

# God's Instrument of Judgment – *Habakkuk 1:5-17*

**Introduction** – “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deut 32:4). If this is true then how can God ordain the unholy work of a wicked person or people and still be just, holy, and good? This is the struggle of the prophet Habakkuk as we continue. But God is able to use unholy instruments for holy purposes. In His inscrutable wisdom and kindness, He also transforms unholy instruments (you and me) even through the work of unholy instruments in His perfect time.

(On this, the national Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, we cry out against the violence cast upon the preborn, the carnage of our abortion mills. Feeding this is the violent shame our culture throws at femininity, the glory of woman, the gift of nurturing motherhood, the perfect wisdom of God in creating Man male and female in His image, while applauding and even legally requiring the abdication of fathers to protect, provide, and take responsibility for their offspring. While many in the church cry out for God to stop the violence, to judge the wicked, to establish righteousness, much of the covenant people of God have become woke, embracing these sins as kind tolerance). We may be witnessing God answering our prayers even now, just not in the way we were thinking.

Habakkuk is about to find out that God is going to clean house.

**The LORD Agrees and Responds** (vv5-11) – The prophet had complained to God regarding the behavior of the covenant people (vv2-4). God sees hypocrisy, unbelief, blasphemy, and false teachings that tickle itching ears, and He agrees with Habakkuk that judgment should fall. But the Lord sees the problem more deeply than the prophet imagined and warns with ominous words of an utterly astounding response that He is going to bring in their day (v5). He will raise up the Chaldeans (Babylon), a bitter and impetuous nation as His instrument of judgment (v6). Just as Israel had taken the land of Canaan and possessed homes and cities they did not build, so now they will lose them to Babylon (v6). The Chaldeans are a terrible and dreadful people and while the LORD is leading them in this, they view themselves above all gods, “*judgment and dignity proceed from themselves*” – they autonomously determine what is true/false, good/bad (v7). They are swift and fierce and see Judah as nothing but prey to devour (v8). While Habakkuk had decried the unrighteous “violence” among His people, Babylon will come with great violence (v9) scoffing at all other kings and strongholds (v10) ascribing this strength as their god (v11).

**Using Evil to Judge Evil?** (vv12-17) – The LORD was right; this is utterly astounding to Habakkuk; he has a hard time believing it (v5 again). He reminds the LORD of His character. He is an everlasting, unchanging Rock. He is “my” God and “my” Holy One. He might bring judgment and correction, but “*we shall not die*” – You’re not really going to do that?? (v12). God is so holy, He cannot even look upon the wickedness of Babylon, let alone use them as His instruments (v13) to swallow up and devour Judah (as in fact they did – Jer 51:34). Habakkuk rehearses before the LORD what he knows the LORD knows about these enemies. They indiscriminately devour everyone, like a dragnet hauling in fish (and historians tell us they would hook the lower lip of their captives and string them together). They worship their instruments of human torture and cruelty – such are their gods (vv15-17). Summary: LORD, what are you thinking? Why would You turn us over to something far more wicked than us to judge our wickedness?

**Righteous Judgment Defined** – Habakkuk’s prophecy comes to pass. Babylon did come swiftly to power. They became the world power over Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt between 614-605 BC when twenty years previously they hardly were known to exist (Robertson). Nations rise and fall “*not by their own instinct, but by the hidden impulse of God*” – (Calvin). This rapid rise to power and the overthrow of pagan nations by another pagan nation was all the sovereign hand of God.

It was the habit of the people of God to remember God’s wondrous works (Psalm 44:1, 75:1) and even to recall His hard providences in the past (Psalm 106:16-18). But it was too much to believe that God could bring such a chastisement by His hand in the present day. How much more are we tempted to believe “that was the God of the Old Testament – we serve the God of the New Testament, a God of love and not of judgment.”

**New Testament Righteous Judgment Defined** (Acts 13:26-48, esp. v41) – Habakkuk was dealing with unfaithful Judah and God sent in the Babylonians to chastise them. This turns out to be only a foretaste. Paul was dealing with unfaithful Israel who rejected their Messiah and declared to them, with the words of Hab 1:5, that God was going to send a great chastisement in their day. Jesus said the same – “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*” And Jerusalem fell, the temple destroyed completely and finally, by a wicked pagan nation, Rome, in 70AD.

**Another New Testament Righteous Judgment** – “Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb” (Acts 13:29). Our sensibilities are offended when we are told that God uses evil acts to bring forth His righteous judgments. But we are not consistent. Why are we not far more offended by the scandal of the Cross? It was there where the most unrighteous act ever occurred, the ordained death of the Lord of glory - innocent, holy, faithful, and nailed to a tree. And, we are told, that this was an act of love (John 3:16). To come to Christ is to acknowledge God’s active and hard judgment upon you as holy, righteous and good – and to see that in His love, He has placed that (imputed that) upon His Son in your place if and only if you are united to Him by faith (Gal 2:20).

**When and How Does Righteous Judgment Come?** – “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deut 32:4). It comes perfectly, it comes in all truth and uprightness, it comes full of justice and without injustice – and all of that is defined by God and never by us. We have sown the wind; we have reaped the whirlwind (Hos 8:7). We have refused to worship God and submit to His ways and He has brought the murder of tens of millions of babies upon us. We have refused to acknowledge male and female and all that that means for sexuality, family, generational responsibility and blessing, and He has brought the destruction of marriage and the family (and all the delightful glory that comes with it) into our land. We have trusted the prosperity and safety of our land to our own military, our own government, in all autonomy from Him, and He has brought the growing tyranny upon us. This has all occurred while 100 million or more professing Christians (the covenant people of God) dwell in our land, many if not most of them, excusing it, encouraging it, ignoring it.

**What Righteous Judgment Brings to the Righteous (2:4)** – “But the just shall live by his faith.” We haven’t gotten there yet, but the Cross has already taught us this as well. Righteous judgment does clean house, and it is convulsive, tearing down all idols and strongholds. Great reformational corrections do the same and so we must pray that God would do whatever it takes to shame this nation and our secular enlightenment culture (including the church) and bring us to repentance as a people. We must pray, and worship, and wait.

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