

## Series: Living Godly When the Godless Bear Rule

### Study 3

#### Context of Habakkuk

#### REASONS FOR COMING JUDGMENT

- Citizens of Judah failed to keep the sabbath year of rest for 490 years.

Lev 25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, **When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.**

Lev 25:3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

Lev 25:4 **But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.**

The sabbath years had rarely been observed, missing one sabbath year x 490 years = 70 sabbatical years. 1095 BC – 490 = 605 BC. The disregard of the sabbath year goes back to the time of the Judges. There is an amazing statement about the morality of Israel during that time in Judges 21:25. “In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.” Through greed and not depending on the Lord’s provision they neglected obeying the clear command to “keep the sabbath year.”

- They committed idolatry and persecuted the prophets.

2Ch 36:16 **But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy.**

2Ch 36:19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

2Ch 36:20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

2Ch 36:21 **To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.***

**Daniel in 538 BC researched the length of the judgment prophesied by Jeremiah. “this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer 25:11).**

Dan 9:2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that **he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.**

#### BIBLICAL RECORD OF SEIGE AND FAMINE

Jer 52:3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Jer 52:6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, **the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.**

A horrific account of famine is recorded in the northern kingdom in Samaria.

2Ki 6:24 And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

2Ki 6:25 And **there was a great famine** in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver.

2Ki 6:26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

2Ki 6:27 And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the winepress?

2Ki 6:28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

**2Ki 6:29** So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

2Ki 6:30 And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh.

### **The Temple was burned and it's valuable worship utensils were pillaged. The city walls were broken down.**

Jer 52:12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,

Jer 52:13 And **burned the house of the LORD**, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men*, burned he with fire:

Jer 52:14 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that *were* with the captain of the guard, **brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.**

in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

Jer 52:18 The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

Jer 52:19 And the basons, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away.

Jer 52:20 The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that *were* under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

Jer 52:21 And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow.

### **EXTENT OF DESTRUCTION**

Dimensions of the Temple columns that were carried away: the pillars were nearly six feet (1.8 metres) thick and **27 feet** (8.2 metres) **tall**. The eight-foot (2.4 metres) **high brass chapiters, or capitals, on top of the pillars** bore decorations, in brass, of lilies. The original measurement as taken from the Torah was in cubits, which records that the pillars were 18 cubits high and 12 cubits around, and hollow—four fingers thick. (Jeremiah 52:21–22). According to the first-century Romano-Jewish scholar Josephus' book *Antiquities of the Jews*, Boaz (Hebrew בֹּזַז *bo'az* "In him/it [is] strength") stood on the left on the portico of Solomon's Temple, while Jachin (Hebrew יָכִין; *yakin* "He/it will establish") stood on the right, and the two were made by an Israelite craftsman named Hiram.<sup>i</sup>

**Total height of pillars:** 35' Circumference 16' Diameter 6' Exterior breadth 4" hollow inside. These 3.5 story tall, free standing pillars are still considered an architectural wonder.

**Long before the enemy took the city of Jerusalem, the godly had become hopeless.**

## Why does the faith of so many falter when the godless overwhelm the godly?

### Textual comparisons in Habakkuk and Peter

Habakkuk 1:4 “Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth”

#### The false perspective of the faithless.

Some Jewish scholars translated this verse as “Why is the Law/*Torah* weakened?” *Ibn Ezra* translates “silenced.” The laws of the Torah have been silenced as if the Torah ceases to exist.”<sup>ii</sup> He asks, Is it the “weakening of their resolve” due to discouragement, ie: the influence of the word of God seems to be weakened. Rabbi Malbim differentiates that the commandments “are between man and God. Justice refers to the civil laws that govern relations between man and his neighbor. Both will cease to be observed, due to the success of the wicked and the suffering of the Jews.”<sup>iii</sup>

The Hebrew presents a word picture in the phrase, “for the wicked doth compass about the righteous.” Apparently the root word translated compass or surround is the same root word as crown. In other words the troops of Nebuchadnezzar surround Jerusalem as a crown encircles one’s head. What powerful imagery! The circumstances surrounding us encircle us as painfully as a crown of thorns. Our thinking becomes besieged and obsessed with the happenings around us.

#### Peter addresses the hopelessness of the godly

It is to this besieged mindset that Peter directly speaks when he says, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator(1 Peter 4:19). In his second epistle he concludes similarly. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:17,18). The problem is not with the storm waters surrounding the boat, but with the water that gets inside the boat that sinks it. We choose whether to hold on in faith or give in to doubting God’s love. Peter well knew how easy it is to slip through the waters he once walked on.

#### A proper response to God’s chastisement

Although Judah was completely deserving of God’s judgment, the text clearly identifies their spiritual position as “righteous.” This coincides so aptly with the immovable position of the believer in Christ while under the chastisement of the Heavenly father. “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Hebrews 12:5-8).

#### When the unthinkable is upon us, we are often in a condition of shock.

Habakkuk 1:5 “ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.”

The phrase “wonder marvellously” is from a double form of a verb used to express utter astonishment.<sup>iv</sup> This is like our expression “absolutely unbelievable.”

The certain imminence of this judgment is clear in the phrase, “in your days.”

“I will work a work” denotes that it is God who is laboring to accomplish a finished result. Israel will be judged for their backsliding and iniquity by Babylon’s cruelty while at the same time Babylon is being drawn into the net of God’s judgment. To answer the accusation that God was being inactive, God, “points them to the events transpiring among the surrounding nations: the Assyrian Empire destroyed by Nabopolassar of Babylon who founded of the Chaldean rule; the victory of Nabopolassar (with his son Nebuchadnezzar) over the Egyptians at Carchemish.”<sup>v</sup> An interesting historical detail is that Nebuchadnezzar was not yet king but the heir apparent when he besieged Jerusalem from 608 – 605 BC.

Faith doesn’t guarantee that 20/20 hind-site will be acceptable to our understanding. That is never promised. In fact God said even if Habakkuk saw it and knew that God was doing it, he would not believe it.”

The point is for our faith to strengthen in drawing nearer to God during the storm we must decide to believe Him and diligently seek him.

Eventually even wicked arrogant Nebuchadnezzar admitted “I praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (Dan 4:37 ).”

Jesus gave the parable of the impenitent widow appealing to the judge. He drew the conclusion for us.

Luk 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, **though he bear long** with them?

Luk 18:8 **I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.** Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, **shall he find faith on the earth?**

**Why did Jesus tell this parable? Because they requested more faith.**

Luke 17:5,6 “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, **If ye had faith** as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”

Often we hear, “Seeing is believing.” Actually no faith is required when knowledge based on evidence is observable. Faith is not the result of seeing, it is a “presult” of a decision to trust God when it seems impossible.

Abraham the father of faith Rom 4:20,21 “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; “**being fully persuaded** that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and **were persuaded of them**, and, **embraced them** and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boaz\\_and\\_Jachin#:~:text=Boaz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boaz_and_Jachin#:~:text=Boaz)

<sup>ii</sup> Artscroll Tanach, P.97

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid P.97

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid P.97

<sup>v</sup> The Major Messages of the Minor Prophets, Charles Lee Feinberg, American Board of Missions to the Jews NY, NY, 1951, P.14

---

**Jewish Awareness Ministries Resource links**

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/facebook-bible-study-videos/>

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/sbjs/>

<http://shalomshalom.info/>

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/blog/>

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/bookstore/>

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/jerusalem-tour-2023/>

<https://www.jewishawareness.org/videos/>