

## HABAKKUK CHAPTER 2(a)

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope. (Romans 15:4).

Page | 1

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime — In the Old Testament; were written for our learning — As if he had said, Though this may seem to concern David or Christ only, yet it, and all other parts of Scripture, whether containing promises or threatenings, whether speaking of rewards or punishments, were intended to be useful to God's people in after ages[.]* (Benson)

**I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.**

We are obligated to stand on our watch post and look around very diligently, as best we can, to see what messengers or enemies, or what dangers or deliverances, are approaching, and to continue steadfast in that work. In a metaphorical sense, we do this from a high place, a bird's eye view, some more than others. **And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.** (2 Samuel 18:24).

The Old Testament is filled with watchmen. Here are just a few examples: For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. (Isaiah 21:6). Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. (Jeremiah 6:17). Son of man, I have made thee a

watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. (Ezekiel 3:17).

In these passages, including our text, the idea is of one who is stationed on an elevated post of observation, who looks over a large region, and gives timely warning. The watch-post also symbolizes the withdrawal of the soul from earthly, and fixing it on heavenly things.

Habakkuk was watching for words from God, either audibly or by inwardly impressing things upon his mind. On this, Gill says we are to “constantly attend to every motion or dictate of the Spirit of God, and take particular notice of what should be suggested.”

**2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.**

It seems in those days, there were well-known tables upon which prophets would inscribe their utterances for public education. Each prophecy was to be printed plainly and legibly on those tables, in a very public way, so they could be easily and quickly read by a passerby. #WBCSigns! If Tweeters were smart, that hash tag would be trending.

Check out these remarks from Benson: *Write down what I am going to say. Every divine communication, by whatever means made, is often spoken of in the prophetic writings under the title of a vision. When the prophets were commanded to write any thing, it denoted the great importance of it, and that the fulfilling of it was at some distance. Make it plain upon tables — Write it in legible characters; that he may run that readeth — That it may be read with ease. For the vision is yet for an appointed time (see verse 3 coming) — What I am now about to reveal to thee will not be fulfilled*

till a certain time which God hath appointed, but which is yet at a distance. You get the drift.

**3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.**

It's hard to read this verse without thinking of Hebrews 10:37: For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. When tossed and perplexed with doubts about unfolding providence, we must fight impatience. Consider this nugget from Matthew Henry: *All are concerned in the truths of God's word. Though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and abundantly recompense us for waiting.*

We also learn here that God's prophecies are truth, through and through. Bank on it! No lies!

**4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.**

The immediate reference here is to the puffed up, prideful invaders, whose minds are consequently distorted and unsound. But the language also allows for general, across-the-board application to all that are so "lifted up." The Vulgate renders this phrase: *Behold he who is unbelieving, his soul will not be right in him.*

As to the final clause of this verse, the word "live" is emphatic. The just shall LIVE by faith! The "just" is juxtaposed to the "lifted up." Two different groups are present in the text.

The reward promised to patient waitings on God is life – deliverance from destruction. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Romans 1:17). But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. (Galatians 3:11). Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Hebrews 10:38).

**5** Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is* a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

This is striking, colorful, beautiful and descriptive language. It's the kind of literature that's fun to read.

Again, it's fair to say the primary application here is to the marauding interlopers, who not only are arrogant and proud, but egged on by wine and strong drink, are restless, rapacious and insatiably covetous. That's the kind of people constantly threatening the Lord's chosen.

As to the language concerning transgressing by wine: Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1). As to the other charge, that of rapacity (aggressive greed), more aid from Proverbs: Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. (Proverbs 27:20). [Y]ea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough. (Proverbs 30:15, 16).

These people are not satisfied to stay home. They are always abroad, looking for some fight or another. They are never satiated; the notion of being content is utterly foreign. But here is where it ends: **He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.** (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

**6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth *that which is not his!* how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!**

Here we see what awaits the wrongdoers, viz. a parable and a taunting proverb. The victims will soon be singing a denunciatory song. This parable/proverb dichotomy connotes a common, well-known derisive song. We see a sample of such at Isaiah 14:4: **That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!** The specific lyrics of this particular taunting proverb make up the balance of this chapter.

