

The Judgement the Righteous Wait For

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- [0 : 00] And we're going to turn now to our Bible reading. Phil Copeland will be continuing his series in Habakkuk, and he'll be preaching to us this evening from Habakkuk 2, verse 2 to 20. We have visitors' Bibles available, so if you need one, or the person beside you needs one, please don't be shy.
- Grab hold of one so you can be following along. If you're using one of our visitor Bibles, it can be found on page 785.
- Habakkuk 2. And the Lord answered me, Write the vision, make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time.
- It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up.
- It is not upright within him. But the righteous shall live by his faith. Or as the footnote translates, by his faithfulness. Moreover, wine is a traitor.
- [1 : 22] An arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide a shale. Like death, he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.
- Shall not all these take up their taunt against him with scoffing and riddles for him and say, Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own. For how long?
- And loads himself with pledges. And loads himself with pledges. Will not your debtors suddenly arise? And those awake will make you tremble? Then you will be spoiled for them.
- Because you have plundered many nations. All the remnants of the people shall plunder you. For the blood of men and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.
- Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm. You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples.
- [2 : 19] You have forfeited your life. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity.
- Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the earth's sea.
- Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink. You pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness. You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.
- Drink yourself and show your uncircumcision. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory. The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them.
- For the blood of men and violence to the earth, the cities and all who dwell in them. What prophet is an idol when its maker shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies?
- [3 : 27] For its maker trusts in its own creation when he makes speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, awake to a silent stone, arise.

Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. But the Lord is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before him. Amen. May God bless to us his words. Amen. Well, good evening, everyone, and welcome.

Oh, no, welcome. You've already been welcomed. Sorry. It's great for you to be with you this evening. Please do turn to the book of Habakkuk, chapter 2, and keep that open in front of you.

That'll be great. Thanks. Thanks. There may well be times in the Christian life when we are utterly perplexed, perplexed about what God is doing.

[4 : 36] Times when we know what the truth is about God is at loggerheads with our current experience of him. We know that God is the sovereign ruler of the world, and that he's holy and just and good.

He is a shepherd, a shield, a rock for all those who trust in him. We know that these things are always true all of the time. But there'll be many times when the church won't experience the Lord our God in that way in our everyday lives.

Times when the Lord's apparent inactivity causes us great pain. And makes us cry out to him in perplexed concern. And for you might be here this evening, and that might just be how you're feeling exactly.

You look at the world around that the Lord apparently controls and see many things that just should not be. Our nation seems to be falling further and further down into depravity, away from the ways of the Lord, and it seems to be doing so scot-free.

And those who obey Christ, those who love Jesus and make a stand for him, were there lambasted, bullied and belittled by the proud and the haughty, both from outside the church and from within the church.

[5 : 55] You look at all of this and you think, well, I know the Lord is in control, but it doesn't look like it. It looks as though the enemies of the gospel are calling the shots.

And when we see all of these things happening around us, questions fire up within us. Oh Lord, why do you seem so inactive? Why don't you do something about this?

You can, so why don't you? How long will things be like this? Can I just say, that's nothing new. For that is exactly the same painful perplexity that was pulsating through the heart of the prophet Habakkuk.

You remember last week, if you were here on Sunday, he brings the first of two perplexing concerns to the Lord in chapter one. He cries out, oh Lord, how long must I look upon all the evil that's happening within Judah, your Old Testament church is full of people who are spurning your grace, nullifying your law by the way they live their lives, the evil that they're doing.

And they're doing it in your name. Your name's being dragged through the mud. And they're persecuting the remnant of real believers within Judah.

[7 : 12] And you don't seem to care. Won't you remember your covenant promises and deal with this? Well, the Lord does answer Habakkuk, remember? But he gives him a shocking answer in chapter one, verse five.

The Lord says, Habakkuk, I'm not blind. I'm the all seeing, all knowing Lord. I'm not idle either. I see what's going on and I'm taking action that you won't even believe if I told you.

But I'm going to tell you, I am raising up a war machine. Babylonian brutes, Chaldean killers. The ferocious army has been raised up by me.

