

# God at Work in Judgment

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Preacher: Jeremy Sarber

[ 0 : 00 ] Habakkuk chapter 1, and I'll be reading verses 5 through 11.! This is the word of God. Look among the nations and see, wonder and be astounded.

! For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if I told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own.

They are dreaded and fearsome. Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle, swift to devour. They all come for violence. All their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.

At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on.

[ 1 : 04 ] Guilty men whose own might is their God. Amen. You may be seated. When Habakkuk surveys the nation of Israel, God's covenant people, mind you, he sees violence wherever he looks.

He sees corruption in the courts. God's holy law has essentially become powerless, twisted by those who were supposed to uphold it.

The poor are crushed by the rich. The righteous are mocked by the wicked. And the prophets who speak out against these sins are laughed at and mocked, such as Jeremiah.

2 Chronicles 36 tells us, Habakkuk is living during a time when the temple of God still stands in Jerusalem, but the people's fear of the Lord is gone.

They've traded the truth for their sinful desires. Justice is for sale. The weak are oppressed. Idolatry is rampant. Ever since the death of King Josiah, a man who brought wonderful, godly reforms to the nation, Judah has quickly descended into moral chaos and darkness.

[ 2 : 39 ] And just to stress, this is not a pagan nation who has never known the one true God. This is Judah, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

King David, a man after God's own heart, was their leader some 300 to 400 years before. Josiah was their king only five or ten years ago.

Meanwhile, the prophet Jeremiah has been warning them faithfully for years to repent before it's too late. But they would not listen. And it's within this tragic context that Habakkuk cries out, O Lord, how long shall I cry for help?

And you will not hear. Or cry to you violence and you will not save. Why do you make me see iniquity? And why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me. Strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous.

[ 3 : 51 ] So justice goes forth perverted. Now setting aside the prophet's lack of reverence and perhaps accusatory tone here, his assessment of Judah's sins are accurate.

The Lord's response is essentially, yes, I agree they are guilty. And I will bring judgment against them for these sins. Of course, Habakkuk has his own personal lessons to learn throughout this ordeal, such as trusting in God's wise providence when you don't understand what he's doing in the moment.

But the prophet's sense of Judah's spiritual condition is accurate. It's spot on here. More than that, his frustration over the situation comes from a right place.

What he sees among his brethren in Judah is awful. Injustice. Idolatry. Rebellion. Insolence.

Oppression. Violence. And again, he's not wandering through a distant pagan land when he sees these terrible things.

[ 5 : 07 ] He's among God's people. In Judah. Excuse me. It's quite possible he's in Jerusalem. Since he speaks of the law being paralyzed.

And witnessing. Excuse me. Injustice. Presumably in the royal courts. He will later compose a psalm, presumably to be sung in the temple.

So, he's in the heart of God's covenant people. But what he sees is anything but faithfulness to God.

Despite any vain attempts the people are making to worship God, Judah acts no different than the godless nations around them. Can you relate to the prophets' distress here?

I don't read much news in detail. I'll peruse the headlines. But I rarely read the full stories because the headlines usually tell me just enough.

[ 6 : 23 ] And just in the past week or so, I've seen many headlines related to the corruption in the United States Justice Department.

There's corruption in Australia's federal government. The military in Sudan is killing innocent civilians. Nigeria continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians to exist.

As there is state-sponsored persecution against them. A police raid in Brazil against protesters left hundreds dead.

I was at a pro-life dinner a few weeks ago. And the keynote speaker explained how since Roe v. Wade was overturned, there has actually been an uptick in abortions.

So while states like Indiana have outlawed it, people have merely gone to neighboring states such as Michigan and Illinois to procure abortions.

[ 7 : 38 ] And so those states have seen a dramatic increase in the abortion rate. Back in 2020, I remember the confusion and frustration I felt as I watched citizens of our own nation burn down cities, the places where we live.

And then the politicians and the media not only excused it, not only justified it, but even celebrated it.

I remember the story of a satanic statue that was erected in a state capitol. And a state congressman, presumably from righteous indignation, came and knocked it down.

