

litany of laudation only less splendid than those which a tender piety once raised to the Mother of God." (Italics mine)

Such was the religion and such were its worshippers whom God raised up to punish His people for their failure to keep His covenant and for the social immorality which existed among them because they because they turned to the same gods.

Habakkuk's first question is answered! Jehovah will not long tolerate the evils that repel the prophet. He will raise up one of the most wicked nations in history to punish them.

Chapter XVI—Questions

How Can God Allow Injustice to Go Unpunished?

1. Habakkuk's opening words are calculated to establish what?
2. What is the significance of Habakkuk's use of the name "Jehovah?"
3. What caused Habakkuk to ask the first of his two questions?
4. What is God's answer? Summarize.
5. Who were the Chaldeans?
6. Why were the Chaldeans named here when it was Babylon who would chastise Judah?
7. What king of Judah died in the vain attempt to preserve Assyria against Babylon?
8. How does Jehovah describe the Chaldeans? (vs. 7-11)
9. What do you know of the religion of the Babylonian empire of Habakkuk's concern?

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECOND QUESTION

HABAKKUK 1:12-17

RV . . . Art thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One? we shall not die. O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, has established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? He taketh up all of

them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous. Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?

LXX . . . Art thou not from the beginning, O Lord God, my Holy One? and surely we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast established it for judgement, and he has formed me to chasten with his correction. His eye is too pure to behold evil doings, and to look upon grievous afflictions: wherefore dost thou look upon despisers? wilt thou be silent when the ungodly swallows up the just? And wilt thou make men as the fishes of the sea, and as the reptiles which have no guide? He has brought up destruction with a hook, and drawn one with a casting net, and caught another in his drags: therefore shall his heart rejoice and be glad. Therefore will he sacrifice to his drag, and burn incense to his casting-net, because by them he has made his portion fat, and his meats choice. Therefore will he cast his net, and will not spare to slay the nations continually.

COMMENTS

O JEHOVAH, MY GOD, MY HOLY ONE . . . v. 12(a)

God had warned Habakkuk he would not believe the answer to his question. (1:5) The prophet, upon hearing Jehovah's description of the Chaldeans whom He is raising up to punish the sins of Judah, recoils in shocked horror and incredulity.

The first half of verse twelve is, to the prophet, a rhetorical question. It answers itself in the asking of it. Jehovah *is* from everlasting! He *is* the God of Israel's prophets! He *is* Holy! Therefore, His people shall not die.

Here is the most succinct statement in all the Bible of the gross misconception the Jews had of their relationship to God. Their major premise, *ie.* the everlasting holy nature of God is correct, but their false conclusion, *ie.* that *they*, as a people, could not, therefore, die was based on a minor premise of their own devising!

In *The Story of the Jew Briefly Told*, published by Bloch Publishing Company with Jewish confirmation manual, Dr. Maurice H. Harris says, "It took centuries to grasp the concepts that *God is wholly spirit and without material form, that He is the sole ruler of the universe, not sharing this power with other divinities; that He is omniscient,*

Omnipresent, and eternal; that He is absolutely righteous and just in dealing with His children—not favoring Israel more than other people, though they were the first to recognize Him." (Italics mine)

Dr. Harris here places his finger on the problems of both the nation of Judah and the prophet Habakkuk. The first question asked by the prophet grew out of circumstances fostered by the failure of the people to understand that ". . . God is wholly spirit and without material form, that He is the sole Ruler of the universe . . ." This failure allowed the Jews again and again to fall into the worship of Baal. (See the discussion of Micah.)

The second question posed by the prophet (v. 12) resulted from their failure to understand that God ". . . is absolutely righteous and just in dealing with His children—not favoring Israel more than other people . . ."