They will sweep across the world and the nations, devastating and seizing peoples, not their own. These immoral and idolatrous pagans who know nothing of me and therefore know nothing of love and forgiveness and mercy.

They are coming for you. And they are my instruments of judgment. I'm setting them upon Judah. They will seize the promised land and my people, as painful as it may be, will face exile.

[8 : 22] And you'll remember that this answer to prayer makes Habakkuk, he puts him in an even worse position. He does accept the Lord's plan by faith in chapter one, verse 12, but it's still an utterly perplexed faith.

Because again, what he knows to be true about God is at loggerheads with his current experience of God. He says, Lord, you're so holy, you can't even tolerate, let alone see evil.

And yet you're using these thugs for your purposes. Lord, you're just. I know you're just. You're holy. How then can you use extremely wicked people to punish those less wicked?

Lord, your cure seems worse than the disease. And in 1 verse 17, Habakkuk sums up his protest. He says, Lord, are you going to let Babylon do this forever?

Will you never hold them to account for their atrocious war crimes and their holocausts? And that's where we left Habakkuk last week, eagerly waiting and longing for the answer from the Lord.

[9 : 31] And in our passage this evening, the Lord finally replies. And once again, just notice the Lord doesn't scold his prophet for being perplexed. The Lord doesn't scold him for boldly questioning him or not having all the answers.

No, just as was the case with chapter 1, the Lord graciously meets with his servant in his perplexity and in his pain. And gives him understanding through his word.

So let's run through this now. And we'll think about what this means for our lives today as people of the Lord. Please look at 2 verse 2.

The Lord answers the prophet. Write the vision. Make plain on tablets so that he may run who reads it. So the Lord is going to give Habakkuk a vision.

And really that could be translated, that word, as a message, a revelation. Habakkuk is going to get a message. And he's to take this message and the Lord says, write it plainly on tablets.

[10 : 32] And you think that is a big deal. The only other thing the Lord told any of his people to write on tablets was the law. Now here's another message just as important. It's so important.

And it's on tablets so people could see it. It's to be proclaimed. That little detail about he who reads it may run with it. That's talking about what prophets did back in the day. Jeremiah 23 speaks about prophets in the same terms.

It's taking the Lord's message and running with it. Proclaiming it to everyone within earshot and beyond. And notice the events described in this message.

Just notice. They will only come to pass according to the Lord's timing. Verse 3. Now the appointed time would have been a very familiar phrase to Habakkuk or any person in Judah who knew their Bibles.

That was a phrase used in Genesis 18. Way back when the Lord spoke a promise so graciously to Abraham and Sarah.

[11 : 40] That the covenant people would survive despite the way things appeared at that time. Do you remember? Do you remember that story in Genesis? The Lord had promised that they would have a child despite their old age.

And they were very old. Well past the age of being able to have children. But the Lord says to them, no you will. You will have a child. The covenant family line would survive.

But Sarah laughed. Do you remember? She laughed at the prospect of the Lord's message coming to pass. And who could blame her? It seemed so unlikely given her current visible circumstances.

And what did the Lord say to her? He says, no you will. I'm telling you, you will have a child. But at the appointed time. On my time. Not your time. And it's the same phrase used here in Habakkuk.

And it's the same point that's been made. Friends, the Lord our God has his own diary. And so if it seems as though his message, his promises are taking a long time to come to fruition.

[12 : 45] Then as God's people we must wait. We must wait. And remember that it is not taking a long time from God's perspective. And really at the end of the day that's all that really matters.

Is God's perspective. But that is always the true nature of biblical faith, isn't it? True faith always waits for the Lord's word. Always takes the Lord at his word.

Even if it seems so unlikely at the present time. We are a people who do not walk by sight. We do not walk according to the things that we see around us.

Yes? No, we walk by trusting in what God has said. See, waiting in the Bible, it's not a passive thing. Waiting in your mind.

I wonder if you think about waiting. You might think of a waiting room. Sitting back, reading a magazine. Or just doing nothing. Waiting passively. That's not what the Bible means by waiting. It's active. We trust.