And then he was very quickly charged with a hate crime. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. We see more than enough wickedness in our world to be like the prophet Habakkuk and cry out, Oh Lord, how long?

How long? That's where Habakkuk is when we meet him in this book. He steps into the scene as a man agonizing over the rampant evil among his people, pleading with God to do something.

[ 9 : 02 ] Meanwhile, something else is happening in the world. Something that would impact, even devastate nearly every nation on the planet.

Far beyond Judah's borders, a storm is gathering in the east. For decades, the Assyrian Empire ruled the Near East with an iron fist.

Its armies crushed nations, enslaved people, and really filled the earth with terror. Even Judah trembled under their shadow in the days of King Hezekiah.

But to everyone's surprise, the empire collapsed. Almost overnight. Just a few years before Habakkuk's prophecy was written, their capital city of Nineveh fell.

Two seemingly small, seemingly insignificant rebel groups, known as the Medes and the Chaldeans, also known as the Babylonians, burned it to the ground.

[ 10 : 11 ] It was unthinkable. No one could have predicted the fall of the mighty Assyrians. No one saw this coming. By the way, you might remember that it was the Assyrians who conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.

So there's this major geopolitical shift taking place in the world. The Medes and the Babylonians sack Nineveh in approximately 612 BC, essentially destroying the Assyrian Empire.

King Josiah, the last of Judah's righteous kings, dies about three years later. And Habakkuk comes along sometime between Josiah's death and the Babylonians' defeat of yet another major power, the Egyptians in 605 BC.

So sandwiched between the fall of Assyria and the fall of Egypt, two notable things are happening. Within Judah, the people are in drastic moral decline.

And outside of Judah, Babylon is quickly replacing both Assyria and Egypt as the predominant superpower in the world.

[ 11 : 26 ] And if you're wondering why I'm even giving you a history lesson on these somewhat interesting but seemingly unrelated events, well, as it happens, these two events are very much related.

The book of Habakkuk opens with the prophet crying out to God, O Lord, how long shall I cry for help?

Of course, he's focused exclusively on the spiritual decline in Judah. He has no thoughts of Babylon at this point, but that will change very quickly. The Lord responds to Habakkuk's prayer in an unexpected and frankly disturbing way.

This is not what the prophet expected to hear. The Lord says, Look among the nations and see. Wonder and be astounded, for I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. It appears that God intended to dramatically grab Habakkuk's attention here. Notice how he piles up these four imperative verbs. Look, see, wonder, be astounded.

[ 12 : 41 ] Habakkuk, are you awake? Are you listening carefully here? Perhaps there's a hint of righteous indignation in his tone because of the way that Habakkuk complained to him, essentially accusing him of not caring about what was happening in Judah.

Regardless, the Lord is preparing his prophet for a very serious word. It will not be the comforting solution that Habakkuk might have hoped for. Now, it isn't evident in English, but the Lord is using plural commands here.

In other words, he's not speaking only to Habakkuk. He's likely speaking to everyone in Judah. This isn't merely a personal response to Habakkuk. You might call it a wake-up call to the nation.

This is for everyone. Listen. And frankly, it's a word to us. When we see the headlines, when we see what's happening in the world around us, perhaps we also wonder what the Lord is doing.

Or perhaps we wonder why he doesn't seem to be doing anything at all. And the Lord might very well say to us, just as he did Habakkuk, I am doing a work in your days.

[ 14 : 02 ] It may not be what we want. It may not be what we anticipate. It may not be what we think the Lord should be doing. But he is always working.

He is always carrying out a divine plan that we may or may not understand as it unfolds. Chances are we won't. As for Habakkuk, notice how God directly responds to the prophet's complaint. Habakkuk accused God of sitting idly by while violence and injustice consumed the nation. So God replies here, no, I'm not sitting idly by. I am doing something. I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

And what is God doing? Verse 6. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans. Now the term Chaldeans is essentially synonymous with Babylonians.

At one time, the Chaldeans were a small Semitic tribe near the Persian Gulf. Modern day Iraq was their homeland. And Chaldean was really their ethnic or their tribal identity, while Babylonian became their national or their political identity, especially as they grew in size and power.