It begins with a powerful Woe! to them that become wealthy by ill-gotten gain through fraud, stealing and oppressive usury.

**7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?**

We get to the nub of this verse with these remarks from Ellicott: *Bite.*— *This verb nâshac also means “to oppress with usury,” and this is its force here. Thy turn shall come, and men shall exact usury from thee. Similarly, the verb translated “vex” is, literally, to shake violently, in allusion to a creditor’s forcible seizure of his debtor. (Comp. Matthew 18:28.) The prediction of Habakkuk in these verses was fulfilled by the*

*rise of the Medo-Persian power, and the capture of Babylon by the forces of Cyrus, cir. B.C. 538.*

The destruction of the wicked is ever sudden. Such was the flood, the demise of Sodom, of Pharaoh, the enemies of God through the era of the Judges, and so on. And such shall the end of this present world be. We won't have any trouble recognizing it. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-5). The suddenness and thoroughness of their latter end is apparent from this language at 2 Peter 3:10: **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

**8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for* the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.**

This language, which can be taken to have specific application to what was happening on the ground in Habakkuk's time, also has powerful and mystical application now.

Today, who has spoiled many nations? Who has slain their people, sacked their cities, robbed their treasuries, and deposed kings – and done this towards many nations? Who indeed? Now, soon, according to this text, such a nation will be paid back in its own coin.

And look at this unique view posited by Gill on the language “because of men’s blood” -- *because of men's blood; the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, of those under the altar, whose blood cried for vengeance, Revelation 6:9, which was shed under the ten bloody persecutions: or, "because of the blood of a man": of Adam (f), as it may be rendered; the blood of Christ the second Adam, which, though shed at the instance of the Jews, yet by the order of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor:*

**9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!**

Woe to that people who gather spoils from other nations and stows it away in what they believe to be an impregnable treasure-house. As birds, guided by instinct, build their nests on the top of mountains and trees, these wrongdoers think that obtaining possession of places strong by their situation will guarantee safety from any enemy. **And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.** (Numbers 24:21). **Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.** (Jeremiah 49:16).

As you might have guessed, the image here is from an eagle. **Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?** (Job 39:27). There is something about the flesh that causes it to believe they can assure security and safety by reaching for the stars. **And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.** (Genesis 11:4).

This country thinks in those terms as well. Even if you wanted to, you would not be able to get too close to the United States Bullion Depository (a/k/a Fort Knox) because it's surrounded by a steel fence. Even the building itself is hardcore, made of concrete-lined granite and reinforced by steel to help it withstand any attack. Much of this country's gold reserves are located there. Here's a Wikipedia description: *The facility is surrounded by fences and is guarded by the [United States Mint Police](#). Between the outer perimeter and the depository walls lie rings of [razor wire](#) and [minefields](#). These grounds are monitored by high-resolution [night vision](#) video cameras and microphones. The depository is equipped with its own [emergency power](#) and water systems.* For security reasons, visitors are not allowed inside the depository grounds.

(Incidentally, that place is named after Henry Knox, a good friend of George Washington, who was one of Washington's top military aides during the Revolutionary War and who became the first Secretary of War as a member of Washington's cabinet. He famously defied experts and odds by arranging and carrying out the transport of large canons hundreds of miles in winter weather to ultimately save the hide of rebel fighters. Knox was a bloody warmonger.)

Time will tell how this story ends, but God's word for it, "Woe" to such a people.

**10** [Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned \*against\* thy soul.](#)

The meaning here is that, by determining to cut off many, you have caused shame to your own house and have therein sinned against your own soul so that you are the guilty cause of your own ruin.

And this proverb is right on point: **He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.** (Proverbs 15:27). And this: **But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.** (Proverbs 8:36). There you have it; house/soul: Two things that any right-thinking person would never want to damage or destroy. Page | 9

**My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.** (1 Corinthians 16:24).