

Verses 1:12-2:1 were also included on session 2.

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

Verses 12-13 - see session 2

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!

THE WATCHMAN'S VISION: DIVINE ASSURANCE AND JUDGMENT (HABAKKUK 2:2-20)

GOD'S ASSURANCE TO THE WATCHMAN: THE CERTAINTY OF THE VISION (HABAKKUK 2:2-4)

VERSE 2 -

Habakkuk positioned himself as a watchman, and it appears he didn't have to wait long. The Lord gave two instructions. First, Habakkuk was to "write the vision." Second, he was to "make IT plain upon tables." The purpose wasn't to provide encouragement, but rather to impart the ominous message "that he may run that readeth it."

When Habakkuk is instructed to "make IT plain upon tables," it suggests a form of writing meant for public display or easy accessibility, so that the message could be quickly and clearly understood. In Habakkuk's day, writing on clay, stone, or even metal "tables" or tablets was not unusual, especially for a public document. Having written the vision, Habakkuk was to provide an edited, readable, accessible form of the message to the people.

The phrase "make it plain" in Habakkuk 2:2 translates the Hebrew verb בָּאֵר (ba'ar), which has a root meaning of "to make clear, explain, or elucidate." This verb implies the act of making something understandable or clear, not just in terms of physical legibility but, more importantly, in making the message's meaning accessible and comprehensible to its intended audience.

All of this suggests a form of communication that exceeds mere word-for-word dictation. The focus on making the vision clear implies that Habakkuk received a message from God, which he was to relay in a way that his audience could easily comprehend. This process likely involved receiving the divine revelation and then interpreting or conveying it in a manner that clarified its importance and application for the readers.

In the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, the process of revelation often involved a dynamic interaction between the divine message and the prophet's role as a mediator of that message. Prophets received revelations from God in various forms, including visions, dreams, and direct speech, and were then tasked with communicating these revelations to the people. This process allowed for the prophet's personality, understanding, and context to influence the presentation of the message, even as the core divine revelation remained unchanged.

The instruction for Habakkuk to "write the vision, and make it plain" indicates that he was to take the vision he received from God and present it in a form that was explicitly clear and unambiguous, facilitating its comprehension and the prompt response of his audience. This task would involve more than merely transcribing a direct dictation; it required an engagement with the content of the vision to ensure its effective communication.

VERSE 3 -

In this verse, Habakkuk is informed that the vision he is about to receive is "yet for an appointed time." This means that the fulfillment of the vision is not immediate but set for a future date. Yet, it is

also emphasized that the vision will definitely come to fruition. The waiting period might be long, but once it begins, the fulfillment will occur swiftly and without delay.

When does this "appointed time" when "it shall speak" occur? There are several perspectives. First, there's the "nearer" view, suggesting the fulfillment will occur after the Babylonian exile. This is possibly the safest explanation and has substantial support from Jewish rabbis. Another perspective is the messianic view, which interprets this "appointed time" as the arrival of the Messiah. Both Christian and Jewish scholars support this interpretation. A third viewpoint is the last-days/eschatology view, where the vision pertains to the establishment of the kingdom. Additionally, the possibility of dual fulfillment also exists.

The eschatological view finds some support in New Testament passages. A notable example is the phrase from Hebrews 10:37-38, "it will surely come, it will not tarry," which quotes parts of both verse 3 and verse 4. Verse 37 states, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Here, "it will surely come" is modified to "he that shall come." However, the Hebrew pronoun in verse 3 is the third person masculine, which can translate as "it" or "he." The context of Hebrews 10:37 is about patience for the promise that God has given Israel (see Heb. 10:36). The Hebrews reference suggests that interpretation should take a "far look," or possibly both a near and far look.

VERSE 4 -

The vision states, "his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." This is the thing that the Lord wants Habakkuk and his readers to "Behold." This can be taken in a general or specific manner. Generally, the one whose soul is "lifted up" in personal pride, "is not upright in him," that is, in himself. More particularly, this could be a reference to the Chaldean of chapter 1 verse 11, and thus concerns Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:30 records him as boasting, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

However, from an eschatological perspective, this could also reference the Antichrist. In biblical themes, the Antichrist is often portrayed as a figure of immense pride and self-exaltation, which can be paralleled to the "soul which is lifted up" in Habakkuk 2:4. Cross-references that may be considered shadows or types of the Antichrist exhibiting this pride include:

1. **Daniel 11:36:** "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god..."
2. **2 Thessalonians 2:4:** "[The man of sin] Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped..."
3. **Isaiah 14:13-14:** In reference to the king of Babylon, which some see as a type of the Antichrist and others view as Satan himself: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God..."

Contrary to such pride, the Lord informs Habakkuk that "the just shall live by his faith." These words, perhaps the most well-known from this minor prophet, are also quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. In none of these references does "the just" seem to refer to a single individual like the Messiah. Instead, it appears to be a general statement about anyone who is just. This statement references the beginning of the Messianic age, not the dispensation of God's grace, which was an unrevealed mystery in Habakkuk's time. However, many aspects of the future kingdom are also experienced in the current dispensation, drawing parallels. Indeed, in today's world, "the just shall live by faith."