Nahum's question to Nineveh on the eve of her doom was "*Art thou better than No-Amon . . . ?*" (Nahum 3:8) As we saw in our study of Nahum, No-Amon, the capital of Egypt, had been devastated by the Assyrians. Nahum would have the Ninevites know they are no better and hence no more assured of national survival than No-Amon. Had someone asked this same question of Judah on the eve of the Babylonian captivity, or of Habakkuk when he entered into his debate with God concerning God's use of the Chaldeans to punish Judah, both the nation and the prophet would have answered a resounding, "Yes!" They believed they *were* better.

If their superiority over other people was not evidenced in their unfaithfulness or their moral corruption, they believed that God's past dealings with their father's proved it.

They were mistaken. John the Baptist, centuries later, challenged the same attitude. (Cf. Luke 3:7-9)

The fundamental Jewish error is a misunderstanding, not only of the nature of God, but as well a misunderstanding of a doctrine which runs through both the Old and New Testaments. It is often called the "doctrine of Election." (We suggest just here that the reader review the chapters on the covenant in the introductory section and also my book, *Thus It Is Written*, College Press.)

This doctrine, that God is calling out of every kindred and race of man a people for His own possession, is inherent in the unfolding inspired interpretation of the work of God in history and makes up the bulk of the Old Testament Scripture. It is the entire burden of the Luke-Acts narrative and comes in for a detailed analysis in the writings of Paul, especially Ephesians, Romans, and Galatians. The Jews "were

made a heritage of God, having been foreordained according to the plan of Him who effects all things according to the council of His will." (*Ephesians 1:11*) This plan of God, which is the mystery hidden in times past to be revealed in Christ through the church, (*Ephesians 3:1-16*), never included the Jews or the nation of Israel simply for their own sakes or as an end in themselves.

God chooses whom He will *eg.* Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, *et al.* His choice is made not primarily from the standpoint of its advantage to the chosen.

Nor is His choice, even in the Old Testament, limited only to the physical descendants of Abraham. Paul illustrates this truth in *Romans 9:14* by referring to *Exodus 9:16*. There God says to the Egyptian Pharaoh (who was anything but a Jew), "For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in the earth." In a similar vein, Jehovah might well have made a similar statement to the Chaldeans. (*Habakkuk 1:6*)

The perversion of the Biblical doctrine of election reaches its climax in those who commit themselves to a "dispensationalism" which makes the Jew *per se* the center of God's concern, both in the Bible and in the age to come. Such people believe about the Jew exactly what the Jew came to believe about himself. This belief blinds men to the revealed purpose of God's intervention in human history.

The point is, of course, that the *elect* or more accurately the *called* of God, whether individuals or nations, are never chosen for their own sakes merely, but that they are rather called to participate in God's eternal plan to offer the blessings of Abraham to all mankind.

O JEHOVAH . . . O ROCK . . . v. 12(B)

Habakkuk does not doubt God for a moment. Difficult as it is for him to accept the idea that God should raise up such as the Chaldeans to judge His people, the prophet immediately concedes: "Thou hast ordained him (the Chaldeans, particularly Nebuchadnezzar) and thou . . . hast established him for correction."

We must also not fail to recognize Habakkuk's conviction that God's people could not be wiped out is related to his understanding, quite correctly, that God is Himself eternal. His error was in identifying that people with a race and a nation, and in objecting to God's use of another nation and race to bring about His purposes.

The term "O Rock" applied to Jehovah is reminiscent of *Deuteronomy 32:4*. His use of it reflects Habakkuk's conviction that God's

work is perfect . . . His ways are just, even though they are beyond the prophet's own understanding.

Indeed, it is precisely because of what he knows about God, coupled with his Jewish nationalism that has caused him to so question Jehovah.

THOU THAT ART OF PURER EYES . . v. 13

Habakkuk knows God to be a pure God who cannot tolerate the presence of evil in His sight. Whatever else the Word teaches about God, it certainly affirms this truth, from Eden to Calvary.

How, then, the prophet asks, can such a God look on such perversiveness as is present among the Chaldeans? Why will He look on Babylon's destruction of Judah and hold His peace? His bias shows through when he asserts that the Jews of his day are more righteous than the Babylonians.