[13 : 42] We hear the Lord's word. And we get on with what he has actually told us to do. As we wait for the great fulfillments of his promises to come. Well, what exactly is this message that will happen at the appointed time?

What is it that the Lord's people need to wait patiently for? Well, friends, it's contained in verse 4 to verse 20. Verse 4 to 20. And let me sum it up for you.

Here it is. Here's the message. The message is that one day, the Lord our God is going to fill this earth with the knowledge of his glory. And on that day, the Lord will punish the proud.

Babylon. But the righteous, all those who have clung on to the Lord's promises, shall live by faith. And that's the message that we're told here.

And it's bursting full of hope and assurance. And it answers Habakkuk's perplexed concern. One day, at the divinely appointed time, the Lord is going to come and deal with Babylon.

[14 : 49] He's not going to let them get away with their evil. Yes, he has used Babylon as his own instrument for judgment and his own purposes. But they are still fully responsible for what they've done.

The Lord will deal with Babylon. And also, by the way, everyone who's lived with the same proud heart attitude as Babylon. They will get their comeuppance.

And the Lord, at the same time, will deliver his needy people, wiping out their oppressor. So, yes, God's people might well face exile now.

They might face Babylonian blasting. But even in their darkest hour, they can rejoice in knowing that the Lord, he's going to establish justice in the end. And all those who trust in his message will live and go on living.

Please look at verse 4. And in verse 4, what we have here is really the summing up of these two ways to live. The first half of verse 4 is in direct contrast to the second half of verse 4.

[15 : 52] He says this, Behold, his soul, and in context that his is referring to Babylon. Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him.

But the righteous shall live by his faith or faith or by his faithfulness. It doesn't matter how you translate it. It means the same thing. My friends, the Hebrew for puffed up there, it could also be translated as tumor.

That's how it's used in Samuel and in the book of Numbers. You could translate the start of verse 4 as this, Behold, his soul is bloated with cancerous pride. Cancerous pride that will kill him from within.

The Lord is saying that when it comes to the proud opponents of his kingdom, They might look strong. They might sound bolsterous. They might be intimidating. But really within themselves, they have the seed of their own destruction.

By their own self-righteousness, they will fall. Palmer Robertson says this in his commentary. In chapter 1, we're told that the Babylonians have set themselves up as the source of their own goodness and their own morality.

[17 : 04] In other words, they worship themselves as God. And so they exclude themselves from the possibility of ever receiving righteousness from the only one who can give it to them, who is the Lord God.

Contrast that with the people of faith, friends. Look at the second half of verse 4 again. The righteous shall live by faith. And who are they? They're the people who know that on their own they are hopeless.

And they've humbled themselves, trusting in the Lord alone to save them. And they've completely built their lives upon his word and his promises. Just like their father Abraham did in Genesis 15.

He believed. He walked by the obedience of faith in God's word, even when it was costly. He didn't go by how things appeared.

He did make mistakes. But he always turned back to the Lord in repentance. And because he did this, it was credited to him as righteousness, as a gift.

[18 : 06] And friends, the New Testament teaches us exactly the same thing, doesn't it? Because friends, that has always been the way of life. That's why, by the way, the Apostle Paul quotes Habakkuk 2 verse 4 as the very foundation for the entire argument of the book of Romans.

Did you know that? Romans 1, 16 and 17. Paul says, And Paul goes on to unpack all of that in his letter.

So the whole Bible teaches this plainly, friends. That only those who humble themselves and believe the gospel of God will be justified and saved from the wrath to come.

But again, this is precisely what the people of pride refuse to do. They refuse to humbly bow the knee in obedience to the Lord and trust his word. They reject that because their soul is so puffed up with self-reliance and self-love.

And so they can never be upright. And as a consequence, they can never live. Again, what an encouragement that must have been to Habakkuk.

[19 : 29] As he looks to the horizon and sees Babylon rising and coming closer and closer. If you want to see some of the horrific things they did to the people they captured. Well, you can look at chapter 1 if you weren't here last week.

But you can also look in the history books at the British Museum and you'll see the horrific things they did. And yet 2 verse 4 is the hope that Habakkuk needs to hear.

