

Wednesday, December 18

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Habakkuk 1:1 - 3:19

1 **1** This is the message that the prophet Habakkuk received in a vision. **2** How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! “Violence is everywhere!” I cry, but you do not come to save. **3** Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. **4** The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted. **5** The LORD replied, “Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn’t believe even if someone told you about it. **6** I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people. They will march across the world and conquer other lands. **7** They are notorious for their cruelty and do whatever they like. **8** Their horses are swifter than cheetahs and fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their charioteers charge from far away. Like eagles, they swoop down to devour their prey. **9** “On they come, all bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind, sweeping captives ahead of them like sand. **10** They scoff at kings and princes and scorn all their fortresses. They simply pile ramps of earth against their walls and capture them! **11** They sweep past like the wind and are gone. But they are deeply guilty, for their own strength is their god.” **12** O LORD my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal— surely you do not plan to wipe us out? O LORD, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins. **13** But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they? **14** Are we only fish to be caught and killed? Are we only sea creatures that have no leader? **15** Must we be strung up on their hooks and caught in their nets while they rejoice and celebrate? **16** Then they will worship their nets and burn incense in front of them. “These nets are the gods who have made us rich!” they will claim. **17** Will you let them get away with this forever? Will they succeed forever in their heartless conquests?

2 **1** I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guardpost. There I will wait to see what the LORD says and how he will answer my complaint. **2** Then the LORD said to me, “Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others. **3** This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait

patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed. **4** “Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God. **5** Wealth is treacherous, and the arrogant are never at rest. They open their mouths as wide as the grave, and like death, they are never satisfied. In their greed they have gathered up many nations and swallowed many peoples. **6** “But soon their captives will taunt them. They will mock them, saying, ‘What sorrow awaits you thieves! Now you will get what you deserve! You’ve become rich by extortion, but how much longer can this go on?’ **7** Suddenly, your debtors will take action. They will turn on you and take all you have, while you stand trembling and helpless. **8** Because you have plundered many nations, now all the survivors will plunder you. You committed murder throughout the countryside and filled the towns with violence. **9** “What sorrow awaits you who build big houses with money gained dishonestly! You believe your wealth will buy security, putting your family’s nest beyond the reach of danger. **10** But by the murders you committed, you have shamed your name and forfeited your lives. **11** The very stones in the walls cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint. **12** “What sorrow awaits you who build cities with money gained through murder and corruption! **13** Has not the LORD of Heaven’s Armies promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain! **14** For as the waters fill the sea, the earth will be filled with an awareness of the glory of the LORD . **15** “What sorrow awaits you who make your neighbors drunk! You force your cup on them so you can gloat over their shameful nakedness. **16** But soon it will be your turn to be disgraced. Come, drink and be exposed! Drink from the cup of the LORD ’s judgment, and all your glory will be turned to shame. **17** You cut down the forests of Lebanon. Now you will be cut down. You destroyed the wild animals, so now their terror will be yours. You committed murder throughout the countryside and filled the towns with violence. **18** “What good is an idol carved by man, or a cast image that deceives you? How foolish to trust in your own creation— a god that can’t even talk! **19** What sorrow awaits you who say to wooden idols, ‘Wake up and save us!’ To speechless stone images you say, ‘Rise up and teach us!’ Can an idol tell you what to do? They may be overlaid with gold and silver, but they are lifeless inside. **20** But the LORD is in his holy Temple. Let all the earth be silent before him.”

3 1 This prayer was sung by the prophet Habakkuk : **2** I have heard all about you, LORD . I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy. **3** I see God moving across the deserts from Edom, the Holy One coming from Mount Paran. His brilliant splendor fills the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise. **4** His coming is as brilliant as the sunrise. Rays of light flash from his hands, where his awesome power is hidden. **5** Pestilence marches before him; plague follows close behind. **6** When he stops, the earth shakes. When he looks, the nations tremble.

He shatters the everlasting mountains and levels the eternal hills. He is the Eternal One! **7** I see the people of Cushan in distress, and the nation of Midian trembling in terror. **8** Was it in anger, LORD, that you struck the rivers and parted the sea? Were you displeased with them? No, you were sending your chariots of salvation! **9** You brandished your bow and your quiver of arrows. You split open the earth with flowing rivers. **10** The mountains watched and trembled. Onward swept the raging waters. The mighty deep cried out, lifting its hands in submission. **11** The sun and moon stood still in the sky as your brilliant arrows flew and your glittering spear flashed. **12** You marched across the land in anger and trampled the nations in your fury. **13** You went out to rescue your chosen people, to save your anointed ones. You crushed the heads of the wicked and stripped their bones from head to toe. **14** With his own weapons, you destroyed the chief of those who rushed out like a whirlwind, thinking Israel would be easy prey. **15** You trampled the sea with your horses, and the mighty waters piled high. **16** I trembled inside when I heard this; my lips quivered with fear. My legs gave way beneath me, and I shook in terror. I will wait quietly for the coming day when disaster will strike the people who invade us. **17** Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, **18** yet I will rejoice in the LORD ! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! **19** The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights. (For the choir director: This prayer is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.)

Revelation 9:1 - 21

9 1 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. **2** When he opened it, smoke poured out as though from a huge furnace, and the sunlight and air turned dark from the smoke. **3** Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. **4** They were told not to harm the grass or plants or trees, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. **5** They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with pain like the pain of a scorpion sting. **6** In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them! **7** The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. **8** They had hair like women's hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. **9** They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of

chariots rushing into battle. **10** They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people. **11** Their king is the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is and in Greek, —the Destroyer. **12** The first terror is past, but look, two more terrors are coming! **13** Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice speaking from the four horns of the gold altar that stands in the presence of God. **14** And the voice said to the sixth angel who held the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River.” **15** Then the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth. **16** I heard the size of their army, which was 200 million mounted troops. **17** And in my vision, I saw the horses and the riders sitting on them. The riders wore armor that was fiery red and dark blue and yellow. The horses had heads like lions, and fire and smoke and burning sulfur billowed from their mouths. **18** One-third of all the people on earth were killed by these three plagues—by the fire and smoke and burning sulfur that came from the mouths of the horses. **19** Their power was in their mouths and in their tails. For their tails had heads like snakes, with the power to injure people. **20** But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk! **21** And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Psalm 137:1 - 9

137 **1** Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem. **2** We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of poplar trees. **3** For our captors demanded a song from us. Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: “Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!” **4** But how can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a pagan land? **5** If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp. **6** May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don’t make Jerusalem my greatest joy. **7** O LORD, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. “Destroy it!” they yelled. “Level it to the ground!” **8** O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us. **9** Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!

Proverbs 30:10

30 10 Never slander a worker to the employer, or the person will curse you, and you will pay for it.