

GOD'S REVELATION TO THE WATCHMAN: THE APPROACHING JUDGMENT (HABAKKUK 1:5-11)

VERSE 5 -

"Behold ye among the heathen" instructs Judah to observe the divine actions among the nations, which will impact them due to their unfaithfulness. The Lord promises a shocking display of His power. Taken out of context, this verse might be misunderstood; it doesn't promise benefit to Judah.

Paul quotes this message in Acts 13:40-41, during the first recorded verbalization of God's grace Gospel. In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul addressed the Jews, summarizing their history and declaring Jesus as their Messiah. After their rejection, he conveyed the grace gospel (vv. 38-39) and warned them about the prophetic word that would "come upon" them. He reinterpreted the term "heathen" to "despisers" as a warning about God's work among the Gentiles.

VERSE 6 -

God promises to raise the Chaldeans, often referred to as the Babylonians. The Bible uses "Chaldean" 80 times, compared to "Babylonian," hence, they will be referred to as the Chaldeans. The Lord prophesied that the Chaldeans would possess the 'dwellingplaces,' predicting Babylon's occupation of Judah.

VERSE 7 -

The Chaldeans, reflecting the Neo-Babylonian Empire's powerful military status, are described as 'terrible and dreadful.' This aligns with scriptures and history as they ended the long-standing Assyrian dominance, shifting power in the ancient Near East.

The phrase "**their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves**" suggests that they have the autonomy to make judgments, stemming from a high, power-based authority.

VERSE 8 -

The verse, referencing the Chaldeans and Deuteronomy 28:49, uses poetic imagery to instill fear, provoke introspection, and remind the nation of the consequences of their transgressions. Its vivid symbolism is intended to resonate with the people, urging them to reconsider their actions.

VERSE 9 -

The warning describes the approaching horde's violence. The phrase, "**their faces shall sup up as the east wind**", suggests they're consuming everything in their path, much like an east wind devours all in its trajectory. It resonates with Job 39:24 which portrays a runner appearing to "swallow" the ground with his speed and rage.

VERSE 10 -

The kings and princes of Judah will prove no match for them, as later history would record. No stronghold would withstand their power. The last phrase, "they heap dust, and take it," is clearly a metaphor, although its exact meaning is difficult to determine. It might refer to the Babylonian empire's practice of constructing siege ramps to conquer strongholds, similar to the Romans' later tactics at Masada.

VERSE 11 -

The Lord speaks of the Chaldeans' future change of heart. The unclear reference—either to the Chaldean king or people—stems from the singular pronouns in the original language, translated into plural in English as it seems to refer to a "national whole." The nation or king attributes his achievements to his Chaldean god, crossing a line noted by Prophet Habakkuk from verse 12.

THE WATCHMAN'S PERPLEXED RESPONSE: QUESTIONING THE JUSTICE IN GOD'S METHODS (HABAKKUK 1:12-17)

VERSE 12 -

Habakkuk interrupts, affirming God's sovereignty with, "Art thou not from everlasting." He proclaims "We shall not die," not denying God's earlier proclamations, but affirming God's covenant with Israel. He acknowledges that the Chaldeans' judgment upon Judah was ordained by God.

Indeed, numerous passages in the Scriptures affirm Habakkuk's proclamation that Israel "shall not die." In both the Old and New Testaments, we find repeated confirmations of God's covenant promise to preserve the nation of Israel, despite periods of judgment and exile. Examples include:

- Leviticus 26:44
- Isaiah 54:10
- Jeremiah 30:11
- Jeremiah 31:35-37
- Amos 9:14-15
- Romans 11:26

These passages, along with others, reiterate the truth that while Israel may face judgment due to disobedience, the nation will not be completely destroyed or forgotten. God remains faithful to His covenant promises.

VERSE 13 -

Habakkuk's lament reflects his concern over God's perceived tolerance of wickedness, both within Judah and in the Chaldeans' brutal conquests. He struggles to understand how God allows the righteous to suffer while the wicked prosper. This inner turmoil reflects his struggle to reconcile the reality of evil's triumph with the divine character. His reflections may allude to historical events, such as Zedekiah's fate under Nebuchadnezzar, emphasizing the ongoing struggle to understand divine justice in a world where it is not immediately evident.

VERSES 14-15 -

Habakkuk develops his discourse, shifting from lament to a graphic representation of the Chaldean threat. God is implied to permit 'the wicked,' primarily Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, to execute their destructive campaigns, as agents of divine judgment.

The fishing metaphor encapsulates the Chaldeans' military operations. Nebuchadnezzar and his forces are depicted as fishermen using a dragnet to capture entire populations, reflecting the Chaldeans' comprehensive and indiscriminate invasions.

Moreover, the metaphor portrays the Chaldeans' delight in their conquests, akin to a fisherman's satisfaction with a bountiful catch, accentuating the ease of their subjugation of nations and indifference to the resulting devastation.

The fishing metaphor not just conveys the extent and efficiency of the Chaldean military but also suggests a sense of helplessness and inevitability. The nations appear as powerless as fish against the dragnet, intensifying the narrative's emotional and moral complexity and underscoring the prophet's distress at the unfolding events.

VERSE 16 -

In verse 16, the prophet criticizes the Chaldeans' arrogance for attributing their victories to their strength, represented by their metaphorical fishing equipment. They worship their nets, symbolizing their military prowess, failing to recognize God's hand in their success. Habakkuk criticizes their idolatrous practices and the injustice of their prosperity despite their wickedness. His concern isn't just their material success but their failure to acknowledge God, crediting their victories to their strength and idols.

VERSE 17 -

The verse, in continued poetic form, essentially asks, "will it never end?" One can sense the frustration in Habakkuk's tone.

THE WATCHMAN'S VIGIL: POSITIONING FOR GOD'S ANSWER (HABAKKUK 2:1)

Habakkuk is determined. He plans to stand guard in a tower, and "**will** watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Presumably, it's the Lord's response he anticipates. He seems to expect reproof, but he's unsure of the exact words the Lord will use, or how he will respond. Fortunately, he won't have to wait long!