The Lord is saying the very fact that Babylon takes pride in its own power is a sure sign that it is headed for judgment and destruction. And friends, the same goes for any enemy of Jesus Christ in this age today.

It's a strange concept for you to get your head around. But the Lord is saying this to us, his church today. You, my people, really can take comfort when you see arrogance and boisterousness of your enemies.

The way that they've puffed themselves up, you can find comfort in that because it's a sure sign that they're going to fall. They might look strong and stable, but the reality is they're about as stable as a drunkard.

[20 : 37] And that's what verse 5 is all about. Verse 5, if you read it out of context, looks like a bit of a random collection of sayings. But in context, this is what's been said. In verse 5, the Lord is saying Babylon is just like a drunk man who keeps down in more and more wine.

And in the metaphor, the more and more wine is his military victories. The more people that Babylon consumes, the more intoxicated and unstable they will become in their arrogance.

Their own success will deceptively go to their heads. And it will end up being the very source of their downfall. One day, Babylon will keel over in a drunken stupor.

And when that happens, they're going to get a total kicking. That's what the Hebrew says. If that was the Glaswegian Bible. But it's true. And that's what's described really in verses 6 to 20.

Verses 6 to 20 fleshes all this out. And what we get here in verses 6 to 20 are five songs. Habakkuk is going to turn into a very musical book from this point on.

[21 : 44] Because the rest of the book is song. Songs that are to be sung by the people of God. And these five songs, if you just look at them. There's one that starts in verse 6, verse 9, verse 12, verse 15 and verse 19.

They all start with this, Woe. Woe to you who do this. And really friends, they have been written as five woe songs to taunt the proud.

They are there to taunt the proud. The Hebrew in each of these songs, it would have been very punchy. Rather like a nursery rhyme. Very easy to remember. They were catchy songs, these ones.

You ever listen to a song on the radio? And it catches your ear in the morning? And you just can't get it out of your head for the rest of the day? I have this when I do the school run in the morning. My sons pick some kind of atrocious cheesy pop song on the car radio.

And I, for the rest of the day, have this annoying child song in the back of my head. Playing all the way through. I'm sure you can relate in some way to that. But that's what these songs would have been like.

[22 : 47] So catchy. Can't get them out of your head. And they were designed that way by the Lord. To stick in His people's minds. Again, humor me.

I wonder if you've ever been to a football match lately. I don't know. Put your hand up if you've been to a football match in the last six months. Fraser, you've been to one. Was it Broughty Ferry United or something like that, Fraser? It certainly wasn't Dundee.

Fraser's not from Dundee. He's from Broughty Ferry. It's a very important difference. No offense if you're from Dundee. It's a lovely place too. But anyway, I was at a football match ages ago.

And the team I was there to see was the mighty Partick Thistle. The mighty Partick Thistle. No offense to Partick Thistle football fans. But the standard of football on the pitch was so bad that I found the chants of the fans around me far more entertaining than the football that was on the pitch.

And the fans' chants were genius actually. I can't repeat them here because they're not appropriate. But the fans' chants were all easy to remember. And they were all designed to greatly annoy the opposition.

[23 : 53] To taunt the opposition. And these five woe songs that the Lord gives to Habakkuk are just like the chants that you might hear being sung in a football stadium.

Where one set of fans who know that they're on the winning side taunt the losing side, their opponents. And the key message of each of these woe songs is that the Lord is going to deliver public retributive justice.

The Lord is going to bring justice upon the proud for their crimes. In other words, the Lord will inflict just punishments upon Babylon. And the punishments will be humiliating.

They will be humiliating, but they'll be fair. They befit the crimes. This is an eye for an eye principle of God's law. And they will be carried out rightly. There's nothing unfair about these.

And if you read the crimes, we don't have time to go through every last detail tonight. But if you read the crimes of each song that Babylon has committed. If you read them carefully, you'll really see that what Babylon has done is in some way broken one aspect of God's law.

[25 : 03] And the Lord will not stand for that. Because He's just. And again, as I say, we don't have time to look at every detail. But what I want to do is just quickly run through them.