Two fallacies should be recognized at this point. First, Jehovah, in revealing His intention to raise up the Chaldeans against Judah, did not say He would overlook Babylon's evil. Divinely recorded history proves He did, in fact, no such thing.

Secondly, the insistence that Judah is more righteous than the Babylonians raises a moot question. They had adopted the Baal worship which originated in the Chaldeas. They had been unfaithful to Jehovah when they were the only people on earth who had His written word. Their behavior had consequently become so corrupt that it was the very reason God chose to raise up a pagan people to smite them.

. . . HE MAKEST MEN AS FISHES . . v. 14-17

The prophet reinforces his argument by changing his emphasis from the holy nature of God to the unholy nature of the Chaldeans' treatment of people. He first says that the incursion of the Chaldeans causes confusion. Like a school of fish or a swarm of insects, those struck by Babylon are left purposeless and leaderless. Then, in the confusion, the Chaldeans capture slaves like catching fish with various nets and devices.

It was indeed the practice of Nebuchadnezzar to lead away to slavery those who were the leaders of a conquered people. As we say, Micah promised that exactly this would happen. The practice, according to Micah, was *God's* device to punish those whose leadership had corrupted the nation.

In verse sixteen, Habakkuk adds that the success of the Chaldeans is the force of their own skill and power (rather than dependance upon God). They idolize themselves because of this (Cf. *Deuteronomy* 6:17,

cp. *Isaiah* 10:13, 37:24-25). To Habakkuk this is further evidence that Jehovah cannot use such a nation against his own people.

(Verse 17) Furthermore, asks the prophet, will there ever be an end to it, if God allows such a people as the Chaldeans to succeed against His chosen ones? This argument sounds extremely familiar to us today as we are asked to believe that God cannot control the evil forces of communism if these forces are allowed to prevail against us. Perhaps we, as Habakkuk, need to give serious attention to God's answer.

JEHOVAH'S ANSWER . . . Habakkuk 2:1-20

RV . . . I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith, Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein. Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and has sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art

filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein. What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

LXX . . . I will stand upon my watch, and mount upon the rock, and watch to see what he will say by me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and that plainly on a tabler, that he that reads it may run. For the vision is yet for a time, and it shall shoot forth at the end, and not in vain: though he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come, and will not tarry. If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him: but the just shall live by my faith. But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, shall not finish anything; who has enlarged his desire as the grave, and like death he is never satisfied, and he will gather to himself all the peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him? and a proverb to tell against him? and they shall say, Woe to him that multiplies to himself the possessions which are not his! how long? and who heavily loads his yoke. For suddenly there shall arise up those that bite him, and they that plot against thee shall awake, and thou shalt be a plunder to them. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the nations that are left shall spoil thee, because of the blood of men, and the sins of the land and city, and of all that dwell in it. Woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evils. Thou hast devised shame to thy house, thou hast utterly destroyed many nations, and thy soul has sinned. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beetle out of the timber shall speak. Woe to him that builds a city with blood, and establishes a city by unrighteousness. Are not these things of the Lord Almighty? surely many people have been exhausted in the fire, and many nations have fainted. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the

glory of the Lord; it shall cover them as water. Woe to him that gives his neighbour to drink the thick lees of wine, and intoxicates him, that he may look upon their secret parts. Drink thou also thy fill of disgrace instead of glory: shake, O heart, and quake, the cup of the right hand of the Lord has come round upon thee, and dishonour has gathered upon thy glory. For the ungodliness of Libanus shall cover thee, and distress because of wild beasts shall dismay thee, because of the blood of men, and the sins of the land and city, and of all that dwell in it. What profits it the graven image, that they have graven it? one has made it a molten work, a false image; for the maker has trusted in his work, to make dumb idols. Woe to him that says to the wood, Awake, arise; and to the stone, Be thou exalted! whereas it is an image, and this is a casting of gold and silver, and there is no breath in it. But the Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth fear before him.

