

When God Seems Silent: A Study of Habakkuk
Lesson Six: The Perverted Justice of Immorality (1:7-11)
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Introduction:

I. Sir Thomas More coined the word "utopia" in the 16th Century. He used it as a title of a book he had authored about the ideal commonwealth on an imaginary island. Today's mind identifies "utopia" with a perfect world or ideal society. The interesting fact is that the literal meaning of "utopia" is "no such place." Ironically, in striving for utopia modern man chases an elusive dream.

1. Life is filled with tragedy, sorrow, and injustice.
2. God has warned us of this (Job 14:1) but modern minds refused to admit it. We vainly strive to find "utopia." When arrogant injustice arises, we begin to blame God.
3. This is where Habakkuk was in 1:7-11. He expected God to furnish an instant cure for the injustice of Judah (1:2-4). God's response was far from what Habakkuk expected!

II. God's solution to the perverted justice in Judah was the strengthening of the Babylonian nation.

This providential action illustrates *"the problem of history."* This is a principle illustrating that God has historically worked in the rise and fall of World Powers (Daniel 2:21). Historically God is at work to will His dictates and direct the world's affairs. How sad that many refuses to see history as the unfolding of Divine Providence in the affairs of this world.

1. The Chaldeans were a Semitic tribe living between Babylon and the Persian Gulf.
2. They had revolted against Assyria and gained freedom. In 612 B.C. they, with the Medes and Scythians, destroyed Nineveh. With the victory at Carchemish, Babylon emerged as the world's ruler.
3. Judah had early treaties with Babylon but had broken them in favor of gaining protection from Assyria/Egypt. With the defeat of Assyria/Egypt at Carchemish, Judah fell to Babylonian domination. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and subjected it. In 536 B.C. the temple was destroyed and Babylon carried away the third group of Exiles.
4. In response to Habakkuk's first question, God replied that He was preparing the Chaldeans (who ruled the Babylonian Empire) to punish Judah's injustice.
5. The reputation of this nation was an unbridled evil.
6. Deuteronomy 28:49 – God had warned Israel about this penalty and now it was too late for the nation to avoid it.
 - a. Judah had turned from God and walked in her own way (Jeremiah 23:16, 21, 26-29, 36).
 - b. She despised God's Word, refused God's prophets, and now she had to pay the penalty.
 - c. Judgement was certain.



III. This bitter nation reveals the corrupt standard that guides all who have given up God's righteousness.

1. Its tenets are apparent in our modern day.
2. Its ruin awaits all who despise God's Word.
3. Consider the facts that surround this nation being used by God.



Body:


I. Its basis of AUTHORITY – "themselves" (1:7).

- A. This nation was self-directed.


1. "Their character was rooted in self-sufficiency that acknowledged no superior authority and no dependency, which was tantamount to self-deification" (C. Amering quoted by Leggett, 97).
2. They held a "dignity" (NASB, "authority" verse 7). These thought they were all-important and independent of God. They  thought they did not need God to be important or powerful!
3. They possessed an  inherent arrogance and conceit that marks all world powers (Daniel 4:30).
4. Their "justice" originated with themselves – they were the law. They governed by a self-determined law that rejected God (Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). "Ruthlessly arrogant with no higher law to answer to than their own" (Leggett, 97).

B. We must take heed lest we fail to submit to God's authority in our lives!


1. Within this anarchy was the  germ for the future ruin of Babylon – in making himself his own authority he was doomed.
2. We need to beware lest we share this guilt and find the wrath and destruction of God upon us!
3.  We must submit to God's authority! (1 Chronicles 29:11, 12; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Isaiah 33:22, 13:11; Proverbs 8:13).
 - a. Ajax called his sword his god and thanked it for all its achievements.
 - b. Belshazzar boasted (Isaiah 14:14).
 - c. The Prince of Tyre thought himself god (Ezekiel 28:22).
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar allowed pride to dominate (Isaiah 10:13-15).

II.  Its STRENGTH – mortal power (1:8, 11b).

A. There is no denying that the strength of Babylon was fierce.

1.  Her armies were overwhelming (Jeremiah 4:29; 6:23; 8:16; 50:37; 51:21; Ezekiel 23:23, 24; 26:7-10).
2. Word images (8-11) depict her strength.
3. Belshazzar boasted in his power (Isaiah 14:13-14).

B. The Anti-Christ displays this same trait (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

1.  Those who share this attitude presume they are self-reliant – they have no use for God. Some view dependence upon God as a "weakness"! These share this blasphemous trait of Babylon.
2. Only the ignorant will think he possesses a strength that is greater than the LORD God (Job 4:19; 35:2; Psalm 144:4; Jeremiah 17:5).
3. We need to sing – "The arm of flesh will fail you, you dare not trust your own!" ("Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus").
4. When a nation/people/Church begin to trust in their own strength, disaster is soon to strike. Violence eventually leads to anarchy and chaos. There will be no stability because God's Laws have been banned!

C.  Modern America sits uncomfortably in a similar posture.

1. National leaders decry violence yet pursue policies of gross violence worshipping at the altar of "Self."
2. Babylon warns us about the danger of rejecting God for Self—
 - a. Violence will be uncontrolled for all authority will be forsaken with arrogance (Habakkuk 1:10; Hosea 4:1-6).

b. Violence rapidly advances for there will be no stopping without authority!