Can you do that with me? You've not fallen asleep. We're going to run through them. A quick overview. So that you get the gist of what's being said in each song. And you'll see the pattern that's laid down. So give yourself a wake.

Wakey, wakey, shake. If you've fallen asleep. And listen to taunt song number one. Which is verses six to eight. And we're told that those who have plundered nations. Shall themselves be plundered.

Look at verse six, for example. Shall not all these. That all these are those who've been captured by Babylon. The remnants of the nations. Shall not all these.

Take up their taunt. Against him, Babylon. With scoffing and riddles for him. And say woe to him. Who heaps up what is not his own. The plundered.

[26 : 01] Those who've plundered nations. Will be plundered themselves. Their victims of extortion. Will rise up. And suddenly ransack Babylon. Their oppressors. Making a spoil out of them.

Verse eight. Why? Because you have plundered many nations. All the remnants of the people shall plunder you. For the blood of man.

And the violence to the earth. To the cities. And all who dwell therein. Taunt song two. Verses nine to eleven. We are told that the pursuer of evil gain.

Shall be publicly exposed. For what they've done. And the imagery there is. These people. By evil gain. Have robbed people. And they've built up a really great security for themselves.

Or they think it's a great security. Well their security. The very fruit of their greed. One day. Will be wiped out. They've set their nests on high.

[27 : 00] So as to be out of the reach of their enemies. But friends. Nowhere is out of the reach of the Lord God. And any security. That they've built up.

Will be replaced. By pain. And shame. And you know. When I read that. I could not help but think about the eagle's nest. Those of you who know. Your history of World War II.

You'll think of. What the Nazis built for Hitler. The eagle's nest. Up in the Bavarian Alps. It was supposed to be a haven. For the Führer. At the expense.

Of the slaughtered masses. It was built. Well now. It's a place of shame. A place of darkness. The Entente Song 3.

From verse 12 to 14. Says. The promoter of violence. Who's built a city through bloodshed. Shall be publicly ridiculed. As a fool. Who has toiled for nothing.

[27 : 57] Wasted their time. The image there. Is of people building up these cities. To big up their own name. For their own self glory. Well in the end. Their city will be torched.

To cinders and ashes. And also. Just think about this. In the Bible. So often we're told. Why do people build cities in the Bible? And the answer is.

To build up a name for themselves. To build up. In other words. Their own glory. Well what's going to happen? Look at verse 14. A true king. Is going to fill the earth with his glory.

Verse 14. This is terrifying. For the earth will be filled. With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. As the waters cover the sea. You see what's going to happen? Babylon's tried to build up their own glory.

By their own cities. Days. Nah. It's not going to last. The true king of the universe. He will one day fill the earth. With all of his own glory. And that is the right glory.

[28 : 54] That the earth should be filled of. Not our glory. But God's glory. And what is implied friends. By verse 14. Is that. The glory of the Lord. Will be joyful comfort.

For those who've lived by faith. But the glory of the Lord. Will be nothing but torment. For those. Who've walked by pride. And. Taunt song 4.

Verses 15 to 17. Woe to the perverted poorer. Of wrath. Woe to the perverted poorer. Of wrath. And this is a chilling image.

Commentators reckon that this one. Was specifically aimed. At the king of Babylon himself. He's described as. The one who's poured out wine. In order to get his neighbors drunk.

So that he can then. Take advantage of them. Strip them naked. Parade them around. And abuse them sexually. That's the imagery. And the metaphor of the text. He's a pervert.

[29 : 51] Who publicly takes glory. In the fact that he can do this. Over other people. Well the Lord says to this pervert. It will be your turn soon. It will be your turn soon. You gave your neighbor.

The cup of your wrath. I'm going to give you the cup of my wrath. Which is furious. You will drink it down. You will be utterly intoxicated.

And then you. Will be the one who's stripped naked. Publicly. And the whole world will see you in weakness. And in your. A state of great shame.

You will be revealed to be an uncircumcised pagan. That is. An enemy of God. And all of the destruction. That you inflicted upon your innocent neighbors. Or the people around about you.

