

WOES UPON THE WICKED CHALDEANS

TEXT: HABAKKUK 2:5-20

Introduction:

1. We left off last week at Habakkuk 2:4, the great Scripture, which is quoted three times in the NT – “The just shall live by faith.”
2. We are saved by God’s grace through faith, but it is important to remember that we “live by faith.”
3. The first part of the verse is usually overlooked – “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him...”
4. “His soul...” – this refers to the Chaldean. The Chaldeans attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. They took the Jews into captivity.
5. Here the Chaldeans represent all proud, self-sufficient sinners. It is important to study this chapter with that in mind.
6. We saw in our study of Habakkuk chapter 1 that Habakkuk was perplexed. He wondered why a holy and righteous God would use wicked heathens like the Chaldeans to chasten His own people who were “more righteous” (1:13).
7. God revealed to the prophet Habakkuk that the just were to live by faith. Meanwhile, God would surely judge the wicked.
8. In this chapter, God pronounces five woes. “Woe” means “calamity.” God’s judgment would soon come upon the wicked Chaldeans.

I. WOE UPON PLUNDERING (2:6).

II. WOE UPON COVETOUSNESS (2:9).

III. WOE UPON OPPRESSION (2:12).

IV. WOE UPON DRUNKENNESS (2:15).

V. WOE UPON IDOLATRY (2:19).

I. WOE UPON PLUNDERING (2:5-8).

1. The words “plunder” or “plundering” are not found in our English Bible. Instead we see similar terms – “gathereth unto him... heapeth unto him... increaseth that which is not his... ladeth himself” (2:5, 6).
2. When I speak of “plundering,” I mean stealing and taking by force what is desired (2:5, 6).
3. The Chaldeans are described in the Bible as proud sinners, intoxicated by wine, never satisfied, always looking for more things to acquire, and more cities and nations to conquer (2:5).

4. In the Bible, hell and death are pictured as “never full.” Proverbs 27:20 says, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”
5. Habakkuk says the Chaldean “enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied...” (Hab. 2:5).
6. Proverbs 30:15, 16 says, “There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.”
7. Isaiah 5:14 says, “Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.”
8. We often sing, “There’s Room at the Cross for You.” But there is a flip side to that. There is still plenty of room in hell for impenitent sinners.
9. Nebuchadnezzar and his Chaldean army were greedy for conquest. They also loved to drink wine (Hab. 2:5a). Daniel 5 tells us that while the Babylonians were getting drunk, the Medes and Persians marched into the city and took over.
10. Habakkuk 2:6 says, “Shall not all these take up a parable against him...” “These” refers to the various nations oppressed by the violent Chaldeans.
11. The reference to “thick clay” has been interpreted in several ways. Merrill Unger, in his *Commentary on the OT*, says “thick clay” (2:6) refers to a “pledge or article pawned or pledged” as security for a debt.
12. The Chaldeans and Babylonians had plundered others; now they would be plundered (2:7, 8). This prophecy was fulfilled when Darius the Mede invaded Babylon and killed King Belshazzar (Daniel 5).

II. WOE UPON COVETOUSNESS (2:9).

1. Covetousness and materialism hinder spiritual life. For the unsaved, covetousness and materialism hinder them from getting saved. For believers, these things hinder them from growing spiritually.
2. The Chaldeans set their “nest on high” (2:9), like an eagle that thinks his nest is impregnable.
3. In Babylon there were 250 towers placed along the walls of the city. These towers were 420 feet high.
4. Walls 350 feet high and 87 feet thick surrounded the entire city. There were 100 gates made of brass. So they thought they were impregnable.
5. But God warned them, “Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee” (Hab. 2:8).
6. Around the same time, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied, “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire” (Jer. 51:58).