COMMENTS

Having presented what sounds to himself like a conclusive argument against God's use of the Chaldeans to punish Judah, Habakkuk now declares he will simply stand and wait for Jehovah's answer. We do not know what answer he expected. Perhaps he thought Jehovah would acquiesce, as He did when Moses interceded following the unfaithfulness of the people shortly after the exodus. (*Exodus 39:9-ff*) In any event, the answer was not long in coming. The prophet is to write the vision (which is how the book of Habakkuk came into being). He is to make it plain upon tables.

National dealings were engraved upon wooden tables covered with wax. The engraving was made with a hot iron writing instrument and the plaque—or tablet thus engraved was hung in public in the temple. (cp. *Luke 1:63*) It is to be written so plainly that one running past could read it without stopping.

The idea seems to be that whcever reads the tablet engraved with God's answer to Habakkuk's complaint will run to whomever he can with the news. "Run" is used elsewhere for the urgent announcing of God's revealed truth. (cp. *Jeremiah 23:21, Revelation 22:17*)

In view of modern insistence upon the same complaints against God, it would seem that we too should adopt a sense of urgency. God's answer is still valid. Men need to know it now as in the day of the prophet.

(Verse 3) The message is to be committed to writing because the fulfillment of what is said lies in the future, from the point of view of those who first read it. "Write it down just as you receive it," says God, in effect, "then see if it doesn't happen just this way."

In this verse is stated a point which needs to be imprinted indelibly on the mind of anyone who ever doubted the divine inspiration of Scripture. What God said and the prophets wrote about the cataclysmic events of history was written well in advance of the events themselves. That these predictions were fulfilled to the letter years, sometimes centuries, later is conclusive proof to any honest scholar that they were not of human origin.

The predictive element of prophecy was one of the strongest evidences offered by the apostles of the truth of the Gospel. (eg. *Acts* 2:22-ff)

A generation ago it was the fad among the critics of the Bible to say that the predictive prophecies of the Bible were actually written after the fact, but recent scholarship, even of the most liberal persuasion, tends to accept the traditional dates of Scriptural writings. These dates place all predictive prophecies well before its fulfillment.

What God answers here, in reply to Habakkuk's second question, is a case in point. Having answered the first question with a prediction of Judah's punishment at the hands of the Chaldeans, He answers the second by predicting the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves by the Persians!

The years of Babylonian captivity will make the fulfillment of this vision seem to tarry. Nevertheless, those who read are to wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay.

(Verse 4-5) Jehovah begins His answer by setting forth a general principle. Whoever is puffed up in his own soul (whether Jew or Chaldean) will be punished. "The righteous," whether Jew or Chaldean (Paul will later say "to the Jew first but also to the Greek," *Romans* 1:16-17) "shall live by faith."

The contrast of the Bible between the godly and the ungodly is set forth in verse four in bold relief. It is not a contrast between "good" and "bad" *per se* but between the haughty soul who sets his will against that of God on the one hand and the one who lives by faith on the other. The New Testament will make this contrast even more sharply in terms of the carnal as opposed to the Spirit-directed. (eg. *Galatians* 5:16-25)

A word needs to be said here concerning the statement "the righteous shall live by his faith." As indicated above, Paul alludes to this

statement in *Romans 1:17*. In so doing, he quotes the Septuagint. There the text reads literally "but the righteous, out of my faith shall be living." The Greek of the New Testament in *Romans 1:17* reads literally "but the righteous out of faith shall be living."

There is a minor textual problem here. The Hebrew text, as represented in our American Standard Version has "his" faith in *Habakkuk 2:4*. The Septuagint in the same place has "my" faith. Paul's Greek omits both possessive pronouns and says simply "by (not my or his) faith."

The apostle has captured the essential truth of Habakkuk. In contrast to the overwhelming military might in which the Chaldeans trusted (*Habakkuk 1:13(b)-16*) and the Assyrian-Egyptian alliance upon which Judah had based her national security, the righteous shall stake his life upon his trust in God.