[ 15 : 23 ] But for our purposes, these terms are essentially interchangeable. So the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's prayer for justice, for an end to violence, for an end to the wickedness in Judah, is to raise up an unjust, violent, wicked nation.

Now, this isn't altogether unprecedented. God did the same thing regarding the Assyrians when He judged the northern kingdom of Israel. Through the prophet Amos, He said, For behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel.

What does that mean? Well, it means that He will grant power to that nation for the purpose of using them as His rod of correction. He gives them their military might.

He gives them their opportunities, if you will, to use them as His agents of judgment. This is not what the prophet Habakkuk anticipated.

The Lord was right when He said, I am doing a work that you would not believe if told. I'm sure the prophet wanted mercy.

[ 16 : 43 ] I'm sure he wanted revival in the nation. Instead, the Lord threatens a cure that seems worse than the disease. Little did Judah know, God has been raising up Babylon, this godless, vicious nation, so eventually they could be His judgment against Judah's godless, vicious sins.

Wow, doesn't this raise questions? How can this be? How can a holy God use wicked instruments and still be righteous and just?

Well, Habakkuk will ask these very questions. But first, the Lord wants the people to know precisely whom He is raising up against them.

And that's the focus of our text this morning. He wants them to know just how bad this will be. He says, For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own.

They are dreaded and fearsome. Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. The Babylonians are a people of corrosive anger, of reckless haste.

[18:04] They're like a bear robbed of her cubs, lashing out wildly in every direction. They conquer merely for conquest's sake. Nothing satisfies their appetite for expansion.

They march through the breadth of the earth. The NIV translates it, they sweep across the whole earth. You know, most armies would be more careful than this.

They would advance slowly, being sure to secure their territories before moving on, being sure that they're careful to guard their flanks. But the Babylonians, they march broadly and boldly.

They're on a mission to take over the world, and that's precisely what history records they did. They quickly rose to power. They quickly swept through Syria and Palestine.

Not long after, they besieged Egypt. It seemed no one could avoid the onslaught. And notice the phrase, to seize dwellings not their own.

[19:05] This highlights their imperial ambitions. They're after expansion. Their mission is to take over the world. But I can't help but notice something else in this.

In Deuteronomy 6, as God is preparing His people to inherit the promised land, He says, And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you, with great food in cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

So God gave the land of Canaan over to the Israelites. It was the Canaanites who built up the land in the previous years, but they were a wicked people whom God dispossessed from that place. He took their land, and He took their cities, and He gave them to the Israelites, and now He is reversing the roles. Do you see that? His people have forgotten the Lord, as He warned them not to do, and they will be dispossessed by the ruthless Babylonians, who seize dwellings not their own. And by the way, God explicitly warned them that this would happen. In Leviticus 18, He said, Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

[21:09] But you shall keep my statutes and my rules, and do none of these abominations, lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

And how would the land vomit them out? Well, in this case, God would use the Babylonians to do it. They are dreaded and fearsome.

Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. The NIV says, They are a feared and dreaded people. They are a law to themselves, and promote their own honor.

In short, they're incredibly intimidating, and they're autonomous. Just a mere rumor of the Chaldeans' approach could make people tremble. And perhaps the thing that makes them the most terrifying is the fact that they don't have any fear themselves.

They don't fear God. Evidently, they don't fear other nations. They are a law to themselves, which means they don't recognize any law but themselves.

[22:18] In their minds, they define what is right. They define what is honorable with no reference to any law or any standard outside of themselves. In their minds, might makes right.

As long as they win the battle, then no one can tell them they're wrong. I've read stories of the Babylonians' conquest. One of their practices was to take the most important religious artifacts from the nations they defeated to prove that they were not only more powerful than those nations, but more powerful than their gods.

You see the kind of arrogance they had. They not only defeat the nations, they defeat their gods. And we read accounts of this in 2 Kings 24, in Daniel chapter 1.

Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian, removed the treasures from the temple of the Lord. So the Babylonians have a terrible arrogance about them.

And in this case, they will lift themselves up against both Judah and the God of Judah, which only deepens the paradox here. Again, Habakkuk has to wrestle with this question.