Well it will come upon you. And it will overwhelm you. And finally. Taunt song 5. From verse 18 to 20.

[30 : 50] Says. The pagan idolater. Woe to you. Pagan idolater. The person who spent his life. Worshipping false gods. That he has made. Should stand silent now.

For the true and living God. Who rules the universe. And who will judge the whole cosmos. He is in his holy temple. In heaven. And he knows all.

And sees all. And hears all. Unlike the speechless dead idols. That you've trusted in. And just remember. What was the specific idol. That the Babylonians worshipped.

We're told in chapter 1 verse 11. It was. Their own strength. The Babylonians worshipped statues. And worshipped false gods. That they had made. But they also worshipped. Their own strength.

Themselves. They love themselves. They worship themselves. They think. They are the conquerors. And masters. Of their fate. And the universe. And this woe song.

[31 : 48] Calls them. To shut up. Stop going on. About your self-worship. Now. Because. That's where you're headed. A day is coming. When you will stand.

In silent shame. Before the living God. With no excuse. For the way you've suppressed. The truth. On that day. God will be God.

And Babylon. Will know it. So friends. These are five. Woe songs. Written to taunt the proud. And terrify them.

Of the judgment. That will come upon them. By the hand of the Lord. God. And again. Can I just say. If you're sitting there. Thinking. This is horrific. This is just like. The description of Babylon.

Back in chapter one. That was horrific. This is even more horrific. If you feel that way. My friend. You are correct. Yes. The Lord's judgment.

[32 : 43] Is not a little thing. It is horrific. But it's fair. These are. Horrific. But again. Don't miss the surprise. Of the text. The surprise of the text.

Is that the Lord. Has given. These songs. To his exiled people. So that they will sing them. With joy. With thankfulness. In the same way.

That we just sung. That psalm. That was all about. God's judgment. To that uplifting tune. These are songs. That the true people of God. The righteous remnant. Of faith. Could remember.

And sing. Whilst they're being. Blasted by Babylon. So that they will look around. At their grim circumstances. And if they're tempted. To feel that the Lord. Has abandoned them.

Well they can sing. These songs. And remind their hearts. That one day soon. At the appointed time. Justice is coming. God's glory is coming. Vindication is coming.

[33 : 38] For all those. Who've been blasted. By Babylon. And trusted in the Lord. Habakkuk was concerned. That the Lord. Would let the wicked. Get away with their crimes.

But the Lord's answer. Must have filled him. With hope. And indeed. It's going to transform him. You will see that. Next Sunday. If you come along. And listen to chapter 3. You will never find a man.

So full of joy. As Habakkuk. It's in chapter 3. And it's because he's heard this. The Lord will bring justice. And friends.

We know from the history books. That the Lord. Did just as he said he would. Babylon. The nation. Got it's comeuppance. In 539 BC. Later on tonight. You might want to get your Bible open.

Read Daniel chapter 5. Babylon. Is swept away. Like that. In Daniel chapter 5. In fact. Mighty Babylon. And all it's pomp. We're told.

[34 : 33] That it was swept away. In two verses. Two verses. Like that. It's blown away. That's how much of a threat. Babylon is to the Lord. But friends.

You know. It is clear. That the message given to Habakkuk here. It wasn't completely fulfilled then. In the fall of Babylon. In fact. The Lord's promise. To ultimately. Judge the proud.

And deliver the righteous. It still hasn't been fulfilled yet. In all it's fullness. We are still waiting its end. We are still waiting. The appointed time. For what.

Was promised to Habakkuk. Will only be fulfilled. When the Lord Jesus. Returns. To the earth. And brings in. The kingdom of God. In all it's fullness.

And just look back over that. Verse 14. That we read together. Do you know. That that's actually. Words of. They're not Habakkuk's words. These are words. That he quotes from earlier on.

[35 : 29] In the Bible. Did you know this? It's from an earlier prophet. The prophet Isaiah. Straight from chapter. 11. Where the Lord promises. To bring in his kingdom. And establish justice on earth.

Through. His ultimate. King. His new David. Listen to these words. Isaiah says. In Isaiah 11. There shall come forth.