7. These prophecies were fulfilled when Darius the Mede and his army cut off the Euphrates River and diverted the water into other channels. The Euphrates River ran right through the city, but Darius turned it into a dry riverbed. This allowed him and his army to march in and take the Babylonians by surprise (cf. Daniel 5:24-31).
8. However, Darius did not burn down Babylon. The city fell intact and the Medes and Persians occupied it for many years. Many Bible teachers believe Habakkuk 2:13 will be completely fulfilled during the tribulation (Rev. 18:8, 9).
9. It is quite possible that the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and will become the commercial capital of the antichrist during the tribulation. It will then be destroyed in fulfillment of Rev. 18.
10. Covetousness is a wicked sin, and it brings shame to the whole “house” (Hab. 2:9, 10). “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Proverbs 15:27).
11. The tenth commandment is, “Thou shalt not covet” (Ex. 20:17). It is widely ignored, and even many Christians overlook it.
12. Our Lord said in Luke 12:15, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”
13. Colossians 3:5 says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

III. WOE UPON OPPRESSION (2:12).

1. Babylon was built by blood and established by iniquity (2:12).
2. Daniel tried to warn proud King Nebuchadnezzar, “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility” (Dan. 4:27).
3. But the proud monarch would not listen to the man of God (Dan. 4:30-33).
4. God allowed Babylon to invade Jerusalem. And God allowed Babylon to prosper for some time. “Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts?” (Hab. 2:13).
5. The destruction of Babylon is a vivid picture of the future destruction of Satan’s one-world government and one-world religion, which will precede the second coming of Christ (Hab. 2:14).
6. “But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (Numbers 14:21).
7. “And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen” (Psalm 72:19).

8. “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3).
9. “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).
10. These prophecies will be fulfilled when Christ returns to set up His kingdom. The whole earth “shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” after God destroys Babylon.
11. It is common in OT prophecy to go from an immediate, imminent judgment (in this case the destruction of ancient Babylon), to future judgment (the tribulation period).

IV. WOE UPON DRUNKENNESS (2:15).

1. On the basis of Habakkuk 2:15, it seems highly unlikely that our Lord turned the water into fermented wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).
2. Alcohol often leads to shame and immorality (Hab. 2:15, 16).
3. The Bible has many warnings – consider Noah and Lot.
4. Alcohol often leads to violence – not just at parties and taverns and nightclubs, but often in the home and in places like airplanes and baseball games, etc.
5. There is an article in today’s *NY Post* about a recent Columbia University study. Between 1990 and 2003, 145 of 315 unintentional deaths came when drunk subway riders stumbled off the platform, fell suddenly ill or foolishly jumped onto the tracks to retrieve a personal item. Drunken subway riders died at higher rates than those who were killed or committed suicide.
6. A quarter of a million Americans lost their lives in alcohol-related car crashes over the past decade – 70 a day! The news media has made a big thing about the casualties in Iraq, but they seldom mention the slaughter on our highways due to drunk drivers.
7. Congressman Vito Fossella of Staten Island was arrested for drunk driving, and then it was revealed that he had a secret mistress and 3-year-old out-of-wedlock daughter.

8. The other day he threw himself a big party (before he goes to jail) with some of his big-shot friends like Mayor Bloomberg and Congressman Pete King.
9. One of the speakers, City Councilman James Oddo, compared Fossella to the Lord Jesus Christ, while 1,000 supporters in the packed ballroom cheered like crazy.
10. On an average weekend night, one out of every ten cars you pass is driven by a drunk driver.
11. About 6,000 babies are born every year with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, literally “pickled” in the womb by a drunken mother.
12. Every Christian should take the same pledge as Abraham Lincoln:

“Whereas, the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation, and crime; and believing it our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage” (Abraham Lincoln, February 22, 1842).

V. WOE UPON IDOLATRY (2:19).

1. Idolatry was the great sin of ancient Babylon, and it is the great sin of modern day ecclesiastical and commercial Babylon (Rev. 17 & 18).
2. Idolaters “trust” in their “dumb idols” (2:18).
3. The idol may be overlaid with gold and silver, but there is no life in it (2:19).
4. First Thessalonians 1:9 says, “How ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”
5. Behind idols lurk demons who delude and deceive all idolaters.

CONCLUSION:

1. “But the LORD is in His holy temple...” (2:20).
2. This wicked world appears to be spinning out of control, but God is on the throne and He is in control.