[ 23 : 36 ] If the problem in Judah is injustice, how could God use a nation whose own idea of justice is completely contrary to that of God's?

Well, the Lord continues describing the Babylonian forces, saying, Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves.

Their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle, swift to devour. They all come for violence. All their faces forward.

They gather captives like sand. Like leopards, they pounce on their prey swiftly. Like wolves, they are fiercely hungry, and it seems as though their appetites are never satisfied.

Their horsemen come from afar. So Judah can't rely on any false hope that the Babylonians are too far away to be a serious threat. Neither speed nor mobility are a problem for them.

[ 24 : 41 ] They will come from a great distance without any trouble at all, and they will do so quickly. They fly like an eagle, swift to devour. Now here we have yet another allusion to some of those earliest warnings God gave His people back in the days of Moses.

Back in Deuteronomy 28, God told the Israelites that if they did not obey His voice, the Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like an eagle. A nation whose language you do not understand. A hard-faced nation. Who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed.

It also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. They shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout all your land.

And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land which the Lord your God has given you. As we continue to read through the book of Habakkuk, the prophet acts surprised by what the Lord will do.

[ 26 : 04 ] In fact, God himself, he would be surprised. Be astounded, for I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. But that is precisely what God had said would happen if they rebelled, if they disobeyed from the very beginning.

This is what he said he would do even before the Israelites entered into the promised land.

Furthermore, Habakkuk has seen God do this very thing with the northern kingdom of Israel.

So, while this shouldn't come as a surprise, it is a surprise. It's utterly shocking. It's unthinkable to the prophet.

The Babylonians will come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.

Their soldiers are relentless, always marching forward, and they will take innumerable people captive.

I don't know, but maybe there's an allusion here to the descendants of Abraham. We read it this morning in Hebrews 11. The descendants of Abraham are often described as more numerous than the sand that is on the seashore.

[ 27 : 23 ] Regardless, the Babylonians will capture much of that sand and they will carry it away.

Again, Deuteronomy 28 says, you shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity.

Next, at kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.

Again, they don't fear other nations. They laugh at them, along with their rulers, and they laugh at every fortress, meaning a city's best defenses are a joke to them, for they pile up earth and take it.

They simply build siege ramps outside of a fortified city's walls and breach them, seemingly nothing, no one can stop them. And that's precisely what they will eventually do in Jerusalem.

We read an account of it in 2 Kings chapter 25. I'll read a portion of it. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it.

[ 28 : 37 ] And they built siege works all around it, so the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.

Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city.

And they went in the direction of Ereba. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him.

Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.

And the story of the city's destruction at the hands of the Babylonians continues from there if you want to read it. Verse 11, Then they sweep by like the wind and go on.

[ 29 : 52 ] Guilty men whose own might is their God. Now let's not miss this. Though God will use the Babylonians as his instrument to judge his people in Judah, he is well aware that the Babylonians are wicked.

He calls them guilty men who idolize their own power. They are proud, blasphemous men, and more to the point, the Lord knows this.

He knows this. So this is not a case of God overlooking the sins of one nation to bring down another sinful nation. No, Judah is guilty, and God freely acknowledges that Babylon is guilty.

He knows this. And soon enough, God will prophesy Babylon's downfall as well. They too deserve to be judged. But for now, he has allowed this unjust, violent people to gain power for the purpose of bringing down another unjust, violent people.

God is impartial. No sins will be overlooked. Even so, Habakkuk, of course, still has questions. He still does not understand how God can fairly use the Babylonians against his own people.

[ 31 : 18 ] Can God use the wicked to achieve righteous purposes? Well, the short answer is yes. But we'll have to wait for the full answer because that will come to Habakkuk only later.

For now, God reveals to us at least three foundational lessons about himself and how he operates in our world.

So let's go through these. First of all, we see that God is sovereign over history. God is sovereign over history.

Despite what they certainly believed about themselves, the Babylonians did not rise to power and conquer all of these other nations through their own might. God says, I am raising up the Chaldeans.

I am the one orchestrating this geopolitical shift from the smallest events in the world to the greatest. It is my hand that guides according to my will and my purpose.