A shoot from the stump of Jesse. And a branch from his roots. Shall bear fruit. And the spirit of the Lord. Shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom. And understanding. The spirit of counsel. And might. The spirit of knowledge.

And the fear of the Lord. And his delight. Shall be in the fear of the Lord. With righteousness. He shall judge. The poor. And decide equity.

For the meek of the earth. He will strike the earth. With the rod of his mouth. And with the breath of his lips. He shall. Kill the wicked. Isaiah then goes on.

[36 : 24] To talk about the way. In which. The curse of sin. Which is clung on to this earth. Will be done away with. And the created order. Set free. From its bondage to decay. Because on that day.

Isaiah says. The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. As the waters cover the seas. Isaiah then goes on to say. This king. He will gather up his people.

From all the nations. His people have trusted him. From all the place. All over the place. And they will rule with him. In perfection. And in peace.

Nothing evil. On that day. Will stand a chance. Friends. Only when the Lord Jesus appears.

Shall the earth be completely full. Of the glory of God. As the waters cover the seas. And so just like the people of the Lord. Back in Habakkuk's day. We are. We are just like them.

[37 : 20] Because we're in that situation. Waiting for the message. To reach its appointed time. Because the message is none other. Than actually the gospel. The gospel of God. And until then.

Friends. As we wait for our appointed time. You and I must remember. We are surrounded by Babylon. We are a people. Who are surrounded by Babylon. All the time.

And so we should expect. To be. Persecuted. Oppressed. As the righteous. The people of faith. The next time.

You're perplexed. And concerned. Because you're part of a church. That's been overrun. By the enemies of the gospel. Friends. You should. And must. Take comfort. From these messages. That the Lord gives Habakkuk.

Now friends. We should all. Rightly. Fear the judgment of God. Even as Christians. Who do not fear condemnation. In Christ. We should all. I still think. Have a fear. A healthy fear.

[38 : 20] Of the judgment of God. But it is also true. That as those who are in Christ. We should find great comfort. In the judgment of God. That's to come.

Because it means. That our struggle. Will be over. Remember. That's why the Lord. Gave Habakkuk. This message. In the first place. So his suffering people. Who were overrun.

By Babylon. Would have hope. And be assured. Of their enemies. Final punishment. You can't be sitting there. Thinking. Oh come on. Come on. That's not very Christian.

That's not very Christian. I'd never wish. For these things. To come upon. Anyone. These things. Mentioned in Habakkuk's songs. Well. Just think for a second.

Please. About our brothers and sisters. In Christ. Who live in parts. Of the world. Where they face. The daily threat. Of authentic. Babylonian. Like treatment. At the hands.

[39 : 15] Of the wicked. Babylonian. Think of our gospel partners. For whom. They have to. Disguise themselves. And gather in quiet. Because they're feared. Of being attacked.

For meeting. To carry out. A service like this. And listen to the Bible. Think of our gospel partners. Whom we've heard reports of. From the north of India. Over the past few years.

They've faced horrific. Suffering. And persecution. At the hands of those. Who are spiritual Babylon. Just recently. I read about many. Churches being attacked.

In the Democratic Republic. Of Congo. Up to 124 Christians. Slaughtered. Like cattle. Same in Syria.

Churches attacked. Christians killed. Children killed. All because they bear the name. Of the Lord Jesus. For no other reason. Buildings and homes.

[40 : 10] Ransacked. In Syria. Burned to the ground. Christians left. Christians left. With nothing. Nothing. New converts. In Pakistan. New converts.

To Christianity. Have had their livelihoods. Stripped from them. They've been cast out of families. Out of society. Others have received death threats. Others have been arrested. And interrogated.

A recent report said. That Christians are being killed. In more countries. Than ever before. Believers have been made. To watch their loved ones. Being murdered.

Shot in public. Simply because. They took a stand for Christ. And were being good. Christian citizens. Ring any bells?

Can you not see friends. How the just. Promises of the Lord's. Just judgment. Against the proud. Might just be. A source of comfort. For someone. Who's lived through that.