3. Unless dramatic shifts are soon made, our nation's destiny will be as Babylon's!

III. ☞ Its FRUITS – “violence” (1:9).

- A. ☞ When a nation lives by its own law, despises God, and rejects Heaven's standards it invites and embraces brutal violence.
1. King Manasseh is the historical illustration of this brutality (2 Kings 21:9-16, “Manasseh encouraged them to do evil, more than the nations whom the Lord eliminated from the presence of the sons of Israel”).
 2. Hosea 4:1-3, Describes a horrible culture of violence. “There is oath-taking, denial, murder, stealing, and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore, the land mourns, and everyone who lives in it languishes.” The explanation for this violent culture was “There is no knowledge of God in the land.”
 3. Babylon was infamous for its cruelty (2 Chronicles 36:6; 2 Kings 24:14, 15; Jeremiah 22:19).
 4. ☞ Nations reap the harvest their government sows – Judah had acted violently and now she would reap violence (Hosea 4:1-3, 6).
 5. Ultimately, Babylon seated violence as her chief gods Bel and Nebo. Later nations followed: Rome deified her military standards and arms; savage tribes idolized arrows and spears.
- B. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of this perverted justice in the devolving of a nation. Violence brought about the fall of Judah, “Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you searched for the lost; but with force and with violence you have dominated them” (Ezekiel 34:4).

IV. ☞ It's END – “guilty” (1:11).

- A. The nation stood condemned—even with her arrogance, strength, might, wealth, and worldly prestige, no ☞ one could defend her (Isaiah 14:5, 6, 15).
1. The Chaldeans would be used by God for punishing Judah but ultimately the evil Babylonians would perish—the Babylonian Empire lasted only 89 years (Farrar, p. 167).
 2. The guilt of Judah's culture is highlighted in the nation's rejection of God for Self. “The deification of self is the last delusion of a foolish heart” (Genesis 3:5, Deane, 9).
 3. There is a great historical irony—Babylon failed to realize she was being used by God and thus imputed success to herself. Suddenly her power was inadequate!
 4. As a nation, she would be weighed in the Almighty's scales of justice and be found “wanting” (Daniel 5:27). This great Empire would “pass on.” Though she assumed that she would last forever, her self-worship led to ruin!
- B. This point should not be lost on modern minds. Notice in this point once again ☞ “the problem of history.”
1. ☞ No cruelty, crime, or injustice ever escapes God. ☞ He is aware of all injustices. He may utilize evil men to achieve eternal purposes, but ☞ they will be held accountable.
 2. We may take pride in science and medicine, and modern warfare, and engineering achievements. But do not forget, great world powers have been raised up and reigned worldwide, but they eventually ☞ became drunk with success and forgot God and then found themselves cast down!
- “Nations and people who have founded a culture that is established on human reason and modified by human wants and desires, without taking into account the higher laws of God, have always

sooner or later fallen under the weight of their own devising...The earth is a vast burial ground where nations that were born and grew mightily in power lie buried" (Yoder, 156).

3. ☞ The destiny of any godless nation will be as Babylon—it will be "like the wind and pass on." That nation will have no permanence—the problem of history!

A nation might have a constitution based upon godly principles and have a renowned history of amazing feats. But when that nation forsakes the Rule of Law that has established righteousness, it will quickly devolve and ultimately disappear!

☞ The nation of Israel illustrates this tragic truth. Consider Deuteronomy 4.

- a. A nation is only as "great" as its devotion to the Almighty God (4:7).
 - b. National greatness is guarded by "statutes and judgments" of righteousness (4:8).
 - c. National greatness is dependent upon the education in righteousness (4:9-10).
 - d. When the nation "forgets" God, its national greatness devolves (4:23).
 - e. When a nation remains "a long time" it forgets God's commands, act corruptly, and does evil (4:25).
 - f. ☞ The once great nation that provokes God, will not continue long, and will quickly perish (4:25-26).
4. ☞ National sins bring ruin and divine wrath (Numbers 35:34; Proverbs 14:34). There is a moral imperative that nations must follow if they are to remain! If the ☞ strongest nation on earth perverts the righteous decrees of the Almighty God, it cannot succeed. ☞ That nation is in a death spiral.

Conclusion:

I. Historians have dubbed ☞ Attila, leader of the Huns who overran Europe in the Fifth Century, the "scourge of God" ("*Flagellum Dei*" in Latin). He was seen as God's instrument for punishing a society gone mad. ☞ Why have modern minds forgotten that an Almighty God is still at work in our history? Why do we seek to cover up this Truth? ☞ Why do we permit the justice of God's righteous standards to become perverted?

1. ☞ God controls not only Israel but also His enemies. Every nation is under God's control (Isaiah 40:15).
2. God has a definite plan for history and His eternal purposes will be achieved (Isaiah 14:27a). We may not see the divine plan in the present but rest assured that eventually we will discern a wondrous plan unfolding (Isaiah 46:9-10).
3. God works according to His will, His time, and His acts (Psalm 33:10).
4. Thus, there is meaning even when evil appears triumphant (Habakkuk 1:5, 6).

II. ☞ Whenever evil seems triumphant we must not despair—hope in God whose sovereignty will judge all (Psalm 2:4). What could Habakkuk do now? He had obeyed God but was in the minority. His country was about to be invaded. All he could do was hope and pray.

III. Habakkuk's ☞ first question has been answered.

1. God will not tolerate evil.
2. Jehovah will rise up one of history's most wicked nations to punish Judah.
3. But that nation will not go unpunished.

God knows what He is doing. He is not indifferent. He is using whatever instruments He can to achieve His purposes, and His purposes will be accomplished (Deuteronomy 28:49).

Thus, 🙏 Habakkuk should not lose heart, never compromise, and remain confident in trusting God! We need to do exactly as Habakkuk did!

🙏 Our Next Lesson: "The God who00 cannot ignore injustice"