Habakkuk - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 3:19: Dominion Reserved for Christ

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And let me still take on me to add another word on what the Lord says as to the Chaldean in Habakkuk 2:14. “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

The pride of man, whether he is Chaldean or any other, that would affect universal empire, has ever been, and shall still be, judged and broken; and that dominion shall be reserved for Jesus “the Lord,” and for Him only. He shall be made higher than the kings of the earth, and His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Neither the past or present unbelief of His own nation, Israel, nor the purposes and attempts of any of the Gentiles, shall hinder this. (See Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14.) For, in the coming peaceful days of the scepter of the righteous One, this shall be accomplished. (See Isa. 11:9.)

The people shall labor after this, but they shall weary themselves for nothing, for “very vanity” (Hab. 2:13). But Jesus shall have it. “Blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen” (Psa. 72:19).

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 3:18: Application to Today

Now, upon this, we may again say, the present day may put us much in company with Habakkuk. The man of God looks round, and sees everything in Christendom to provoke the resentment of holiness, or to vex the righteous soul. But while he resents the thing, he would willingly plead for the people, like Habakkuk, and, like him again, turn to God, with his burdens and his expectations. But somewhat beyond our prophet, the believer now, from the fuller instructions of God, knows there will be “a revival,” and does not merely pray for it. He knows that the judgments which are coming, more solemn than that by the hand of the Chaldean, will only clear the earth of all that offends, take out of it all that are corrupting it, and thus lead to its redemption, and not to its destruction. And he knows that a brighter, richer condition will mark its end, than that which did its beginning—for “the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into, the glorious liberty of the children of God.” So that it will not be merely a revival of early days in the history of either Israel or the earth; but their latter end, like that of Job, will be more than their beginning.

And I would add a practical word upon the experience of Habakkuk, which is so blessed at the end. “I will rejoice in the Lord,” he says, “although the fig-trees shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines.”

To live happily in the love of God, through Jesus, is the glory He seeks at our hand—sinner, self-ruined, as we are. And to do this, like Habakkuk in spite of the contradiction of circumstances, makes this service and worship still more excellent—the fruit, as it surely is, of His grace and inworking power.

Man seeks to live pleasurably, but he has no care to live happily. He would live pleasurably, or in the sunshine of favoring, flattering circumstances; but to live happily, or in the favor of God, in the light of His countenance, the sense of His love, and the hope of His presence in glory, this is not what man cares about. And it is God’s work in the heart and conscience, when man is considering himself, and seeking to cease from living pleasurably, that he may live happily—find his life only in the greatest of all circumstances, that is, in his relation to God, having discovered, through grace, that that relationship is settled for him forever, in the precious reconciliation accomplished in the blood of Christ.

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 2:2-20

Habakkuk 2:2-20

Here we read the Lord’s answer—and it is full of solemn, interesting meaning. Habakkuk shall not be disappointed; he shall not be on his tower for nothing. As Daniel’s fasting for his twenty-one days, so Habakkuk’s watching on the tower shall be rewarded.

The Lord, however, begins his answer by stating some strong, leading facts, or rather principles of truth.

1. That the vision or prophecy was to be clearly announced (Hab. 2:2).

2. That all was to remain in vision, or unfulfilled, for a season (Hab. 2:3).

3. That during that season the man of the world would ripen himself in pride for the judgment of God (Hab. 2:4-5).

4. That during the same season the saint should live by faith (Hab. 2:4).

5. That in due season, God’s appointed time, the vision should speak, the prophecy be fulfilled, so that the end was surely worth waiting for (Hab. 2:16).

Then, having laid down these facts or principles, the Lord goes on to announce, to the welcoming ear of the prophet, the awful judgments that were to overtake the Chaldean.

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 2:1

Habakkuk 2:1

And having unburdened his heart and pleaded with the Lord, he waits for the answer. His heart is with his people, and he must watch for the end of the Lord. He is no hireling; he cares for the flock, and cannot flee. His service for Israel had not been lightly taken up, and it cannot therefore be quickly laid down. He must see the end of it; and for this, he sets himself upon the watch-tower.

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 1:12-17

Habakkuk 1:12-17

Hearing this, Habakkuk is terribly alarmed. Like Moses, in such a case, he cannot be prepared for this; nor can his heart, that so cared for his people, welcome the Chaldean, however his soul may be angry with their evil ways.

In the deepest strain of fear and of feeling, and in the skilfulness of an advocate whose affections were making him eloquent, he pleads against the Chaldean, assured that the Lord would not give over His own people, however guilty they might be, to the reckless wrath of those who were still more wicked than themselves. Moreover, he seeks that this terrible scourge may in the Lord’s grace, be only for correction, and not for destruction, to Israel.

All this is a sweet state of soul in our prophet. Habakkuk, perhaps, is more of a Jeremiah than any of the prophets. He lives more personally in the scenes he was describing than is common. He feels everything—and so did Jeremiah. They lived the prophet, and not merely spoke as such.

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 1:5-11

Habakkuk 1:5-11

In His answer to this cry of His servant, the Lord seems, at the first, to vindicate and to join with it. He enters into the resentment of the moral state of Israel, which Habakkuk was so deeply feeling. He challenges His people as “heathen”—for such they would prove themselves to be, by not believing the work that He himself was purposing to work among them. He counts their circumcision as uncircumcision. The apostle, quoting this word from our prophet, calls them “despisers” (Acts 13:41). The Lord, therefore, at the first, follows the story of Israel’s iniquities, which the prophet had been rehearsing; and anticipates their great crowning, closing iniquity—the rejection of His word and work through unbelief.

But having done this, He lets the prophet know, that this iniquity which had been vexing his soul, and against which he had been crying to Him, should not go unpunished, for that the Chaldean sword should soon enter the land to avenge the quarrel of His holiness.

Minor Prophets, Habakkuk 1:1-4

Habakkuk 1:1-4

In these opening verses, as I noticed already, the prophet’s righteous soul is vexed with the evil conversation of his nation. He presents the sad, reprobate scene that was lying under his eye to the notice of the Lord. He cries out of violence, and grievance, and spoiling, and strife, and such like iniquity, found, as it was, in the very midst of God’s people.

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