The Chaldeans would lay waste to Judah who trusted in Assyrian and Egyptian arms. Cyrus would one day bring the Chaldean empire of Babylon to her knees. Through it all, God would preserve His real people . . . the true Israel. (cf. discussion of Micah's prophecy concerning the remnant.)

Here is an eternal truth, and one God's people in the closing decades of the twentieth century would do well to learn. God deals with people on the basis of obedient faith not on the basis of misplaced national loyalty and military power, whether Chaldean, Jewish or American!

(Verse 6) There is an intriguing reference to wine here. The haughty, who depend on military might and alliances are pointed out as deceived by the treachery of it. When Babylon attacked Nineveh, the leaders of that city were indulging in a drunken revelry. When Babylon herself was taken, it was during Belshazzar's feast when he dared drink wine from the golden vessels of the temple of Jehovah. (cf. *Daniel 5:2-4*, 30 cp. *Proverbs 20:1*, 30:9)

The United States may one day fail in her own defense while our leaders are enjoying themselves in the endless round of Washington cocktail parties.

Of course one who objects to such things in our day is looked upon as being somewhat strange and fanatic . . . as were the prophets who tried in vain to warn Israel and Judah of the consequences of the same thing.

In verse five there begins a general description of those things characteristic of the Neo-Babylonian empire which carried in them the

seed of the destruction that awaited her. Cocktail party diplomacy was only one of those characteristics. The empire is presented as a haughty man. Just as Judah's pride went before her fall so would Babylon's contribute to the downfall of the empire.

Every ancient nation shared this weakness of pride. Each imagined itself to be the select or chosen people of a god who was superior to all other gods. This national deity would preserve his people and subordinate all other peoples to them. The Jews' flirtation with Baal, along with certain other influences, made them mistake Jehovah for such a nationalistic god. This is why Habakkuk asked his second question (1:12-f). Such haughtiness blinds any nation to the realities of international life.

The second characteristic of Babylon which contributed to his (the haughty man's) downfall was the inability to stay home. As Habakkuk pointed out (1:14-ff), the Chaldeans swept all people into their sphere of dominance as a fisherman snares a school of fish.

Here Jehovah agrees with the prophet's evaluation. The haughty man "enlarges his desire as Sheol." Sheol is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek Hades; the abode of the dead. It is never full but always seems eager to receive more and more people. Babylon is like this. Just as death is never satisfied, so Babylon is never satisfied . . . always seeking more victims.

This is a fatal obsession for any nation. Every world conqueror, from Alexander (or those who divided his kingdom following his untimely death) to Hitler has learned too late that he cannot encompass the earth and successfully control it.

A classic example is the British Empire. There was a time when Britannia could boast that the "sun never set on the Union Jack." But it did not last. Today England is at best a second rate power.

Even our own attempt to build a world wide economic empire has brought to us problems that seem insoluble and that threaten our national vitality beyond endurance.

The lust for power, as any other lust, carries in it the elements of its own death. (cf. *James 1:15*) It was indeed an attack upon Babylon by those who had once been her ally that brought the empire to destruction in the end.

So Jehovah predicts that those whom the Chaldeans conquer will one day take up a parable (or taunt) against them. This taunt forms the first of a series of woes through which Jehovah answers Habakkuk's second question.

THE FIRST WOE . . . v. 6(b)-8

As God's providential guidance of history will bring about Judah's chastisement at the hands of the Chaldeans, so it will bring about, in turn, the destruction of the Chaldeans. Just how this is to come about is described in the woes which Jehovah now pronounces against them.

The first woe is "to him that increaseth that which is not his." To see this principle in operation against the Babylonians, we must bear in mind that Judah was not the only nation to fall prey to the Chaldean's military expansionism. The Medes and Persians also came under the influence of Babylonian greed. And the time was not long in coming when they would together find the strength to do something very final about it.

This uprising reached its climax c. 532 B.C. when Cyrus and his Persians in collusion with certain Babylonian clerics made Babylon subject to the enlightened domination of Persia. For two subsequent centuries Babylon was ruled by the Persians.

