

Do not Fear

Habakkuk 2:18-20

The Chaldeans are coming! The Chaldeans are coming! If Paul Revere lived in Judah at the time of Habakkuk, this would have been his warning. Habakkuk, the prophet who dared to ask why, complained to God because of all the injustice and sin he saw in Judah. He accused God of being indifferent to the plight of righteous people in Judah and of being inactive, not doing anything about the situation. God shocked His prophet in answering these charges. The LORD answered Habakkuk's challenge by calling him to look among the heathen. The Chaldeans were coming to take care of Judah's sinfulness. They were preparing themselves to invade and destroy the Judah that the prophet knew. Immediately, Habakkuk stepped back and took time out to remind Himself of what was real. God is eternal. God is holy. God is the faithful covenant keeping God of Israel. God is Elohim, the all-powerful God. His conclusion followed, *"we will not die."* Judah would not cease to exist. Yet he asked, *"God how can you use those less holy than we are to judge us?"*

In Habakkuk 2:2 we read, *"Then the LORD answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.'"* The whole of chapter two is God's answer to Habakkuk's question. God's answer is five woes. In the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the woes the LORD positions three towers of timeless truths for the righteous ones to run into and be safe. Tower one promised *"the just shall live by faith."* Tower two proclaimed *"the knowledge of the glory of the LORD shall cover the earth as the water covers the sea."* We are looking at the third tower today. *"But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."*

First, we learn the truth about idols. Second, we learn the truth about the living God whom we serve.

Many remark that the last woe, unlike the others, does not begin with the word “*woe*.” It has a preamble. This is true, but the preamble and the woe itself are the backdrop against which the last tower, the last statement of timeless truth, must be viewed. *“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ to silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it there is no breath at all”* (Habakkuk 2:18-19). This woe is against those who trust in idols and who do not trust in the living God.

About now we might be tempted to fall asleep. Clearly this message is not for me because I do not have an idol hidden in my closet. There is no shrine against one wall of my living room. We may not realize God was talking about something much broader than just an idol. God condemned a heart problem, which we do well to make sure we do not tolerate in our hearts.

In the book of 1 John, the Apostle John wrote about this problem in one statement in the end of the book. The very last verse of 1 John says, *“Little children guard yourself from idols.”* There is not one word in the epistle saying anything about idols leading up to this little verse that gives a warning about idols. John did warn his readers about loving the world and the things of the world. He told them about the three kinds of lust that make up the world. He also said the world is passing away, but he who does God’s will shall abide forever. Perhaps all these ideas are about allowing something to take God’s place in our hearts and lives and so become an idol. John wrote the last verse of his epistle warning about idolatry because anything we trust in place of God is an idol.

The Scriptures are replete with statements like we hear here in Habakkuk about the futility of making and worshipping idols. After Isaiah’s great vision of the person of God in Isaiah 40 we find Isaiah asking, *“To whom then will you liken God? Or what*

likeness will you compare to Him?" Nothing and no one can adequately represent God. We must not let an idol take God's place.

Because of idolatry this disaster would come upon Judah. Because they put their trust in dead and impotent idols instead of the true and living God, they were suffering.

Although the gods represented by the idols are not real and can't do anything to help Judah in the crisis, God is real and is there for them. *"But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."* Some may indulge in their false gods, but this does not mean the true and living God is not there. No sir, God is in His temple and still demands our worship. The Spirit of God declared God is where He is supposed to be.

The Hebrew word translated *"temple"* is used in several ways in the Old Testament. It is translated *"house of a king, temple, palace, or tabernacle."* In this text it can mean the Lord is in the Temple in Jerusalem dwelling between the cherubim, or it can mean that God is in His palace on His throne in heaven.

God is still on His throne and He is still in control of the situation no matter what is happening around us. God has not gone on vacation, nor is He napping. God is still on the job! Judah, you can worship false gods but your actions do not change Who God is and what He is doing. Habakkuk doubted this very fact in chapter one. Habakkuk thought God had forgotten him. He thought God did not care about what was going on. He may even have entertained a shadow of a doubt about God's integrity. He was not convinced God was in His palace or temple and sovereign over the creation He had made.

Contrary to what Habakkuk thought, the LORD was there and He was not silent. He still worked out His will for the world around Habakkuk, just as He is working out His plan in the world in which we live. Psalm 115:1-3 catches what should be our spirit in this verse. *"Not to us, O LORD not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of*

your steadfast love and your faithfulness. Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases."

This fact is the secret of our confidence. It is the foundation upon which we live our lives. Remember what Elisha said and did when Elijah went to heaven? *"Where is the LORD God of Elijah"* 2 Kings 2:14. He is here and He is not silent. Just remember the things He has done.