[ 32 : 28 ] Now, like Habakkuk, we may not understand what the Lord is doing or all of the reasons why, but when Germany starts a world war or a group of terrorists kill 3,000 people in a suicide attack or the Soviet Union falls or China rises to power or Nigeria slaughters countless Christians or people in our own nation set fires to our cities, we can know that he does have a purpose.

We can know that he hasn't lost control even when it seems that evil is winning in our day, we can know that God is working out a plan that is ultimately for good.

we can know that one day we will look back and we will say the world meant evil against us, but God meant it for good.

Second, God shows Habakkuk and us that he is working even when it seems he's not. the prophet complained, O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear?

Why do you make me see iniquity and why do you idly look at wrong? Why are you just sitting there doing nothing? And what does the Lord say?

[ 33 : 53 ] I am doing the work in your days. I am. Now, if the prophet knew anything about the sack of Nineveh and the rise of Babylon's power evidently, he didn't necessarily see that as a work of God or at the very least he didn't connect his circumstances in Judah with what was happening elsewhere in the world.

He didn't see how the two events in the world would eventually connect, but they did connect. In fact, this was the Lord's plan all along. Now, having said that, let me offer a comfort and a caution here.

The comfort is that God is working. He is doing something even when it seems he's not. So, don't feel defeated when you look out and you think evil is prevailing all around us.

No, our sovereign God is working out his plan that is ultimately for our good. You can trust in that. And my caution is to avoid studying world events in an effort to precisely discern what the Lord is doing.

I have known people who were obsessed with reading the news and trying to connect all of the dots so that they might figure out the Lord's plan. Oftentimes, this is connected with the Lord's second coming.

[ 35 : 14 ] Let's see if we can map this out. Well, as the Lord told Isaiah, my ways are higher than your ways, my understanding than your understanding, our knowledge will always be limited and we're not called to know everything.

We are called to trust in God and his wisdom. Third, God shows us that he often works through means that we don't expect.

God used a hesitant speech-impaired shepherd to confront Pharaoh and lead a nation. You remember that? He used 300 men with torches and jars to defeat a vast Midianite army. He used a shepherd boy with a mere sling to triumph over a giant when all of those seasoned soldiers were essentially cowering in fear. He used a reluctant prophet and a near-death experience with a big fish to spark repentance in a pagan empire.

Who saw that coming? God used Assyria to humble Israel. He used Persia to restore his people. [ 36 : 34 ] He used Rome to crucify his son. So, even the darkest actions of men cannot derail the purposes of God.

In fact, they are the very tools he uses to accomplish his plan. And that leads us to a fourth and what I consider the greatest lesson of all here.

The ultimate unbelievable work of God is the gospel itself. In this passage, God says to Habakkuk, I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe have told.

Now, obviously, he's speaking directly about the rise of Babylon, but I don't believe his meaning ends there. Let me show you. If you will, turn over to Acts chapter 13.

In Acts 13, the apostle Paul is in Antioch, and the rulers of the synagogue invite him to share a word of encouragement for the people. So, he stands up and he delivers a sweeping summary of redemptive history to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's ancient promises.

[ 38 : 00 ] He reminds his Jewish hearers how God chose their fathers, how he delivered Israel from Egypt, how he gave them judges and kings, and how he raised up David through whose line that promised Savior would come.

And he says that this promise has now been fulfilled in Jesus, whom John the Baptist announced, and whom the rulers and Jerusalem rejected and crucified, yet God raised him from the dead. And it's through this risen Christ that forgiveness of sins is offered to all who believe. Then, Paul warns his audience not to repeat their ancestors' unbelief.

Here's what he says, starting with verse 38. Let it be known to you, therefore, brothers, that through this man, Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about. Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you.

[ 39 : 25 ] So, Paul quotes from our passage in Habakkuk. He sees a connection between Habakkuk and the gospel. Now, before we consider how Paul applies this passage, notice how the prophets longing and God's response really both point forward to Christ.

So, Habakkuk, he cried out for justice, cried out for an end to the violence, yet Babylon was never going to be the ultimate answer. It couldn't be.

The Lord himself called them guilty men. Their rise to power was temporary and their own judgment was inevitable. the real answer to the prophets cry, O Lord, how long would come centuries later when God entered into history to bring justice through his own son?