[41 : 15] They've been made to look like. Idiots. For following Christ. Made to look like fools. For loving his word. And his kingdom. Well what a great source. Of strength.

It must be. For them to know. That the Lord is on his throne. And he will not. Let that slide. Despite how things appear. Again. The Lord is never inactive. The Lord sees it all.

He hears it all. He knows it all. He sovereignly uses it all. Never takes him by surprise. Because he's ordained all things. All things work out. According to the purposes. Of his will.

He will give justice to the elect. Who cry out to him. Day and night. He will not delay long. Over them. Friend. You might be embarrassed.

By what Habakkuk 2 teaches. But the persecuted church. Are embarrassed. Persecuted church. Are delighted. This is the judgment.

[42 : 12] That the righteous. Wait for. But before I finish. Let me just say one more thing. One more thing. And that's this. You may be sitting here.

And it might be that you're a Christian. You're not a Christian. Sorry. And maybe you're new to Christianity. Christianity. And you're sitting here. And you may have looked over to verse 4 again. In the second half of it.

And you may have asked yourself. Just by simple logic. How is it possible for God to declare anyone righteous by faith. And still remain just himself.

How is it possible for even the remnant of real believers in Judah. To be declared righteous. Because they by nature. Are not righteous. Whilst they may not have been as bad as the king of Babylon.

And the wicked of Judah. The righteous remnant have still committed evil. And broken the Lord's commands. Just like all of us. And how is it possible for God to forgive. And justify those who walk by faith today.

[43 : 13] When we too deserve to face judgment. Because friends. If we're being honest with ourselves. All of us have committed evil. Might not be as bad as the king of Babylon.

But we've all fallen short of God's standards. We've all not loved God the way we should. And we've not loved our neighbor as we should. All of us to a certain degree. Deserve to drink from that same cup.

Of God's wrath. And we deserve to drink it. For all eternity. I know I've done enough to deserve drinking that cup. For a thousand eternities.

With the stuff I've done. So how on earth can God declare me righteous. And the wonderful thing is that. At the appointed time.

A savior came. One who was the Lord God himself. Some two thousand years ago. He broke into this world. His world that has turned against him. In the person of his son.

[44 : 11] Jesus Christ. He lived the perfect life for us. As a man. Keeping God's commandments perfectly. And as our representative.

Achieving human righteousness. So that it could be credited to us. As a gift. And dying on the cross. As a perfect sacrifice for our sin.

He drank down that cup. Mentioned in that passage. To its dregs. To its dregs. That we deserve. He took the full wrath of God. For our sin. He did all that.

So that God. Could declare us. Righteous. Forever. And so that we might therefore. Live forever. And friend. If you're here tonight.

And if you want to flee. From the wrath to come. If Habakkuk 2. Has frightened you. That is good. But let it drive you. Not to self-righteous pride. Like Babylon.

[45 : 07] Let it drive you. In humility. To the saviour. The only saviour. Habakkuk 2. Pleads with you. To humble yourself. Stop living.

As though you are. The centre of the universe. Stop the self-worship. Stop the pride. And instead. Turn to the Lord. Your God. For forgiveness. Surrender to him.

It's futile. Trying to resist him. It's futile. And come to him. As the only one. Who can save you. Humbly stake. All your hope. Upon his unbreakable promises.

Because my friend. Everyone who does that. They are gloriously known by God. As righteous. And they shall live. Amen.

Let's pray. Amen. Our gracious heavenly father.

[46 : 05] Help us to. Persevere by faith. In these last days. These last days. As we are surrounded. By such darkness. As we are surrounded.

By spiritual Babylon. Thank you. But by your grace. You have saved us. Out of that place. For by nature. We all. Are part of spiritual Babylon.

But now. We are part of your people. In Christ. Your kingdom of light. God. So help us to walk. As people who have been saved. Help us to take strength.

From knowing that you are in your heavenly temple. And that you will ultimately bring justice. To this world. And to your needy people. On the day.

When the earth will be filled. With the knowledge of your glory. And we pray this. In your king's name. The name of Jesus. Amen. Amen.