God's promise to Habakkuk, in answer to the prophet's second question, is (v. 8) that this downfall of Babylon will be in punishment for her plundering and violence done not only to Judah but to other people as well.

THE SECOND WOE . . . v. 9-11

The second in the series of woes pronounced against Babylon in answer to Habakkuk's questioning is stated in verses 9, 10, and 11. It emphasizes the covetousness of Babylon in her aggressions against other peoples. The covetousness is beyond the "normal" greed of an aggressor nation. It is so extreme as to be fatal not only to the invaded nations, but to the invader.

Not content with national aggrandizement and the enriching of his own coffers, the ruler of Babylon steals enough from conquered peoples to enrich his whole nation or family.

This is precisely the sin of Jehoiachem for which God raised up Babylon in punishment (cf. *Jeremiah* 22:31). It will also destroy Babylon in turn.

The "nest on high" is figurative of the eagle (Job 39:27). Here it refers to the royal citadel. Babylon was famous for its towered zig-gurats.

To Babylon Jehovah says (v. 10) "Thou . . . hast sinned against thy soul." The empire raised up by God thus becomes guilty of her own destruction.

The very towers of Babylon, built by the blood of conquered peoples and supported by stolen loot, will cry out against her (v. 11). Her splendor is her downfall. Her glory is in her shame!

THE THIRD WOE . . . v. 12-14

The third woe, pronounced in verses twelve through fourteen, is brought about by the extreme cruelty of Babylon. Like her covetousness, her mercilessness against conquered people also contains the fatal poison of the empire.

This blood-thirstiness of Babylon was infamous throughout the ancient world. John uses it, as a familiar fact, in the symbolism of Revelation. (*Revelation 17:6*)

Those who are now laboring to build Babylon are laboring for the fire. (v. 11) That is, they are simply erecting those things which will be burned in the destruction of the city.

The significant truth here, for the sake of the prophet's question, is that it is of *Jehovah of hosts*. The moral principles which bring about the rise and fall of people and nations in the flow of history are not accidental. Neither are they the product of any process of social evolution. These principles are fixed by God. They are the same from age to age in all of man's international relationships. The nation which fails to recognize them and govern itself accordingly may expect to join all previous empires on the rubble heap of dead civilizations!

There is a purpose to God's rigid insistence that nations as well as men recognize and submit to His moral judgements. (v. 14) "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah . . ."

A word about "glory" may be helpful here. The term itself means literally "the essential nature" of a person. God's glory is His essential character *ie.* that which causes Him to be held in high repute among those who know Him.

By dealing with men and nations on the basis of fixed moral laws, Jehovah is revealing Himself to them. That nations are more often than not blind to this truth is to their detriment, not His!

Just as surely as God was preparing for the coming Christ by revealing Himself to Israel through the prophets and His written word, so He was preparing the nations for Christ through His dealings in history. That both Israel and the Gentile nations failed to learn what Jehovah taught simply underscores man's universal need for salvation. It certainly is not, as Habakkuk's questions would imply, and as modern agnostics insist, an indictment against God as unfair or unjust.

THE FOURTH WOE . . . v. 15-17

The fourth woe, with which Jehovah answers the prophet's second question, has to do with the drunkenness of the Babylonians. We have already remarked briefly on this. (see above on 2:5)

Against the practice of excessive drinking in Babylon, God sets in figurative speech the downfall of the empire. Babylon is pictured here as a drunken man. He is not only drunken himself, but like most drunkards, he influences others to share in his revelings.

The accusation is that the drinker shares the drink in order to look on his neighbor's nakedness. There is no genuineness of friendship here. Babylon only pretends to share "the good life" so as to lure his neighbors into alliances which will ultimately expose them to loss and shame.

Proud Babylon, the drunk, is himself not filled with glory as he supposes. His own nakedness is exposed and it is revealed to all the world that he is uncircumcised. He is not God's covenant people!

God will do to Babylon what Babylon has done to others. He will allow the empire to become corrupt to the extent that "foul shame" (literally vomit) will cover its glory.