You see, the Lord's justice did not change between Habakkuk's day and ours. The same holy wrath that once fell upon Judah for her sins was later poured out on Christ in full at Calvary.

There, divine justice and mercy met perfectly. God did not overlook sin. He satisfied his own righteous demands through the sacrifice of his son.

[ 40 : 54 ] So what Judah experienced in measure, Christ bore in full. the judgment that once came through Babylon fell upon the sinless Savior who stood in the place of guilty sinners.

In him, God's justice is fulfilled, and because his justice is satisfied, his mercy now flows freely to all who believe.

only Christ, only Christ could bear the full weight of human sin. Only Christ could conquer death and rise again to offer new life.

And only when he returns as judge of all the earth will every wrong finally be made right.

Habakkuk's burden also echoes the anguish we feel as we see the righteous suffering and the

wicked as they seem to prosper.

The prophet watched injustice prevail in Judah. But the greater, the greater righteous one, Jesus himself would suffer more deeply than any other man ever could to ensure that evil would not have the last word.

[ 42 : 17 ] Though perfectly innocent, he was, as Peter said, crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. And worse yet, he endured the wrath of God, the wrath of his own father crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The despair Habakkuk voiced in his prayer finds its resolution only in Christ. Our sympathetic high priest who understands our confusion and our fears, the one who trembled in Gethsemane, yet willingly to the cross, facing the full fury of Babylon, if you will, the chaos and the cruelty of human evil, to defeat it once and for all.

And how did God accomplish this? How did God accomplish this? in a way just as unexpected, just as unbelievable as the judgment he once brought through Babylon.

He used rebellion to accomplish redemption. The same sovereign hand that raised up a pagan empire to chasten Judah, later raised up Rome to crucify the Lord of glory.

through the hands of lawless men, we're told, through unbelieving Jews and Gentiles alike, God established his kingdom, he saved his people, and he displayed his glory.

[ 43 : 56 ] What Habakkuk glimpsed dimly in the rise of Babylon was fulfilled perfectly at Calvary. Our holy God ruling over human evil, turning instruments of judgment into instruments of grace and bringing salvation in a way that no one could have imagined.

And the apostle Paul in Acts 13 speaks to those who would scoff at the gospel, that would scoff at this message, and he quotes the Lord's response to Habakkuk.

Look, you scoffers, be astounded,! For I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you.

Don't make the same mistake Judah made. When the prophets preached, the people dismissed God's warnings and went on living in their sin until judgment fell.

God has now done something infinitely greater. He has sent his own son who was crucified and raised from the dead to save sinners, yet many still refuse to believe.

[ 45 : 18 ] The gospel is the ultimate unbelievable work of God. It tells us that our sin is so deep that nothing less than the death of God's son could atone for it, and that any of our efforts, our morality, even our religion, cannot save us.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. In the book of Hebrews, God says today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

Turn from your sin and trust in Christ. Come to the one who bore the wrath of God so that you could receive mercy. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to the cry, O Lord, how long it is there that justice and mercy meet.

It is there that sin is punished and sinners are pardoned. Only there at the cross of Christ. Let's pray.

Amen. Our righteous Lord, you rule the nations by your wisdom. You order all things by your providence.

[ 46 : 42 ] The rise and fall of kingdoms are in your hands and not one event unfolds apart from your will. You raise up and you cast down, you judge, but you also redeem.

We confess that your ways often astonish us. We do not always understand your plan, yet we know that you do all things well, so forgive us, Lord, for any impatience we show.

Forgive us for doubting your goodness when the world seems so evil. We thank you for the greater work that you have accomplished in your son.

When your justice demanded payment for our sin, you did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all. The wrath that once fell on guilty nations has been satisfied in the blood of the Lamb.

Because Christ has borne our judgment, we now stand in mercy and peace. So, Lord, help us to live as pilgrims who believe that your kingdom cannot fail.

[ 47 : 44 ] Keep us steadfast and faithful until the day when the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord and the waters cover the sea. Through Jesus Christ our Savior, we pray.

Amen. Amen. for