

Habakkuk 2

The Woes Of The Watchmen

Learning Objectives

- Meditate on the fact that the Lord is just and is aware of all things.
- Reflect on how God's sovereignty and justice applies in our lives.

Pray for your time together today.

Leaders' Note: Habakkuk 2 begins with a response to a complaint from chapter one. In this complaint the author asks God how he can use a wicked nation to bring justice to a less wicked nation.

Read Out Loud: Habakkuk 2 (NIV)

I will stand at my watch
and station myself on the ramparts;
I will look to see what he will say to me,
and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

²Then the LORD replied:

"Write down the revelation
and make it plain on tablets
so that a herald may run with it.

³For the revelation awaits an appointed time;
it speaks of the end
and will not prove false.

Though it linger, wait for it;
it will certainly come
and will not delay.

⁴"See, the enemy is puffed up;
his desires are not upright—
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness—

⁵indeed, wine betrays him;
he is arrogant and never at rest.

Because he is as greedy as the grave
and like death is never satisfied,
he gathers to himself all the nations
and takes captive all the peoples.

⁶"Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying,
"Woe to him who piles up stolen goods

and makes himself wealthy by extortion!
How long must this go on?’

⁷ Will not your creditors suddenly arise?
Will they not wake up and make you tremble?
Then you will become their prey.

⁸ Because you have plundered many nations,
the peoples who are left will plunder you.
For you have shed human blood;
you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

⁹ “Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain,
setting his nest on high
to escape the clutches of ruin!

¹⁰ You have plotted the ruin of many peoples,
shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.

¹¹ The stones of the wall will cry out,
and the beams of the woodwork will echo it.

¹² “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed
and establishes a town by injustice!

¹³ Has not the LORD Almighty determined
that the people’s labor is only fuel for the fire,
that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁵ “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors,
pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk,
so that he can gaze on their naked bodies!

¹⁶ You will be filled with shame instead of glory.
Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed!
The cup from the LORD’s right hand is coming around to you,
and disgrace will cover your glory.

¹⁷ The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
and your destruction of animals will terrify you.
For you have shed human blood;
you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

¹⁸ “Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman?
Or an image that teaches lies?
For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation;
he makes idols that cannot speak.

¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’
Or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’
Can it give guidance?
It is covered with gold and silver;

there is no breath in it.”

²⁰The LORD is in his holy temple;

let all the earth be silent before him.

Part One: Habakkuk Prepares For God's Response

? Watchman quietly stood in towers at night and strained their eyes for enemies in the dark. What does Habakkuk's posture reveal about him as he prepares to receive God's word?

Possible Answers: He compares himself to a watch man of the night. Watch men stood high on the wall in the quiet dark of the night and strained their eyes for enemies or others coming to the gates.

? As a watchman, Habakkuk would have been part of a city's defense system. Herodotus says that Babylon had a huge wall with 100 bronze gates that was wide enough for a four-horse chariot to run on. How does the enormous defense systems of humans look when paired against God's power?

Possible Answers: The Lord of hosts will be able to defeat any power, that God will be able to defeat anything even when our eyes and minds see it as impossible.

? In verse 2, God instructs Habakkuk to write the vision to make it plain so that a herald may run and share this message. Why is this message urgent? How would you run with this message?

Possible Answers: In order to spread the word to the city, in an attempt to flee the coming judgment.

? In verses 4-5, many believe that God is talking about the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and Jewish unbelievers. What do we learn about their character based on this description?

Possible Answers: They are "puffed up," meaning that they make more of themselves than they actually are. Their desires (or "soul" in ESV) are not upright within them. They are always restless. They are greedy and devour nations and are never satisfied.

? What truths and characteristics about God can we see from this message?

Possible Answers: God is in control. He knows the best timing for things. Just because He doesn't answer a prayer in the way we think we should doesn't mean He isn't in control or doesn't hear us.

? Conversely, God uses one phrase to describe the righteous. "The righteous person shall live by his faithfulness." How do you see death and life (righteousness), contrasted here?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary and will likely include above points.

? Many of these woes speak to challenges and temptations that faithful people falter to in this fallen world. Do any of these woes ring true or feel familiar to experiences you’ve had in your own life? In what ways?

Possible Answers: Will vary

Part Two: Four Woes To The Chaldeans (/All Nations And Unbelievers)

Read Out Loud: Romans 1:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

? How does Paul use Habakkuk 2:4 to make a statement about righteousness?

Possible Answers: God shows through the teachings and life of Jesus (gospel) that righteousness and salvation is a gift to be received, not something that can be earned, as the proud referenced here may be trying to do. Or they are trusting in their own might for their salvation.

? Building off of Romans 1:16-17 and Habbakuk 2:4, what does living by faith look like? What does it look like to “live by faith?”

Possible Answers: To continue to trust in God and clinging to God’s promises, even when the days are dark and the stress is high. To cling to the truths of God’s character, his justice, his awareness and care for you.

Objective: Break into partners or spend time as a large group filling out the following chart.

Leaders’ Note: We’ve filled in the first column, but the second column is blank on the handouts. Have groups fill in the second column and then discuss your findings.

	<u>What are the Human Actions?</u>	<u>What is the Response and/or Consequence?</u>
<u>Woe 1:</u> <u>6-8</u>	Stealing and killing, excessive greed and conquest	<i>Possible Answers:</i> Debtors and the plundered will come calling.
<u>Woe 2:</u> <u>9-11</u>	Building a safe life with stolen material, economic injustice	<i>Possible Answers:</i> The loss of community, creating separation, a focus on self-reliance
<u>Woe 3:</u>	Building a city by killing and iniquity,	<i>Possible Answers:</i> Your work apart from God will

<u>12-14</u>	slave labor	result in rubble.
<u>Woe 4:</u> <u>15-18</u>	Embarrass and bring shame to their neighbors, irresponsible leaders	<i>Possible Answers:</i> Justice will come full circle.
<u>Woe 5:</u> <u>19-20</u>	Creation and worship of false gods. Idolatry	<i>Possible Answers:</i> Destruction, separation from God

? What woes do you see in our society/the world today?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

? What should be our response to those woes? How does the gospel give us hope when facing down those trials?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

? How can you better trust God and His plan when you feel overwhelmed by the evils of the world?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

For Discussion And Accountability

? Of the five types of woes we discussed tonight, which ones are most present in your life? How can you better allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to repentance in that area?