Ironically, Babylon's final collapse came in the midst of a drunken revel. (*Daniel 5*) The imagery here is very appropriate! ..

In verse 17 the figure changes. From describing Babylon as a shameful drunk, Jehovah turns to describing him as a beast caught in a net trap.

"The violence done to Lebanon" reminds us that Lebanon was the gateway to Judah for the armies of Babylon. Also that the temple destroyed by the Babylonians was built of the cedars of Lebanon.

Just as men threatened repeatedly by the incursion of wild beasts become driven by fear to destroy the beasts, so Babylon's neighbors, subjected repeatedly to the brutalities of Babylon will one day be driven to destroy him.

THE FIFTH WOE . . . v. 18-20

The fifth woe against Babylon is introduced by a question (v. 18). "What," Jehovah asks, "is the profit of a graven image even to the one who makes it?"

As with all nations of ancient time, Babylon created gods in their own image and then relied upon these gods of their own making to lead, empower and preserve them. It is the futility of this practice that God points to in this woe.

Not only the covetousness and bloody violence of Babylon will contribute to the overthrow of the empire. The trust in man-made gods also will conspire to bring it about. The god in which they trust is dead, "*There is no breath in all the midst of it.*" Because they serve a dead god; they too shall die!

"Christian America" woke one day a few years ago to hear on television and read in major publications that "God Is Dead!" Perhaps there was more truth to the pronouncement than we realized. The gods of Roman and Protestant institutionalism . . . the god of economic materialism . . . the god of permissiveness and pleasure . . . the whole American pantheon is dead. Perhaps as we need to learn from the first four woes, so we need to learn from the fifth. The nation is doomed who worships a dead god!

In contrast (v. 20) to the dead god of Babylon, Jehovah is in His holy temple. Strange words, since the temple would, when the vision of Habakkuk came to pass, be in ruins. The obvious intent is that God does indeed not dwell in temples made with hands, whether those hands be Jewish or Babylonian.

A brief listing of the five woes may be helpful:

1. (v. 6) Woe to him who increases his possession of that which is not his.
2. (v. 9) Woe to him who gets evil gain in order to set himself above others.
3. (v. 12) Woe to him who builds his great cities on the suffering of downtrodden people.
4. (v. 14) Woe to him who involves others in his sin in order to exploit them.
5. (v. 19) Woe to those who worship dead gods.

These woes reveal eternal truth which explains in varying degrees the downfall of every collapsed civilization.

Chapter XVII—Questions

The Second Question

1. Show how God's answer to Habakkuk's first question gave rise to the second question.
2. State the prophet's second question in your own words.
3. Show how the Jews' misconception of themselves as God's people is reflected in Habakkuk's second question.

4. What two concepts did the Jews find hard to grasp? (As stated by Dr. Maurice Harris)
5. Show how Nahum's question to Nineveh (*Nahum* 3:8) could be asked here of Judah.
6. What do you understand is the Biblical doctrine of "election?"
7. How does dispensationalism pervert the doctrine of election?
8. What word more accurately states the idea of election?
9. What is implied by Habakkuk's use of the term "O Rock" in reference to Jehovah?
10. What two falacies combine to confuse Habakkuk in reference to God's purity and Babylon's impurity?
11. Describe the activity of the Babylonians toward neighboring nations.
12. In a sentence, what is Jehovah's answer to Habakkuk's second question?
13. List the five woes with which God gives His answer.
14. Show how these woes describe eternal principles in God's dealing with nations in history.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PROPHET'S POETIC PRAYER

VISION OF GOD IN JUDGEMENT . . . Habakkuk 3:1-15

RV . . . A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth. O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid: O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years; In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; He had rays coming forth from his hand; And there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence. And fiery bolts went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; And the eternal mountains were scattered; The everlasting hills did bow; His goings were as of old. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was Jehovah displeased with the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers, Or thy wrath against the sea, That thou didst ride upon thy horses, Upon thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite bare; The oaths to the tribes were a sure word. Thou didst