always correspond with the crime. Think of a scale. You could take a handful of sand and put it on one side and then take another handful of sand and make it balance. But if you wanted to be precise, you would need to count every single grain and make sure it is right. This is the case with God.

Now, we know there will be an ultimate day of judgment in the future. But, until that time, there are always divine judgments upon sin. Think about some examples. Judgment came upon Adam and Eve as they were cast from the Garden of Eden. To Adam, God says in judgment: **“Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life . . .”** (Gen. 3:17). To Eve, He says, **“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you”** (3:16). Think of the judgment at Babel as God scattered the peoples through the means of different languages. Think of Noah and the flood. I cannot imagine the evil of that day as we read of that time: **“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Gen. 5:5). I think of Sodom and Gomorrah as these cities were so wicked that God destroyed them with sulfur and fire (Gen 19:23). And in our context with Habakkuk (and with all the prophets), God judges Israel. He uses ungodly Assyria and then ungodly Babylon. And then, He turns around and judges Assyria and Babylon for their sins. Even when we come to the NT, we see Jesus speaking against the religious leaders of his generation saying, **“The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it . . .”** and **“The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it”** (Matt. 12:41-42).

And in all these cases, each of these nations gets EXACTLY what is coming to them. Jesus says: **“For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you”** (Matt. 7:2).

So how do we apply this truth? First, we must all know that our sins will be fairly judged by God. He cannot do otherwise. In this way, your sin will find you out. Jesus says in Matt. 12:36: **“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak . . .”** I will apply this truth with the good news of the gospel in a moment. But, what about modern nations and civilizations? The ways, times, and particulars of God’s judgments are a mystery; but, second, we must take notice of this truth as a country. What we measure out will come back to us. The way we treat other countries, whether in righteous or unrighteous ways, will eventually come back to us. And the standard by which we judge what is right is the truth of God as given to us in the Bible. The Word of God is our standard! And as a general rule, the extent to which we follow the ways of God, will be the extent to which we are blessed. And the extent to which we disobey the ways of God will be the extent to which we are cursed. Some examples: We cannot expect to receive the blessings of God when we reject Him as our creator and as the One who tells us how to live and expect good things. We cannot blur and even reject the distinction between men and women and not expect God’s blessings. We cannot overthrow the institution of marriage and expect our lives to go better. We cannot murder innocent lives in the womb and not expect the judgment of God upon us.

Much of what I see happening in this country is right from Rom. 1:21-25: **“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”** Brothers and sisters, the judgments of God are fair! Let’s move on.

3. Divine Judgment Is for the Good of God’s People. Brothers and sisters, divine judgment, and the applications of divine judgment are for our good. What does Rom. 8:28 say? **“And we know that for those who love God ALL THINGS work together for good, to those who are called according to his purpose.”** The “all things” includes divine judgment. But, you might ask, “why?” Because if divine judgment is SURE, and divine judgment is FAIR . . . and if we are sinners by nature and by choice, how can it be good for us. We know the answer! Divine judgment is good for us BECAUSE our salvation comes through judgment. God MUST judge sin; his glory is at stake. 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.”**

Brothers and sisters, this CANNOT happen without divine judgment. God must judge sin! And only through the judgment of sin can salvation come to God’s people. And, only through judgment can this world be made right . . . so that the **“earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”** Look at v. 16. Concerning the judgment of Babylon God says, “You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show

your uncircumcision!” And then we read: **“The cup in the LORD’S right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!”** Often, the wrath of God’s judgment is pictured by a cup in God’s right hand as God . . . POURS OUT his judgment upon sin. Does this picture sound familiar? It should! What have we read every month for the past 13 years as we take the Lord’s Supper? **“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you drink it, remember me.”** What are we remembering? We remember the death of Christ as the cup of God’s judgment fell upon the Son. This is the cross of Christ! ***“For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life.”***

Listen to these words from John 3:17-20: **“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”** And in John 5:24 Jesus says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”** Why do those who believe in Christ not come into judgment? Because, on the cross, God judged the Son in our place. Through faith (the just shall live by faith), in Jesus we no longer fall under judgment. **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”** (2 Cor. 5:21). Today, the cross is the greatest news for the sinner. **“There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 8:1).

In the end salvation comes through judgment. And this is for our good and for the good of creation. There must be judgment if salvation is to come. If God does not judge, what about his glory? His glory will certainly not “fill the earth” without judgment. The door to salvation is the door of judgment. God’s glory is at stake. This is why judgment came to the Son. This is why as Christians we celebrate divine judgment. For in this judgment, the great mercy of God is displayed and now, through the spreading of the gospel, his glory will fill the earth. Today, God’s judgment is sure. God’s judgment is fair. God’s judgment is for our good.